

PINE KNOT



WILLIAM E. BARTON

1.



“Tell your father that I forbid him to open school.”

(See page 60.)

Pine Knot

A Story of Kentucky Life

By

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Illustrated by F. T. Merrill



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TO MY FRIEND
MRS. MARY E. STEARNS,
AND
IN HONOR OF THE WORK OF HER HUSBAND,
MAJOR GEORGE L. STEARNS.

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PINE KNOT

CHAPTER I

THE PINE KNOT GHOST

NOEL DAVIS moved his inverted nail keg a little farther within the shade in front of Bill Blake's store, kicking Widow Braniman's long-eared hound out of the way. He was moving less to get out of the sun than to get farther from his companions. He was feeling a little sore, for they had laughed at him, and he had just had charged to his account a bushel of corn meal which he had too confidently offered to pay for if Granny White could pack it home. With visible effort, but still successfully, she tugged at the sack until she got it upon her shoulder, and then tottered off home with it. Noel watched her eagerly as at times she seemed likely to fail, but at last when she gathered strength with the effort and moved more briskly to her cabin, he joined with the rest in shouting words of encouragement to her, and pretended that he had sought that way of dispensing a charity. No one contradicted this declaration, and no one believed it, and the group, on one pretext or another, laughed at Noel several times thereafter.

"Leave the dog alone, cyan't ye?" demanded Widow Braniman, coming to the door in answer to the familiar yelp.

"Who's tetched yer dog?" demanded Noel.

"You kicked him," said she.

"You cyan't prove it," retorted Davis.

"I don't have obleeged to prove it," replied the widow. "They hain't nary 'nother man anywhurs near Pine Knot that's triflin' mean enough to do it."

With this sally the widow returned to the inspection of some calico, the purchase of which, if she really decided to buy it, would require all her eggs and butter for some time. Bill Blake had received a new order of goods since last mail day, and several women, as well as the usual number of men, had come to await the advent of the mail.

Dan Brafford had not arrived yet. It was not time for him to arrive for that matter, and even if it had been there was more time. Nothing else was so plentiful about Pine Knot. If, therefore, Dan delayed, as was sometimes inevitable, and the mail was an hour or four hours late, Pine Knot accepted the fact not without comment, but with composure. The men outside and the women within were both congenially occupied.

The men, who had been animated momentarily by the promise of a set-to between the widow and Noel, settled back again into their listless attitudes. Neze Post looked dejectedly into the puddle of tobacco juice between his feet. That was his customary position when in repose, his elbows resting on his knees. He was unusually dejected to-day. The hotel business was not flourishing of late. The single tourist who had come to town this week had gone to Green Best's new hotel. Green sat to-day with his box

tipped back, his thumbs under his knit "galluses," and his cob pipe tilted high.

"What ails ye, Neze?" he asked. "'Pears lack ye ain't so pert as you uster be when we was a-settin' up to the same gal."

"Old age comin' on, I reckon," said Ebenezer, with a faint attempt at pleasantry.

"I don't reckon hit's that," said Green. "Must be piety. You kep' both the preachers over last Sunday."

"They ain't much money in keepin' preachers," said Neze. "P'ti'lar when they feed their own beastis."

"They don't let 'em starve, that's a fac'!" laughed Green. "When old Preacher Taulbee comes on his horse—hit ain't rightly a horse, but jist the frame of one—you kin hang me if I don't believe it's all the feed that old nag gits till his next meetin' day, without it's faith and papaw bushes."

"Neze gits the preachers and you git the cattle buyers, ain't that so, Green?" asked Blake.

"Oh, I'm liable to git the preachers next time," said Green. "They go around. If they give Neze any special attention hit's because he needs it worse than what I do. But I reckon I need money worse'n what he does, and that's comin' to-wards me a leetle nite faster now. Things goes where they's the most need, I've most gen'rally always noticed."

Neze colored. "I don't think hit's plumb right for you to put up that ar new sign that calls yourn The Best Hotel," said he.

Green laughed, and the others joined with him, for Green's answer was already known.

"Hit's a case of needcessity, Neze," he said. "I couldn't call it The Post Hotel."

"But hit ain't nary bit nor grain better than mine," urged Neze.

"I never said hit was," rejoined Best, with contagious good humor. "I jest call my hotel by my own name, and you kin call your hotel by yourn."

"I don't want to call it by my own name," said Post. "But if I was to, my name wouldn't be no sorter *insult* to yourn. But yourn is to mine."

"Good lordy, Neze," said Green, laughing louder than ever. "Hit's a right daggon shame ef a feller cyan't use his own name without some other feller feelin' lack he was insulted. I'd pinely like to accommodate ye, Neze, I would for a fack; but the truth is I cyan't afford to pay the Legislature to change my name. Of course *you* needn't understand that my hotel's better'n yourn, but I don't see no help for it but to use the name that the Lord and my daddy gin me."

This explanation did not satisfy Neze, who knew that Green was chaffing him and gloating over the situation. The name had unmistakable advertising value, and, while it was respectable to keep the preachers, they were likely to go to Best's or somewhere else next meeting day; and they paid nothing, and were as hungry as their horses.

"I wisht Dan would come," said Green, taking up the conversation again after a pause. Green had led in the laughter against Noel, and had worsted Neze in the argument over the sign, but there are disadvantages in a victory too sweeping, and Green felt the obligation of starting the conversation which the demor-

alization of Neze and Noel had brought to a temporary close.

“What d’ye want Dan to come for?” asked Blake. “He ain’t got no mail for you.”

“I’d sorter like to hear about politics,” said Green.

“They say,” said Neze, “that things are getting pinely mixed up.”

“Yes,” said Green, “the nomination of this man Lincoln is a mighty sorter surprise to the Jimmy-crats.”

“Hit’ll be a surprise to them that nominated him come November,” said Neze.

“I ain’t right sure of that,” said Blake. “I’ve got a sorter idy they’re goin’ to run that man in.”

“Tell you what I’ll do, Neze,” said Green; “I’ll undertake to eat and sleep the Republicans and you take keer of the Jimmycrats.”

“All right,” said Neze. “Will you call your hotel The Black Republican?”

“I’ll take that under advisemaint, as the jedge says,” said Green.

The men laughed at Green this time, and good nature was restored all around.

“Here comes Jake Crawford,” said Noel. “Howdy, Jake. Got ary flask about ye?”

“Nary un,” said Jake. “Been a-movin’ my still-house.”

“Whar is it at?”

“Right acrost the Gov’maint survey for the State line.”

“What’s yer idy in that?”

“Well, they’re a-gittin’ sorter ornery about the laws agin sellin’ and stillin’, and I’ve sorter made up

my mind to preepare, as the feller says, for the eenevitable. When I have my still in Kaintuck and my worm in Tennessy, who's a-goin' to say whar the stuff was made? And ef I stand in Tennessy, and the man that buys it stands in Kaintuck, whar is the sale? And ef the sheriff comes from one State, and finds the barrel rolled acrost the floor into the other, and me a-settin' on it lack a law-abidin' citizen, what's he got to do, as a man and a gentleman, but jest to own up beat, and step acrost to whar he hain't got no jurisdiction, and take a drink, and go home about his business, sayin' that when he arrived he found I was out of the State."

"Jake," said Green admiringly, "by ginger, you'd orter be a member of the Legislature! I never heerd tell of nothing slicker!"

"Well, I jist now begin to see the use of this Gov'maint survey," said Neze.

"Yes," said Jake, "the State line is a real special Providaince. When I git fired up agin, boys, come over and we'll have somethin' wet."

We know many things now about which there was once a reasonable doubt. Thereby we have needlessly increased our sorrows. The whole world knows now that Pine Knot is in Kentucky, but in 1860 it was assumed to be exactly on the line between that State and Tennessee. What good it has done any one to learn that the line runs two miles south it would be hard to say, and it compelled Jake Crawford to move his bar again.

However, he could afford it. No man profited better than Jake by the proximity of the State line except old Tommy Jones at Cumberland Gap after

the war. He took the shanty which the Federal soldiers built exactly under the war-time bridge that connected the pinnacles, and then sold liquor till the railroad went through and demolished the bridge and old Tommy's business. Tommy Jones had both Kentucky and Tennessee as a base of operations, and if he had been pressed hard, as some good men have been in these later years, by a concerted attack of officers from both States at once, he had five or six square, or rather triangular, feet of the very tip end of Virginia in his chimney corner. That is, it was so believed then. More recent surveys, forever unsettling things, have changed this, too, and moved the corner a distance up the hill where a three-colored sandstone rock marks the corner of the three States. The stone below, which people sit upon to snap their kodaks at each other and then chip for relics, is simply a witness stone now, though it serves the ignorance of tourists quite as well as the genuine mark, and for that matter it served the ignorance, if you choose to call it so, of Tommy Jones.

But Tommy Jones is gone from the Gap, and Jake Crawford's new store on the new State line is as obsolete as his old store in Pine Knot itself. Yet—and I have always counted it a curious fact—the State-line habit clings to Jake. When his regular business became demoralized through the joint operation of the officers of the law and the manufacturers of the dirty red whisky they make in Cincinnati (the mountain whisky is uncolored), he was driven back to making his own liquor in order to have a good article, and to be able to sell it at a living profit. Now revenue officers have no more regard for a State line

than they have for human rights in general; but Jake's present establishment, whose exact location is known to certain discreet individuals in a very rocky hollow among the spurs of Pine Mountain, is built on the line of the newer Government survey. It must be either from sentiment or from pure force of habit, but the round-bellied copper still is in Kentucky, and the barrel containing the worm is in Tennessee.

Jake Crawford is gone, and Bill Blake no longer keeps the store and post office, and the hooting, whanging locomotive brings a daily mail. Few, if any, of those whose history this book relates now live at Pine Knot. Time changes everything; and the war—that awful Government survey that staked off with little rows of white marble stones at the head of low mounds the whole eternity that had been from the present and the future—the war made more than war's usual changes about Pine Knot. In one of its many invasions of the place, when the Federal army was on the Cumberland and was moving south to capture Knoxville and Cumberland Gap, a Union teamster was shot from ambush near there. Whether it was the commanding general or some of his officers of the commissary department that gave the order to burn the houses, is perhaps uncertain. Anyway, it was assumed that a region where teamsters were shot could not be counted loyal territory, and a company was detached to ride from Point Burnside to the State line and burn every house along the way. Possibly those of us who knew the inhabitants of Pine Knot before and during the war might hazard a guess as to who shot the teamster. At any rate, we know

that those who would have done it were few. But the officers in the Federal army were slow in learning how few there were in that region who wished them ill.

Many thousands of Americans have wept over the destruction of Grand Pré and the scattering of its ill-fated inhabitants by their enemies; possibly sometime some one will write of tragedies not wholly unlike it in which communities in our own land suffered at the hands of their friends.

They burned every house in Pine Knot, and for thirty miles north. The houses were not many, but they were all burned. And yet they spared the house in which Granny White lay a-dying. The captain himself went in to see if she could not be moved. They say he wiped his eyes as he came out. She begged him to bring in the flag, and when it was brought in she kissed the hem and thanked God that she had lived to see it again. It was evident that she was not one to shoot teamsters, and the captain, who followed his hard orders to the letter elsewhere, set a guard before her house with orders to shoot any man that would do it harm. The flag, too, was hung over the door.

But the other houses were burned. It was a small affair in its way, for the houses were so few. But the husbands and fathers and brothers and sons of those homeless women and children who shivered that night about the embers of their homes were fighting in the Union army. So many things of the kind happened, and on a scale so much larger, that it would not be worth while to mention this one, except that it accounts in part for the fact that the present residents

of Pine Knot are not those who were there "before the war." They may be talked about with freedom, therefore, and with no danger of hurting anybody's feelings.

That is enough about the war for the present, though we shall come to it again. Unless it might be worth while to remember, as we are leaving the subject, that Granny White died that night. The whole town was there to see her die, as it probably would have been in any event, for the solemn dignity of death is not lightly regarded at Pine Knot. Granny White did not know who had burned the town. She thought that it had been the Confederates from Knoxville, and that the captain whom she had seen had driven them off, though too late to save the houses. The friends let her think so. It was a fearful responsibility, and lay hard on their consciences that they let her go into eternity with a falsehood of their own making or conniving, but they could not help it. She died blessing God that she had lived to see the flag again. They tried vainly each to persuade some one else to tell her the truth, but while they were agreeing that she ought not to die cherishing a delusion, and that some one ought to tell her, but were not agreed who should do it, she died, and the happy look upon her sunken, toothless old face was there when the earth covered the coffin. She died, and that ended the discussion, and they turned the two or three pictures to the wall and stopped the clock.

But all this happened later and belongs to a story that is yet to be told. Granny White was alive and well in 1860, and, old as she was, packed home the

bushel of meal for which Noel Davis had promised to pay. The men still sat about waiting for the mail.

"Heerd tell anything about the ghost lately, Noel?" asked Jake.

"Which ghost?" asked Noel.

"Deek Morgan's."

"How d'ye know hit's Deek's?"

"Whose is it if it ain't Deek's?"

"I don't know's it's any person's," said Noel.

"You don't?" exclaimed Widow Braniman, coming to the door. "Then how'd it come to be a ghost?"

"Of course it's Deek's," said Neze; "and that's the quare thing about it."

"I don't see nothin' more quare about it bein' Deek's nor about ary 'nother person's," said Noel.

"Why, sartin," said Green, "Deek's ghost hadn't no ambition agin Pine Knot."

"No, nor no person was ever ambitious agin him," said Widow Braniman.

"Then," said Green, "he was so mighty anxious to rest when he was alive I don't see his idy in not restin' now he's got a chance."

"Deek never was no hand to exert hisself when they wa'n't no needcessity," said Blake. "He uster allow that he was jist naterally borned tard."

In truth his natal fatigue had pursued Deek at a leisurely pace all his life, and there was apparent justice in the complaint that he ought to rest now that opportunity afforded.

"Ef they was ary person livin' that Deek had a gredge again," said Neze, "hit would be differnt."

“Without it was his wife,” said Widow Braniman.

“Shore enough,” said Jake. “But she’s married to Abednego Williams, and they’ve done gone to Missouri.”

“I wisht the ghost ’d go thar, too,” said Noel.

“Well, if he don’t pester them I don’t see why he should pester us,” said Green.

“I reckon ’Bednego don’t need no ghosts,” said Widow Braniman.

There was a laugh at this.

“Well, if ’Bednego is gittin’ his sheer the ghost mout go to haintin’ his wife, or less let us alone, one.”

“Wa’n’t she a main buster?” asked Jake. “I uster go by on my way to the mill, and he’d be in his cornfield, above the house. That cornfield’s so steep, anyhow, a feller’s in plumb danger of fallin’ out of it and breakin’ his laig. But Deek wa’n’t in no danger. He couldn’t even fall fast enough to hurt hisself. Lordy, I’ve seed him when he’d see some person comin’ down the road, and he’d yell, ‘Hello, Jake, I want to see you a minute!’ Then I’d pull up under the dead sycamore where the haint walks now, and he’d come down sorter lack they was somethin’ in him pullin’ back agin the slope of the hill and hatin’ to come down so fast, and down he’d come, sorter makin’ a swing around not to come too clost to the door, and Peggy she’d yell out: ‘Wha’ d’ye wanter go down to the road fur? You hain’t got no business with Jake. Let him go on to mill, and git his turn ground and git back to the stillhouse afore night, and you go back ter your hoein’! The crab grass ’ll take that ar corn if you don’t stir yer lazy bones!

Loafin' all day yistidy at the store, and now no good when ye git ter work; runnin' off down thar to that ar sycamore tree ter see Jake! I never seed sech another triflin', no-'count man in all my borned days!' But Deek wouldn't never stop, and jest hurried on—ef it's right to say, that Deek ever hurried—and thar he'd set under the old dead sycamore, carvin' its roots with his barlow and yellin' back to Peggy onct in a while when he das'n't let on not to hear, 'All right, Peggy, I'm comin' tereckly!' but I allers knowed that he was in for another ten minutes. And he was a right divertin' talker. And that old sycamore root was his favor-ite seat."

"I allers allowed that that ar nail kaig was his favor-ite seat," said Blake. "He'd set thar and tell yarns by the hour, his old nag standin' hitched to the fence thar, till the fear of Peggy 'd drive him home or I'd lock up the store, one."

"Peggy was a main hard one, that's a fact," said Green; "but then we all suffer that away."

"You don't suffer half so much as what you'd orter," retorted his wife. "I do believe Peggy had a hard time of it."

"So did Deek—and me," laughed her husband.

"You both got a good right to a hard time," she answered, and the laugh turned on Green, who rejoiced to have his wife get the better of him in public.

Peggy was not the only woman who complained of Deek. Many a wife whose husband did not come home promptly from the store or mill told her good man that she "jes' knowed he'd be'n aloafin' a-longer that triflin', no-'count Deck Morgan"; to which statement she would add such specific denunciation as the

particular occasion called for, ending with a command to her husband to have nothing more to do with Deek. But these same women—and it grieves me to record their inconsistency—received Deek when he came to their kitchen doors with scant civility at first, to be sure, but with a tartness which gradually wore off when the owner felt that it had had its moral effect. Ill humor, except Peggy's, always lost itself in his presence. He was so humble, so genial, and knew so many good stories and so much gossip. If there was anything good to eat in the house Deek always got it. After one of his visits, the good housewives of Pine Knot were wont to profess shame that they had harbored him, and to tell what they would do with such a man if he were their husband. Few living men have been more hypothetically married for the sake of working out a wholesome reformation than Deek. But these good women were wont to add as a last word that "Deek wa'n't so bad a feller, atter all, ef he jes' had a chance to home. What wonder, with a wife that hetcheled him all the time, ef a man *did* git mighty triflin' an' no 'count?"

"What's Deek's haint been a-doin' now?" asked Bill.

"Oh, hit jest raises up in front of the dead sycamore and says: 'Oh, leave me be, Peggy; hit ain't mornin' yit!' or 'Hold on, boys, I know another un!' lack he was a-goin' to tell a story. Hit would be right comical ef it wa'n't so mighty skeery."

"I reckon that house that was Deek's will stand empty a right smart spell," said Neze.

"I heerd it was goin' to be occupied," said Noel.

“Did ye? Land o’ massy! Who?” demanded Widow Braniman.

“I dunno,” said Noel. “I didn’t hear no more.”

“Here comes Dan with the mail,” said Green Best, and they started up, expectant.

“That ain’t Dan,” said Neze Post. “That horse ain’t a patchin’ to hisn. You could cut four len’ths off Bill’s for the mill, and then he’d have more cord wood left in him than they is in that nag.”

“Bill’s horse is providaintially built for carryin’ the mails,” suggested Widow Braniman, coming to the door just then; “they couldn’t no common horse ford high water lack hisn.”

“Hit’s Preacher Jim Fletcher,” said Best. “His nag has a white left hind foot and a star in his face.”

“I’d like to swap my nag to hisn,” said Noel Davis.

“Like to swap yer chance of heaven with him, too, wouldn’t ye, Noel?” asked Bill Blake, for the whole business of shopping had been suspended at the first word that a horse that might be Dan Brafford’s was in sight, and all within were at the door.

“I wouldn’t swap hit for yourn,” retorted Noel.

“Mine ain’t for sale,” said Bill.

“I didn’t allow you had anything that wa’n’t for sale,” said Neze.

“Amounts to the same thing,” said Green. “Reason he hain’t got none for sale is he hain’t got none nohow.”

“What you alls pickin’ at Bill fur?” asked Widow Braniman. “Bill, ain’t you got ary friend to stand up fur ye?”

“Bill don’t need yer sympathy,” said Green, “and

hit's wasted on him. Bill's done married. Here's Noel here, he needs sympathy more'n ary 'nother person, and being single hit mout not be wasted."

"Green Best!" said Mrs. Braniman, "if I could get at you with this here hickory I'd pinely w'ar you out!"

"All right, Mis' Braniman," cried Green amid the laughter of all. "Looks like I'd need sympathy myself, if I keep on."

"Then you best not keep on," said the widow. "How do you make out to live with him?" she continued, directing her question to Mrs. Best, who was inspecting some cotton sheeting, and had brought the bolt to the door to see it to better advantage.

"I just have to stand it best I kin," said Mrs. Best admiringly.

"Law, if she was as bald as I be!" said Best, rubbing his hand over his thin hair.

"I'd pull it all out if you was my man," said the widow. "'Twouldn't be no more than what you deserve."

"Howdy, parson?" called Blake. "'Light and lift your saddle."

The young minister did not reply to the salutation, but hitched his horse to a swinging beech limb, and, flinging his leg over the saddle, swung himself to the ground, and taking his saddlebags on his arm strode up to the front of the store.

He was very tall and and swarthy, with high cheek bones that stood out prominently on his sallow face. His head was held erect on a strong neck that seemed even larger than it was in the loose and rolling collar of his unstarched white shirt. He wore no vest, and

his coat and trousers were of jeans, and fitted loosely. His stride was long and swinging, and his whole body hurled itself forward at each step. Unlike the average mountaineer, who walks leisurely and with regard for the inequalities of the surface of the earth, Fletcher strode forward over stones and roots, with his black eye straight ahead. His eye was fixed on Davis, and he disregarded the greetings of the others, saying:

“Noel Davis, I’d like to see you a minute.”

“Well, you’re a-lookin’ right at me, ain’t you?” asked Davis in a surly tone.

“Yes, I am, and I’ve had my eye on you for some time. I want to talk to you alone.”

Nothing is more common in the mountains than the calling of a person to step out for private conference. The homes and public places afford little opportunity for privacy, and personal conversations are almost invariably preceded by a request to step out. To decline such an invitation is usually the mark of discourtesy or cowardice.

“If you got anything to say to me say it here,” said Davis.

“All right, I can say it here. I want to know what you gave that school away for?”

“I thought you wanted to say something to me? ’Pears like you’re a-astin’ me to say something to you.”

“I’ll say something to you, then. You promised me last year, you and Bill Blake here, that I could keep the school this year. You allowed there’d be public money enough to pay rising twenty dollars a month for a three months’ school, and you promised it to me.”

"Maybe Bill did," said Noel; "I didn't have much to do with it."

"You needn't lay it on to me," said Bill. "What I agree to I stick to. I thought Jim kept a good school last year, and I told him I was willing he should have it agin. You said the same, and so did Jake Trosper."

"Jake Trosper hain't got nothing to do with it," said Noel. "He wasn't re-elected."

"No, but you two held over, and you're a majority of the trustees," said Fletcher. "I could a had the Marsh Creek school—I preach there the fourth Sunday—but I counted on this one. But Bill Trosper went out, and Peleg Goodwin he got on, and he and Noel Davis have given the school to a straggler no person knows anything about."

"Is that so, Noel?" asked Bill. "Have you give the school away and not said nothin' to me?"

"Peleg didn't 'low it was necessary," said Noel. "He said we was a majority; and we had a chance to git a first-class, A No. 1 teacher, and Peleg he thought we'd best do it, and I sorter gin my consent."

"I have nothing to say against Peleg Goodwin," said Fletcher, "you all know what he is; but I've got this to say about you. You promised, and you broke your promise. You've told a plumb lie, and you don't have sand or honor ary one enough to last you in hell for ten minutes!"

"You mean to call me a liar?" asked Davis blusteringly.

"Yes, I do. And what's more, you know it's so."

"If you wasn't a preacher," said Davis deprecatingly, "I'd see whether you'd call me a liar!"

"You would, would you? You needn't stop for that. If I was to treat you as you deserve I'd duck you in the branch."

"Look here, parson," remonstrated Best, "Noel won't fight you, and they hain't no use p'tic'lar in worryin' a 'possum atter he curls up and stops fightin'. I don't believe I'd sass him much more.

James Fletcher felt the justice of this word. By his display of temper he had lost in large measure the sympathy of the spectators. He bit his lip, and, turning without a word, mounted his horse and rode away.

There was silence for a little while after he departed, and then Best restored the conversation by remarking with a laugh, "You seem to be ketchin' it all round this evenin', Noel."

Then the mail came, and all gathered about Dan Brafford as he brought in the lank, double pouch, and threw it on the counter. His greeting was hearty and went around the group.

"Howdy, Bill? Forgot to order that sand scoop for your sugar sack. Howdy, Mis' Best? Still boardin' with Green, be ye? Git better board over to the other house, I reckon. Ain't that so, Neze? Howdy, Mis' Braniman? Still single, be ye? Law, I've laid off to come over and set up with you myself, but I hain't had time. I reckon you'll jest have to take up with Noel thar. Hello, Noel! Say, that last sang I took for you wasn't dry enough. Got any tobacker, Bill? I'm mighty nigh dyin' for a smoke."

There was a hush as the strap was pulled through the metal loops and the postmaster's arm was thrust

in, first one side and then the other, and all gathered around. It is not to be supposed that any of them expected or desired to receive a letter. The chief function of the mail carrier was social. What news he brought in his pouch was a mere fraction of what he gathered and disseminated along the way, and he performed certain commercial services, buying sundry little packages in exchange for ginseng or angelica (known as jellico) root; but he served chiefly to get people together at intervals along his route. As the chief business of county court day at Whitley Courthouse (the profane have changed the name to Williamsburg) was done outside the courtroom, and the interest in a big baptizing (pronounced baptizin') on Marsh Creek was largely independent of the precise religious character of the event which gave name to the gathering, so the coming of the mail was of interest principally for other reasons than that the inhabitants of Pine Knot were large senders or receivers of letters. In these days people send letters on the slightest pretext and wholly without justifiable excuse, but in that day and at Pine Knot letter writing was not counted a thing to be entered upon lightly or unadvisedly, but soberly, reverently, and discreetly.

There was about the usual assortment of mail: a few letters for Whitley Courthouse and points beyond, a meager assortment of mail for intervening points, and a letter and a paper for Pine Knot, with a good-sized package of printed matter.

"That's a main big one, Dan," said Bill.

"I had a right good notion to put me a rock in the end with the other mail to balance it," said Dan.

"Who's hit for?" asked Mrs. Braniman.

“J. Howard Buzbee.” Bill read the name laboriously, and turned to the letter and the paper.

“Who in creation is that?” asked Mrs. Best.

“What on airth does a man want to part his name in the middle that away for?” demanded Mrs. Braniman.

“J. Howard Buzbee,” read Bill from the paper.

“Who’s the letter for?” asked Post.

“Mrs. J. Howard Buzbee,” read Bill.

“Well, I never!” cried Mrs. Best. “Whoever heerd tell of a woman’s name same as her man’s? Do you reckon that’s her sure-enough name?”

“Course it is,” said her husband. “What would they call her that for if it wasn’t?”

“Maybe hit’s for her man,” said Post.

“No, hit’s ‘Mrs. J. Howard Buzbee,’ plain as kin be,” said Bill.

“Who do you reckon that kin be?” asked one and another.

“Nobody of that name around this neck of woods,” said Bill.

“Well, put that other stuff back in the sack and lock it up. Do you reckon the Gov’maint pays me to stand around here while you alls gawp at that mail lack you was young ducks gawpin’ at a toad in the feed trough? I gotter git on to Marsh Creek,” said Dan.

“They hain’t so anxious to see you there as we be to have ye go,” said Mrs. Braniman. Such are the pleasantries of Pine Knot.

“That’s the way you talk jest because I hain’t got time to come over and set up with you. I didn’t think you’d talk to me that away, Mis’ Braniman.”

“Go ’long with your fool talk,” said Mrs. Braniman.

“I always ’lowed you keered a heap for me,” answered Dan.

“Well, I don’t, so you know it now.”

“Noel’s cut me out, I reckon,” said Dan, holding the mail bag to protect himself from her riding whip as he escaped through the door.

“Well, what I want to know is, who is this here J. Howard Buzbee?” demanded the widow.

No one answered. Noel Davis knew, but he was in no mood to give information.

CHAPTER II

SMITH HEMPHILL'S PASSENGERS

"Now jist let me tell you about the like of sich roads as these here!" exclaimed Smith Hemphill, as one wheel tilted high upon the summit of a rock and the other sought the nadir in a fathomless mudhole.

The bright-haired girl on the seat beside him caught herself midway between the upward lunge and the downward pitch, and, after a moment's waiting, looked at the driver with an expectant "Well?"

"Well, what?" demanded Smith Hemphill.

"You proposed to tell me about the roads."

"That was my way of sw'aring at 'em in the presence of ladies," he said grimly. "Hit ain't safe for me to say nothin' more."

"Oh, I see," replied the young woman.

A heavy rain had washed and gullied the roads and raised the streams so that fording was disagreeable. The creaking wagon, drawn by a span of mules, was making its way painfully along Marsh Creek toward Pine Knot.

"Are we almost there?" asked Mrs. Buzbee in a soft, refined voice that had in it the pleasant accent of the blue grass, as well as a trace of semi-invalidism, and just a faint suggestion of suppressed complaint.

“Almost there, my dear,” answered her husband. “Barbara, hold on carefully, my child. The road, I grant, is very unpleasant, but we must be near. It can not be more than a mile——”

“Hit’s a good two mile and a half,” drawled the driver, in tones that perceptibly lengthened the distance. “And they maisure the miles with a coon skin, and throw in the tail ever’ time for good maisure.”

“They certainly are long,” said Mrs. Buzbee.

“They air, now that’s a fact,” admitted Smith. “I’ve pinely noticed that myself. And they ain’t no way to git shet of ’em but for them two mules to laig ’em off, one step at a time.”

“They seem short steps and many to the mile,” said Mrs. Buzbee.

“That is true,” said Mr. Buzbee. “I wonder just how many steps are required. Let me compute it. There are five thousand two hundred and eighty——”

“O father! Please don’t!” exclaimed Barbara. “Aren’t the roads bad enough without arithmetic?”

“I will desist if you desire, my daughter,” said her father.

“Hold on more carefully, Barbara,” said her mother.

“I’m all right, mother. Can I do anything for you?”

“Nothing, my child.”

“I will care for your mother,” said Mr. Buzbee, coming back at that instant from his mathematical abstraction. “I estimate that these mules step not far from two thousand eight hundred and forty-three times to the mile.”

“With one laig or all four?” asked Smith.

“With one pair. That reminds me, I forgot to consider that they have four legs. I will begin again.”

“Not now, John,” said Mrs. Buzbee, wearily.

“Very well, my love,” said he. “We will talk of other things. Two and one half miles, my dear. So near is the fruition of our hopes.”

“I trust so, John,” said she, “for it is hope long deferred even if it comes now.”

“And your heart has done well not to be sick, my love,” said he. “But better things are coming. My dear, we are living in a formative time. The fountains of the great deep of human opinion are about to be broken up. There will be new social and political conditions. The old Democratic party is divided. The Republicans have put in nomination a man unknown, but certain to become known. We are on the verge——”

“Hold on goin’ down this here little pitch,” said the driver, interrupting Mr. Buzbee, who was speaking as if addressing a meeting.

“But what I do not see, father,” said Barbara, “is how we are to accomplish anything at such a time back in these hills. Even the sunshine gets lost in these valleys——”

“Ya-as,” said the driver. “They’s a holler over in back here whar they hatter dip their sunshine up with a bucket and a sweep and pour it down.”

“Where do they dip it from?” asked Barbara, entering into the spirit of the mountain pleasantry.

“South side the same ridge. Clk-clk! Clk-clk!” The first two clucks were uttered in appreciation of his own joke; the last two, louder and in a different key,

were to the mules, who responded to the jerk of the one rope line.

Mr. Buzbee paid no attention to the byplay of humor. He was thoughtfully preparing his answer to Barbara's question.

"These mountains," said he, "afford me the very situation I want as a place to stand while I adjust my Archimedean lever."

"Any place where we can stand or rest, with a roof above us, will be acceptable, John," said Mrs. Buzbee.

There was a just perceptible shade of reproach in her voice.

"It isn't just like Lexington, mother," said Barbara; "but it is a healthful region, I have no doubt, and will be good for us all."

"The worst thing about this country is the titles to the land," said Smith.

"How so?" asked Barbara.

"The rain washes the land off 'm the hills. The title won't hold it."

Barbara laughed, but the joke was lost on Mr. Buzbee.

"These mountains," resumed Mr. Buzbee, "are the home of freedom. Here was created the State of Franklin, and before it was the Watauga Association, the first free commonwealth formed by American-born citizens."

"Are there no slaves here?" asked Mrs. Buzbee of the driver.

"Wall, they's a sprinklin'. The houses in the hollows don't have none, but the houses on the hills has one or two, mebbby."

“How do you make the distinction?”

“Wall, most of the folks in these knobs is too pore to own a nigger or to dig a well.”

“But the hills and the hollows——?”

“The springs is in the hollers, mostly.”

“Oh, I see! They build their houses with reference to convenience in getting water.”

“Sartin,” said the driver, in a tone that implied great self-restraint in not intimating that so elementary a truth ought to have been perceived with less explanation.

“Precisely so,” said Mr. Buzbee, making a mental note for a future research concerning the relation of altitude to slavery. “And you notice that there are very few houses upon the hills.”

“This mud is very deep and sticky,” said Barbara, attempting to turn the conversation.

“Hit’s so sticky hit’ll pull a shoe right off a horse’s hoof,” said Smith.

“Is there no other road?” asked Mrs. Buzbee.

“Yas’m. But I most generally always aim to go this way, for hit’s a heap the best. I aim to go back the other.”

“Why do you do that?” asked Barbara.

“Hit saves me from studyin’ while I go along about how I’ve got to go back through the same mud-holes. I’d a heap druther take the ones that I don’t know jest how bad they be. For they ain’t no mud-hole so bad as to know hit’s ahead and have to study about it.”

Barbara laughed.

“That does not accord with the philosophers,” said Mr. Buzbee. “They affirm that it is the unknown

that has the greater terror. Shakespeare represents Hamlet as preferring to suffer with the ills we see——”

“Wall, I go straight ahead if I don’t see no hats in the road.”

“Hats?”

“Yais. Whar some feller has done gone down, mules and wagon and all, and left his hat top side of the mud.”

Again Barbara laughed, a merry, ringing laugh.

“I see nothing to laugh at, Barbara,” remonstrated her father. “I am sure if such a thing should happen it would be anything but a laughing matter.”

“Howdy, Mr. Strunk?” called out the driver as they passed a cabin. “Dog my cats if I know which Strunk that is!” he added in an aside. “But hit’s a Kaintuck Strunk.”

“Howdy?” was the reply. “Whar you alls going?”

“I cyan’t tell ye till I come back,” replied Smith. “Clk-clk!”

“His name is Strunk?” asked Barbara.

“Most ever’ person’s is in this neck of woods. They was two brothers, Abram and Daniel, and they come in here nigh on to a hundred years ago, I reckon, and both of ’em married twict, and one had twenty-four children and the t’other twenty-eight. And all of ’em bred mightily in this wilderness country; and now when you don’t know a feller you call him Strunk. They’re on both sides of the line, and the Kaintuck Strunks is a heap different from the Tennessy Strunks.”

“In what way?”

“Wall, the people are right smart divided about

that," said Smith deliberately, cutting off a chew of pigtail twist. "The Tennessy Strunks says the Kaintuck Strunks is the oneriest, and the Kaintuck Strunks says the Tennessy Strunks is a heap the oneriest. But they both favor each other right smart, after all."

"How far are we now?" asked Barbara.

"Here's the forks," said the driver. "Hit's a mile to Pine Knot."

"Which way do we go?" asked Barbara.

"Keep the main road."

"One looks to me about like the other," said Barbara, with a woman's insistence on a more tangible discrimination.

"Jes' keep the main, big road all the way. That's all they is of it," said the driver.

"But there's always a right and a left," insisted Barbara.

"Yes, they is. But jest s'posin' some person had a-told you the way from Whitley Courthouse here. Jest s'posin' that driver from Lexington had a-come plumb through with you alls and you alls' plunder. Jes s'posin' I had a-told you fust left, then right, then down the branch, then foller the ridge, then down the holler to the ford, then over the mounting to the head waters of 'Tater Branch, then down 'Tater Branch to whar hit empties inter Marsh Creek, then——"

"Oh, we should have been lost, like the babes in the wood, I know. But twenty times you have told me that you were keeping the main road when one road looked just like the other!"

"Mebby hit did to you. But hit wasn't jest like it, don't ye see?"

"No, I confess I don't."

"Wall, t'other un wouldn't have fetched ye to Pine Knot. Now do you see the difference?"

"Oh, I see *that* difference, of course——"

"Well, then!" said the driver, and Barbara knew that that argument was ended.

Smith Hemphill was a civil driver, and was willing to answer any reasonable question, and quite liked to have a passenger sufficiently stupid to justify him in elongating his explanations, but there were limits to his willingness to recur to a given topic. Barbara had kept up a conversation with him a good part of the way, and had found no little pleasure in calling out his argumentative powers.

Mr. Buzbee, finding the conversation lagging, reverted to his former theme, nothing disconcerted by the interruption.

"These mountains are the natural home of freedom."

"Ya-as," admitted Smith, "a feller is free to do about as he pleases if he don't keep no sheep-killin' dogs."

"That is just it," said Mr. Buzbee eagerly. "That is the very illustration I was seeking. Now, a man has a natural right to keep sheep. That is fundamental. Sheep are——"

"Sheep are mighty unsartin critters," interrupted Smith. "What with dogs, and wolves, and foxes, and hoof rot, and the whole daggon flock dyin' off if one of 'em ketches anything ketchin', I've made up my mind to stick to hogs."

"That may be, that may be," said Mr. Buzbee. "But, as I was saying, a man has a right to keep sheep."

Now the same can not be affirmed without qualification of his right to keep dogs. Slavery is——”

“Dogs,” observed Mr. Hemphill, “is, next to women, the most valuable and the most wuthless property ary man ever owned.”

“Oh, shame, Mr. Hemphill!” cried Barbara in mock surprise. “I thought you were too gallant to say such a thing of women!”

“I said they was the most valuable, didn't I?”

“So you did. I see. And dogs the least. Oh, thank you.”

“Wall, I didn't put it jest that away,” said Smith; “but I kin say this, the man that gits you——”

“Oh, don't. I thought you were above flattery.”

“How did ye know I was goin' to flatter ye?”

“Why, of course, you were not going to say anything bad!”

“Wall, if you're sure of that, you may as well not know what I had in mind to say.”

“You make me curious.”

“No, I never. The Lord made all women that away.”

“You do not know all women.”

“Wall, I've read the Bible, and I know about Eve, and I've got a wife o' my own.”

“Poor Eve! She has pointed every slander that men have ever devised against her daughters.”

“Oh, you think hit's slander now, do ye?”

“Flattery and slander are much alike. What were you going to say?”

“I was goin' to say——” said Mr. Hemphill meditatively. “Whoa, thar!” he continued, and jumped from his seat. “That's the first pennyroyal I've seed

this side of the mountain." He gathered a bunch, and, first rubbing his horses' ears with it, drew it under their bridles, making a plume on each mule.

"Yea, thar!" he said, climbing to his seat and jerking the rope line. The mules started ahead. "Them horseflies is the worst things that come out of the ark. Dagon me if I wouldn't 'a' liked to been one of Noah's deck hands for one day! I'd 'a' thinned out his live stock consid'able!"

"They don't like pennyroyal?" asked Barbara.

"They like it," observed Mr. Hemphill, "about lack a short-haired bainch-legged feist dog lacks hot soap grease."

"How far are we now?" asked Mrs. Buzbee.

"You can see Pine Knot," said Smith, "from the top of yan hill. Hit ain't more'n a half."

"Half of what?" asked Barbara.

"Half a mile, of course," said Mr. Hemphill. "What did you reckon it'd be half of?"

"Barbara," remonstrated her mother, "I'm afraid you're bothering Mr. Hemphill."

"Oh, no'm; not at all," said Smith. "I've got a heap of charity for folks that hain't had my advantages."

Barbara laughed again.

"You know more'n I do about some things," admitted Mr. Hemphill, "but when it comes to knowing which fork o' the road to take or how to keep off horseflies, mebbly I know more about that 'n you do."

"I should think," said Mr. Buzbee, "that horseflies might afford opportunity for an interesting study. To what order do they belong?"

"I never heerd tell that they belonged to no p'tic'-

lar order," replied Hemphill deliberately; "but I reckon they're predestinarians of some sort. They believe in perseverance of the saints."

Barbara laughed again. It would be hard to tell where she got that ringing laugh. Her mother never laughed, but sometimes smiled a wan smile. Her father was absolutely devoid of any sense of humor, and took the world not only seriously, but strenuously as well.

"I did not quite mean that," said Mr. Buzbee, not at all annoyed. He had learned to be patient with a world that was slow in understanding his purposes and explanations. "How many varieties are there?"

"Which? Of predestinarians? Thar's the Presbyterians, and they're skase around here, and the Two-Seed Babtists, and the horseflies."

"No, no! Of the flies?"

"Oh, yes. Wall, they's one kind that pesters a horse about the ears jest whar you cyan't retch 'em with a whip, and another that jumps up and hits 'em under the chin and gives 'em the botts, and another that overcomes 'em by main stren'th. And thar's Pine Knot. Hold on acrost this holler, and we'll be thar in a minute."

"I want to stop at the post office," said Mr. Buzbee. "I must have some mail waiting."

"Let us get to our home as soon as possible," said Mrs. Buzbee.

"Yes, my dear."

Busy as they were, he was inclined to stop and tell the idlers at the store, in response to questions about the political news that was just beginning to percolate through the many strata that separated Pine Knot

from the outer world, about the nomination of Lincoln, and what it meant to the country and the world; but a sight of the patient, weary face of his wife and a much less patient reminder from Smith that he "wanted to unload this here plunder and start back" brought him to inquire the way to "Mr. Goodwin's house—the one formerly occupied by the late Mr. Morgan."

"Deek Morgan's old house?" asked Bill Blake. "He ain't a-goin' to put no human thar, is he?"

The point of the question was lost on Mr. Buzbee, but not on Barbara, who kept it in her heart and pondered it. Thither the wagon made its way amid the gossip of the community.

When Smith Hemphill had unloaded his passengers and their "plunder," consisting of three trunks, a box of books, two beds, a pinched little dresser, a few chairs, and a meager equipment of cooking utensils, and had collected his pay and gone back, Mrs. Buzbee looked over the rickety old cabin with its curling roof board, its unchinked cracks, its dilapidated stick chimney, and its loose, treacherous floor puncheons, and, sitting down upon the doorstep, dissolved her long-trying, half-complaining patience in a flood of tears, and even Barbara's lip quivered till she saw her mother's need of courage. Then she laughed, but it was not a happy laugh.

CHAPTER III

UNCLE SIMON PETER

“EB’NIN’, missie.”

Barbara looked up, and saw an old negro framed in the doorway, holding in his left hand a young opossum, whose tail curled around his finger.

“Good evening, uncle,” said Barbara. “What have you there?”

“I got de one t’ing de Lawd nebbah made.”

“How is that?”

“De Lawd nebbah made de possum.”

“Why, I thought the Lord made all things.”

“*Mos’* all t’ings. But not de possum.”

“Who did make him, then?”

“De debbil done made him.”

“Then most colored people have not renounced the devil and all his works, have they?”

“De debbil? Yas’m. But all he works? Wall, *some* of he works.”

“Then, I suppose you don’t like possum?”

“Mus’ be, missie, you sholy got weak eyes.”

“Weak eyes?”

“Yas’m. You surely don’ notice the colah ub my complexion?”

“Well, I should never suspect that you were white.”

“No’m; I ain’t. Dat’s a fack, I ain’t. When I gits tar on me hit meck a light mahk—he-he! Hit do, dat’s a fack.”

“Well, I supposed that all colored people liked possum; but if the devil made him, of course they don’t.”

“Ya-as’m. I reckon dat why de debbil alles has it so easy wid de niggahs.”

“But how did the devil happen to make him?”

“Dat’s it. How did de debbil come to make so good a t’ing?”

“I’m sure I don’t know. Do you?”

“Yas’m. Same reason de ’possum don’t got no har on he tail.”

“Tell me about it, uncle; but here, help me set up this bed.”

“No’m. I ain’ goin’ do nuffin’ de sort. You ain’ fitten to set up no beds. You des se’ down in dat ah cheer, an’ I’ll set up de bed. Hol’ on a minute.”

He moved two chairs back to back, hung a broom across them, and transferred the prehensile tail of the possum to the broom handle while he set up the bedstead.

“Whah yo’ pappy?”

“He has gone to dig out the spring, and mother has gone with him to bathe her head. She has a headache.”

“She gwine ober to my maws’r’s, dah whah she gwine.”

“You came to invite her?”

“Yas’m. An’ you alls. Dye ain’t no use settin’ up no bed. You ain’ gwine sleep here *dis* night. I gwine come ober in de mawnin’, an’ Dinah comin’ too,

an' we gwine clean up de house an' set up de beds. *You* ain' gwine dirty dem lill white han's ob youn settin' up no bed. Mis' Renfro she gwine lick me, if I let you set up bed. I jes' move dis plunder in de house, an' we gwine git away 'fo' sundown."

"My father and mother will be back soon. Tell me about the possum."

"Wall, ef dat ain't de quares' story, sho' 'nuff! Wall, you see, de Lawd, he made de sun, and de moon, and de animiles, and de coon. De las' t'ing he made 'fo' sundown on de animile day dat was de coon. Wall, ebery night de debbil he come out he hole, and he look around in de moonlight to see what de good Lawd done made. Wall, de debbil he p'tic'lar interested in de coon. He see him wid de fine tail wid de rings around hit, and de sharp eyes, and de fur and all, and he say he gwine make one des' presackly like hit. He-he!"

"Well?"

"Well, de coon he made so late, you see, he ain't mo'n hardly dry, and de place whah de Lawd got de mud to make him out'en, dat was in plain sight, and de water gourd and de stirrin' stick still dar. So de debbil he sot to wuck to make a coon."

"And he made the possum instead?"

"Yas'm. Dat's jes' presackly what he went and did. He made de possum. He was jus' lack he be now, all but de tail."

"What kind of tail had he?"

"I don' know, missie, I don' know. Dey don' nobody know. Dey's a mystery 'bout dat ah tail from dat day to dis."

"How do you know it was different?"

“Ca’se hit *had to be* diffunt. Hit was ’bleeded to be diffunt. Dat’s de reason. Yas’m. Yas, missie. Hit had to be diffunt. Hit had ha’r on it, sorter lack de debbil he try to make a tail lack de coon tail. But it’s unpossible to make a tail lack de coon tail. Dat coon tail am de fines’ tail de Lawd put on to any critter. De Lawd made dat when he got de tail-makin’ trade lunned, and had dat tail hung up on a tree in de garden waitin’ fo’ some critter good enough to put it on.”

“And the coon was good enough?”

“No’m, he ain’t. But he was de las’ critter, and de Lawd had de tail hangin’ up, and he put dat tail on de las’ critter. Yas’m.”

“It is certainly very different from the possum’s.”

“Yas’m. Hit am, fo’ a fack, but it’s diffunter dan hit was when de possum was fust made.”

“Here comes father.—Father, here is a message for you. Uncle——”

“Unc’ Simon Peter,” said the slave.

“He has come from one of our neighbors, Mr.——”

“Maws’r Renfro; he send he compliments to Maws’r an’ Mis’ Buzbee an’ de young missie, an’ you alls gwine come home wid me, and stay dar till we git de house sorter fix up. He ain’ gwine hab you stay heah till we got dis house clean up.”

“Thank your master for me,” said Mr. Buzbee, “and say that if Mrs. Buzbee can stay there to-night——”

“He done tole me you alls comin’, and for me to set in de t’ings an’ carry you right ober.”

“We will go,” said Barbara. “It is a hospitality which we are needing sorely just now.—Yes, mother,

we will go.—Come, Uncle Simon Peter, we will go with you. Set in the things as quickly as you like.—Mother, sit down till I see to this matter.”

Mrs. Buzbee dropped into a chair and rose with a little nervous scream.

“Oh! What is it? Take it out!”

“De law sake!” cried Simon Peter. “Ef dat ain’t keerless—me leabin’ dat possum dah for missis to knock off!”

The opossum was waddling across the room with tail up. Simon Peter caught it, cuffed it first one side and then the other, not enough to hurt it, but enough to make it think that it was being injured, and tossed it into a corner, where it lay down limp and apparently dead.

“He gwine stay dah now,” he said, and hurried to get in the furniture that was still outside before the possum should think it time to get up.

The task was a short one. Mr. Buzbee took hold with him and lifted at the trunks spite of Simon Peter’s protest, and with an evident drop in Simon Peter’s good opinion, who did not esteem a white man the more highly for being ready to work. Then he took the unresisting creature by the tail and announced that he was ready to go home.

“What are you going to do with that creature?” asked Mrs. Buzbee.

“Gwine keep him till de papaws gits ripe, and cook him.”

“It is a hideous-looking object,” said Mrs. Buzbee.

“Yas’m. Dat so.”

“Uncle Simon Peter was just telling me when you

came in that it was the devil that made the possum," said Barbara. "Tell me the rest, uncle."

Simon Peter crossed to the other side of the road that the shadow of the great white tree where the ghost was wont to stand should not fall upon him, and was somewhat silent for a few minutes. Then he began his story again.

"Yas'm. When de debbil got de coon made——"

"I thought you said it was the possum."

"So it war. But it war a coon to de debbil. Dat what he staht to make, an' dat what he t'ink he done made. De debbil *he* don' know he made de possum. He 'low he done made a no-'count coon. Wall, when he got de critter made, he look at him, and den at de coon, what sot on a limb ob de tree of knowledge. An' when de debbil see de Lawd's coon and de coon he make—he-he! He take de critter by de tail and go to kill him. He des' swing de coon he make 'round he haid, and go to knock he brains out 'gainst de gate postis of de garden. Well, de critter was new, and de skin on he tail was lack de bark on a willow limb in de spring, and when de debbil he swing de critter dat-away, de skin come off de tail, an' de debbil kep' it right in he hand. De debbil got dat skin from de possum's tail yet. De possum don't got it, no sah. Wall, de possum he fly right t'rough de air when de debbil throw him dataway, right t'rough de gate ob de garden and catch hold ub a limb wid he tail and hang dah, and he turn and grin at de debbil. Yas, sah! He-he! And dat's why de possum is de one critter dat ain't under de curse ob Adam."

It had not taken half an hour for all the inhabitants of Pine Knot to learn that the man for whom the mail

was waiting at the post office had arrived. No one had any doubt who J. Howard Buzbee was, or by what means he had been appointed teacher. Nor did any one fail to learn that he had arrived with a wife and daughter, and had no other home than the tumble-down, haunted house that had been Deek Morgan's, and, be this remembered among its virtues, there was not a house in Pine Knot that would not have swung its doors wide open that night to take in the strangers. That there were not a dozen invitations instead of one was because the whole community learned—and all these things were made known in that supernatural way in which news spreads in such a community—that for that night, and as much longer as there was need, the family was cared for at Mr. Renfro's. Mr. Renfro's was the best house in Pine Knot, and his two slaves were a large fraction of the total black population of the settlement.

“Come in! come in! Don't stop to knock or holler,” called Mr. Renfro, coming to the door. He was a tall, spare man, past fifty, and with a sprinkling of gray in his hair and his mustache and heavy, long goatee. “I just got home from court, and heerd you'd come. We cyan't let you set up housekeeping for yourselves till we git things fixed up a spell. Come in. This is Mr. Buzbee, I reckon? My name's Renfro, Mr. Buzbee. And this is Mrs. Buzbee, I reckon? Proud to meet you, madam. And Miss Buzbee? Come right in; you're right welcome.—Pete, call your mistress.”

Mrs. Renfro came bustling in from the room across the wide hall. “Good evening,” she said. “It's just a plumb shame that you've come here with no place

to go but that old tumble-down house; I didn't know a thing about it. Come right in this way. We've got lots of room, and I never feel like I'm at home unless I have a houseful. No, no! It ain't just for to-night. You ain't a-going to step out of this house to no other home till we see things fixed up a little."

"That's the way she talks," said Renfro gleefully; "and she most ginerally always has her way. I've learned not to oppose her."

"Jest hear him talk!" exclaimed Mrs. Renfro to Mrs. Buzbee. "He don't seem to remember that he's talking to folks that don't know how he stories!"

"I think we understand him," said Barbara, "and I am sure we are grateful. My dear mother is very tired."

"And no wonder! Riding over that awful road!—Here, Dinah, fetch in some hot water.—Or mebbly you'd like cold water?—Simon Peter, you run to the spring.—Now this room is for you. It's got two good beds, and— Would you like a fire? Well, it is warm, that's a fact. It gets cool toward night. Now, if I was you, I'd just undress and wash my feet in hot water and lay right down. Dinah'll have supper after a while. And if you say one word about leaving here this week I sha'n't like it one bit!"

So the Buzbees were installed in the large, square room, with its two beds, springy with fresh, fragrant straw, billowy with feathers, and spotless in sheets of Dinah's best laundering and white homespun counterpanes. A new rag carpet adorned the floor in a gorgeous pattern of stripe alternating with hit-or-miss, and the odd old dresser and the few chairs left the room still so wide, and open, and restful that the

hearts of the mother and daughter found instant comfort there. The hospitality was so genuine, the hearts of the host and hostess were so warm, and their sincerity was so manifest that from the first hour the Buzbees counted the Renfros their friends indeed.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCHOOL BOARD CHAIRMAN

MRS. GOODWIN stopped to sit down for a few minutes while the ponies were baking, and, from force of habit rather than from urgent demand on the part of the youngster, caught up the ten months' baby from the floor and offered him his supper. He was a big, strong baby, able to walk by pushing a chair over the rough floor, except when one leg got into a crack between the puncheons, when he would howl viciously. He was usually vociferous for his rations, which his thin, angular mother gave him in installments. The boy was not insistent to-day. His father had returned from the store, and had taken his one cent of change in candy. The baby lay now in his mother's arms, tugging hard at the breast and holding fast to the candy.

"Gimme a suck of your candy, honey," she asked the baby; but the urchin kicked a dissent and tried to grunt an emphatic negative without relinquishing any of his natural rights.

"He's got his pappy's head on his shoulders," said Goodwin admiringly.

"I reckon that's so," said Mrs. Goodwin proudly.

Mrs. Goodwin admired her husband with a docile and submissive admiration which flourished in the

shadow of a willingly endured tyranny. She was his second wife, and the farm that had been hers, across the mountain, was in his name now, and she was glad to be relieved of the responsibility.

"Hit's plumb time for me to be a-weanin' you," she said to the baby. "Hit's as much as I kin do to git enough stren'th for myself, let alone feedin' a big boy with a mouthful of teeth."

"Not yet," said Goodwin. "Let him git a good start first."

"Gimme a bite of your candy, honey," she pleaded again; but the request had the effect of inducing the youngster to drop the breast and transfer the candy to his mouth. Soon, however, he returned again and pounded his mother's bare breast with the candy while he devoted himself to his native food.

"He feels so good over havin' both at onct," said Goodwin, "he don't hardly know which to take. I wist I could have a run of luck lack that."

"Now I ain't a-goin' to stand that," said Mrs. Goodwin to the baby with mock severity. "I am goin' to quit if you don't quit daubin' me up like that!"

"You're wastin' a heap of your candy that away, Bill," suggested his father; at which economical suggestion the baby desisted and conserved his candy for later consumption. Mrs. Goodwin leaned forward and removed the candy stains with the corners of the little shoulder shawl she wore, which served at times in lieu of a handkerchief.

"Peleg," she said, "don't you reckon hit's about time to build on a new house on to the front of this here?"

“Wha’ d’ye want a new house fur?” he asked.

“Why, you know you promised when we was married.”

“A feller promises a heap of things when he gits married that he forgits atter a spell.”

“Well, I ain’t a-goin’ to let you forgit that.”

“I cyan’t afford it now.”

“Well, you kin pay for it out of my farm if you want to.”

“Your farm? Hain’t that mine?”

“Why, yes, of course. Only——”

“Well, then, if hit’s mine, don’t call it yourn. Dog take it, if there’s anything I hate to hear hit’s a woman talkin’ about what’s hern just like she wasn’t married.”

“You needn’t git ill, Peleg. Only I hate to have Renfros in that house all made out of sawed lumber from the mill and ceiled up in the front rooms with walnut and pine—fust a plank of one and then one of t’other—and we a-livin’ in this old house that hain’t but mighty little better than the one you got on the morgidge from Deek Morgan’s widder. And you know you told me you was worth more’n Renfro.”

“Shet up!” said he. “Didn’t I tell you not to tell that?”

“I hain’t told it to nobody but you.”

“Well, I knowed it a’ready. A man is a plumb fool to tell a woman all he knows when they’re first married.”

“Don’t be ill. Cyan’t you call in some of that money you’ve got loaned out in Laurel and build a front part to the house like Renfro’s?”

“No, I cyan’t,” said he. “That money is a-fetchin’

good intrust. But looky here, old gal! How'd you like to have Renfro's house and Renfro's niggers? Hey? Since you know so daggon much, I'll tell ye what I've got a sorter idy of doin'. I've bought some timber land down by the river in partnership with Renfro, and lent him money for his half. He don't know he's borried hit from me—he-he! He thinks I'm jest agunt. But I've had the morgidge transferred to me, and Renfro hain't no idy how hard hit's a-goin' to be for him to pay off that morgidge! They's one or two conditions thar that I reckon he didn't notice p'tic'lar. But I noticed 'em. He's put on style in this community a heap longer than he's goin' to."

"How long do you allow hit'll take?" asked his wife.

"Three years, I reckon. Mebby five. But hit's got to come."

"That's a long time to wait," said Mrs. Goodwin.

"Long?" demanded her husband. "Hit won't be long. I've been a-layin' low for ten year. But he won't put no morgidge on his house, and he don't know that he's a-goin' to have obleeged to do it. But I've got my plans! I've got my plans! Now, look here! Don't you go to doin' none of your fool blabbin'."

"Peleg," said she, "you know I won't. Still, I sorter hate to think of gittin' their house. One jest like hit or a lectle grain better would suit me as well, I reckon."

"Hit wouldn't suit me. Not half so well," said her husband. "And I'll tell you another thing. We've lived pore and we're a-goin' to live pore till the time comes. But the time ain't a-goin' to last forever. You

know Doc Mallory in Huntsville that come here when the baby was borned?"

"I reckon I do. He was mighty good to me."

"Well, he is a clever feller when he ain't a-drinkin'. But he's drinkin' harder, and he's had to borry money. And there's a feller in Pine Knot has lent him some money as a sort of favor, and took a chattel morgidge on his pair of niggers and their young 'uns."

"But, Peleg, I'd hate to git his niggers away from him."

"Why, he's a-goin' to lose 'em anyhow, and hit's better for 'em to go to some one that's be'n a friend to him, ain't it? And I've got some other lines out. And they're all on the quiet, but some day in three or four year I'm goin' to pull in my fish, that's what I'm a-goin' to do. And you'll jest hatter live in this old house till then."

Mrs. Goodwin laid down the sleeping boy and lifted the cover from the baker.

"They ain't quite done," she said, and replaced it.

She was eager to hear more, and this was one of Goodwin's communicative days. She sat down, leaning forward expectantly.

Goodwin sat for a time in silence. He was a strongly built man of fifty-five, and wore a full bushy beard. A pair of steel-bowed spectacles sat constantly on his nose, and his wide wool hat sat level on his head. Decision and cunning were written together on his features. As he sat his jaws worked decisively on the tobacco in his mouth, and he spat from time to time, straight across the baker and into the fire without the slightest inclination of his head or uncertainty of aim.

"You was a-speakin about the Deek Morgan house," he said after a pause.

"Yes," said she.

"I've rented hit," said he.

"Peleg Goodwin! You ain't found no livin' human willin' to go into that house, have ye?"

Peleg chuckled.

"Well, if you hain't the master hand ever I seed!" said she admiringly. "Who is it?"

"The new teacher," said he.

"Why, Peleg Goodwin! Is he, for sure?"

"He wouldn't 'a' got the school if he hadn't."

"Who is he?"

"Oh, he's a innocent sort of a feller, with a wife and one gal, he said; and he's a-fetching them here from Lexington."

"I'm sorter a-feared they won't like the house," said Mrs. Goodwin timidly.

"They don't know nothing about this fool story of the ghost, and hit won't pester them, nohow."

"But didn't the trustees promise the school to Preacher Jim Fletcher?"

"They hadn't no right to if they did. What business had the old board to promise the school before the election?"

"Well, two of 'em held over."

"Yes, but how'd they know but the third man would have so much more sense than the other two that he'd win 'em over?"

"Ain't that jest about what happened?"

"I reckon hit is. I've had my way this time, anyhow. I never did like that Jim Fletcher, nohow, and I've got some rent money out of that house."

“How much?”

“Two dollars a month. And he thought hit was cheap! He’s a man that’s got a heap of book learnin’, but he ain’t got no more wild-hog sense than the toe of my boot.”

“Which of the trustees come over?”

“Noel Davis. I had to give him the first month’s rent to put in the place whar he keeps his conscience.”

“Did ye git the first month’s rent in advance?”

“Eh, did I! And I reckon hit was about all the feller had. Here’s Smart. Come in, Smart. Well, did you git that corn?”

“Yes, sir; I got hit. He’s to deliver fifty bushels of years for six dollars and a quarter paid now, and the corn is to be delivered when hit’s ripe.”

Smart was not a prepossessing man in his appearance. He was a man of thirty, sadly stooped, and wore a very ragged coat and a nondescript hat of the worst possible character. It had been brown, with a narrow brim, but the color was one now that would escape all classification; and as for the shape, the loss of band, and the drawn-down rim and battered and broken crown made it as scandalous a piece of headgear as ever man wore. When he removed it, he exhibited a bullet head, close cropped, as though he had escaped from prison, but the low receding brow and unkempt appearance raised a question whether he would have been held sufficiently responsible to be sent to prison, and his meek, obliging deportment certainly was an indication that he did not deserve it. Yet there was a glitter in his eye that showed intelligence beyond what his general appearance promised; and when he talked, though at first you might not

have noticed it, he gave indication of having seen and thought to better advantage than at first seemed possible. If he did not improve with acquaintance, certainly acquaintance served to increase one's sense of his ability, and to raise a doubt whether the first glance, in which one set him down as a shiftless ne'er-do-well, with just a touch of viciousness restrained by natural indolence, adequately gauged his character.

"All right," said Goodwin; "I reckon I'll have obleeged to let him have the money. Money's right short now, but a man's got to be neighborly. Keep watch of that crap, Smart, and if you see the yield's goin' to be good I'll manage to lend him a leetle more to-wards fall. I like to be neighborly, and he's got a fine lot of young hogs comin' on."

"Who's that?" inquired Mrs. Goodwin, her scruples at her husband's method quite overborne by her admiration of his farsightedness and shrewdness.

"Dave Cecil," said Goodwin. "He's had a sick young un, and he'll sell so much corn afore it's growed; if he ain't keerful he'll hatter sell his hogs, come winter, to whoever's got the corn to feed 'em."

"And that'll be you," tittered Smart.

"Shet up, you fool!" said Goodwin.

But Smart laughed the more heartily, and hence the less loudly, for he knew that Goodwin's command to shut up was really a compliment, and intended to commend him for an insight into motives which, just in proportion as Goodwin desired to conceal them from the world at large, he wished also to have recognized by the few people whom he was compelled to trust.

"Supper's ready," said Mrs. Goodwin.

Goodwin and Smart rose from their chairs, Goodwin as he pushed back catching one leg of his chair in the cracks between the puncheons. He swore so loudly that he woke the baby. Mrs. Goodwin caught up the child as the men sat down to supper. The baby rescued the candy, and resumed the dinner with the alternating courses, his mother singing meantime an old-time ballad:

“And bury far Eleanor in my arms,
And the brown gal at my feet.”

Still she had an ear for the conversation between Goodwin and Smart, who sat in the shed room, with the open door between.

“That feller’s come,” said Smart.

“What feller?”

“The one that’s rented the Deek Morgan place.”

“Who told you?”

“Noel Davis. Didn’t you know?”

“Yes. I heerd it at the store a spell atter he’d went by.”

“Wonder whar he’ll stay till he gits the old house fixed up?”

“I dunno. I’ve done my sheer in providing the house for him. Some one else can look out for him now.”

“Is Mr. Goodwin in?” asked a voice at the door at that moment.

Mrs. Goodwin rose, the baby still holding tightly to her.

“Howdy?” she said. “Come in.—Peleg, I reckon this is the new teacher.”

Peleg rose from the table and came into the front

room. The sun was still an hour above the horizon, pouring its light through the open door, casting the teacher's shadow the length of the room and on the wall beyond.

Goodwin greeted him courteously. "Howdy, Mr. Buzbee?" he said. "Right proud to see you. Got here, did ye? If I'd knowed you was coming, I'd 'a' met you."

"Quite unnecessary, Mr. Goodwin; quite unnecessary. We are overwhelmed by the kindness of the people already. Mr. Renfro has taken us in."

"Yas. Renfro's a right clever feller, and he's got a house that can take keer of folks that's been used to having things like they'd ought to be. Pore folks has pore ways. We feel ashamed a heap of times that we cya'n't do more for folks than what we can. You'd be right welcome to such as we've got."

"I thank you. But at present we are provided for, and we hope to be in our own home soon. I—I—I came over to ask, Mr. Goodwin, whether some repairs may not be made on the schoolhouse—and—I hesitate to ask so much—on the house that is to be my home also. I—I— Believe me, I dislike to trouble you——"

"Wall, as to the repairs on the schoolhouse, I'll call a meeting of the board. I reckon they is some repairs needed. Hit stood open all last winter, and some hogs got in, I reckon. We'll have a workin', and see to that. Smart, you go over to Noel's and tell him we got to git the fellers out and fix that schoolhouse up."

With such heartiness did Mr. Goodwin accept the part of the request which he could share generously

with others that it was doubly hard for Mr. Buzbee to press his own request.

“Thank you, thank you. And may I ask if you can at the same time repair the house which I have rented?”

“What’s the matter with hit?”

“I—I had not observed anything. But my wife noticed some leaks in the roof, and my daughter thought the chimney defective. And I myself noticed, when they called my attention to these things, that the cracks in the walls and floor are very large.”

“They’s cracks in my floor,” said Goodwin. “Hit don’t seem as if I’d orter have to fix a better house for other folks than what I live in myself.”

“I—I thought of suggesting,” stammered Mr. Buzbee, “that if you thought right, I would bear a share in the expense of the repairs.”

“I reckon that would do,” said Goodwin. “Do you reckon you could advance me a couple of months’ rent to-wards my sheer?”

“I—I think so. I do not have the money with me. But I will procure it.”

“All right, Mr. Buzbee. We’ll fix the chimbley and the roof and chink the walls. I reckon we’ll have to let the floor go.”

“You are very generous,” said Mr. Buzbee. “Your kindness really touches me. I know that I ask much, far more than I would for myself. But I wish to provide a home for my wife and family.”

“Tell your wife Howdy for me,” said Mrs. Goodwin, “and ask her and your gal to come over and see me.”

“Thank you,” said Mr. Buzbee. “I will do so.

Good evening, Mr. Goodwin. Good evening, madam."

"I lay off to come over to Renfro's atter a spell," said Goodwin. "I reckon you'll be thar?"

"Yes; I shall be there to-night."

"All right. I'll come over and see how things is moving. We'd oughter be a-stirring a little about the opening of school."

"I shall be glad to have you come and talk matters over. Good evening."

"Good-by. You'd best stop and spend the night here."

"No, thank you. I will see you at Mr. Renfro's."

CHAPTER V

A POSSIBLE CASTAWAY

JAMES FLETCHER was riding to fill his appointment at No Bus'ness, where he was to preach at early candle lighting. No Bus'ness creek is formed by the junction of Troublesome and Difficulty, and there was to be night preaching there. His heart was hot and bitter as he approached Pine Knot. Here was the scene of his most joyous and remunerative work. He had taught the three months' school last year, when the wages were only fifteen dollars a month, and now, when the district had been enlarged and the pay would be something handsome, it had been taken from him. He had not been able to carry out his plan with the earnings of the first year. His mother, who lived on Roundstone, had been sick, and he had done a son's duty. She was convalescent now, and his stepfather was doing a little better, and there was not likely to be any demand upon him this year. The books that he longed for were almost within reach. There was a concordance; he had never seen one, and it did not seem possible that there could be such a thing, but the presiding elder had recommended it and told him that with it one could find any passage in the Bible in half a minute. Watson's Theology, too, and Barnes's

Notes on the Gospels were on his list, and a text-book on logic, and a book on science. He had conned the list and prices a thousand times. He was to receive deacon's orders at the annual conference this year. With such reading as he could do in another year he hoped to be able to take a regular circuit next year, and to be listed as a circuit rider, and not, as now, an exhorter. This had been his day dream. Bitterly had he struggled over it last year; yes, it had cost him a struggle to pay his money even for his mother's illness. He read many times the words of Christ condemning the gift of corban, when money dedicated to God left a parent to suffer. There had been little love lost between him and his stepfather, and home going had given him no pleasure in recent years. Indeed, his mother had seemed no longer his, till that terrible sickness came just as he received his school money. If he was tempted to glory in the fact that he had given his money for her recovery, he had shame in the recollection that it cost him such a struggle. For James Fletcher had one consuming ambition, an ambition that took stronger hold upon him because it possessed so many good and true elements, and that was to be a preacher of the Gospel, and the ablest and wisest one in Whitley County. About him were few preachers that cared for books. The Baptists were ignorant, almost to a man; he did not know a preacher among them that thought the earth to be round, and several of them could not even read. The Methodists were driven to some reading by their conference examinations, but the examinations were necessarily superficial, and hardly touched the branches they professed to cover. How could it be otherwise, in the rude

and stern conditions of life that left little time for reading?

He had no thought of earning his living by preaching. There was not a minister about who did that. They all owned farms and worked them, and what they received was free board and horse feed, a pitiful quarterage, paid mostly in produce, and an annual donation just before conference that sometimes in its best estate sufficed to buy a new suit of clothes and a stock of horseshoes. That was all he expected. It was not for money's sake that he wanted money, but his soul hungered for knowledge, and he had read and reread his few books till he could tell their contents as he could spell the column of words that began with "ba-ker" in Webster's old blue-back speller.

He was thinking bitterly of these things when he met Jake Trosper.

"Howdy, parson?" said Jake.

"Howdy, Jake?" said Fletcher. "I didn't see you till you spoke."

"Studyin' 'bout something, was ye?"

"Yes."

"Your sarmon?"

"No, not this time."

"I reckon I know," said Jake.

"I reckon you do," said Jim.

There was silence a moment, then Jake said, "He's come, parson."

"Who?"

"The feller that's to keep the school. He's goin' to live in Deek Morgan's old house."

A sudden resolution came over Fletcher, and he started to ride on.

“ Good evening, Jake ; I’ll have to be riding on. I got to preach at No Bus’ness to-night.”

“ Good night, parson. I’m mighty sorry. I reckon the other fellers sold ye out. I wist I’d ’a’ been re-elected, and me and Bill would have done gin ye the school.”

“ Thank you, Jake. I know you would. Good night.”

He touched his fine horse with the switch he carried, and started ahead. A mile farther was the house of Deek Morgan, owned, as he knew, by Peleg Goodwin. It was all plain to him. The stranger had bribed the new trustee by paying rent on this old house. It was a game of fraud, and he was the victim of threefold dishonesty. He had been hot and sullen before, he was well-nigh furious when he drew rein before the house. The door was ajar. He rode up and called, “ Hello ! ”

There was a moment’s delay, and then there came to the door not the man whom he expected to see, but a young woman, rosy-checked, and with bright, golden hair glistening under the white sunbonnet that, slipping back, formed with the hair a halo round her face as she stood in the doorway in the glow of the westering sun.

James Fletcher sat spellbound on his horse. If Deek Morgan’s ghost had confronted him it would have astonished him less than the sight of this beautiful creature. For a full minute he did not speak.

Then he touched his hat with his whip, and said :

“ Good evening, miss. I want to see the man who has come to keep the school.”

“ My father ? He is at Mr. Renfro’s ; or, no ! I do

not think he is there. I heard him asking if he would have time before supper to walk over to Mr. Goodwin's and see about some repairs on the house. If he is not at Mr. Renfro's, however, he will be back soon."

"I have not time to wait," said Fletcher. "I will see him another time."

"I will take a message to him," said Barbara. "I am going back at once. I came to get a few things which my mother needs. I will deliver any word which you wish me to take."

Fletcher stopped to think. Well, why should she not take the message? Was not his cause a just one? Was he ashamed of his message because it was to be sent by a girl? Was this his courage, that oozed out at sight of a pretty face? He turned, and with rising warmth said:

"Tell your father that I forbid him to open school. Tell him I know that he has obtained it by bribery and fraud. Tell him that the school was promised to me nine months ago, and that it is mine by every right. Tell him that I warn him not to begin school."

Barbara looked straight at the man before her, and with indignation asked: "And what effect, sir, do you expect this message to have upon my father?"

"That depends," said Fletcher, "on whether he has any honor left."

"Honor!" she cried. "You question my father's honor? My father, of all men who ever lived! My father, sir, is the soul of honor!"

"Of course," said Fletcher, stumbling, "I didn't start to accuse your father to you, but——"

"But you have done so, and have questioned his honor, and accused him of fraud, and have sent a

threatening message. Well, sir, I will deliver it. And do you think you will frighten my father? He has faced a score of mobs single-handed and unarmed. Do you think he will fear one bully? He has stood before great audiences that seethed with passion while he was the only calm man in the house. He has raised his voice against dishonor in half the States of this Union, and do you, a threatening, angry bully, question his honor? My father, sir, though tender as a woman and sensitive as a child to pain or unkindness, has the courage of a lion. He would snap his fingers at your brutal threats."

"I did not threaten," explained Fletcher.

"You told me to warn him not to begin school. And he will despise your warning, as I do."

James Fletcher rode away, chagrined and amazed. He had been in the wrong again. The very justice of his cause had given him a self-confidence that had led him into sin. And he was going to preach the Gospel that very night—he who had shown passion and ill-will, he who had questioned the honor of a man whom he did not know, and insulted a woman beside. Why should he preach to others, who was perhaps himself a castaway? Had he fallen from grace, and was his disappointment and humiliation the mark of Divine displeasure?

He whipped his horse into a gallop and sped toward No Bus'ness; but half a mile short of his appointment he stopped, turned from the road, and, hitching his horse, spent an hour on the hillside overlooking the No Bus'ness valley in what he called silent prayer. The people who were gathering for the service heard him there, and knew that he was coming to

the meeting from his knees. They prayed, too, for he was late in coming, and an earnest, expectant spirit filled the room when he entered, and, hanging his saddlebags across a chair, took out his Bible and began to preach:

“My friends,” said he, “I ain’t worthy to preach the Gospel. I’m a poor sinner, and I sometimes doubt my own salvation. Satan has desired me to sift me as wheat, and he’s sifted me, and I reckon the reason he didn’t take me was that I wasn’t worth while. But the word of God is not bound by the human weaknesses of the preacher, and I’m going to preach to you as a dying man and a sinner to dying men and sinners. Pray for me while I preach, brethren, for I need your prayers.”

Far from discrediting the message which followed, this introduction was accepted as the badge of a proper, though unusual humility, and made the sermon that followed, which was a powerful one, most effective. There were fifteen “souls” at the altar for prayers that night, of whom six “got through” before the meeting closed, and were taken in on probation. Besides this, Larkin Sumner, who joined the Baptists later, dated his conversion from that sermon of James Fletcher’s.

Among those who heard James Fletcher that night there was one who always heard him with admiration, and who listened to-night with rapt attention. It was no secret that Liberty Preston admired James Fletcher, and there were not a few who looked for the announcement of the engagement between them whenever Fletcher came to No Bus’ness and stayed at Preston’s big double house, near the fork of Trouble-

some and Difficulty. Fletcher himself had thought of it as a possibility; and, while denying himself all present thought of matrimony, was fond of staying at Preston's. He did not always stay there, to be sure, but Silas Preston was class leader on No Bus'ness, and Liberty was the leading singer, and Mrs. Preston could fry a chicken to perfection and make such biscuits as are the joy of a preacher's heart. She put four kinds of preserves on the table, too—or three besides honey—when the preacher came, and, unlike the Forbeses, who always displayed all they had, but were careful not to have it all used, Mrs. Preston put a spoon in each jar. So it was natural that the minister should go often to Preston's, for it is well known that righteous men, such as ministers of the Gospel, are fond of spring chicken and beaten biscuits with honey and preserves. But, much as there was to take a minister to Preston's, a man could not always go to the same place, and Brother Forbes was first in inviting him that night. So, although Liberty stayed with her father till the last "mourner" at the bench had been prayed for and sung with, and though the invitation was pressed upon him, and a promise obtained that he would stop there next time, the Prestons rode home without him. But Liberty comforted herself with his promise.

CHAPTER VI

THE CHIMNEY CORNER

“THERE ain’t nothing I love like an evening like this,” said Renfro after supper. “An evening when it ain’t too hot nor ain’t too cold, when you jest set by the light of the pine knots, not needing a fire nor finding a little blaze uncomfortable. Hit sorter thaws out all the good they is in me, and makes me feel like the kingdom was coming, sure enough. Some folks loves one thing and some another, but I pinely believe they ain’t nothing I love so well as to set by the fire of an evening, having a good visit, and sorter gittin’ a little more logy all the time, and then kiver up the fire and lay down on a bed that’s got some goose ha’r on top of the straw. As I git older I find I keer a heap more than I did for goose ha’r.”

Mr. Buzbee looked troubled, and was about to inquire whether any new variety of goose had made Pine Knot its habitat, but Barbara laughed, and Mr. Buzbee saw that the reference to goose hair must be a humorous allusion to feathers.

“This village has abundance of the knot for which it is named,” said Barbara.

“Thousands, thousands of it,” said Mr. Renfro, who used the term *en masse*. “Nothing so plenty

here, and nothing in it's way so good. Who's that? —Pete, run to the door and see who's there."

"Hit's Daddy Campbell, sah," said Pete.

"Run down, Pete, and help him in," said Renfro.

"Yas, sah," said Simon Peter, and hastened to the front gate.

"Howdy, Pete, howdy? Reckon your maws'r's got room for me to-night? Gimme a lift on that wheel, thar."

"Ce't'nly, sah. Ce't'nly; Maws'r Daddy, he's always got room for you."

"Wheel him in, Pete.—Right in this way, daddy.—Git out, Ben!—Pete, kick them dogs out of the chimbley corner, and make room for daddy's wagon.—Where'll you have it, daddy—about thar? Stick out your toes and git 'em warm."

"Thank you, thank you," said the crippled old man, extending toward the fire a pair of shriveled legs. "I ain't cold, but a fire feels good. I ain't so young as I used to be."

"Le's see, how old are you? I've heerd so many times I've plumb forgot. Over a hundred, ain't you?"

"No. Ninety-nine and about ten months. I've sorter had a hope lately, Mr. Renfro, that when I git to be a hundred the Lord'll have mercy on me. I don't look for no relief till then."

"Now you look a-here! Don't you go to talkin' like that. You're gittin' up a conspiracy to go off and die! I pinely don't like that. What'll we do for wooden bowls and sich? You just got to stay on!"

"Oh, but I'd like to git outen folks's way. And it's a awful thing to be cussed so's one cyan't die."

“ I reckon that’s so, daddy. But you’ve lived now till you’ve skeered off the hoodoo, I reckon.”

“ I’ve outlived the bitterness of the cuss, and that’s a sure-enough blessing ; but still, it ain’t like the blessing hit would be to die.—Howdy, Mis’ Renfro? Yes, I’ve come to pester you ag’in. They had company come over to Mr. Strunk’s, and they said I mout stay right on, but I allowed I’d best git away if you could keep me a day or so. I got sorter late, comin’ by Granny White’s with a gourd I’ve been a-cuttin’ out for her and to git me some goose grease for my rheumatiz. I didn’t know you had company, too, Mis’ Renfro.”

“ Bless my heart, daddy, that ain’t no matter !” said Mrs. Renfro, wiping her hands on her apron. “ We’ve always got room for you !—Mr. Renfro, I do believe you hain’t made Daddy Campbell acquainted with the teacher and Miss Barbara. Have you plumb forgot your manners ?”

“ I never had none, only them I’ve got invested in my wife’s name,” said Renfro. “ You’ll have to make allowance for me, Mr. Buzbee. I’m a rough sorter feller, I reckon. This here is Daddy Campbell. And this here’s his daughter, Miss Barbara.”

“ She ain’t neither his daughter ; she’s Mr. Buzbee’s,” said Mrs. Renfro.

“ That’s what I said, ain’t it ?”

“ No, you didn’t. You said she was Daddy Campbell’s.”

“ Well, if I did I’ll stick to it. I’ve been to court often enough to learn that if a man tells a lie he’s got to stick to it. And Daddy Campbell’s daddy to every-

body around here. So, Miss Barbara, you've got more kin folks than what you knew."

"That's the way he gits out of his awkwardness in introducing people," said Mrs. Renfro admiringly. Her sparring matches with her husband were designed in part to show him off, and she was justly proud of him.

Barbara took the thin, drawn-up hand that was extended toward her, noticing a certain gracefulness in the manner of the deformed old man.

"Right proud to meet you, my lady," said daddy.

"Here comes Dinah to see you, daddy. And this here is her daughter Sallie's little nigger. I reckon you remember Sallie? She was about the smartest darkey of 'em all! We hated to let her go, but she got into love with one of Jim Cecil's niggers, and a right likely yeller feller he is, too; and we let Sal go so's to live with her man.—Come right up, honey, and see daddy. He's mighty good to little children."

The little one came up timidly, its wool tied in short pigtailed all over its head, and these tied down so tight to threads that ran from one to another that the tails were hardly in evidence at all, and the head showed a series of dark patches separated by the partings, and looking like a phrenological chart.

"Come here, honey, come to daddy. I've got a pretty for you," and he held up a beautiful bit of shell, delicately tinted and water worn.

The child came to him, accepted the gift, and soon was so happy with him that it required some force to get her away.

"Run along to the kitchen now, honey. I'm gwine come and put you into yo' bed."

"That's a likely child, Dinah," said daddy.

"I nebbah could b'ar her," said Dinah proudly. "She show de dirt so easy."

"You run along, Dinah, and git Daddy Campbell something to eat."

"I've done got it, misses," said Dinah.

"Wheel yourself right out, daddy," said Mrs. Renfro; "and when you git your supper come back."

"What's them dogs a-barkin' at? They's some person out thar," said Renfro. "Go out, Pete, and see."

"I ain't got to go out to see," said Peter, shuffling toward the door. "Hey dah, Ben! You Ben, come hyah! Come heah, Bruno! 'Peah's lack de dogs knows who to like. Come in, Maws'r Goodwin."

"Howdy, Goodwin? Come in. Take a cheer and put yourself level on it. Rest your hat. You've met Mr. Buzbee? This here's his daughter. Mis' Buzbee had a headache, and laid down early. Mis' Renfro's here somewheres—she was here a minute ago. I reckon she's gone to see about Daddy Campbell's supper. Well, Goodwin, what do you know?"

"I come over to talk about repairing the schoolhouse. I reckoned we could get up a sort of a workin', and have the hull deestrick turn out and fix up the schoolhouse and mebbly do a leetle grain to the teacher's house, too."

"Hit needs it right bad," admitted Renfro, with a possible touch of sarcasm. "Well, I'll do my share. When 'll you go at it?"

"Monday, I reckon."

"All right. Send out word. We can norate it around at meetin' come Sunday."

“ I wish it could be done sooner,” said Mr. Buzbee. “ I should like to get into my house soon.”

“ Well, I reckon hit won't hurt you to live over Sunday on what we live on all the while,” said Renfro. “ You stay right here till we git your house in shape.”

“ You are very good,” said Barbara.

“ Here comes daddy,” said Renfro. “ Well, daddy, couldn't you find nothin' more to eat? I didn't reckon you could eat up what Dinah had so soon.”

“ Plenty, plenty,” said daddy. “ I don't eat much, and they all feed me well. I ain't got no teeth to do no good.”

“ Well, set up to the fire and tell us what you know. Didn't you know this old feller over on Copper Creek—this man Mundy? ”

“ I knowed him well,” said daddy.

“ He's right sick,” said Renfro.

“ Is he? ” asked Goodwin eagerly.

“ Yes, they don't allow he'll live long,” said Renfro.

“ I've got some business with him,” said Goodwin. “ I reckon I'd best ride over to-morrow.”

“ I knowed his father,” said Daddy. “ He come over from No'th C'liny with Swift—you've heerd about Swift that had the mine? They uster tell a right quare tale about a lode of silver back by the river, and how him and a feller named Wright got the secret of it from an Injun.”

“ How was that? ” asked Goodwin.

“ Well, you know Swift found a great mine here in these mountains, and got silver out of it so pure he made it up into dollars and took 'em back into No'th C'liny and passed 'em.”

“ I've heerd tell about that,” said Renfro, “ and

about their arresting him, and not being able to convict him because his dollars had more silver than the ones the Gov'maint made."

"I've wished a heap of times I knowed where he buried the money he left here in the mountains," said Goodwin.

"What was the tale about Mundy?" asked Renfro.

"Well, they told how him and Wright and a feller name of Jefferson was with Swift, and how they begun to feel that Swift was gettin' more than his sheer of the silver. And one day when they was off in the woods they met an Injun that told 'em that he'd tell them where the main lode was for their two guns, and they agreed to it. Well, the tale runs that he told 'em, but when hit come to givin' up both guns, they was a-feared to do it, thinkin' mebbly the Injun would kill 'em. And so they asked the Injun to take one. The Injun said he darsn't, for the other Injuns, like as not, would want to kill him for tellin', and he'd got to have both guns to defend hisself. And they got all the more skeered, and they finally come to the conclusion between theirselves that they'd kill the Injun. So they did. They shot him down by the river, jest above the falls, and he went down over the falls; and as he went he shrieked out a cuss on their souls and on the secret he'd told 'em, and said his spirit would ha'nt the place. Old Mundy never dared to go to the place, but they say he had a paper that he got from Swift, and that onct he and this boy of hisn tried to locate it, but they got a skeer that killed the old man—he died two three weeks atter—and this boy of hisn ain't never been the same sence."

Goodwin had listened eagerly to every word of this.

In his mind something began to form that promised much larger returns than the scheme at which he was already working. "Did ye say that was at the falls of the Cumberland?" he asked.

"Right thar," said Daddy Campbell.

"That's where we've bought our timber land, Goodwin," said Renfro. "Mebby we've got something better than to raft logs from there down the river."

Goodwin made no answer. "Hit's time for me to go," said he. "I got to take a ride to-morrow."

Daddy Campbell also retired early, and Mr. Renfro and Mr. Buzbee had an errand to the Buzbee house, as it was to be to get something which Mrs. Buzbee had forgotten. Mrs. Renfro and Barbara were left alone before the fire.

"He is a very singular man," said Barbara.

"Who—Goodwin? He's a snake! Eh, is he! He's got some *idy* about that silver. He's goin' over thar to-morrow and pester that dyin' old man, that's what he's goin' to do! I wisht Mr. Renfro wouldn't have nothing to do with him, that's what I wisht!"

Barbara felt the same. Some uncanny influence seemed to attach itself to the man. And a certain fascinating horror seemed to hang about the story of the abandoned mine.

"Tell me about Daddy Campbell," said Barbara.

"Well, that's a quare tale, too. I reckon hit's too long to tell to-night, and you that tired."

"Oh, no, tell me," said Barbara.

"He's been conjured," said Mrs. Renfro. "That's why he cyan't die."

"Conjured?" asked Barbara. "By whom?"

“By a slave woman. He sold her baby. Hit was hisn, too. That was more’n seventy year ago. Nobody don’t tell it on him no more. But I’ve heerd it often years ago, how his wife hated the slave woman and her baby, and wouldn’t give him no peace till he sold the little feller down the river. The nigger woman cursed him then, but she died atter awhile, and, dying, she cursed him with a conjure curse—slapped him in the face with her two bloody hands and cursed him to live till he was a hundred years old, and bear his curse ever’ day. She cursed his own children to scatter and die, and him to live and repent.”

“It is dreadful!” said Barbara. “Yet it interests me. Tell me all about it, please.”

So Mrs. Renfro told the story, in the chimney corner, of the black Hagar and her curse that had condemned Daddy Campbell to live on, a sad and penitent old man and a pauper. Mrs. Renfro began back with the selling of the child from the home over on No Bus’ness Creek, to appease the wrath of Campbell’s wife.

The black Hagar had pleaded to be sold with her baby if the child must go, but Mrs. Campbell not only valued her services, but sought a more cruel revenge, daily twitting her husband with the sin which she took care should not be repeated, and daily goading the dark but comely slave with a woman’s petty but malignant persecutions. Already she had borne her husband three children, and was about to bear a fourth; and when the baby came Hagar watched her mistress with a tenderness that had as yet learned only sorrow and not revenge. She had cursed, indeed, when her baby was torn from her, but it was the resentful curse

of an acute sorrow, and not the curse of a long-cherished bitterness. But that same curse she repeated and distilled in more of her soul's deep venom as the years went by, and repeated at last under circumstances of peculiar horror.

For, once recovered, Mrs. Campbell had found a new occasion of jealousy in the love that existed between her own babe and its slave nurse. The slave cherished her mistress's child as in some sort a compensation for the loss of her own, and while she never smiled after the day that her own child was taken from her, she had a kind of fierce joy in the possession of this little one, and secretly gloried in the fact that the child loved her more than its own mother.

Then the mother tore the baby from her, ordered her from its presence, hastened to thrust herself between the two if at any time the little creeper started for her, and to snatch him if he cried after her. It was for this, the neighbors believed, that Hagar conjured the child, and it died. They did not know at the time that he was conjured, but later they were sure of it. But if indeed the fault was Hagar's there was no more passionate mourner at the little grave than the black woman, who went there nightly to pour out her heart-broken sobs above the little mound where, in her thought, her two babies lay buried—the white child that had died in his mother's arms (and Hagar had been shut out of the room) and the mulatto boy that had been sold down the river and was thrice dead to her.

For four years more the bitterness continued, and John Campbell had never known a happy day. Yet as the fourth year drew to a close he had hope again,

but it was a hope that went out in a horror that had been his nightmare since. Another child was born to him, a daughter, and so ill was his wife that she forgot her hatred in her weakness, and found comfort in the nursing of Hagar. The child was three days old, and was lying at its mother's breast, and the mother light was in the weak eyes that looked down upon the little head; every cruel thought was absent, as for three days it had been, when she looked up and saw Hagar looking down upon the little one with eyes so hungry and pitiful that in a moment it all came back. With bitter reproaches and many vile names she shrieked to the slave woman to leave her side and never to come near her or the child again. In that moment there rushed into the black soul all the shame and sorrow and pent-up revenge that had been harbored there. With the cry of a tigress she fell upon the infant and tore it limb from limb, and then—for it took only an instant—she fell upon the mother and choked her to death. In fearful horror she fled from the presence of her awful crime—fled damning herself to the lowest hell for the sin that she had done, yet gloating savagely over the fearful vengeance that had been hers.

Ah, but the hounds were on her track, and she led them a weary chase through glade and swamp, and over mountain and field. And the men rode hard behind the hounds. Two days they followed her, now losing the trail where she walked in the water, now put to confusion where she doubled on her own track, but ever relentlessly following, and John Campbell rode with the hunters that followed the bloodhounds.

They found her at last in a tree, and the dogs were barking about her. They could not see her at first,

and doubted if the dogs had not lost the trail and followed an animal. They gathered under the tree; it was twilight, and they peered into the thick branches and called for a light. It was then that she sprang down, when John Campbell stood just below her, and as she sprang she drove her keen knife hard into his shoulder, and a thousand times he mourned that she missed his heart.

They shot her as she struck, and the two lay side by side beneath the tree. They drew the knife from his wound, and let her alone to die while they cared for him.

John Campbell raised himself on his elbow and looked at the woman who had struck him. "I shall not die," said he to his companions; "my wound bleeds freely, but I shall live." Then he looked at the dying slave, some said in hatred, and others said in pity, and one or two believed in love.

One of her hands was wet in his blood and the other she wet in her own. With her dying strength she raised herself and smote him on the one cheek and the other, and fell back, crying:

"Yes, live! Live to be a hundred years old! May you see your own children scatter and die, and may God's curse follow you!"

John Campbell had lost standing with his neighbors when he sold the slave child. No Bus'ness was in a part of the country that hated a slave trader; perhaps there was no other man who was not welcome to a night's shelter on the creek; and they disapproved the man who would buy a slave that broke a family, or sell one except from necessity or to keep households together. For years after his wife's death

no neighbor crossed his threshold. He walked alone among his fellow-men as did the lepers of old, and all knew that he was living under a curse. One by one his children left him. Two died in childhood; one, a son, was shot on a Mississippi steamboat; and the daughter that left home died far away, and after a life of shame. And then for fifty years more he had lived the loveliest man that ever walked the earth. For half of this time he lived apart and cared for himself. But sickness came upon him. White swelling left him helpless and old. His property, already sadly diminished, was soon exhausted, and Daddy Campbell, as he now came to be called, was a pauper.

They had no poorhouse in Whitley County, and Daddy Campbell was for years the only person "on the county." They farmed him out by the year, paying a pitiful sum to any one who would take him. At first it was with contempt, but even then with something of pity, that he who had lived a hermit was received into human habitations. But as the years went by the contempt vanished, and something of reverence mingled with the pity. The sad, patient, suffering old man somehow came to receive a sort of veneration, as one who by years of suffering had obtained absolution, and through the very extremity of his sin found more of grace. The face that had looked hunted and pinched and accursed came to have a transfigured look, as if from a patience that had had her perfect work and a peace that followed a storm-swept life that had been rocked between the billows of the mightiest emotions and now was calm.

Seated in the crude little cart which his own hands had fashioned, and into which he was lifted every day,

he made his way slowly up and down among the neighbors, welcomed by young and old, but held especially dear by the children. It was as beautiful as it was pathetic to see him among them. They knew not the bitter past, and their parents were trying to forget it. They had long since ceased to tell it, save in pity, and they ran at his shout to lift his cart over the bars or to push behind as he wheeled it upon the punched porch, and they made a wide place at the table where his cart might stand among the children at meal-time.

“And he has been a pauper all these years?” asked Barbara.

“I wouldn’t like to say pauper,” said Mrs. Renfro. “No person don’t count him a burden. He kin use his hands right smart, though his laigs is shriveled and twisted up. He digs out wooden bowls and trenchers, and he mends cheers and a heap of things. Folks likes to have have him come, and the money the county pays for him gits less and less ever’ year. I’ve plumb forgot who gits it this year. It’s divided among several, and he sorter boards round. Here comes your pa and Mr. Renfro. I reckon I’ve plumb tired you out with my long stories. Hit’s time to lay down now.”

CHAPTER VII

TWENTY DOLLARS A MONTH

“AND this, my dear, is our home.”

It was the second Sunday morning, and the Buzbees had had their first meal in their own home. They had seen no ghost, nor had any untoward event occurred save the message of James Fletcher, which Mr. Buzbee had passed unheeding.

“A mere irritable and thoughtless word from a disgruntled applicant for the school,” he said. “I am sorry that my coming should be a disappointment to any one. I must see him and explain how important this work is to my cause.”

Saturday night they had moved over from the Renfros'. The house had been swept and garnished, and was supplied with provisions for immediate needs. Some little had been done by way of repairs; not, however, at the expense of Peleg Goodwin, but under his direction and by voluntary labor contributed by a number of the men of the district, who patched the roofs both of the teacher's house and the school-house and made some simple improvements besides that involved labor only and no expenditure of money.

“Yes, this is our home,” said Mrs. Buzbee, “and,

humble as it is, I rejoice in it. It is so long since we have been together under our own roof."

"Yes, and we have worked at a disadvantage. This home, dear as it will be for domestic reasons, will become still dearer because of the work which I hope to accomplish here."

A slight shadow crossed the face of Mrs. Buzbee. "The work, I know, is important, but I hope that we may now give a little thought to our own need and comfort."

"Comfort, my love, except as we have it in consciousness of doing our duty, I fear, will never come to us. But something better will."

"Father," said Barbara, "how are we to live here? When you told us that you had a position as teacher, with assured salary, I did not ask you how much, for I did not want to seem curious. Since coming here and seeing the poverty of the people I do not see how they can afford to pay a teacher much."

"They do not pay, my child. The pay is received from the State school fund."

"How much is the school fund, father?"

"The school fund, my dear, consists of \$1,326,770, invested mostly in five-per-cent bonds, beside a five-cent tax on every hundred dollars' worth of property."

"And we get all that?"

"Preposterous, my child! We get the proportion which comes to Pine Knot *per capita*. That is, at the rate of about sixty-two and one half cents per scholar of school age, Pine Knot, having ninety-seven scholars, will receive a gross amount of sixty-one dollars and sixty-three cents."

"Per month?"

“No, no. For three months. That is what makes the school so desirable. In the more prosperous portions of the State the public money is increased by local taxation. That is quite out of the question here. If there are one hundred scholars or more, there must be a five months’ school. Three more pupils would compel me to teach five months instead of three, and for practically the same amount. Ours is a very fortunate condition, my child.”

“Then this is the sum over which men are breaking their hearts—this princely salary of twenty dollars a month?” asked Mrs. Buzbee.

“I am most sorry, my dear, if any one is breaking his heart about it. I will cheerfully explain to any who are disappointed. There must be not one, but many. It is unfortunate that our successes in life do thus involve the disappointment of others. I grieve that it must be so; indeed, I do not think that I could accept it if it were not that it gives us leverage for our great work.”

“And what do we pay for the rental of this miserable old shanty?” asked Mrs. Buzbee.

“Don’t, mother, dear,” said Barbara. “Do not speak so of our home. Poor as it is, let us make it beautiful with our love and sympathy. Yes, let us idealize it, if need be.”

“You are right, my child. But, oh, it is hard to idealize poverty such as we must face! I had no idea that we had so meager an income to depend upon.”

“We pay only two dollars a month, my dear!” said Mr. Buzbee.

“For twelve months?”

“Certainly.”

“And out of a gross income of sixty dollars!”

“That, my dear, is counted a large sum here.”

It was indeed so counted.

It was by an arrangement with the adjacent county of Tennessee that so large a sum was possible, for some of these children were over the line, and all were counted as in Kentucky. To make up for this an equal number of Kentucky children on No Bus'ness, where the school was taught in Tennessee, were counted as living in the latter State. It was thus the result of a peculiarly favorable set of conditions that Mr. Buzbee had come to his twenty dollars a month.

The sum seemed great to the district and a fortune to John Howard Buzbee, who thought of the sixty dollars in a lump, and estimated it as though, having it all at once, he would have it throughout the school term and for nine months thereafter. He had not often handled sixty dollars of late. But Mrs. Buzbee and Barbara, when they came to know in detail the terms of the teaching contract, looked each other in the face in blank amazement, and then in despair, till Barbara saw the funny side of it and burst into a laugh.

“Sixty dollars, for three months! As we have no other assured income and must pay our expenses for the year, twenty-four dollars will go for rent, and—help me with my arithmetic, father—thirty-six dollars will remain for food, clothing, and your tracts——”

“Yes, indeed, my daughter,” interrupted her father, “we must contrive, however small our income, to save a little for tracts.”

“Thirty-six dollars! A dollar a month apiece!

How shall I ever spend it?" And Barbara laughed, a merry, but half-ironic laugh.

"It is doubtless small," conceded her father, "but our expenses of living will be small. Eggs are but six cents a dozen. Corn meal is but thirty cents a bushel, and flour, which is coarse indeed, but still is the more wholesome, is but fifty."

"And meat——"

"As for meat, we are the better without it. Indeed, I am now studying a method of dieting which will enable us to live, not only without using the products of slave labor, such as cotton, molasses, and rice——"

"Except the mountain sorghum, I suppose."

"Yes, and that will take the place of sugar."

"Think of it, mother, dear, sorghum in your after-dinner coffee, served in the two little Dresden chinas I have in my trunk!"

"My dear," said her mother, "don't; pray, don't. I am in despair."

"Very well, father, what else? I will be good, and if at first I don't succeed, I'll try, try again!"

"As I was remarking," said her father, not in the least tried by the interruption, "I am involved in a plan which I hope to make plain, first to myself and then to the world, by which we may avoid, first the use of slave products, and then the use of all articles which involve the murdering, enslaving, or robbing of dumb animals."

"Well, father, and what will you leave us to eat and wear?"

"I do not claim as yet to have developed the theory consistently. I spoke of eggs. Technically,

my theory would exclude them, as involving either slavery, robbery, or murder, or perhaps all."

"O father, I shall be in State's prison before supper time at this rate!"

"But even if the theory be fully carried out, we shall not suffer. We shall live upon corn, wheat, nuts, fruit, maple sugar, sorghum, oil of the cotton seed, which is far more wholesome than lard——"

"But cotton, father, is a product of slave labor."

"My child, by the time the world is ready to adopt this theory there will be no human slavery."

"I quite agree with you, father. The millennium will be well advanced by that time. But as for our clothes?"

"Cotton, when that is freed from the incubus of slavery; paper, which civilization will surely come to use more and more; straw of different grades and corn husks, for hats of different kinds; and, most of all, flax—the blue-flowered, hand-wrought flax—a small field of which, easily within the care of a man using only his own arms with hoe, and flail, and break, and a woman with spinning wheel and loom, will clothe a family in comfort, aye, with the vesture of kings; for with native dyes it may be of varied hue. The meanest man that lifts his head in self-respecting manhood may lift his hands guiltless of blood or the spoil of his fellow-men or the dumb animals about him and stand clothed not only in purple and fine linen, but clad also, as Solomon in all his glory was not clad, in innocence and righteousness."

It was thus that John Howard Buzbee mingled his chimerical visions with prophetic insight, and from shallow and impractical reasoning rose in the joy of

argument, and the warmth which argument always brought to him, into something like eloquence. Barbara ceased to laugh, and looked at her father. There he stood in the simplicity of his childlike soul, that at threescore years was guileless as in infancy, a simplicity that caused his daughter many a merry laugh at his inconsequentiality, his hopeless inability to cope with the problems of life, and Barbara looked at him and loved him. He was impractical, he was visionary, but he was learned, eloquent, unselfish, and without fear or reproach. He had met the world at its worst, and was not blackened by its pitch, nor soured by its rebuffs, nor made hateful by its hatred. He stood in the rough, almost uninhabitable cabin on the Sunday before the school began, dressed in his best, which was so poor and plain, but he looked a gentleman, every inch, and her heart went out to him. She flung herself into his arms, kissed him again and again, crying:

“O father, father! My dear, dear, lovely, loving father! Forgive me for laughing at you, and annoying you with my arguments. I’m not good enough to understand you, father, and the world is not good enough. You’re a dear, dear, impractical, visionary old dreamer, so the world thinks; but you’re the dearest, truest, bravest, kindest man that ever lived, and I’m proud of you, father; I’m proud of you!”

Mrs. Buzbee, too, drew near and kissed him, crying as she did so: “Yes, John, yes, we do love you, even if we don’t always understand you, and we will love you and help you till we succeed or starve together.”

Mr. Buzbee turned first to one and then to the other, responding to their caresses in a dazed sort of

fashion, and said, as he disposed of Mrs. Buzbee on a chair and released himself from the caresses of Barbara: "Why, my dears, of course you love me! I know that very well. This is very delightful, though I don't quite see the occasion that prompts it at this moment. As to laughing at me, Barbara, I never suspected that you were laughing at me, but you are quite welcome to do so, my child, if it affords you pleasure. And, as to not understanding me, I thought I was unusually lucid. Let me go over those points at a little greater length. I am sure that I can make it plain to you."

"Oh, no, father, don't!" said Barbara. "We are too stupid. There is only one thing that we need to understand, and that we do understand more and more every day, that you are the best and dearest father in the world."

It was thus that John Howard Buzbee met the world, shrinking from its rare caresses, disclaiming its few well-merited kind words, laboring patiently to make his position clear, and never doubting that its thoughtless laughter at his expense was prompted by a harmless joy of its own, which, while he did not share, he did not grudge. But the little outbreak of demonstrative affection which followed the sad discovery of their pitiful outlook did all good. It cheered Mr. Buzbee to be reminded that his wife and daughter loved him and trusted him, even though he could not understand why they should have supposed it necessary to tell him so. And it put a curb upon Barbara's somewhat tantalizing laughter, and her mother's quiet but complaining anxiety. So it was from a happy, though an anxious home, that John Howard Buzbee

went forth that morning to attend meeting in Pine Knot. It was the third Sunday in the month, and the regular preaching day. Preachers were there—a herd of them—and they all participated. Mr. Buzbee, being understood to be “a public brother,” was asked to add a word at the close, and was said to have given “a mighty good lecture, but hit wa’n’t no preaching.”

One noticeable thing about it was that Jim Fletcher, who should have been there to preach, did not appear. Ominous threats from him were quoted, however, as the men sat about on logs outside the schoolhouse.

“You trustees better hit the turf right early in the morning and git out of here,” said Neze Post.

“What for?” asked Noel Davis.

“Jim Fletcher allows he’s goin’ to have a finger in the pie.”

“What’s he got to do with it?”

“Wall, he met Jake Trosper t’other night, when he was on his way to No Bus’ness, an’ he ’lowed that when the school opened to-morrow he’d be thar and take a hand. Then he rode on to Deek Morgan’s old house, whar the new man is a-stayin’—that was mighty shifty o’ you, Peleg, to put him in thar! Daggon me, if I had a room to my hotel like that old hainted house if I wouldn’t expect to see the Old Boy himself with all his hoofs and horns if I put a man to sleep there! And he told the new teacher, so I’ve heerd, that one man’s curse rested on that roof already, and another man’s was on the schoolhouse if he ever undertook to open school.”

By all the absence of Fletcher was considered sig-

nificant, and Noel Davis remembered his bitter words in front of the store, and questioned whether it would not be more prudent to be called away in the morning, and to let the other trustees open the school and sign the contract with the teacher.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MAKING OF A PHILANTHROPIST

MRS. BUZBEE and Barbara did not go to meeting that Sunday morning, but remained to make preparations for their simple dinner, and to enjoy the quiet of their own home.

“Mother,” said Barbara, “I wish that I knew my father.”

“What do you mean, Barbara?”

“I know him, of course, as a good, true, kind man, a man of talent and of education, and I know, too, his hobby. When I think of him in that way, I—forgive me, mother, I almost pity him, and feel like making apologies for him. And then again I am so proud of him! After all, mother, I do not know him very well, you know. He has been gone from us so much. I have sometimes wanted to ask you something, mother.”

“What is it, dear?”

“I have wondered how you came to marry father.”

“You know the story in part?”

“Just enough so that I want to know it all. Begin at the beginning, and tell me. Tell me about his father, and all that.”

“ I think that you know the most of it, but I will tell you what I know. Your father’s father, you know, my dear, was a minister in Virginia. He came of the old families, and was a good and honored man. It was not in his pulpit that he was greatest, but in his philanthropy.”

“ I have heard about his work among the prisons.”

“ That was one of his special hobbies. ‘ I was sick and in prison, and ye visited me ’ was his great text. It was that which caused him to name your father after his ideal philanthropist. But that was not all his work. He was interested in the destitute in the new settlements, in the work of the Tract Society, in the temperance movement, and in foreign missions.”

“ He owned slaves? ”

“ Yes, and was kind to them. They were members of his own church, as were those of his congregation. They sat in the same church house, and received the communion at the same table, after the white people had been served. This, in his thought, was his full duty to his slaves. None of them ever suffered for attention or were treated with severity, but he accepted slavery as a fact. While he did not approve it, he did not feel responsible for its abolition, and set himself about philanthropy in other directions. He dedicated your father to the work of philanthropy.”

“ That was rather a perilous thing to do, was it not? ”

“ Yes, for most men’s philanthropy has its metes and bounds, and the son’s philanthropy soon came to oppose the limitations of the father’s.”

“ Father was educated in the North? ”

“ At Yale. He graduated young, and led his class.

At eighteen he began studying theology, and at twenty-one had finished his course. But he had read much beside theology, and had become a radical abolitionist."

"That was not rare in Virginia in his youth, was it?"

"No, it was very common at that time. I have heard your father say that all the great statesmen of Virginia in that day were abolitionists. His own father was one, in a certain sense—that is, he would have been glad to see universal freedom, but he did not count it a great evil as it then existed in Virginia, and thought the practical difficulties of emancipation too great to justify any aggressive movement toward it."

"But he must have been a narrow, bigoted man."

"Not quite that. He disinherited your father, to be sure. But I am not sure that your father, in the first enthusiasm of his outspoken conviction, was always as prudent and gentle as he has now become. He was always considerate, always a gentleman, but he was always fearless and outspoken, and he doubtless was a disappointment to his father, who had looked to have him engage in what he counted practical philanthropy, instead of a quixotic fighting of windmills, as he was wont to express it."

"I know about his disinheriting father, and that sad scene."

"Well, then he came to East Tennessee, where Benjamin Lundy had established his paper, *The Genius of Universal Emancipation*, first at Greenville and afterward at Jonesboro. Your father was between twenty-one and twenty-two—he was born, you know, with the century—and he flung himself with ardor into

that work. It is the memory of that work in these mountains that has always inclined him to come back again."

"How did he get to Baltimore?"

"Mr. Lundy moved the paper there. Then Mr. Lundy went to Boston and met William Lloyd Garrison."

"Was Mr. Garrison then in antislavery work?"

"No, he was editing a temperance paper. He met Mr. Lundy at Garrison's boarding house, and became a convert."

"I remember about that."

"Then Mr. Garrison went to Baltimore, and worked with Mr. Lundy on the paper. Your father at that time was away on a lecture tour."

"Then Mr. Garrison entered into the work with great enthusiasm?"

"Yes, with all the zeal of a new convert. And his editorials, instead of being kind and temperate, like Lundy's and your father's, were vehement and denunciatory. Mr. Lundy had to come to an understanding with him at once, and it resulted in each man signing his own editorials with his initials."

"But that did not save the paper?"

"No, Mr. Garrison's editorials soon caused it to be broken up. Your father, in common with many of Mr. Lundy's friends, thought it a sad thing that the work of so many years should have been ruined, as they thought, needlessly."

"Still, father went to Boston and worked with Mr. Garrison?"

"Yes, though always dissenting from Mr. Garrison's methods. It became apparent in time that they

could not agree. Mr. Garrison was an avowed secessionist; your father has always held that the slavery question is in the widest sense a national question, and must be settled within the nation. Mr. Garrison uttered most bitter words against the Church; your father, while often tried with the indifference and timidity of the Church, has yet held that the support of the Church is an absolute necessity."

"But he did not continue to preach?"

"At times he did, and at times he stopped entirely. He came to bring almost everything to the test of its relation to the antislavery work. Yet, while this may have narrowed him, it did not embitter him, and, even toward Mr. Garrison, whose methods he came so thoroughly to distrust, he always maintained the profoundest charity."

"I have heard him say that it was a great pity that Mr. Garrison ever became associated with the conduct of the *Genius*."

"Yes, but he said that without bitterness. The *Genius* was published in a Southern State, and had a small but influential Southern patronage. Beside that, Lundy traveled the whole country over, and had societies formed in many cities, North and South, at the time when Mr. Garrison, editing his second or third paper, had done nothing to show where he stood on the slavery question. Your father felt that it was wrong for him, a new arrival and a Northern man, to oppose his own theory of the conduct of the paper to that of the men who had from the beginning managed it, especially when the change was certain to wreck the paper, which was not his own."

“ Then, he felt, did he not, that the stamping out of Lundy’s paper made the question more sectional? ”

“ Yes, and he deplored that. For the antislavery sentiment of the South was waning, and, while they tolerated Lundy’s paper, they were quite unwilling to hear such words as Mr. Garrison had to say hurled at them from New England.”

“ And then? ”

“ After your father severed his relation with Mr. Garrison’s paper, *The Liberator*, where he worked for a little time, he thought of the law as affording him his best opportunity. He had preached now and then, but his preaching, though tender, earnest, and eloquent, was objected to by many because of his views on slavery, so he turned from the pulpit and studied law, teaching school the while. As a teacher he was a great success, being versatile, widely read, and full of an enthusiasm for his subject which always captivated his pupils. In the classics and in natural science he excelled, and in literature and *belles-lettres* he was ever at home. But the time came when he could claim admission to the bar, and he left the schoolroom to plead the cause of the slave in court.”

“ He never sought general practice, did he? ”

“ No, it was unpleasant to him, and so the law itself became. The grasping, haggling, selfish spirit which he found in the courtroom was uncongenial. He would not badger witnesses nor seek to blind juries. The cases for which he cared were those that paid nothing, and where he had hardly thanks for his pains. Yet he pleaded the cause of the fugitive slave in many courts, and with eloquence, though seldom with success. Disheartened, he turned from the law as from

the pulpit, though at rare intervals in recent years he has sometimes pleaded and sometimes preached."

"It was then he came to Lexington, was it not?"

"Yes, a little more than twenty years ago. He was teaching again, and, as ever, he was a success in the schoolroom. Only he was always counted impractical and visionary. But the success which he might have achieved he always frustrated by his opposition to slavery."

"Yet Henry Clay was opposed to slavery?"

"Yes, and hundreds of slaveholding people. Slavery in Kentucky and in all the border States was and is dying of its own weight, but social reasons and the practical difficulties of emancipation made and still makes opposition to definite antislavery work intense. I came to know your father then, and loved him. My father was a member of the State Senate, as you know, a proud, hot-blooded man. He and your father never agreed, and I think my father disliked him more because he never got angry, as my father did, in their discussions."

"And then I know about your marriage, and your leaving home and all that. You left Lexington?"

"Yes, for three years. They were years of trial, and poverty, and privation. A part of the time we were at Danville with James G. Birney. He was a Kentuckian, you know, who freed his slaves in 1834, and established an antislavery paper. But for two years we were on the road. We traveled far, and received little for our labor, your father lecturing against slavery."

"And then Henry Clay called you back?"

"Not Henry, but Cassius M. Clay. He founded

his True American, and at one time had to defend his office with a cannon, and had all his men armed."

"Did father go armed?"

"No. But he was not a noncombatant, like Mr. Garrison. He used to say that Mr. Garrison opposed fighting, but did his best to provoke mob violence, while he, who believed in the right of self-defense, was the true friend of peace. He believed that he had a right to go armed, but that to do so was inexpedient and likely to cause trouble."

"You must have trembled for him in those days."

"Yes, and was proud of him, too. He was so fearless, and withal so far from blustering. He was a true knight in his spirit."

"And yet, mother, you never fully agreed with his views?"

"It was not for his views that I loved him, Barbara. And in these years when we have lived without servants and I have so needed help I have sometimes thought that I knew of no slave so poorly rewarded for his toil as your father; and I may have said sometimes when I have been ill and impatient that there is such a thing as enslavement to an idea. But I have always admired him, yes, and loved him."

"And he has loved you ardently."

"Yes, and yet your father loves his cause first and dearest, and I will not deny that there have been times when I have yearned for a love more personal and demonstrative than he could show. But when I have done so I have reproached myself, remembering that his love, though abstract, is so true and strong and tender."

"I am sure I understand you, mother. Father quarreled with Mr. Clay?"

"There was no quarrel. The Mexican War came, and Mr. Clay, though disapproving the war and its purpose, enlisted, declaring that in Kentucky a man to succeed in public life must have a military record. Your father called this doing evil that good might come of it, and he parted from Mr. Clay. Then he studied medicine."

"I remember about that. He taught again while studying, did he not?"

"Yes, in Louisville. For a time he seemed discouraged with his antislavery work, and thought that in healing the sick he could do what he called one man's work for human well-being."

"And, oh, I remember to have heard how devoted he was to his patients, how they came to love him and to trust him!"

"Yes, but they were very few. And few of them could pay. And because few could pay him, the rest did not. He had the constant humiliation of seeing quacks and charlatans prosper while he was in poverty. Moreover, he came to feel that he had done wrong in leaving the platform, and that duty called him to public work. About that time my mother was taken sick."

"And she sent for you."

"Yes, and I hastened to her deathbed."

"Had she never forgiven you while you were in Lexington?"

"No; and because we were so near we seemed more distant. But when she was about to die, she relented and longed to see me and you. She loved

you the moment she saw you, and forgave me. She left a provision in her will for your education, and a little for me in the hands of my father. I suppose that we have long since spent it. I never knew the details about it, as it was wholly in his hands. She left it so because——”

“ Because she feared father would use it——”

“ She feared that I would give it to him, and she knew how he would use it if it were his.”

“ And so we went to grandpa’s?”

“ Yes, after the death of my mother, my father could not bear to have me leave. Your father was about to give up his practice and go into the field again, and it was arranged that I should stay at home and take care of father and you. You have had your education. Father has been more than a father to us both. But you know your father’s visits have never been very happy. We were provided for, and that left him free to devote all his earnings, which were never large, to his work. Indeed, I think he forgot that we required money, and I do not question that he has thought as little of sending money to us as of spending money for himself. It was well; we have lacked for nothing. We have had one purse with your grandfather, who has given to us unstintedly. We have never been so comfortable financially.”

“ But we have not been comfortable when father and grandpa have had their discussions.”

“ No, and for a long time they avoided controversy by mutual consent. Your father came home but once or twice a year. He saw you growing to womanhood, and loved and admired you more and more. He saw me, with health broken from our years of hardship,

cared for in the home of my father, and then he went off again, a year longer, perhaps, writing to me, almost daily, letters which I treasure, and pouring out his own life in effort for others. He was happy, and so were we; though we wanted him with us we felt that on the whole it was best."

"But this last time?"

"Men's minds are getting heated now. This presidential campaign is driving men crazy. Topics long laid aside between your father and grandfather came up. Your grandfather grows more irritable as he grows older, and he was never a patient man. And when he drove your father from the house there was nothing for us to do but to go forth with him. We stayed till your father sought and found this opening. It was all that he could find. Turning to the mountains as the place where summer and autumn schools are the rule, he remembered again the early days when he worked with Lundy here. He read the Knoxville Whig, in which Mr. Brownlow, though not an abolitionist, is fighting so splendidly for the idea of a loyal sentiment for the whole united nation. And so we are here. It seems hard. We might have stayed with father, and your father would always have had a home to come to—which is all that he needed—and we a permanent home. Father will not live for many years, and he would not have left us unprovided for. You could have married Boyd Estill——"

"Mother!" cried Barbara, her cheeks red.

"No matter, my dear, it is all past now."

"And you do not regret it?"

"No, no. If I seem to complain it is because it seems so needless, and we were so happy. If only

men could agree to differ, and let matters rest! I do not know what will grow out of this terrible discussion that is rending homes asunder. Ours is not the only one, nor yet the saddest one. But I do not regret it. When your father came and went as he chose, and was at liberty to come to us, it was in some sense as though he was with us all the time, and we could be content to stay though he came to us but once or twice a year. But when he was driven from the house, Barbara, all the love that made me leave father and mother for his sake came back with double power, and I would have gone with him to the stake. If I complain, it is my flesh that is weak. Barbara, I shall never be well again. Sometimes I am impatient, I know. But what I have done I would do again a thousand times."

Barbara had been sitting on the rough floor, holding her mother's hand as she reclined on the bed and told this story. She rose and kissed her mother, and said:

"God bless you, mother! I would have done the same. And we will stand by him, and help him, the dear, brave man, even if we can not always understand him. And now, mother, I'll put the kettle on. Even philanthropists and their families can not live without eating."

CHAPTER IX

THE SURPRISE AT THE SCHOOLHOUSE

BILL BLAKE, the chairman of the board of trustees, slapped the log side of the schoolhouse vigorously with a discarded roof board, and thus made known the fact that school had "took up." It was eight o'clock on Monday morning, and the trustees had demurred a little at beginning school so late in the day, averring that a teacher ought to work from sun to sun the same as other men, and as had been the case in years past; but that question had been settled, and the contract had been signed in the presence of a goodly number of the patrons of the school, whose children meantime scampered about the building, or peered through the door, or played at "bull pen," if they were boys, or at "chickeny-chickeny-craney-crow," if they were girls.

The seats of the Pine Knot school were of punch-on, with legs that were driven through auger holes. It had not been thought necessary to saw off the legs where they projected through the bench. The pupils extemporized desks by placing their feet on the backs of the seats in front, and writing on their knees.

A section of log cut out on either side made a window, guiltless of glass, and the lighting and ventilating spaces were greatly increased by the ample cracks be-

tween the logs, and the door stood ever open. A great fireplace filled one end, and had not the heating contract involved the warming of a considerable adjacent portion of the two States of Kentucky and Tennessee as they then were supposed to lie there would have been no trouble in keeping warm. There was not much trouble anyway with a three months' school, which would be over before the weather got cold, but the theory was that the school might be prolonged by subscription.

The school came in, the girls giggling and choosing seatmates with much whispering and some difficulty. The boys shambled to their places, the big boys crowding their way to the seats for which they cared, and the little boys sitting where they could. A few of the parents sat with their children, and more stood up. The teacher had no chair, but it was opined that he could borrow one from one of the neighbors. A barrel did service as a desk. Jake Crawford had contributed that.

After the school came in Bill Blake had another whispered conference with the other trustees, the purpose of which was to manifest to the crowd now assembled that he assumed the position of spokesman only after proper urging. Then he rose, hitched up his galluses, and addressed the school:

"This here school is tuck up, and Mr. Buzbee here is goin' to keep it. He ain't the teacher we was lookin' for at one time, but I reckon he's as good, and some thinks he's better. One thing I know. We've got it from headquarters that he's the lickin'st teacher they ever had over where he's been a-teachin', and if you don't look out he'll take a hickory to you!"

Mr. Blake was kneedeep in falsehood here, and only indulged in this sort of talk by way of moral support to the new teacher. That he used the rod plentifully was taken as a matter of course. That any fear of the rod in his hand would be a present incitement to righteousness, and be justified in the outcome, he did not question. So the barefaced falsehood was not wholly without excuse. Indeed, Mr. Blake knew no other way of endeavoring to convey a proper warning.

He proceeded: "This teacher is a heap stouter than he looks, and a heap smarter, too. If you big fellers that thought you could run the other teacher out ever try it on this one, you'll get what you got before, and worse, now I can tell you. He'll bring you back to taw. Now, we've got a few rules from the trustees, and the teacher can make his own. The girls is to take turns sweeping the house. Jest git ye a good bunch of papaw bushes and pitch in every noon time. Then, if there comes a cold day or a wet one, so's you need a fire, the big boys is to cut the wood, and you may as well see to gittin' in a backlog and a forestick and some pine knots while hit's dry. Then they's another thing. The hogs has got in here, and they's a heap more fleas in this house and under it than what you'll need. Now, when you go out to-day for recess, you jest all of you bring in a big bunch of pennyroyal and drap it on the floor, and tromp on it as ye go back and for'ards to class, and keep that up till the fleas is gone. And then there hain't to be no sparkin' here at noon times, nor on the way to school and back; and havin' said that to the gals, I'll say this to the boys, that they ain't to be no fighting, not unless somebody yells

‘School-butter!’* Now we’ll make up the roll, and I reckon we best begin with the strip of timber we fetched in from *Difficulty*, and clean out that branch first, and then take the others in regular order.”

* “School-butter.” To any who have known the conditions existing in backwoods schools it is unnecessary to explain this phrase. What it originally meant, if indeed it meant anything, the writer has never been able to learn, nor to obtain a reasonable explanation. But from rural Pennsylvania to Arkansas, and even in parts of Indiana and Michigan, it was known as the most humiliating insult, and one certain to provoke swift revenge. All rules against fighting stood aside in favor of a pursuit of the person who called the word to the school. No pupil, of course, unless an expelled pupil, would thus insult the school, for it was the school as a whole that suffered from it; and while the teacher did not commonly join in the pursuit of the culprit, he often found means of retribution against him, especially if a former pupil.

Richard Malcolm Johnston has contributed to the Annual Reports of the Commissioner of Education two interesting papers on Early Education in Middle Georgia. The conditions there described are practically identical with those that the writer has himself observed in the mountain schools of Kentucky and Tennessee. On the use of this phrase Mr. Johnston says:

“No satisfactory account that this writer has heard has ever been given of the origin of this notable phrase in country schools. Its utterance by a passer-by in tones loud enough to be heard was regarded as the grossest insult that could be perpetrated. The utterer, on making the cry, immediately fled amain, and every boy rushed from the house in pursuit of him. If overtaken, he was either ducked in the spring branch or, his hands and feet being seized by four of the stoutest boys, he was bumped against a tree until the insult was avenged. Seldom a traveler on foot dared to take the risk. Even a horseman was sometimes overtaken after a chase of several miles by two or more who came to school on horseback mainly for the purpose.

“Some persons have speculated upon the phrase having originated from that of ‘I am your school’s better.’ Whatever

The parents present as called upon gave the names of their children, and the other children gave their own names. Some gave abbreviated names, as Dan and Sam and Bill, and others gave names in full, as William Henry Harrison and Julius Cæsar. Widow Braniman was there, at the head of a long and very much overcrowded bench.

“Them’s all your gals, be they, Mis’ Braniman?” asked Bill Blake.

“Yes,” she answered; “I’ve had sorter bad luck with my gals. The chimbley fell down on ’em and killed all but nine!”

“Dear me,” exclaimed Mr. Buzbee, who took but little part in the organization of the school, “how unfortunate!” But all the others understood the characteristic mountain joke about the widow’s nine daughters, the youngest of whom was five and the eldest seventeen.

The making of the roll consumed a good deal of time, and the discussion which followed was on the method of classification, a matter involving some difficulty, as there were all grades, from the lowest primary to such studies as might be pursued by young men and women, and while there were a few nondescript textbooks, almost the only one of which there were two copies—and of that there were at least sixty—was Webster’s Elementary Speller, known in mountain schools as *The Old Blue-back*. Mr. Buzbee relieved the trustees, however, by saying that he could attend to the classification alone.

its origin, it was the universal custom in old-field schools to regard it an insult, and attempt was made, with the master’s full assent, to punish it.”

The work of registration over, Mr. Buzbee took the school in charge, saying :

“ I will not announce any rules at this time except that each pupil is to seek to promote the welfare of the school and do to others as he would be done by. You may take your books and study while I call you up one by one and assign to you your classes.”

There was a shuffling of bare feet on the log floor, a pushing and a sliding along benches, and then the books were opened, and the whole school began to study, each one conning his lesson aloud, and in a tone that, if alone, would have been distinctly audible throughout the room. Such was the fashion in the old-time “ blab-school,” and the teacher was wont to insist upon a loud, clear tone as an evidence that the studying was being faithfully done.*

* Blab-schools had become rare when the writer taught school in the mountains of Kentucky in 1881 and following years. Their disappearance was rapid, and they must now be almost if not wholly extinct. At one time they had been practically universal. It was astonishing to see the skill of teachers, even in moments of abstraction or of other cares, in detecting the dropping out of a single voice, or the use of the babel of voices to cover communication of a forbidden nature. Richard Malcolm Johnston, in his paper on Early Educational Life in Middle Georgia, writes, in a note which accords with the author's experience, as follows: “ The fashion of studying aloud in schools, now so curious to recall, did not produce the confusion which those not accustomed to it would suppose. Besides the natural desire to avoid punishment, rivalries were often very active, particularly among girls, and during the time devoted wholly to study there were few who did not make reasonable effort to prepare for recitation. Spellers, readers, geographers, grammarians, getters-by-heart, all except cipherers, each in his or her own tongue and tone, raised to height sufficient to be clearly distinguished from others by individual ears,

Mr. Buzbee tapped lightly with his pencil and said: "We will have no studying aloud. The room must be quiet."

The trustees looked at each other in amazement, and the pupils sat open-mouthed, wondering what they could be expected to do.

The teacher then began his classification. "Can you read?" he asked the first boy.

"I dunno. I never tried."

"Can you spell?"

"Yes, sir. I kin spell through the book sight lessons, and over to 'horseback' heart lessons."*

filled the room and several square rods of circumambient space outside. In this while the master, deaf to the various multitudinous sounds, sat in his chair, sometimes watching for a silent tongue, at others with lackluster eyes gazing through the door into the world beyond, perhaps musing when and where, if ever in this life, this toiling, fighting, migratory, isolated, and about friendless career would find respite."

* In the use of Webster's Elementary Speller, the word at the head of the page comes to be a familiar designation for the section of the book containing it. Thus, to have "spelled over as far as baker," signifies familiarity with the simplest words of two syllables; "horseback," the hardest common words of two syllables, and so on. The book itself contains division headings, as, "words of three syllables, accented on the second," but it is simpler to say "sirocco." Under each section are short sentences, some of them very quaint, used as reading lessons, and often committed as proverbs. For instance, under "sirocco" the pupil is informed that "the chewing of tobacco is a useless custom," the statement being suggested by the word "tobacco," which falls in this section. In the back of the book are certain tales, as of the farmer and the rude boys, the milkmaid and her day dream, and the ox that had been gored by the bull. This part of the book is known as "the grammar of it." The book is much less elaborate than the newer spellers, but it is said to sell a million copies a year even to this day. In the

“Very well. You should have been taught to read while learning to spell. Now, take your speller, and study this line, which tells you that ‘Ann can spin flax.’ Spend the next hour in looking at it, finding out from what you know of spelling which word it is that corresponds to each of those groups of letters. Be able to read the sentence as a whole, and to point out each word at sight, to print it on the slate and to spell it. Have it so that you will know every word in that sentence wherever you find it. I will have a blackboard here in a few days, and I shall expect you to be able to print your lesson upon it. You have no slate? You may borrow one, if you can. If not, study it the more, for I shall require you to do it.”

The boy stood astonished. It had never occurred to him before that the printed words which he had spelled in the long columns were intended to be put together so as to convey information.

The trustees looked anxious. Peleg Goodwin, who felt chiefly responsible for the teacher, was first to question this new and singular method.

“Mr. Buzbee,” said he, “don’t you have ’em spell three or four times through the book before you have ’em read?”

“No,” said he, “I expect them to read at once.”

“I never heerd tell of no sech way o’ teachin’,” said Noel Davis.

“I will illustrate it,” said Mr. Buzbee. “Let all who do not know their letters step forward.”

There was a long, wavy row across the room, girls in linsey-woolsey, boys in new suits of tow, hastily

judgment of the writer, who has used it enough to know its merits, it deserves its continued popularity.

finished for the day, and as yet very new and very scratchy.

“All look this way,” said he, and with a bit of red keel he printed on the hewn face of a log, “See my cat.”

“Now, children, I want you to look at this that I have done. I have written here the three words, ‘See my cat.’ Look at this sentence. It is in three parts, and each of them is a word. They are not alike. They are just as different as are the three words which I speak when I say, ‘See my cat.’ Look hard at them. This one is ‘cat.’ You must be able to know it whenever you see it, just as you would know a picture of a cat. It never means anything else than cat. I will talk to you about the other two words later, but now I will print this one word on a piece of paper. Take it, and go down to the road, and make it in the dust with short sticks. Help each other to get it right. I shall come and look at it at recess time. Do not stop till you can make this word in the dust. You may try to draw a cat, too, if you like. Wait a minute. If I should tell you the three letters in that word, could you remember them? Perhaps some one of you knows already how to spell cat? Do you know, my little man? Well, do not tell it now, but when you get down to the road tell all the others. Teach them the three letters. And whatever any one of you knows, he may teach the others. Whoever learns anything before the rest of the class will have this reward, that he will be the teacher of that thing to the others.”

It astonished the trustees and parents, and Widow Braniman was not the only one who threatened to take her “young ’uns out if they was goin’ on that

away" ; but as the parents straggled home, they found their hopefuls regarding their work in the road. There were printed cats, and drawn cats of all stages of imperfection, and mud pies as well, and a few had ornamented their work with borders of barefoot tracks, and a few of the ambitious ones were teaching the others how to improve their work. But there was not a child in the school who, at the end of the first day, did not know the word "cat," and most of them knew the other two words.

"I wish the trustees to prepare me a blackboard," said Mr. Buzbee. "You may plane four boards a foot wide and five feet long and fasten them together on the back, and stain them black with pokeberry juice."

"What's that fur?" asked Noel Davis.

"That is to write upon with chalk, where all the school can see it."

It was a new idea, but it took, and the blackboard of Pine Knot, with red keel for chalk, was inspected by many schools about, a few of which copied it for their own use.

Arithmetic was the one branch, except spelling, that was well taught in the mountain schools. The pupils had a natural talent for figures, and not a few of the larger pupils had hard problems of their own with which they attempted "to floor" every new teacher. Woe to the reputation of the teacher who confessed that he could not work them!

There was no geography or history, and the grammar was of the most arbitrary sort, as impractical as could be imagined, and many a boy finished the course in it with no idea that "nominative, he; possessive, his; objective, him," really meant anything. Mr. Buz-

bee discarded the two or three grammar books, and arranged a method of oral teaching. As to geography, he made a class of his own, and promised to tell them a story each day, and have them repeat it to him the day after. The same method he pursued in history, and as this did not give him classes enough, he asked each pupil to bring from home a few kernels of corn, a bean or two, and certain other seeds, which they would plant beside the spring branch, and dig up specimens day by day for examination.

"Hit ain't no way to keep school," whispered Noel Davis to Peleg Goodwin.

"He'll larn 'em a heap," said Goodwin, "but hit ain't what we send 'em to larn. Daggon me, ef I wouldn't like to come here to school myself."

There was a spirited discussion about it all, and the neighbors were of at least two minds about the matter. It was strange, to say the least. One group of little folks was sent to the woods to see how the sycamore leaf protects its buds, and to compare the way of the oak and the hickory, and another was sent to watch an ant nest, while the teacher was grouping his larger pupils into classes. One thing was certain, he was master of the situation, and another thing was probable, that the children would learn something, whether it was what Mr. Goodwin thought they ought to learn or not.

This work was nearing completion, when a whispered word passed around directed all eyes to the door. Noel Davis shifted his seat, and got well into the corner, yet where the open door would serve him, if a retreat became necessary. Bill Blake looked anxious, and Peleg Goodwin grew nervous and a little

pale. Jim Fletcher came riding up the road, over the children's printed lesson, and hitched his horse to a tree hard by. Then, with a determined look on his dark face, he strode up the path to the schoolhouse, and crossed the threshold. There was fear on almost every face within. No one was unmoved except the teacher, who greeted the newcomer, and asked him to take a seat. The whole company waited for the outburst which was to follow. James Fletcher reached in his pocket, and drew forth, not a pistol, but a silver dollar, which he handed to the teacher, saying:

“That's my tuition for a month. I'm not in school age, but I want to come to school and learn all I can.”

Then he took his seat among the children who had been his pupils, and the hush that fell on the room was like the silence which follows a thunderclap.

CHAPTER X

THE TOP SIDE OF THE EARTH

WHAT is the shape of the earth? They were discussing this question around the cane mill at Sile Parker's. It was at the time of the stir-off, and the talk which had started earlier in the day grew more voluminous and more intense after supper. The company was larger then, and the grinding being done, and the sap at its final boiling, there was more time to talk.

"It ain't what I send my young uns to school to larn," said Green Best.

"You'd best be glad to have 'em larn anything. They'll be just that much ahead of their daddy," retorted Neze Post with a laugh.

"Without it's develmaint," added Jake Crawford.

"You want to remember, fellers, that they got a mammy," replied Green good-naturedly. "I hain't never sot up to be no Solomon myself, but the chaps ain't likely to be fools ef they favor their ma."

"Oh, we knowed which side o' the house the brains was on," said Post, and the laugh grew more boisterous. This was characteristic Pine Knot humor, and Green counted it a family compliment, since it reflected credit on his wife.

“ Brains is one thing, and this here talk about the earth bein’ round is another,” said Green.

“ That’s so,” said Preacher Taulbee. “ I lay off to have as much brains as the next feller, and I thank the Lord that my jeans coat hain’t never breshed no dust offn nary college wall. This here talk about the earth bein’ round is a-goin’ to ruin this country ef we ain’t keerful.”

Preacher Taulbee owned the cane mill, and hauled it from place to place in the autumn, grinding out the sap from the little patches of sorghum along the creek, and boiling it down into molasses.

“ What do you aim to do about it?” asked Post.

“ I ain’t a-goin’ to stand it,” said Taulbee.

“ But the teacher’s a-teachin’ it right along.”

“ I’ll take my boy out of school.”

“ That won’t stop him a-larning the rest of the chaps.”

“ No, but the rest kin do the same ef they feel as I do.”

“ But he’s larning the chaps a sight,” said Parker.

“ It ain’t the larning,” said the preacher. “ I don’t like to have our young uns larned what’s goin’ to make ’em infidels.”

“ Mr. Buzbee ain’t no infidel,” said Parker. “ He’s a good man, and you alls know it.”

“ But he cyan’t ride over this community with his fool talk about the earth bein’ round,” said Noel Davis.

“ I know one thing,” said Taulbee, “ he cyan’t ride me. He kin saddle me, but he cyan’t ride me.”

“ Nor him nor no other man cyan’t ride me,” said Davis. “ Ef he comes up to whar I’m a-standin’ at the trought a-eatin’ my oats, and gits his foot in my stirrup

and goes to throw his laig acrost, about the time the dust clars off I'll be a-standin' thar like I was before, and he'll be a-layin' off about ten foot, and one o' his galluses'll be wropped around my hind foot."

Just what the teacher had done to give wings to this brilliant flight of rhetoric may be inferred from the conversation. He had taught the children of Pine Knot that the earth is round.

"What be you a-doin' thar, Noel? 'Pears to me you're keepin' mighty still," said Green.

"The still sow steals the swill, I've heerd tell," said Neze.

"I ain't a-doin' nothin'," said Noel, concealing a shovel in the dark.

"I know what you're a-doin'," said Green. "You're a-fixin' you a glory hole."

"Shet up!" said Noel. "Hit's for the teacher!"

The teacher did not step into the glory hole that night. He had been at one or two stir-off's before, and had learned to locate the hole where the skim-mings were poured, and to expect that it would be lightly covered with sod as a trap for some unwary victim. Noel himself forgot and stepped in it before the evening was over, and thus poetic justice was done in a manner not wholly unusual. But the teacher got his foot into another situation that evening by accepting Preacher Taulbee's challenge to a debate on the shape of the earth.

The fire was glowing under the long sheet-iron pan. The furnace had been made by digging a shallow trench a foot longer than the pan in the bank of the creek. From the lower level it was easy to tend the fire, and the elevation of the pan to the top of the

bank made it easy to pour in the sap and dip out the molasses. The fire showed out at the door and cast its red light across the creek, and also from the chimney, if the hole at the other end could be so called, making a nearly vertical cone of light above the pan. But later when they lifted off the pan, the whole bed of red-hot coals blazed out, and, to quote the felicitous phrase of No Bus'ness, "burned a hole in the night."

Mr. Buzbee appeared just as the pan was lifted off, and the young folks, who by this time numbered a score or more, crowded around the pan with their whittled paddles, and scraped the edges where the molasses cooled first, and licked the paddles and came again. The teacher soon had all the molasses he wanted, and withdrew from the crowd of youngsters who were laughing over Noel's mishap, as since the day of Haman people have laughed or moralized—and it amounts to the same thing often—over the fate of the man who falls into his own snare. The group of men who stood aside were talking about his teaching that the earth is round, and his approach resulted in a frank challenge from the preacher to discuss the question publicly in the Pine Knot schoolhouse. The teacher promptly accepted, and the details were arranged.

It was a crisp autumn evening when the first debate occurred. From up the creek and down people came with unlighted pine-knot torches, or with little brass lamps. A fire was kindled in the ample fireplace, and several of the brass lamps, smoking furiously, and incidentally lighting a little spot about them, made the darkness visible. Before it was dark the log schoolhouse was crowded.

With Buzbee came James Fletcher, who was to be his colleague. With Taulbee was Green Baker, a preacher of note from Laurel County. Baker was noted for various things. He always removed his coat when preaching, but this was not enough to distinguish him. He had served one term in the penitentiary at Frankfort, and while it would be a gross libel to mention this as if it were common among mountain preachers, still it is worthy of note that not a few converted ruffians become preachers there; the ministry is the one respectable career left for such men, with dignity comparable to their past estate. And it certainly is characteristic of the region that while common fame declared that the particular offense for which he had been sentenced in his sinful days was hog-stealing, Baker himself declared that it was for "stobbin' a feller." He was well past both stealing and stabbing now, however, but had in him the somewhat sanctified spirit of the desperado turned to righteous ends. He was to be the chief speaker tonight, and his old spirit was up. He was righteously indignant that any man should be teaching pernicious doctrine, and he was enjoying the prospect of a fight for the truth.

Renfro was chosen chairman by mutual agreement. At Fletcher's suggestion, Mr. Buzbee also chose him as judge. The preachers chose another preacher, and so it was certain in advance that the vote would stand paired, with the third man to decide. It was agreed also that each man should speak three quarters of an hour, and that the leaders should close the discussion.

Mr. Buzbee began by stating the arguments given in the geographies. He told of the ships whose masts,

though smaller, appear before the hulls; of the round shadow upon the moon, cast by the earth in time of an eclipse, and so on. It seemed to him a clear and convincing statement. But it was evident, even while he was speaking, that any argument based on unobstructed vision was ineffective; people living among the hills had no experience which enabled them to interpret such an argument.

Taulbee made the most of this in his reply. Even if it was true, he said, it proved nothing, and nothing was so certain as that the earth was solid. He appealed to the evidences of the senses, to the experience of mankind, to common sense, and to the Bible. Who of all the people here ever saw the creek, which flowed west, begin running east at midnight, as it certainly must do when the earth tipped sufficiently? As to eclipses, they were freaky things. He had once seen one come on and go off on the same side of the moon; the fact was, no one could predict the turn they might take, and it was a pure assumption that they were caused by the earth's shadow. Besides, even if it were possible to prove that eclipses were caused by the shadow of the earth, it might be merely the shadow of a round hill on the top side of it.

Fletcher followed, and dwelt upon the facts of human experience. Men had actually sailed around the earth. Men whom they had seen on the other side were no more on the bottom than they themselves; they, also, thought themselves to be standing with heads up, and suffered no discomfort. He urged his hearers to believe that the earth's motion made it seem that the sun and stars moved; even so he had seen on horseback a whole landscape in apparent mo-

tion, and he had heard that people on a train were uncertain whether their own train or one on an adjoining track was moving.

Then Baker rose. He was a giant in stature, and stooped a little to get down to the level of other people. He was stooping when he began to speak, but he straightened as he proceeded, and the effect was as if he added cubits to his stature by the mere force of his argument. He took his stand beside Buzbee's chair, and made sweeping gestures over his head, his ponderous fist descending over the head of the teacher as though he would crush his skull.

"Mr. Presidaint," he said, "this here ain't no time for smooth talking. I've come here to-night from clar over the aidge of the yarth in Laurel"—there was infinite sarcasm in the words, and a plain attempt to establish his own reputation as a traveler—"and I've come too fur to have ary false *idy* of politeness to these here gentlemen, I'm a-goin' to hew to the line, and let the chips fall whar they will. This here's a age of new *idys*, and most of 'em false; this here's a time that people wants to believe a lie and be damned. And hit's a time for them that believes the truth to stand together and fight for the truth, and not be mealy-mouthed about it. I ain't a-sayin' my colleage ain't right in bein' so p'tic'lar to be polite to these gentlemen, and I ain't disputin' that they're very *nice young* gentlemen, but they got a heap to larn, and some things that ain't down in the books in college. R-r-r-r-ck!"

Thus he ended his paragraphs with a hostile clearing of the throat, and a threatening gesture. Then he began his argument.

Who did not know, he asked, that travelers were notorious liars? They came back, knowing that it is impossible to disprove their tales and that people expect them to have seen great things. People expect them to lie, and they do lie.

"Why, I remember," said he, becoming facetious, "when Bill Geddes went off with a hog drove. He come back plum heavy under the heft of the wisdom he'd got. All the neighbors ast him whar he'd ben, and he said he didn't know. And so they kep' a-pes-terin' him to know somethin' about it. 'I dunno,' says he, 'but I know I got a long ways off and to a mighty quare place.' 'How was hit quare?' says some one. 'Wal,' says he, 'they called sop, gravy.'"

This story provoked a roar of laughter, and, while the point was not quite in sight, it was evident that it militated against Buzbee and Fletcher.

"Now, who's a-goin' to believe that down under the dirt and rocks and sich thar's folks a-livin' with haid down, and foolish enough to allow they're up? I've heerd tell of folks not a-knowin' which end thar haid was on, but I hadn't no idy of meetin' none till to-night! I reckon that's whar these gentlemen come from; anyhow, they come from whar men's idys gits that away. R-r-r-r-ck!

"Now, all this here talk about men sailin' round the yarth. Now you know as well as I do that water would run off the aidge and take them with it. And if they thought they sailed around, why mebbly they sailed around as clost to the aidge as they could and kept a-goin' till they come back."

He illustrated this by telling of a man who thought himself to be going straight ahead, but who really was

lost, and who, after a night of wandering, found himself where he started from. "But even he wasn't fool enough to allow he'd went around the yarth to git to the back side of his own barn. R-r-r-r-ck!"

Then he advanced to the positive part of his argument. He had been something of a traveler himself. He had been through Cumberland Gap into Old Virginy, and had been the other way as far as Frankfort. He had found that the earth was not all so broken into knobs as it was here, but he had found no place where it appeared round, and his eye was as good as the next man's. He had sat up all night grinding when water had been low, and the need of meal was great, and at no instant during the night had the mill pond, the one level sheet of what water was near his home, even hesitated about running over the dam. "Hit didn't appear to know what these gentlemen expected of it. I hain't no doubt ef the water had a-knowed how it ort to act, hit would have done different when the yarth began to tip; but 'peared lack hit didn't know no better than to do like it done. Hit never went to no college, and couldn't be blamed for hit's ignorance. Nobody larned the water how to run but God A'mighty. R-r-r-r-ck!"

By this time Baker's form seemed to tower among the rafters, and the planes of light made by the flickering lamps added to his apparent height. He wore no vest, and his jeans coat had been laid aside. His long arms were swinging, and his right fist was descending over the teacher's head.

"But all this ain't a patchin' to what I've got to say. The question ain't what I think nor what these here nice gentlemen think. I hain't got no quarrel

with them, nor I don't intend to run for no office here, neither, nor come over here a-sparkin' nor apply for no schools to keep. I'm to tell the truth without fear or favor, and I say that this doctrine is plum agin the word of God."

Then he told how the Bible declares that God laid the corner stone of the earth, and stretched the line upon it, and he asked what need a ball had for a corner or a corner stone—"no more need than a hog has for a sidesaddle," he answered—and how a straight line could conform to a curve. He added that the Bible affirms that the course of the sun is from one end of the heaven to the other, and that if the sun is stationary the Bible must be false. He affirmed that, if the Bible is true, nothing is hid from the heat of the sun, whereas, if his opponents were right, the poles were long in darkness. He was in the midst of a long array of quotations when his time expired.

It was evident that the argument was not exhausted, and adjournment was had for a week. Public sentiment was divided concerning the merits of the discussion, but no one questioned that Baker had made a profound impression. He himself conceded, as modestly as he knew how, that he had delivered a great speech, and added, "Hit takes a college-bred to dror me out!"

Mr. Buzbee and his colleague got together and compared notes. It was evident that they were to have a harder task than they anticipated. Anxious as they were to succeed—and to be defeated would be only less fatal to their reputation in the community than to be the victims of a successful lockout—they were also anxious to convince their audience, many of

whom indeed agreed with them, but not a few of whom counted their teaching a dangerous heresy. And, indeed, a man who has seen sincere people in the throes of an effort to believe the earth round and the Bible true comes to look rather calmly on discussions about higher criticism and evolution and the other minor affairs which trouble the faith of weaker souls than these stalwart mountaineers. And if it seem to any reader that a man must be counted ignorant because he believes the earth flat and stationary, let him remember that Sir Francis Bacon never fully accepted the Copernican theory; that Turretin defends the theory that the earth is flat; and that one great American university is said to have taught the Ptolemaic theory for conscience' sake down to the second decade of the nineteenth century.

The simple globes and luminaries and the home-made orrery were fairly successful, and made an impression on the audience when exhibited, and it impressed the third judge, Tom Lawson the blacksmith. The teachers appreciated his growing interest, and they noted gladly that Mr. Taulbee could do little more than thrash over the straw of the previous meeting. But Mr. Baker had not exhausted his argument, and when he rose it was to an argument chiefly biblical and full of power. As he went on he grew more heated and indulged more in sarcasm. Looking down in scorn upon Buzbee, and clearing his throat, he said:

“R-r-r-r-ck! Here's a college-bred—ah! And he's come out here into this wilderness country—ah!—to larn us and to instruct us about the shape of the yarth—ah! And he knows more'n what Joshua did—ah! Brethering, do you reckon Joshua needed him to tell

him what to pray for—ah! Did he say, ‘Yarth, stand thou still on thine axletree’—ah! No, he says, says he, ‘Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon’—ah!—‘and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon’—ah! But he knows more’n what Joshua did—ah! I reckon he’d like to take Joshua inter this little school of his—ah!—and larn him about the shape of the yarth—ah! *He* knows more’n Joshua—ah! Yes, I reckon he *thinks* he knows more’n God A’mighty that writ this Book—ah! I tell ye, brethering, hit’s the doctrine of infidelity—ah! And ary man that’ll teach it ort to be drummed out of the country—ah! R-r-r-r-r-r-ck!”

He also explained his theory of the continual energy of the sun. Said he:

“I’ve got an idy about how it is that the sun comes up just as bright as what it went down and don’t lose no light. Ef hit kep’ on a-shinin’ in Chiny and them other places day and night right along, hit would burn out attar a while. But every night when hit goes down hit rolls right through hell and comes up a-blazin’. Anyhow, that’s my notion, though I don’t know as they’s ary Scripture on the p’int, but hit stands to reason.”

The discussion closed; the judges went out into the dark and cast their vote, two to one in favor of the teachers, though Mr. Lawson desired to have it understood that his vote was strictly on the merits of the argument, and not on the question of fact. After the meeting he said to Mr. Buzbee that he was somewhat troubled about the matter, and he wished to settle the question now he had begun. He asked Mr. Buzbee if he might come over some night and explain some questions that had arisen in his mind during the progress of the discussion.

A few evenings later he came over, and Mr. Buzbee took a ball of yarn and a knitting needle and a candle, and, pushing the needle through the ball, illustrated by walking around the candle the alternation of day and night, and the progression of the seasons. At last Lawson declared that he understood it, and wondered how he had misunderstood so long. So Lawson went home and the Buzbees retired for the night, and the earth soon rolled around into sunlight again.

But Lawson was not a permanent convert. Mr. Buzbee heard that he had fallen from grace, and asked him about it.

"I reckon I mout as well own up," said Lawson. "They say an honest confession is good for the soul. You made that look mighty plain, but I wasn't easy in my mind. 'Peared like ever' time the old thing flopped over she was goin' to spill us off. And I couldn't git over Joshua, and the angels standin' on the corners of the earth, and I said, 'Let God be true, and ever' man a liar!' And I made up my mind I didn't want to believe it, and I wasn't a-goin' to, and I hain't!"

Another man's heart sank as he viewed the failure of his conversion to last, but Mr. Buzbee had learned to expect the world to receive his ideas somewhat slowly, and said: "Mr. Lawson, I don't blame you. If I were in your place, I don't believe I'd try."

"It's no use trying to deal with such ignorant people," said Mrs. Buzbee, who resented Lawson's fall from grace.

"We must not call them ignorant, my dear," he replied patiently. "After all, we are not so far removed

from this condition that we can afford to call it ignorance. When Cotton Mather, who, spite of his vanities and minor follies, was a progressive man in his day, preached that the sun is the center of the solar system, so intelligent a man as Chief-Justice Samuel Sewall, of Boston, went home and recorded his protest in his diary. Let us not hasten to call them ignorant who went into isolation in Sewall's day, and have retained so well the civilization of his time."

The debate showed Mr. Buzbee at his best. He was used to controversy and wonderfully patient under opposition. He was master of the learning of the subject, and astonished even Fletcher with his skill and resource. And it made his place more secure in the community. The people felt proud of his learning, even if they did not share his views, and they resented Baker's assaults as in some sort a reflection upon the district that had employed him as teacher.

"That man Baker kin preach here whenever he wants to, but he cyan't git a jury out to hear him atter this," was the common remark.

Fletcher, too, had appeared at his best. His espousal of Mr. Buzbee's cause made it seem a home product, and Pine Knot felt itself a sort of Galileo among mountain communities. Not that all the people approved the theory, but that the right to hold it was established beyond cavil. Even Preacher Taulbee came to exhibit a certain respect for the doctrine, and with appropriate gestures admitted that "the yarth may be round this away" (that is cylindrical), "but hit ain't round this away," that is spherical. So, notwithstanding the lapse of some of the converts to the new idea, the debate scored a real triumph

for the teacher and his assistant, and made for progress.

But there was one person who watched it all with anxiety. Mrs. Buzbee could not fail to see that this discussion, which brought Fletcher still more constantly to their home, was making his devotion to Barbara apparent to every one except Mr. Buzbee, and possibly Barbara. Did Barbara, too, understand what it meant? And did she respond? Sometimes Mrs. Buzbee thought she did.

CHAPTER XI

WIDOW BRANIMAN AND HER NEIGHBOR

It is no disparagement of other pupils of the Pine Knot school to say that James Fletcher was the most eager pupil, and the one who gained the most. The studies which he pursued—history, composition, natural science, having for its basis an old text-book in physical geography, with theology and biblical interpretation—were not all in the curriculum arranged for common schools, but he pursued all these and more. Boarding around among his friends as he had done while a teacher, and as he still was welcome to do as a preacher and a friend, he devoted his whole time, except when preaching, to his studies. And what he learned was almost phenomenal. He brought to his task a mind so eager, and questions which he had so long pondered, he felt so profoundly that this was his life chance to get the most from a man whose college training and wide reading made him a mint of knowledge, that he allowed no opportunity to escape him for the learning of a fact or principle.

Mr. Buzbee liked him from the first, and was never tired of speaking to his wife of Fletcher's magnanimity in coming to school after his disappointment.

"It was good sense," she replied, "but I can hard-

ly call it magnanimity, and I am sure he is profiting richly by it."

"No doubt, no doubt. But I also am profiting. Aside from the tuition, which I am most reluctant to accept, but which he forces upon me, he is a great help. It was he who dissuaded the boys from their intended lockout: I am told that it is a universal custom to lock the teacher out one day, to test his ability to master the school. Of course, had they done this, I should have mastered them."

"How?" asked Barbara, a little disappointed that her father had not been permitted to triumph over them.

"Oh, I can hardly tell, not knowing the way their fancy might prompt them to move; but just by way of a beginning, I have carried a pound of sulphur in my bag ever since school opened. It is far easier to set it on fire and drop it down the chimney than to force the door. If that had failed, I have other devices. But it is far better to have avoided all this. Then, when the complaint began about my teaching that the earth is round, it was he who assured the Methodists that I was right, though the Baptists, I believe, still hold me a heretic there. At different times, too, he has heard my classes in the lower grades, that I might devote more time to the higher ones. He has been, in fact, my assistant."

"But you," said Mrs. Buzbee, "have given him much more than what you have imparted in school hours. He comes here almost every night."

"It is a pleasure to see his eagerness to learn. I have taught him a little Latin, and have begun to teach him Greek, using the Greek Testament, and

beginning with simple sight-reading in the Fourth Gospel. It is a method of my own, so much simpler than that commonly employed that I have long wondered why it is not in use in colleges and preparatory schools. It is quite astonishing to see how he gets on. He has actually read three chapters, and has learned not a little of the grammar, and almost without effort."

"John," asked Mrs. Buzbee, as Barbara left the room for a moment, "do you think that it is solely for his lessons that James Fletcher comes here?"

"Why, surely so, my dear. What else should bring him?"

Mrs. Buzbee said nothing for a moment.

"I can think of nothing else, I am sure," he repeated.

"Men are so blind!" said Mrs. Buzbee.

"You can not mean—?" he asked.

"Certainly, I mean just that," she replied.

"But, my dear, Barbara is but a child."

"You are mistaken again," said she. "Barbara is eighteen, and a woman."

"Eighteen! So she is! Time flies so quickly! And I have accomplished so little! Eighteen years ago I expected that by the time I was sixty, as I now am, I should see the end of many things now hardly begun. But we are approaching a consummation, my dear. Lincoln will be elected. The Knoxville Whig, which I have been reading this afternoon, gives the most certain assurance that the election will result so. And then——"

"But, John, I wanted to say a word about Barbara."

“ Barbara, oh yes, to be sure! Well, she is eighteen, as you say. Well, what of it? ”

“ Only that James Fletcher is in love with her.”

“ Do you think so, my dear? ”

“ I know it.”

“ Has Barbara told you? ”

“ Certainly not.”

“ Has he spoken to Barbara? ”

“ Not to my knowledge.”

“ Then how do you know? Perhaps you only imagine.”

“ My dear, wise old goose of a husband, if you will only open your eyes, you will see for yourself.”

“ Well, my dear, perhaps it is so. I had not thought of such a thing, but I do not see that anything is to be done.”

“ Yet, I don't like to have him heart-broken.”

“ No, of course not; and yet, perhaps he would not be so.”

“ John! You don't mean that you would be willing to have Barbara marry him? ”

“ Why, my love, the whole subject is new to me. I have not thought of such a thing. I suppose that Barbara will marry some time, though she seems to me very young. I do not know that I seriously object to him.”

“ Why, John! You do not consider! What is his social position? What are his prospects in life? She could have had, had she stayed in Lexington, offers of marriage from some of the best men there. There is one with whom, I am sure, she practically had an understanding.”

“ Who was that? ”

“Boyd Estill.”

“The son of Philip Estill, who married Lydia Boyd?”

“Yes.”

“My dear,” said Mr. Buzbee, with a quiet emphasis, “the Estills own slaves, and so do the Boyds.”

“Yes, but they are excellent people, and of the very best families. And I am not sure but Barbara encouraged him.”

“They are not engaged?”

“No, but I think Barbara is fond of him.”

“She has not told you so?”

“No.”

“Then I must talk with Barbara.”

“John! What will you say to her?”

“I will say that I would rather see her in her coffin than married to a slaveholder.”

“John, John! Be wise, as you are good! Remember how father’s interference worked in our case! There is nothing between them, I am sure. Don’t meddle, or you will do harm. I ought not to have told you. Promise me, John, that you will not speak to her.”

“They do not correspond?”

“No, I think they had some slight misunderstanding.”

“Ah, well, it was doubtless nothing but a girl’s fancy, and is past, I doubt not.”

“I am not sure of that. But you let her alone about Boyd Estill, and I will say nothing at present about James Fletcher.”

“Very well, my love,” said he, “that seems fair. I had so much trouble in my own love affair through

interference that I have little inclination to meddle with others."

Barbara came in at this moment, and announced: "Mrs. Braniman wants to see you, father."

"Come in, Mrs. Braniman," said Mr. Buzbee. "Let me take your horse."

"No, I won't git down. I ain't got time to stop. Deek Morgan never was no 'count to fix up no stile-blocks so's a woman could git off a horse here. I'll set right here. Be you a lawyer?"

"I am a member of the bar, but I do not practice."

"Well, I want you to git me up a proteck."

"A what, my good woman?"

"Lordy, I ain't your good woman! I ain't nobody's! I sorter wisht I was, sometimes, till I think how I was pestered with my old man that died. But he got good to-wards the last. He was sorter good all the time. But right to-wards the last he got real sweet. Hit seemed right like he was settin' up with me agin. And when he found he'd got to die, he made me promise to plant tobacker on his grave, and nobody smoke it or chaw it but jest me."

"That was a mark of his affection, doubtless. What can I do for you now?"

Barbara, who had been standing in the door, disappeared now and stifled her laughter at the late lamented Mr. Braniman's sentiment as best she could.

"I want a proteck agin Noel Davis. He don't keep up his critters. His farm jines mine, and he lets his hogs and his yearlin's run all over creation, and in my corn. He wouldn't 'a' done it onct when my old man was alive. He wouldn't do it now, if I had any one to stand up for me. But I hain't. I ain't got

no man of no description, nor boy nuther. No man, nor no boy, nor no nothin'. Only jest"—and she added this in a tone of profound contempt—"only jest nine head o' gal children."

"I am sorry, very sorry. What do you wish me to do?"

"I want you to draw me up a paper, to swear to before a justice of the peace, to make him keep up his stock, or his line fences, one."

"I see. My good woman—I beg your pardon, Mrs. Braniman—line fences are a source of perpetual trouble between neighbors. Could you not so plan with him what you will plant in adjacent fields that each shall have the same crop maturing at the same time, so that he will have to keep his stock away from the line fence to protect his own crop?"

"I didn't allow to do nothin' of the kind. I jest allowed that I'd law him till he larned to behave himself like he oughter."

"I should not like to help you go to law. Law is very uncertain and unsatisfactory. Would not this be the better way?"

"But good land, ef I've got to ast him what to plant in this field, and tell him what to plant in that, I mout jest as well marry him and git shet of him."

"That may be the better way."

"Do you reckon so?"

"It is certainly worth considering."

"Wall, I've said a hundred times I wouldn't marry him, if he was the next to the last man, and the other was a bald-headed, cross-eyed heathen."

"But the heathen might prove as disagreeable as

Noel, and besides he would not have the line fence with you."

"I'll study about it, Mr. Buzbee. Say, you wouldn't mind mentioning it to Noel, would ye? But then I reckon you needn't. I'd like to think it over first."

"You understand, Mrs. Braniman, I had no thought of suggesting such a thing. It was your remark that brought it to my mind. But as you put the case, it seems to me an admirable way of settling the difficulty. At any rate, I should say the risks were less and the prospects better than going to law."

"Well, I b'lieve you're right. I've no doubt that house o' Noel's is all seven ways for Sunday inside. I've jest thought a million times I'd like to git in thar and give it a good clarin' up jest for spite. I don't know but what he needs a woman as much as I need a man. But don't say nothing about it to Noel. I ain't sure whether I'd have him yet, and I wouldn't like to disappoint him. And hit's better such things should come around nateral. But whether I marry him or don't, he's got to keep up his yearlin's."

It is characteristic of the difference in their temperament that Mrs. Buzbee was shocked by what she overheard of this conversation; Barbara was on the point of explosion with laughter; and her father returned to the house with entire seriousness, having found in the conversation no cause either of anxiety or of amusement.

CHAPTER XII

DADDY CAMPBELL'S FUNERAL

“MY dearly beloved frien's, and neighbors, and neighbors' childering, and dyin' congregation.”

It was Brother Taulbee's usual form of opening the service. And “The Unclouded Day” was his regular opening hymn. He would have been as unable to begin a service without this formula and hymn as he would have been to conclude his exhortation without warning the sinner who was endeavoring to satisfy himself with “huskis” * that he was liable “to be turned out to graze in the broad pastures of sin like Nee-buck-a-nee-zer-ah!” and the certainty that he would “gnaw his tongue in the tormaints of everlastin' tradition—ah!” If Brother Taulbee had known any other way of opening the service, this would have been the time for an unusual introduction, for this was an unusual occasion. Daddy Campbell was to have his funeral preached.

Daddy Campbell was popularly believed to be much more than a hundred years old, but he had re-

* Many of the strange-sounding forms of speech in the Cumberland Mountains are good Elizabethan words, as the strong Saxon plural, plurals; husk, huskis; beast, beastis; post, postis, etc.

cently corrected that impression. He was ninety-nine years and more than eleven months. He would die when he was a hundred.

Daddy Campbell's approaching death brought back to the older ones the secret of his longevity, and they told it in whispers to those who had a right to know.

Though active in many household industries, Daddy Campbell had had much time on his hands, and he had employed it well. Ever looking forward with hope to the time of his death, he had made himself a coffin. It was such a coffin as no man in Whitley County had ever been buried in, for it was the work of years. The planks were carved with curious emblems, and the top bore, in a tracery of oak leaves, the single verse, "God be merciful to me a sinner." That coffin, worked upon for years, had been put together recently, and, covered with a strip of cotton cloth, had been put away in the loft of Mr. Preston's smoke house. It was brought out to-day, and Daddy Campbell was sitting in it before the pulpit, for his hundredth birthday would come before the next Baptist meeting day, and he wanted his funeral preached at the time of a regular meeting.

It was little enough to ask, and the request met with no objection. And, while Daddy Campbell was a Baptist, Daddy Campbell himself was so catholic and so widely known, and the event was so unusual in its character, that the Methodists were invited to share in it. If James Fletcher had any doubt about the propriety of giving up his Marsh Creek appointment to be at No Bus'ness on the Baptist day, that

doubt was relieved by the assurance that all his Marsh Creek congregation would be at No Bus'ness.

Besides these considerations, it should be recorded that as the month came in on a Sunday, there was the semi-occasional conflict between the Methodists and Baptists—for the Baptists “rule by Saturdays” and the Methodists “rule by Sundays.” This makes invariable confusion in all months that begin on Sunday, for the Baptist “second Saturday and Sunday” is the same as the Methodists' third. And not always is there so harmonious a compromise at hand as that afforded by the funeral of Daddy Campbell.

The No Bus'ness church house was too small to hold the congregation. The seats were moved outside and placed beneath the golden-leaved beeches; a fence was robbed of its top rails and used to extemporize more seats; groups sat on mounds left by the upturned roots of trees or on logs or grassy slopes; and the horses that were hitched to swinging limbs could be heard nickering at their tether two hundred yards and more up the creek and down. It was the largest congregation that had gathered at No Bus'ness for many a day.

Funerals are always attractive affairs there, and autumn is the best time for them. Not infrequently they are bunched, and several are preached in a day. The service at the grave is usually brief and simple, and often is dispensed with. Death is too uncertain to admit of a funeral at the time of burial. It may occur when the water is high, and it is impossible to send for friends; it may occur when other members of the family are sick and unable to attend; it may occur when the preacher is at a remote part of his cir-

cuit. Death is arbitrary, but the funeral is elastic. It will occur perhaps six months after the interment; the boy Abraham Lincoln sent from Indiana far into Kentucky for a minister to preach the funeral of his mother, several months dead. It is so at No Bus'ness and Pine Knot. Indeed, among the notices "norated" at this very funeral of Daddy Campbell's was one that announced the funeral of Sile Parker's first wife at Marsh Creek on the fourth Sunday; and Sile was present with his second wife and heard it.

Brother Taulbee announced the purpose of the meeting. "We air met," said he, "on a most solemn occasion. Our dear friend and brother, our father in Israel, after a long life of sorrow and care, of weakness and infirmity, feels in his soul that afore we meet here again he will have outstripped us in the narrer la-ane of life—ah! and go to pe-eple the pa-ale nations of the dead—ah! It is his request that we preach his funeral now, for whether he dies right soon or not, he cyan't live long. The young may die—ah! and the old must—ah! And hit ain't no more'n right that a man that's lived so long amongst us should have his last wish gratified—ah! So we'll preach about the dead, but we'll preach to the livin', and we invite you all to gether as nigh as you kin, and we'll begin the service by singin' 'The Unclouded Day.'"

Zeke Strunk here moved down the aisle with a gourd and a bucket of water from the spring. He started to set it upon the pulpit according to custom, but as the coffin stood in the way of those who would be passing up to drink, he set it at the foot of the coffin, where all through the service it was visited by members of the congregation.

The hymn started as a solo. It was too well known to need lining, and Brother Taulbee sang it in a voice at first wavering and then stronger, gathering more of power as, first a few on the front row, then an occasional voice in the audience, and at length the whole congregation, gathered up its voice and swelled the refrain :

“ Oh, they tell me of a land far beyond the skies,
Oh, they tell me of a land far away,
Oh, they tell me of a land where no storm-clouds rise,
Oh, they tell me of an unclouded day ! ”

It is one of the more perfect of the mountain hymns, and one famous in the region as a favorite for singing at executions, and also as Brother Taulbee's favorite. The audience sang it while seated, but, when it was finished, rose and repeated the last refrain. It was then that Daddy Campbell's shrill, broken voice was heard, singing the hymn from his coffin.

The service that followed had been undertaken in good faith, but it was carried out with some embarrassment. It was not so easy to speak about Daddy Campbell as if he were dead, and to have him sitting before you in his coffin—sitting or reclining as the case might be—for, while the original purpose of the coffin in that service was as a seat, Daddy Campbell sometimes reclined, both from fatigue and the more nearly to realize his relation to the occasion; and when he lay down, trying painfully to straighten out his poor, deformed legs, the audience watched narrowly to see the expected but uncanny reappearance of his head above the coffin side. But if the sermons were somewhat general in their character, and treated of death in general

rather than the prospective and *quasi*-actual death of Daddy Campbell, it was not so strange, after all, and the funeral as a whole was counted a success, especially in view of the ending. Yet to the ministers, of whom there were a good half dozen, and in less degree to the congregation, the occasion was a somewhat strained and difficult one.

James Fletcher was the last speaker. He felt as he rose that his position was peculiarly hard. The general subject of death with its warnings and hopes had been thoroughly canvassed, and the only topic that seemed to have been left for him was the one which must not be omitted, yet which all the rest had passed over lightly, with vague personal allusions, whether in courtesy to the last speaker or because the theme afforded peculiar difficulties—that of the life and character of the deceased. If he had been truly dead, there would have been no hesitation about it, and all the preachers would have talked about “the life and character of the departed.” All the audience felt the embarrassment and waited to hear from the last speaker the words that had special relation to the occasion.

As James Fletcher rose, the difficulty of his position grew upon him. He looked across to a tree in the rear beneath which sat Mr. Buzbee and Barbara—his eye had often wandered there while the others were speaking—and the difficulty increased. Time had been when he would have delivered his message without fear or favor in the presence of all the kings of earth, so at least he had thought; but he felt strangely embarrassed in the presence of the man at whose feet he sat as a pupil and before whom he felt himself an igno-

ramus, the woman whom he had come to admire, and the man whom he must treat as dead, but who lay there alive. For the first time it seemed to him a sham and a mockery. He looked at Barbara, and thought he read the same in her eyes, and then he was doubly sure of it. He stammered and faltered and forgot what he had meant to say. He uttered a few pious common-places, and felt a hypocrite for doing so, but he talked because he could not think. But his spirit was rising in disgust with himself, in shame for his failure, and in determination to say something worthy, if not of the occasion, at least of his position as a minister and a man, and to speak a seasonable word to the great, curious throng.

“My friends,” said he, “it ain’t easy to treat this occasion just as we’d like. The feeling that makes us want to speak well of the dead somehow shuts our lips when they’re living, and, while our brother, at his age, is standing on the threshold of eternity, it has not been possible for us to forget that he is here and still with us. My brothers have felt this, and have left it for me to speak of the life of the man that lies before us. What I have to say of him I can say in a few words. His life is known to you all. For years he has borne his burden without complaining, and has looked forward to death with hope and not with fear. If his sins have been great, the grace of God has been greater. If his youth was wayward, his old age has been kind and gentle. May God give him rest and peace after the sorrows and mistakes of life, and may we shun his faults and imitate his kindness, his gentleness, and his love!”

He paused a moment, and started to walk around

the coffin that he might speak unembarrassed by its presence. He had said all that he intended to say about Daddy Campbell, and he would now preach to the living. As he passed around the coffin his eyes fell again on the face within, and it had changed.

Fletcher started in surprise. Then his plan changed. He paused before the coffin, his back turned to the audience, and stood looking down into the pale face within. The congregation looked and listened, painfully intent.

“Daddy Campbell!” called Fletcher. There was no answer.

He placed his hand on the old man’s brow, but the eyes did not open. He took him by the hand; it fell back limp. All eyes were fastened upon him in a strange and horrible fascination. The ministers in the pulpit rose, and also looked into the coffin. They saw what Fletcher saw. The congregation strained its eyes and tried to read what these saw reflected in their faces. No one spoke, but one of the ministers hurried out and brought Mr. Buzbee. He stood among them for a moment and bent over the coffin. The whole audience was on its feet by this time, and every one was craning his neck, but there was no movement forward; every one stood rooted to his place.

Mr. Buzbee placed his fingers on the old man’s thin wrist, but felt no throb. He lifted the lid of one eye and looked at the pupil, which did not contract in the strong light.

“He is dead,” said he to the ministers; “the strain of the long service has been too much for his strength. It is what he would have wished for.”

Fletcher turned again and faced the congregation.

“ My friends,” said he, “ our friend has gone. The kind words that our tongues could not utter we can now speak freely, and the faults which we did not like to recall—these too, if we wish, we may now discuss. But he has passed where our words can neither cause him pleasure nor pain, and the lesson of his life we already know. Let us unite in prayer.”

After the prayer the congregation passed around, silent and awe-stricken, and looked into the face that lay silent and irradiate with a joy which Daddy Campbell's soul caught in the moment when it came to him that he was dying.

There are those about No Bus'ness who sing “ The Unclouded Day ” in solemn tones, for they have heard how its words were the last that mortal ears heard from the lips of Daddy Campbell, singing from his coffin.

Barbara and her father went home after the funeral with Mr. Preston. The hour was late, for the service had been four hours in length. They were all tired and hungry, and all were thinking solemnly over the events of the day. But even at such a time Liberty Preston could not restrain a feeling of disappointment that the day must pass without much opportunity to see Fletcher, and when she waited on him and Barbara, who were seated side by side at the table, she thought that she detected their affection for each other even in the silence of that solemn meal, and she hated this new girl from Lexington who was stealing away the heart of her lover.

CHAPTER XIII

A VERSATILE SCHOOLMASTER

BE it remembered, as a partial offset to the many and pathetic failures of John Howard Buzbee in life, that his teaching of the Pine Knot school was a real success. A few children were taken from school because he taught that the earth is round, and a number who stopped out for fodder-pullin' did not return, but that was always the case. To offset this depletion of numbers, a goodly company of young men and women from other districts came in, learning of the superior attainments of the new teacher at Pine Knot. As the Pine Knot school had begun the 1st of September, while many schools about began in July, there was ample time for teachers whose schools had expired to study two months in what the inhabitants seriously began to call "The Pine Knot College." These all paid tuition, or were supposed to pay it. Some few brought money, others brought sacks of meal or potatoes, and others produce of various kinds. It was this that kept Mrs. Buzbee's little store of money from diminishing, for the school money proper would not be paid before the 1st of January. It was an unexpected source of income, pitifully small, but, with the utmost frugality, and the occasional donations of

neighbors, it served. These donations were never sent as charities; they were in part compensations for the fact that the teacher did not board around, and in part return for acts of kindness on the part of Mr. Buzbee.

These services were as varied as they were beneficent. He surveyed a disputed line, and thus settled a quarrel between neighbors, and each stopped at his house when next he returned from the mill. He saved the life of Dick Falkner's baby after the doctor gave him up—and with nothing but hot baths and scalded milk—and Dick hauled him wood enough to last all winter. He probed Ned Lawton's wound after he and Pete Calahan had their misunderstanding about Rosie Jarvis, and dissuaded him from avenging himself upon Pete, who had taken a mean advantage of Ned's disability (it was this and not the wound for which Ned blamed him) to marry Rosie. He refused to preach or to practice medicine or to plead in court, yet he sometimes spoke at meetings, and often gave legal advice to aid in the settlement of disputes, and he rode far at night when horses were sent for him to help where the doctor was at his wits' ends.

The first two months were happy ones in the home. The handful of meal did not disappear from the barrel; the kindness of neighbors did not fail; the fame of the new teacher, who was also preacher, doctor, and judge *ex officio*, spread throughout the county, and he was sent for once to Whitley Courthouse itself to assist a perplexed doctor, and to save the life of a mother and babe.

For a month he never spoke of slavery, and when in the course of the second month he began to dis-

tribute tracts, his place in the community was so secure that he was able to say whatever he chose with little apparent danger.

"Have ye heerd," asked Noel Davis one mail day at Bill Blake's, "that the new teacher is a abolitionist?"

"I heerd so, but I didn't pay no 'tention to it," said Mr. Renfro.

"Well, he is," said Noel. "Here's a track he gin me hisself."

"Did ye read it?" asked Bill Blake.

"I spelled out the most of it," said Noel.

"Let me have it," said Renfro. "I got a use for it. Have you got ary nigger, Noel?"

"No."

"Well, I bet if they's anybody makes any furse about the new teacher bein' a abolitionist, it'll be some person that don't own a nigger."

"Do you want him to set your niggers up to run away?" asked Noel.

"My niggers? Lord bless you, Noel, if he kin git old Simon Peter and Dinah to run away, he'll git a ree-ward, that's what! I'll pay him a good hundred dollars."

"You don't want Pete to leave, do you?"

"It would be money in my pocket if he did! But no, I don't want him to leave. Him and me was nussed by his old mammy to onct, and we wrestled and fit like cats, fust him atop and then me. I'd bawl, if old Pete was to die, wuss'n I would for ary brother I got. But if I'd hate to have him leave, it wouldn't be nothin' to what he'd hate to leave."

"What you goin' to do with that track?"

“ I’m goin’ to give it to Pete. I hain’t got time to read it myself.”

“ Kin Pete read?”

“ Yes; he was raised in Kaintuck, whar they ain’t no law agin learnin’ a nigger to read. He larnt when I did. He cyan’t read to do much good, but he’ll read, if I tell him to. I’ll tell him if he don’t read it I’ll free him, or lick him, one.”

This word of Mr. Renfro settled the question for some time. It was currently said that “ if the men that’s got the niggers don’t raise no furse, them that ain’t got none needn’t a-worry.” So Mr. Buzbee distributed his tracts unmolested, and uttered his sentiments to audiences which, if not sympathetic, were at least tolerant.

“ It is as I predicted, my dear,” he said to his wife. “ This is the true field for my effort. I shall have here a sympathetic and loyal constituency. I will found in time a paper co-ordinate with the Knoxville Whig, and co-operative with it. Let Mr. Brownlow continue to plead for a united nation against extreme proslavery men in the South, and against extreme abolitionists in the North, and I, pleading for the freedom of all men, will meet him in my demand for a nation which, first of all united, must at last be free.”

“ In what respect, father, does that differ from Mr. Garrison’s position?” asked Barbara.

“ Radically. Mr. Garrison is for instantaneous freedom without regard to the unity of the nation or any other consideration. He maintains that, if slavery can be justified for an hour, it can be justified for eternity; the truth is that there are many conditions in government, human and divine, which are only justifiable

because they are temporary, and in process of evolution."

"Would he really break up the Union? I supposed that it was only the South that would do that?"

"Only the South? My dear daughter, have you not read history? Who was it that threatened to secede, if Louisiana should be purchased—the South? No, it was Massachusetts. Who was it introduced into Congress a petition for the dissolution of the Federal Union? It was John Quincy Adams, who had been President of the United States. Who was it threatened to impeach him—the North? It was the South. And who was it that threatened to secede in the time of the Mexican War? It was the North. I disapproved of the Mexican War, and in general agreed with Mr. Lowell, but I could not agree with his avowed secessionism :

" ' If I'd my way I hed ruther
 We should go to work and part—
 We take one way, they take t'other—
 Guess it wouldn't break my heart !
 Man hed ought to put asunder
 Them that God has nowadays jined,
 And I shouldn't greatly wonder
 If there's thousands o' my mind.' "

"Has not Wendell Phillips denounced the Constitution as a league with death and a covenant with hell? Has he not cursed his own State for belonging to the Union, and sharing in responsibility for its sins, saying, ' I will not say, God save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts,' and then adding that awful word, more terrible because so calmly and deliberately uttered, ' God damn the Commonwealth of Massachusetts ' ?

“ No crisis touching the slavery question has failed to bring out a strong disunion sentiment in the North. Did not my friend Whittier, one of the noblest of men, threaten the Union in his poem on Texas? He said :

‘ Make our Union bond a chain ?
We will snap its links in twain !
We will stand erect again ! ’

“ Has it not been in New England that the most bitter denunciations are hurled against Church and state? Is it not there that Stephen Foster denounces the ministry as ‘ a brotherhood of thieves ’ ? And do not the antislavery resolutions adopted at their various meetings impoverish the English language in their effort to associate the Church with piracy, fornication, murder, and every vile offense? Are not the basest epithets hurled against those who belong to any denomination which has churches in the South? Are they not called by every name that may be found in the criminal code? ”

“ But this, father,” said Barbara, “ was some time ago—at the time of the Mexican War. Is it still so with these Northern abolitionists? ”

“ Not with all, but the same ones believe as they did. At Worcester, Massachusetts, no longer ago than in 1857, there was a Disunion Convention ‘ to consider the practicability, probability, and expediency of a separation between the free and slave States.’ It was called by the same men who, in 1845, declared that ‘ the annexation of Texas would be a good and sufficient cause for the dissolution of the Union.’ At this recent convention Garrison said, ‘ I am for the speedy overthrow of the Union.’ And the resolu-

tions said: 'The sooner the separation takes place the more peaceful it will be; but peace or war is a secondary consideration, in view of our present perils.'

"I have no sympathy with the men, North or South, who would recklessly plunge this nation into war for the sake of carrying their point. We are one nation, and are together involved in the meshes of corporate responsibility for slavery. It is wrong to pit the North against the South; it is wrong to say that we must free the slave to-day, though we divide the nation to do it; it is wrong to say that we, being professed friends of peace, are at liberty to provoke certain war for the sake of what we call our principles. It is wrong to say that as abolitionists we may rightfully perpetuate slavery by dividing the nation. I say in all earnestness that abolition will come, and in spite of those who call themselves abolitionists."

It was not often that Mr. Buzbee gave himself liberty to speak on these subjects at length. There was so little about him to excite his opposition, and so much to engage his attention that he almost let his hobby alone. But, as the school term wore on, several things occurred of somewhat unusual interest—the approach of the presidential election, the advent of an important new pupil, the reappearance of the ghost of Deek Morgan, and the matter of the Swift Silver mine.

CHAPTER XIV

GRANNY WHITE'S REMEDIES

"GOOD morning, Granny White," said Barbara. "I am sorry that you are not well."

"Puny, honey, puny. I'm powerful weak these days. Come in. Lord bless ye, dear, yer a sight fer sore eyes. Se' down," and she wiped a chair with her apron.

"I heard that you were not well, and wanted to see me. I brought you over some plum jelly," said Barbara.

"Bless your dear life, ef that ain't kind! Well, honey, I ain't well, and I don't never look to be. But it's to keep you from not bein' well that I sent fer ye."

"I? I'm all right, granny."

"Wait till I put this dollar in the churn, and I'll tell ye."

"What do you put the dollar in for?"

"That's fer the witches, honey. Hit's a heap better than a horseshoe. Now Jim Ballard that uster be a witch-doctor over on Troublesome, he never used nothin' but a red-hot horseshoe. But that ain't half so good as a silver dollar. I've kep' this dollar for forty year, and I never used it for nothin' else but jest to fetch the butter."

“ Do you use it every time you churn? ”

“ Sartin, dear. Now I’ll churn and talk to ye all to onct. How be ye, honey? ”

“ I’m well and much interested in what you tell me about witches. Who do you say is witch-doctor? ”

“ Tom Lawson is now. He’s jest bought the charm from Jim Ballard. Jim Ballard, sence he got elected justice of the peace, didn’t keer to have it no more. He sold it for a yearlin’ bull that Tom Lawson had. ”

“ What is the charm? ”

“ They don’t nobody know, honey. Every doctor has his own charm. And the charms is different. Now mine, I couldn’t tell to you. But I kin tell it to a man. And it was from a man I got it. And he’s got to tell it to a woman. And when you tell the charm, then you lose it. Jim Ballard cyan’t charm the witches no more sence he sold the charm. But I kin tell you some things, and I’m goin’ ter. You know Tom Lawson, don’t ye? ”

“ The blacksmith? ”

“ Yes. He’s mighty shifty. He makes a heap outen his blacksmithin’ and his witch-doctorin’. ”

“ How much does he charge? ”

“ Oh, he cyan’t charge no money for the witch-doctorin’. That would spile the charm. But he gits it back on his reputation. But, I tell ye, I’m a better witch-doctor than he is. ”

“ I never heard that you were a witch-doctor, granny, ” said Barbara.

“ No, you heerd I was a witch, didn’t ye? And Lem Parker says that’s what ailed me when I was tuck this last time with rheumatix in my hip jint. He says he fired a silver dime at a black cat he seed givin’

his cows a spell, and that he broke her hind laig. That was the day I tuck down, and he says the spell is done gone now. Well, I tell ye what, I hain't no witch, but I *could* be a witch ef I was to try. They hain't nobody that kin doctor a thing but kin give a thing, don't ye see? They hain't no doctor but could kill as sartin as cure, ef he was to try. Is they now? And they hain't no witch-doctor but could be a witch, ef she wanted to. And I jest say to you I didn't pester Lem Parker's cows, but ef he don't look out how he shoots around, his chickens'll all have the gapes, that's what they'll have!"

"Oh, I'm sure you wouldn't hurt them, granny!"

"Not 'less I have obleeged to, honey. But I want to tell you about yourself. They're atter you."

"Who, the witches?"

"One witch."

"What witch is that?"

"That's a witch that's in love with your sweetheart."

"My sweetheart, granny?"

"Sartin, honey."

"Who is he?"

"You needn't a let on lack you don't know. And I ain't the ony one that knows, nuther. And some that knows don't like it. But I kin fix 'em, honey. I kin fix 'em jest as easy as I kin take off a wart or cure the thrash."

"How do you do that?"

"Which?"

"The wart or thrash?"

"Why, for thrash, you git a child that ain't never seed his pappy, and have him blow in the mouth of the

child that's got the thrash, and that'll cure him. And for the warts, you find out how old the person is, and cut so many notches in a straight-growin' stick, a maple ef hit's a woman and a ash ef hit's a man, and grows up, by that time the warts'll be gone. And for asthmy in a little chap, you cut a sourwood stick and cut it jest the lenth of the child, and lay the stick away, and when the child grows longer than the stick, the asthmy'll git well."

"Ah, granny, I'm afraid the reason of that is that the child outgrows the disease."

"They's a heap o' that in all sorts of doctorin', child. But if the doctor's goin' to git the credit of it in the one case, I don't see no reason why he shouldn't in all. I've knowed people to git well of a heap o' things when they wa'n't the least excuse for it. I've knowed people to git well o' the toothache from usin' old 'Liphalet Lawson's cure for the toothache."

"What was that?"

"You go to some certain field, no odds what field; you pick three certain kinds o' weeds, no odds what weeds; you grind 'em up jes' so fine, no odds how fine; you put 'em in the tooth, no odds what tooth; and hit'll git well, no odds when."

The two women laughed together—the young girl a hearty laugh, and the old crone a cracked, high-pitched cackle.

"I can tell you a better cure than that," laughed Barbara. "I know what root you can hold in your hand and it will cure the toothache."

"Tell me, honey, tell me," said granny eagerly.

"The root of the tooth," replied Barbara.

It took Granny White a full quarter of a minute

to see this joke, but when she saw it she laughed and laughed, stopping every little while afterward as the interview proceeded, to laugh again.

"That's the way Tom Lawson'd best cure 'em," she said.

"Does he pull teeth?"

"Sartin, bein' a blacksmith."

"But I don't see what that has to do with it," said Barbara.

"He kin make his own pullers. Folks comes a long ways to have him pull their teeth—fur's they do to have their horses shod. The reason his craps is so well hoed is his blacksmithin'."

"How is that?"

"Well, he don't charge 'em no money. He jest swaps work with the men that comes to have shoein' done. They fetch their own shoes and nails, and he's got coal right handy, and the men that comes to have the horses shod works in the field hoein' corn while he shoes the beastis or fixes the wagons."

"I should think the advantage would be on the other side in such an exchange," said Barbara.

"You wouldn't think so, if ever you seed Tom Lawson's woman hoe corn."

"Does she hoe?"

"She kin turn up more dirt with the hoe in a day than ary one woman or man this side the mountain. And the man that gits his wagon fixed has got to hoe 'longside of her while Tom fixes the wagon, ef it is a wagon. And Tom never was no hand to pitch in to work at his forge like killin' snakes, especially when hoein' 's goin' on jest the same and some other person a-doin' it. And so he gits to work sorter easy,

and makes up his far, and like's not has to send the chaps to the hill whar he digs the coal fur some coal, and then when he gits to work they say that he watches his woman and the man he's workin' for streakin' it back and forth acrost the cornfield, she about eight hills ahead, and he a-puffin' and a-tryin' to keep up! Tom always hits the anvil right hard when they come to his eend of the rows, but they do say that he don't hurry lack the smallpox was atter him when they're at the other eend out of sight and hearin' of the shop. I tell ye, blacksmithin' and witch-doc-terin' together kin be made profitable, ef a man has got a woman that kin hoe corn lack Tom's!"

"Such a woman must be a treasure," laughed Barbara.

"Yes, an' she kin plow, too, and if hit's the season, Tom hitches up his nag and the feller's that comes to have the work done. He keeps two bull-tongue plows and two side-hills jest for that purpose. And hit ain't no difference. She's allers about a hundred yards in the lead. But she ain't got no manners. I've seed her at the table, and she cyan't break a pone without gittin' her fingers in it."

"Well, granny, and am I in danger of being bewitched?"

"You're in danger of bewitchin' some person, that's shore."

"Who is it?"

"The preacher. He 'lows the sun rises and sets with you."

"Oh, shame, granny! You must be mistaken!"

"I hain't, and you know I hain't. He loves you, same as I'm a-tellin' ye. Now, as I've been a-sayin',

they's some charms that a man kin tell to a man, lack what Jim Ballard has sold to Tom Lawson, but whether hit'll work now, I ain't sure. And they's some a man's got to tell to a woman, or a woman to a man. That's my kind."

"But you told me several charms, granny."

"Oh, them's about things that witches hain't got nothin' to do with. Them hain't my real charm. I cyan't tell that to you, but I kin tell it to the preacher. But that's the trouble, honey; he don't have confidance lack he'd ort ter have. And so, ef he gits to whar he needs it right bad, you got to tell him that he's got to come to me."

"But, granny, suppose I do not care for him?"

"But you have obleeged to keer for him, hain't you?"

"Why, no!"

"Why, ary gal in Pine Knot would give her haid to git him."

"But suppose I care for some one else?"

"Ye don't, do ye?"

"I don't know, I'm sure. I wish you'd tell me."

"Whar does he live, honey? He ain't round here, is he? Is he off to Lexington? Is he one of them blue-grass fellers? Is he rich, and is he dressed up in store clothes, and has a nigger to black his boots and another to fetch his horse to the door? Is he, honey? He is, ain't he? And you don't know, honey, whether you keer for him or not? And then I reckon you don't know right shore whether he keers for you, do ye, honey? He lives in a big house, does he, honey? And lots o' niggers standin' round to keep the flies off ye at the table with breshes made o' peacocks'

feathers? And where they have horses that you wipe your handkercher on and hit don't sile it? That's the kind of a man he is, is he, honey? Oh, I'm afeard the preacher's got a hard row to hoe, and you, too! I ain't shore but I ort to be a gyuardin' the preacher agin' wuss things than I was a-thinkin'! I ain't no fortune-teller, honey. I ain't got no peep-stone to see what's a-goin' on inside o' folks, nor way off in other places. I ain't shore as I kin help you, honey. But, honey, look out when ye cross the road whar hit forks below the house yer livin' in, and don't let the shadder of that old dead tree fall on yer. And ye won't play witch the preacher's heart, nor break it, will ye?"

Barbara hesitated, and then said, "No, granny, I won't, if I can help it."

"But tell me about this fine blue-grass feller; does he love you?"

It seemed strange to Barbara afterward that she should have made a confidant of this withered old crone, yet the true heart of Granny White was visible to one who could see it through her superstition and ignorance, and Barbara told her.

"He was all that you say, and the finest-looking man! O granny, you should have seen him on horseback! and his father was neighbor to my grandfather. We were much together as we grew up, for I have lived, you know, in Lexington, for most of my life. We were always friends, and nothing more, though as we grew older we seemed always to have belonged to each other. It was this miserable political affair that separated us. He is an ardent friend of the South, while his father is strongly for the Union. He had quarreled with his own father in their talk about

the duty of the South to secede if Lincoln is elected. Telling me about it, he used hard words concerning the abolitionists. He was hot and angry, and his words were bitter and unjust. He has hardly known my father all these years. My father has been little at home, and we—well, we all love my father dearly, but his views were not those of my grandfather, and we talked little about them. So I do not know that my friend really knew about him. But it hurt me to have him speak as he did, and I spoke hastily and angrily. I did wrong, I know, for I am sure that had I spoken gently, telling him my father's position, he would have spoken as a gentleman in return. But he was angry, and so was I, and he said that, having quarreled with his own father for the sake of his principles, he was in no mood to retract the truth for the sake of any other man. So I sent him away."

"Did he come back?"

"No, my father came a few days after, and we left Lexington to come here."

"Has he writ?"

"No."

"Nor ye didn't write to him?"

"No."

"I ain't much at tellin' how to manage them affairs, honey, but, if I kin, I'll help ye. But look here, honey. Did ye ever hear o' the Alamance?"

"I think not."

"Like as not. Nor of King's Mountain?"

"I have heard of that. There was a battle there in the Revolution, I think."

"I should think they war! Hit was thar that Cornwallis got the best part of his army so bad licked he

had to surrender to Washington. My daddy was thar, and helped lick him. And he was at the Alamance, too, whar the Revolution fust broke out."

"I thought that the Revolution broke out at Lexington."

"Is that what the books says?"

"Yes."

"Well, the books lies. The Revolution started right in these mountings, that's whar hit started. My daddy helped to start it. They stood up and fit the King's sojers till their powder gin out, and two hundred of them got killed—a hundred of them and a hundred of the British. Then they come funder back in the hills, and my daddy come here to git away from Tryon, the old sinner! And did ye ever hear of Old Hickory at N'Orleans?"

"Oh, yes, I have heard of Jackson's great victory."

"Well, my old man was thar. I started him off, saying, 'Don't ye come back till this hull big country is free from the trompin' feet of the tyrant!' That's what I said. And he didn't! Now, honey, I jest want to tell ye one thing. I hain't kep' up with things much sence then. The Revolution and Old Hickory at N'Orleans is about the last big things I've heerd tell about. But, honey, this country has cost too much to be busted up by them hot-headed men in the North and them in the South. That young feller in the blue grass'll know a heap more'n he knows now, ef he tries to bust up this Union!"

"But he's a very nice young man, for all that," said Barbara.

"Yes, and so's the preacher. But, la, honey, they hain't no accountin' for gals fallin' in love. And when

they love and are loved, they hain't but one thing to do, whether the country holds together or splits."

Barbara went her way, and Granny White pondered long.

"They ain't no tellin' what a gal will do," she observed, as she drew a coal from the fireplace, and patted it down upon the loose twisted tobacco in her cob pipe. "The preacher's the nearest, and that counts fur a heap, and the other feller's got the clo'es and the big house and the niggers, and that counts fur a heap. But sometimes both them things works backurds, and they jest ain't no tellin'. Ef the preacher don't git to pesterin' her and make her say no, and then she gits sorter lonesome bein' away from the other feller, and gits to sorter likin' the preacher—and she likes him some, a'ready—hit'll be all right. But like as not he'll pitch right in lack he was a-preachin', and time he gits to the arousements she won't be thar. And then if t'other feller was to write to her, mebby that would make a difference. Letters does a heap more'n the folks theirselves, a heap o' times. You don't have to keep yer hair slick when yer writin' letters. But I'd like to see the preacher git her, ef 'twant for nary other reason than to see his shirts done up right. But I know how to find out."

She took two grains of green coffee, and tied a thread about one of them. "That's the preacher," she said, "and t'other one's that blue-grass feller."

She took down from the rafter a round-bottomed bottle, suspended by a string, and dipped the tip of a feather into its contents, the oil from the liver of a black cat, killed in the dark of the moon. With it she anointed each of the kernels alike, and dropped the two

into the neck of a cymlin, which she filled with water dipped from the east side of the spring, which she first stirred to a roil and then allowed to clear.

Then she muttered some half-articulate incantation over the little gourd, and set it away.

“Hit mustn’t upset,” she said, “or they’ll be a heap o’ trouble. And I mustn’t look at it till the sign’s in the heart, or hit won’t be no good; and ef the sign was goin’ down hit’d work backurds. But when the sign’s in the heart, comin’ up, I’ll look, and the one that’s swelled the most’s a-goin’ to git her.”

CHAPTER XV

THE HEART OF JOE LAKES

NOT till after her visit to Granny White did Barbara see anything sinister in the entrance of Liberty Preston into her father's school. At first it had seemed a satisfactory arrangement all round. The Lakes—they pronounced their name "Lacks"—were glad to have her at their house to board, especially Joe Lakes, who was well in love with her, and his sister Polly, who was Liberty's dearest friend, and who wanted Liberty for a sister. As for the Buzbees, they were glad of every new pupil from outside the district. It raised the grade of the school and brought in money or provisions. Mr. Buzbee had given over the lower grades almost entirely to his older pupils who had been teachers or who were planning to teach, overseeing their instruction, however, and outlining methods by which their work was to be made effective.

So widely had his fame spread that it was not counted strange that Liberty should come from No Bus'ness, but only that coming she should not have come sooner, for the term was ready to begin its last half. Still, she would be in time to do some good work in her classes and to share in all the glory of the exhibition, where her voice would bear a leading part.

But there were a few who came to suspect that it was neither the love of learning nor the desire to share in the exhibition that had brought Liberty Preston to Pine Knot, but a determination to keep track of her lover, whom she had not seen since Daddy Campbell's funeral, and whose conduct then, as she dwelt upon it, was quite enough to show that "that stuck-up gal from Lexington, that set down at the first table with the men," had altogether too strong a hold upon his affections.

But if the day of Daddy Campbell's funeral had brought her occasion of sorrow and distrust, it had enhanced in her sight the greatness of the man she loved. The audience had not read aright the embarrassment of Fletcher in his introductory words, nor his intention in walking around the coffin. They had not seen his indecision, his constraint, his change of plan. They remembered only his quiet beginning, his brief but adequate characterization of the man whose funeral he was preaching, and then the dramatic call to the soul that had departed, and the hush that fell upon the great throng when he knelt in prayer on the threshold of the world into which the spirit had flown. The impression at the time had been profound, and it grew as the incident was told and retold, and in every telling of it James Fletcher was easily, next to Daddy Campbell, the hero of the occasion. It raised him also in the estimation of his brethren in the ministry, to whom it seemed that such a sign was a peculiar mark of a call to preach. All this Liberty understood, and her love for Fletcher grew accordingly. But all this was wormwood and gall to her if he belonged to another.

Liberty Preston was a bright pupil. She had not

attended school for several years, but she stood with the most advanced pupils. And she could spell. A graduate from the district school of No Bus'ness, she knew the Old Blueback from cover to cover, and on Fridays, when the school chose up, she was the first one chosen and the last one down. She had better clothes than most of the girls; her white sunbonnet was a wonder in its wealth of starched frills; her hair, instead of perpetually falling down, and needing constant twisting and securing with a comb, held itself in place with its own curliness and a tortoise-shell comb which was the envy of all the girls; and when it fell, as at times it must when playing at recess, it fell in such bewitching disarray about her rosy cheeks and pretty pink ears, that one might have wished to see it fall more frequently. And when she sang, the rafters of the old schoolhouse rang. She was a girl of decision, too, and her black eyes could snap in anger or what passed for anger when any of the large boys attempted to be free with her; for while she did her best to make them show their love for her, and she had lovers other than Joe Lakes, and it was a small task to tempt them into an exhibition of their affection, she gave favors to none, wherefore they loved her the more madly, and envied Joe, who lived in the same house with her, and Fletcher, for whom some thought she cared.

At no time did Liberty put herself in the way of James Fletcher, although they came to have some things in common. She, as the leading singer, and he, as practically an assistant teacher, had frequent need for consultation, and her conduct was above reproach. Only once did she single him out in any way,

and that was a pleasure to remember. Neither of them was accustomed to participate in the noontime games, but one day when they were playing "weavilly wheat," that quaint old motion game, whose hero "Charlie" may well have been originally the Highland "Bonnie Prince Charlie," that day they prevailed on Liberty to join them. Round and round they circled, singing:

'I won't have none of your weavilly wheat,
And I won't have none of your barley,
I won't have none of your weavilly wheat
To bake a cake for Charlie."

It came her turn to choose, and she turned her head and saw Fletcher standing in the door.

The hearts of several young men sank from hope to disappointment when she called: "O Mr. Jim Fletcher! You got to come and help me out! They've got me into this game, and I want you for my pardner!"

Jim hesitated a moment, and then, laughing, came and took her hand, and went round once. Then he chose his own successor, and said to Liberty: "I reckon they can spare you and me now; it's time for us to look over that song you want them to sing."

They walked off to the schoolhouse together. Joe Lakes ground his teeth.

Joe was very glum at supper that night, but Liberty was sprightly enough. As Joe was moving away sullenly after the meal, Liberty slipped out and stopped him at the spring.

"I don't know what you want to run off that way for," she pouted, "running away like you was mad."

"I be mad," said Joe sullenly.

“ Be you? Who at?”

“ I ain’t a-goin’ to tell.”

“ It ain’t at me, is it? It surely can’t be at me, is it, Joe?”

Joe looked at her, and his eyes met hers. He was a coward, no doubt, as a thousand men have been in like places, but he had not the heart to tell her the truth. “ No,” he said, “ hit ain’t at you—that is, not adzackly.”

“ Oh, I’m so glad!” said Liberty. “ I’d feel awful bad if you was mad at me, Joe! Now tell me, who is it?”

“ Hit’s Jim Fletcher,” said Joe doggedly.

“ Is it?” asked Liberty. “ Well, now that’s funny. I’m sorter mad at him myself, but you mustn’t tell nobody. Say, Joe,” she added, as Joe looked up, glad enough that she should be in any wise mad at Jim Fletcher, “ you wouldn’t like to play a real good joke on Jim Fletcher, would you?”

“ Like it? By ginger, I’d like to play anything on him! I’d saw through the under side of a foot-log if I knowed he’d cross it! I’d—I’d—I’d do ’most anything!” It was Joe’s inventive genius that stopped him with his enumeration of a single prank; it was not his inclination.

“ Oh, no, Joe! That wouldn’t be fun. That’s too old, and like as not he wouldn’t be the one that would cross. I believe I know something that would be lots of fun, but it would take a real brave man to do it.”

“ Brave,” said Joe, rashly. “ If you want some one that’s brave, I’m with you till the cows come home!”

Then they conferred long together, Joe sometimes

protesting and she reassuring, or he suggesting possibilities of failure which she met with expedients. At length they arranged it, and Joe entered upon his task with real or apparent enthusiasm. Poor Joe! He is not the first man who has gone into danger for love's sake that he might win thereby the success of a rival. But this aspect of the case Joe did not suspect.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SAME GHOST OR ANOTHER

“THERE’S a good deal of excitement about the election,” said James Fletcher that night, as he sat before the fire at Mr. Buzbee’s, slowly spelling out his Greek.

“This election,” replied Mr. Buzbee, “will be a great watershed of history. We shall elect Abraham Lincoln. We shall thus say to the Nation, ‘There shall be no more slavery in the Territories.’ And the inexorable Providence, which makes of one good choice not merely an opportunity but a necessity, will say, ‘That which you have declared concerning the Territories you shall yet make true of the States.’ It may come soon, and it may come later, but the doom of slavery is sealed, and these mountains will have their just glory in its downfall.”

“I have never yet seen,” said Barbara, “how the mountains have any special glory in it. In their poverty they are measurably free from complicity with slaveholding, but that is no virtue.”

“No, but it gives opportunity for the growth of a virtue. It enables this great mountain region to cultivate a love for the Union as such, which is nowhere more intense. It is not hampered by trade conditions.

That is what kills virtue in North and South. While the extremes of North and South in their heat and impatience are ready to sacrifice the national unity to an advantage *pro* or *con*, this great mountain section, firm in its faith that slavery must ultimately end, and that, as its great commoner, soon to be President, says, 'This country can not permanently exist half slave and half free,' is willing to wait, if need be, and to labor while it waits, keeping the Union whole, and bringing about the final downfall of slavery."

"That is a very rosy picture, father, of public sentiment in the mountains."

"I was just thinking," added Fletcher, "that I did not believe the mountains were ready for so active an opposition."

"I do not pretend," said Mr. Buzbee, "that the strong belief which this section has in the integrity of the Union is primarily antislavery. And I do not agree with my friend Brownlow in this; but he is first of all a Union man, and that will make him an abolitionist."

"But," said Barbara, "would not Brownlow's platform be adopted by the extreme abolitionists at the North?"

"Not at all. They must have abolition this instant, though the heavens fall."

"But can it come without the heavens falling?" asked Mrs. Buzbee.

"I often fear not, yet my hope is that this mountain section will hold the nation together. It was here that Lundy's great movement started. It was here that the first antislavery newspaper was founded. It is this region that is giving to the nation its great new

President, who will end slavery in the Territories. It was from the antislavery sentiment of this region that Garrison learned to be an abolitionist."

"How was that?"

"He was present in Boston when Lundy first called the ministers together to consider his antislavery work." *

"There's some one at the door, Barbara," said her mother. "Go and see who it is."

Barbara went to the door, and found the widow Braniman. "Come in, Mrs. Braniman," she said.

"No, I won't gi' down. I want to see yer pappy a minute. Ast him to step out."

"Mrs. Braniman wants you," said Barbara, re-entering.

"This is inopportune," said Mr. Buzbee. "I was just getting into my narration."

The others, however, were relieved to have him

* As that meeting has often been described and made to appear unfavorable to those ministers, it may be well to print the two accounts of it by eyewitnesses. One is by Mr. Garrison, looking back at it after eleven years of struggle and debate; the other is from Lundy's own journal, at the time.

Mr. Garrison said: "He [Lundy] might as well have urged the stones in the streets to cry out in behalf of the perishing captives. O the moral cowardice, the chilling apathy, the criminal unbelief, the cruel skepticism that were revealed on that memorable occasion! Poor Lundy! That meeting was a damper on his feelings."

Mr. Lundy, however, recorded in his journal: "The eight clergymen all cordially approved of my object, and each of them cheerfully subscribed to my paper, in order to encourage, by their example, the members of their several congregations to take it. Mr. Garrison, who sat in the room and overheard our proceedings, also expressed his approbation of my doctrine."

stop, for Barbara and her mother liked to hear him talk on any other subject better than this, and Fletcher was grudging the time from his Greek.

“Howdy, Mr. Buzbee?” said the widow.

“Good evening, Mrs. Braniman. Won’t you alight?”

“No, I jest come from the mill. Had to wait for my turn, the water is so low. I had to have the meal, though. Say, Mr. Buzbee——” The widow actually simpered.

“Yes,” said Mr. Buzbee, encouragingly.

“You ’member what you was talkin’ to me ’bout?”

“Why, yes, I think so! Let me see—was it about the election?”

“No, no! Election! Who keers for the shame-faced old election? That hain’t it.”

“I am almost afraid I have forgotten. Oh, yes, it was about your line fences. Well?”

“Well, you know you sorter thought me and Noel’d better jine farms, while we was about it.”

“Ah, yes! What seemed to me a very good suggestion. I declare I had forgotten our conversation, but it comes to me now. Well?”

“Well, I’ve thought about it.”

“Yes, and has he?”

“I dunno. But I reckon he’s a-thinkin’.”

“Is he keeping up his stock?”

“Land o’ goodness, yes! They hain’t been a critter from his place around for a long spell, ’cept him.”

“He comes, does he?”

“Yes. I sorter encouraged him, and was friendly like, and he’s commenced a-comin’ reg’lar. We’re talkin’ to each other right along now.”

“ And have you talked about the fence? ”

“ Gracious sakes, no! That ain't what folks talks about at sech times.”

“ Ah, indeed! ”

“ No, hit ain't. But, gracious! don't you know? ”

“ Well, I supposed as that was the point at issue——”

“ Yes, but hit wouldn't do to fetch that up till we git the other things settled.”

“ Oh, I see. Well, I am glad that matters are going well.”

“ Yes, they be. I 'low to find him thar when I git home. He's thar every night now, pretty nigh. And he and my oldest gal, Sal, they got in all my fodder, fast as the rest of the young uns pulled it.”

“ That was very neighborly, I am sure.”

“ Yes, and 'pears lack he keers for the young uns 'most as much as he does fur me. He hain't never had none of his own. I've got 'em till they hain't no cur'osity to me, but he's as good to 'em as a own pappy could be.”

“ I am sure I wish you a happy result from this pleasant arrangement.”

“ Yes, I reckon so. I'm goin' home now. Hit won't hurt him any ef I be a little late. Hit'll make him all the more anxious, and mebbly hurry him up a little. But I'm mighty keen to git thar myself, but I thought I'd stop while I was a-passin' and tell you. Say, you're a preacher, ain't you? ”

“ No. I never preach now. I once preached, but not now.”

“ You couldn't marry a couple? ”

“ I'm afraid not.”

“That’s too bad. I wisht you could. I was jest layin’ off to pay ye for doin’ it by fetchin’ ye a bed kiver I made myself. But I reckon I’ll have to git Parson Jim Fletcher, if he kin spare time from his own courtin’ of Lib Preston to marry any other person. Good night.”

Every word that Mrs. Braniman had said was distinctly audible to those who sat within, and was hugely enjoyed by Barbara and Fletcher, for the most part. At the word about Liberty Preston, Barbara laughed, a cruel, ironical little laugh, and yet it hurt her, too. Mrs. Buzbee heard it gladly, and said:

“Ah, Mr. Fletcher! You have kept this from us. But I forgive you, and wish you joy.”

As for Fletcher, he turned red as a beet, and attempted to stammer that the widow was mistaken, but Mrs. Buzbee cut him off with—

“Your modesty does you credit, Mr. Fletcher. No, no! You need not tell us about it now. Some time, some time! Love and Greek are not good companions, and Greek now is to the fore.”

Fletcher looked appealingly to Barbara to help him out, but she was disinclined, and said:

“Let me dance at your wedding, Mr. Fletcher. Or no, I can’t do that, can I? You Methodists don’t dance. Not even a harmless little country dance. How cruel you are! But perhaps I may dance at the Widow Braniman’s. I’m so sorry you can’t dance with me.”

“Barbara!” said her mother. “Don’t, my child!”

“Oh, he likes to be teased. And he can’t help being a preacher—can you, Mr. Fletcher?”

It was the first moment in his life that James

Fletcher felt a secret desire to be, for her sake, something else than a preacher. And for that moment's thought, which, however, came again and again unbidden, he chided himself over and over.

"Go to your Greek now," said Barbara.—"No, father, don't talk any more politics to Mr. Fletcher. He's there at the sheep market, waiting with the blind man who is to be sent to the pool, and he has found something that troubles him."

"Ah, yes!" said Mr. Buzbee. "You see, that is sheep gate and not sheep market."

"It is not that that troubles me," said Fletcher. "There is a verse gone."

"Oh, yes, the angel troubling the pool. Well, that is an interpolation. You do not find it in the Greek, you know—that is, not in the early manuscripts. That is an ancient superstition."

Fletcher sat aghast. He had had no previous experience with study of this sort, that plucked out verses and cast them aside as interpolations, and he was constrained to contest the point. The two were soon in a deep argument on the purity of the text of the English Bible, from which they were called by a shout from the road.

"Good evening," said Mr. Buzbee from the door.

"Good evenin'. You ain't got no dogs, so I reckon I mout have come up and knocked, but I allow to be polite, so I hollered."

"Come in, Mr. Goodwin.—Good evening, Mr. Renfro.—Barbara, set some chairs."

"We don't lay out to stay long," said Renfro. "We own some land, Goodwin and me, back on the river. He owns one side of the Cumberland and I

own the other. We're going back there the last o' the week, and we reckoned mebbly you'd like to ride there with us."

"But my school?" said Mr. Buzbee.

"We'll go Saturday if you keer to go," said Mr. Goodwin.

"Why, perhaps I might.—Mrs. Buzbee, do you think it well for me to go? I suppose that I might, and yet——"

It was in this undecided way that Mr. Buzbee considered propositions that had no direct bearing upon his own work, balancing the matter, and turning to others to find some objective method of deciding.

"Why do you want him to go?" asked Barbara.

"Well, we got a little matter——" said Mr. Goodwin.

"Well, I reckon they ain't no harm in telling it right out," said Renfro, "though we don't want it to git 'round much. But we ain't right sure but we've got a coon of our own up a tree thar."

"In other words——?" said Barbara.

"In other words," said Goodwin, "we lay out to go thar and skin a hog." He winked as he said it.

"I'll go," said Fletcher, "and you may talk it over together. It is evidently private."

"Don't go, parson. It may not be nothin' private, atter all," said Renfro. "We ain't right sure yit how private it is."

"It either ain't private at all," said Goodwin, "or hit's mighty private."

"It is time for me to go, anyway," said Fletcher. "I will bid you good night."

They all bade him good night, and he started down

the road. The night was dark, and a sudden dash of rain came into his face. It was no storm that was coming, but a creepy dampness was in the air, and a few drops were falling. A hoot-owl gave its weird, unearthly shriek, like the death cry of a murdered child. He had heard it all his life, but it startled him to-night. He was ill at ease. The discussion from which he had been excluded was nothing which concerned him, and yet he felt a little hurt that he had been all but asked to leave because of it. And the word of Widow Braniman rankled in his heart, together with the consciousness that he had been wholly unable to extricate himself from the embarrassment of the situation.

A short distance away he stopped and looked back. This was the roof that sheltered the woman he worshiped. Yes, though she teased him about Liberty, whom he had sometimes fancied he loved, and might perhaps have loved—who knows?—but for her, though she flouted him because he could not dance, and pitied him because he was a minister, and though he could never tell whether she was serious or in play, though he felt in his soul that she could be serious, and was so at times—in spite of all this, and the hopelessness of his suit, he was sure he loved her, and that love made everything else seem small; yes, in shame he confessed it, his calling itself, his ambition, his hope, his soul's satisfaction would be less dear to him if she really despised it. But did she despise it? Underneath her raillery, was there not a real respect for him and reverence for his calling? Sometimes he thought so, but it had not seemed so to-night.

He smiled to himself to think that anything should

have ever happened to make Deek Morgan's house seem a beautiful spot to him. Deek Morgan had done little to beautify it while living, and, while Fletcher did not credit the reports about his ghost, nor quite believe in ghosts, he had never considered a house that was reputed to be haunted one that he would care to visit. Indeed, though free from the grosser superstitions of his environment, Fletcher himself preferred not to carry a hoe through the house, and was a little relieved when he saw the new moon in the open and not through brush. Yet, not only was he coming here nightly without fear, but——

Fear! In an instant he was afraid. He had walked slowly down to the main road, and was approaching the fork where the white sycamore stood. His head was down, and he did not see the tree till he was very near. The whole tree was white, but the bottom of the trunk was more white than it was wont. As he stopped, he heard a groan. It was a low, long-drawn-out groan, and it went to his very soul. As he stood there, trying to persuade himself that it was only the trunk of the tree that he saw, and that the groan was some other noise, the white figure moved away from the tree, into the middle of the road down which he must pass, and stood there, raising its white arms, now silent and now groaning.

No one had ever called James Fletcher a timid man, and he was not a feeble one. He had outwitted the school when it locked him out; he had faced the leaders in a body after he had succeeded by strategy in opening the door; he had given blows and taken them, striking right and left, and receiving the cuffs and strikes of the gantlet as he ran it, till he had sent his



"Who are you?"

most powerful antagonist sprawling, and driven the rest in terror. He had been known to collar a drunkard who disturbed a religious service, and, wresting his knife away, to walk him to the door, and thrust him bodily from the room. But he paused before this awful apparition, and felt his hair slowly lifting his hat.

He was tempted to return to the house for help, but he shrank from the eyes of Barbara. Should he tell her that he had seen a ghost, and was afraid to go home alone? He would die first! He thought of going the other way, but this, too, he knew was cowardly. While he stood debating the figure advanced a step or two. Fletcher stood, his hair still rising. Then he stepped backward one or two paces. The figure came on.

“Who are you?” he asked, his hair erect.

A muffled groan was the answer, and the figure drew nearer.

Fletcher was frightened. Few men, however bravely they may meet such a situation, are wholly unmoved by it. He realized that he was frightened, and on the verge of panic. A little more of terror and he would be running down the road, and that awful figure in pursuit! And to-morrow night? Would he have courage to come again? Would he dare for Barbara's sake to brave it another night? Men think fast at such times. All these and a hundred other thoughts flashed through Fletcher's mind in the time the specter was advancing a matter of two paces. Then it stopped, and Fletcher decided.

“Be you man or ghost or devil,” he cried, “defend yourself!” and he rushed forward.

The ghost gave a terrible shriek and stepped back-

ward; then, as Fletcher still came on, it turned and ran, and Fletcher after it. The ghost ran fast, but Fletcher gained. A little farther, and he could touch it. He put forth his hand and grasped the sheet that covered the fleeing figure, and, as this gave an insecure hold, reached again, halted the figure, and as he turned it about with his left hand he struck a heavy blow with his right. The ghost fell in a heap, and he stumbled over it and fell headlong. When he picked himself up the white robes were still in the road, but the man whom he had knocked down had disengaged himself and fled through the bushes.

The ghost's scream had brought the Buzbees and their guests to the door, and they were hallooing at him, and asking the cause of the disturbance.

"Halloo!" he called, "I've met a ghost!"

"A ghost!" cried Goodwin, trembling visibly.

"Come back, and bring the ghost with you," called Barbara.

"I will," said he.

A few moments later he appeared at the door, bearing a device constructed out of two sheets, with light sticks to lengthen the arms and increase the height, and the whole arranged to adjust to the person of a man.

"I have the ghost," he said; "the man got away."

He told the story in answer to their questions.

"Hit takes a mighty brave man to face a thing like that," said Renfro. "I pass for a moderately brave man as such things go, but hang me if I want to meet any gentleman like that! It must 'a' looked outrageous."

“Mr. Fletcher is a brave man,” said Barbara, and that one word Fletcher cherished.

“And is this Deek Morgan’s ghost?” asked Barbara, laughing, as she disengaged the sheets, which were soiled but not greatly damaged.

“Who ever told you about Deek Morgan’s ghost?” asked Goodwin, laughing uneasily.

“Oh, I heard that we are not the only tenants of this house. Really, Mr. Goodwin, I think you ought to remit half the rent for the space that ghost occupies.—And now, what will you do with these sheets, Mr. Fletcher?”

“I’ll give them to you,” said Fletcher.

“Oh, thank you! That will compensate us for our loss of Mrs. Braniman’s counterpane. But don’t you want them yourself? You might save them toward——”

“I’ve had my fun out of them, thank you,” said Fletcher. “I am glad to get shut of them.—Mrs. Buzbee, if Miss Barbara won’t take them, I give them to you.”

“Oh, but I didn’t say I wouldn’t take them. Certainly, I’ll take them. They are a mark of your prowess. They are your badge of victory. They are the regalia of your knighthood.”

“Barbara, Barbara!” cried her mother. “Do stop your nonsense, child! Give Mr. Fletcher his sheets, and let him find the owner, if he does not wish them himself.”

“Indeed I will not, mother dear, saving my regard for your authority. I may want an outfit myself some day, who knows? The original owner has forfeited all claim to these sheets. They are— What is the term,

father—contraband, is it not? Well, then, they are contraband, and they belong to him, or they did. But he has given them to me, and I intend to keep them.—Please, Mr. Fletcher, go out and find some more ghosts, and may you find the next one in a blue silk dress!”

“If I do,” said Fletcher, “I will bring the ghost’s raiment to you.”

“But really, gentlemen,” said Mr. Buzbee, who had stood helplessly during this play of fun, “this is serious. This is some one’s malice. This should be investigated.”

“Keep still till the feller that done it asts about it,” said Renfro. “Then when Mr. Jim meets up with some feller that says, ‘I heerd you seen a ghost,’ jest let him collar the feller and say, ‘I heerd you was the ghost I seen.’ That’ll fetch him. That’s the best way to investigate.”

“It may not be him,” said Goodwin.

“If it ain’t, it’ll be some person he’s told, and you kin blame it on the feller that asts you till he tells who told him.”

“A very good plan, I think,” said Mr. Buzbee. “Let us all keep silent about it. This probably has no connection with the rumors that have been afloat before.”

“No,” said Renfro, “this ain’t Deek Morgan’s ghost. It runs too fast—ha, ha!”

“All the ghost of hisn there ever was, I reckon,” said Mr. Goodwin, much against his conviction, however.

“Well, parson, I reckon we’d best all go home. We’re going your way.—All right, Mr. Buzbee. We’ll

come by right early Saturday morning. We'll fetch you a horse, and we'll take that ride and see if we kin tree that coon.—Come on, Goodwin; do you want some person to walk home with you? They may be other ghostis, you know.—Come on, parson; you best go by with me to-night. We got a place there for sech fellers as you. If we can't treat you good, we'll treat you clever, and you kin suffer with us a spell, I reckon.—Good night."

It may be worth while to record as an interesting item, which some may regard as a coincidence, that Joe Lakes appeared at school next day with a black eye. There was a perceptible coolness between him and Liberty, too, and he manifested no increase of affection for Fletcher.

CHAPTER XVII

SWIFT'S BURIED SECRET

"GENTLEMEN," said Mr. Buzbee, as he mounted the horse that Simon Peter led up to the step, "I have conceived a most unusual interest in this undertaking. I believe that, if this proves what you hope, it will be the most wonderful thing that has happened in this century."

"That's so," said Renfro, greatly pleased to hear Mr. Buzbee speak with such enthusiasm; "if it's really the old Swift mine——"

"Shet up!" said Goodwin. "Don't talk about it till we git away!"

"If it be what we are hoping," said Mr. Buzbee, oblivious to the word of caution which Goodwin had spoken, "it will have the most important bearing on the work to which I have given my life."

"Goodwin thinks," said Renfro, "that we'd best not talk too loud till we git off in the woods."

It was a long and weary ride. The road led first across the mountain to Marsh Creek, and then down the creek on the main road toward Whitley Court-house. But where that road turned off to the right, they followed the creek till they were near its mouth, and then bore to the left by an obscure road that be-

came a mere trail. The scenery grew more wild and grand. In their haste they urged their horses more than they were aware, and the ascent of a long hill caused one of them to show signs of fatigue.

"We will rest when we come to the top," said Renfro; "our horses are getting blowed."

They gained the top at length, and stopped for a quarter of an hour, removing the saddles and allowing the horses to graze.

"It ain't much funder," said Goodwin, "and I hate to lose the time."

"We are all eager," said Mr. Buzbee, "but it is not well to override our horses. While we wait, tell me more about this mine. The point which seems established is, that Swift found great quantities of money here, or at least of silver from which he made money. Now, what evidence have we that we have discovered the mine?"

"Well, this man that died last week," said Goodwin, "he said——"

"Yes, what did he say?"

"He said that the mine itself was right close to the falls in the rock that glitters so, and he left a paper that tells where there's money buried."

"And you have that paper?" asked Renfro.

"I didn't say I had."

"I know you've got it."

"Yes, I've got it," admitted Goodwin.

"Well, then, shell it out here, and let's see it," said Renfro impatiently.

"I was sorter thinkin'——" said Goodwin.

"You was sorter thinkin' you'd keep that for your haul, was ye?" demanded Renfro.

“Why, yes, the money’s one thing and the mine’s another. If we find the mine, of course we’ll all share.”

“We’ll all share whatever we find; now you hear me. The mine and the money and all is one pot, and we go in for potluck together. We both own the land, and we don’t know whose land the money is buried on, but wherever it is we share it, and that point’s to be settled right here. Now you and I put in what we know, and Mr. Buzbee’ll put in his education. He’ll survey them lines as that paper lays them down, and he’ll test the ore, and if he don’t, we’re both helpless. But I tell ye right now, Peleg Goodwin, this is thirds, share and share alike, or we don’t go no further with it till we settle the p’int!”

“How would you settle it?” asked Mr. Buzbee, apprehensively.

“They ain’t but one way to settle disputes about mines,” said Renfro with emphasis.

“Do you mean——?” asked Goodwin.

“I mean jest that, Peleg,” said Renfro, calmly. “We’re a-goin’ to see that paper, and have a full understandin’, an’ Mr. Buzbee is a-goin’ to draw up a writin’ for us three to sign, that we’ll share alike in this hull business. That’s what we’re goin’ to do. That’s the next thing on the programme, as I heerd a feller say.”

“I deplore anything in the way of a quarrel,” began Mr. Buzbee.

“There ain’t a-goin’ to be no quarrel,” said Mr. Renfro.—“Come, Peleg, hand over that paper.”

“Here it is,” he said grudgingly.

“Mighty little good it would have done you,” said Renfro, looking over Mr. Buzbee’s shoulder in a state

of bewilderment.—“Kin you make head or tail of it?” he asked Mr. Buzbee.

“These are surveyors' measurements,” said Mr. Buzbee, “and the directions and distances are given. The trouble will be to find the starting point. Here is traced a stream of considerable size, running nearly south, which seems to be the point of departure. Ah, yes! I recognize that sign! It is pounds sterling! That makes about thirty thousand dollars buried on that creek! Then, from a tree a distance down the same stream, a tree bearing a compass and square, a line is run across to another marked with a trowel, with fifteen thousand dollars buried there.”

“Is that what it means?” asked Renfro eagerly.

“Certainly. It can mean nothing else.”

“Is that all?” asked Goodwin.

“Evidently not. Here is a rock house marked as containing thirteen thousand dollars, and a small rock with a spring under the east end which is a marker for seventeen thousand dollars, and from there another line is surveyed.”

“How much is there?” asked Renfro.

“The largest of all, I judge. It is marked ‘The Prize.’”

“The Prize!” To any one of these men a thousand dollars was an almost impossible sum. To find a record of thousands scattered about, and among them a reference to “The Prize,” was enough to strain the imagination of all to its utmost limit. Goodwin had all along shown a covetous eagerness that he could scarce repress; Renfro had masked an intense nervousness beneath a stolid exterior; Mr. Buzbee had felt his enthusiasm mounting higher and higher.

“And all this is ours!” cried Goodwin.

“Shet up, ye fool!” said Renfro. “We ain’t got it yit!”

“But it’s in these mountains, and we’ll git it!” cried Goodwin.

“Yes, yes!” cried Buzbee. “It is providential! It is the greatest deliverance since Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt! It has in it the redemption of a race! We are here at the cave of Ali Baba! We are given the lamp of Aladdin! We are to work miracles with this mine!”

His companions looked at him a moment, even in their own enthusiasm half doubting if he were still sane, yet catching more enthusiasm from his.

“What be we a-stayin’ here for?” demanded Goodwin.

“Sure enough!” cried Renfro; “the mine’s the thing to find first!”

“You are right,” said Buzbee. “If we find the mine we shall know that the money is near. This writing is old. The marks on these trees are long since overgrown. The search for the money will be long and difficult. It may take us months to get our starting point. But if we find the mine, we can smelt our own silver.”

“We must have the money, too!” cried Goodwin.

“Yes, indeed! We must have it all!” replied Buzbee; “but the mine is the most important thing.”

They were soon on their horses and pressing forward. They did not spare horseflesh, and the few remaining miles were quickly at an end, and the horses’ feet splashed in the soft waters of the Cumberland

where they ran swift and shallow a mile above the falls.

"Not so low down," said Renfro. "It's deeper there, and the current is mighty strong."

They forded the river in safety and tethered their horses.

"And now," said Mr. Buzbee, "let us get to the mine!"

"'Pears to me lack we best to hunt for the money first," said Goodwin.

"You make me sick!" exclaimed Renfro. "You're so keen for money you'd steal the pennies from your dead mother's eyes!"

"Friends," said Mr. Buzbee, "we have a long and hard task before us and are banded together for noble ends. We must not quarrel. We shall find much occasion for irritation, perhaps some disappointment, but we shall succeed. We shall succeed! We must not quarrel. The opening of this mine is something holy, something sacramental. It must not be done with strife."

He forgot that the others had little idea to what high ends he was devoting his share in the mine. It was characteristic of his generous and not too discerning nature that he included in his own altruism all the selfish effort of his associates, the mere commercialism of Renfro and the greed of Goodwin. And they, not understanding the meaning of his words, understood his spirit, and were persuaded by it.

Then began an examination of the rocks. Goodwin was impatient, and even Renfro found it trying, as they climbed up and down, examining the out-cropped rock above the falls, measuring, breaking

specimens, and thus spending by far the greater part of the day.

"Maybe you'll tell us," said Goodwin, "what's the good of all this?"

"We must find first," said Mr. Buzbee, "where are the silver-bearing rocks. That will show us in what strata we must search."

"'Pears like we're wasting a heap of time," said Goodwin.

"We shall need patience in this work," said Buzbee. "If either of you have a better plan, I will gladly follow it."

"No," said Renfro, "we hain't. But let's stop now and eat a snack, and whilst we're a-eatin', mebbby you'll tell us a little more what you're a-drivin' at, so's we'll have the same in-trust you've got. This seems to us mighty piddlin' business. I reckon we're too impatient."

Mr. Buzbee looked at his watch as they sat down. It was four o'clock. The short day was nearing its close. The sun, as they seated themselves, was out of sight behind the great range of hills behind them. They were tired and hungry and disappointed.

Patiently he explained to them the position of the strata, and the necessity of locating the bed of rock which showed traces of silver. This, he argued, very likely continued under the entire mountain, or a great part of it, and once found would enable them to locate openings at various points, or at least to determine at what point to begin.

"And now tell me," he said, as he saw that they were satisfied with his explanation, "a little more about this man Mundy from whom the paper came."

"He lived on Copper Creek," said Renfro, "and was a honest feller, but sorter cracked. His pa and a feller name of Jefferson was with Swift. There was another, name of Wright, too. Well, atter the skeer he got when he was a young feller, trying to find the mine, he wouldn't never come over here no more, but he hung to the paper like the cholery to a nigger. I don't know how Peleg got it, but that's how Mundy got it, I've heerd tell."

"He owed me," said Goodwin. "I lent him money long ago, and he couldn't pay. I'd often ast him to give me the paper for security, but he wouldn't. But I had other security. When he was a-dyin' I went over, and he gin it to me for payment of the debt. I wanted to ast him a heap o' questions, but he couldn't answer nothin'. I had a notion to keep the thing to myself, but bein' as how Renfro owned the land on one side of the river here, and I couldn't make nothin' out of the paper——"

"Specially the last," interrupted Renfro.

"Well, I found I'd got to have pardners to make a go of it; that's all."

"It is plain that we shall accomplish nothing to-night," said Buzbee. "It is all we can do to get home before it will be pitch dark. I have some specimens to examine, and I will try what I can do with a blowpipe. I really need a crucible of some sort, and I may say now that, while I have a fair knowledge of mineralogy, I am no expert in matters of this kind. I have had no experience in the actual work of analysis. I must read what my books tell about it, and must learn how it is done."

"We'll be larnin', too," said Goodwin.

“ Yes, we will all learn together.”

“ And look here, Mr. Buzbee, you’d best draw up that paper about us goin’ in together, share and share alike.”

“ I will. I will do it next week. And now we ought to go.”

CHAPTER XVIII

THE THREAD THAT SLIPPED

“Chickeny-chickeny-craney-crow!
I went to the well to wash my toe,
And when I came back, one o’ my chickens was gone.
What time o’ day is it, old witch?”

So sang the girls of the Pine Knot College, each holding fast to the skirts of the one before her, and keeping well behind the big girl who assumed the rôle of the old hen, who then, in response to the reply of the witch that it was near dinner time, put these questions:

“What be you doin’, old witch?”

“Makin’ a fire,” replied the squat figure bent over the sticks.

“What’s the fire fur?”

“To bile some water.”

“What’s the water fur?”

“To scald a chicken.”

“Where you goin’ to git yer chicken?”

“Out of your flock.”

Sometimes the witch rushed out and attempted to seize a chick, and sometimes she sat watching, in which case the swaying line brought one girl after another before yet not too near her, each one thrusting out a

bare foot—though it was the 1st of November—and demanding, “Is that hit?” But usually the mother hen took care to keep herself between the witch and her brood, and as she turned to right and left the whole line had to swing with the twistings of her hips. It ended each time in the capture of a chicken, the reformation of the line, the twisting up of hair, the tying up of disordered petticoats, and the repetition of the dialogue. But the mother hen fought hard for every one of her chickens, and not one was lost till the contest had been well and long fought. Some little girls had been thrown from the end of the line as little boys were at “crack-the-whip,” and others had received some bumps and bruises, but the game was a popular one with the girls, though more or less under their mothers’ ban.

It was in this way that Dolly Mason got her skirt torn off, or nearly so, and Liberty Preston was sewing it up for her, and comforting the little girl, who was sure she would “git a lickin’ at home,” with the assurance that she could sew it up so that her mother would never know of the damage.

“You’re just lovely!” cried Dolly. “I think you’re the loveliest girl ever I seed!”

Liberty caught the little one in her arms, and kissed her in return for the compliment.

“Do you really think I’m lovely, Dolly?”

Dolly looked straight at her, and then touched her curls.

“You’re just beautiful,” said she.

“I’m afraid they ain’t many that thinks so,” said Liberty.

“Ain’t they? Who don’t think so?”

“ Oh, I don't know. I reckon 'most everybody thinks I'm mighty ugly. They don't nobody tell me I'm lovely but just you, Dolly.”

Dolly stood undecided what to say. The hyperbole was too much for her to comprehend.

“ Why, I should just think everybody would love you. I just wisht I was a man! I tell you what I'd do! I'd marry you!”

It was a trivial thing, but it cheered Liberty up a bit, and gave her some sad thoughts too. She was pretty, and she knew it. She was popular, and she knew that too. There were many who would call her lovely and make love to her, but James Fletcher was as far away as if he had been in some of the remote lands of which Mr. Buzbee talked in the geography class. And the only reason under the sun, as she believed, why he was not her own was that this girl from Lexington had bewitched him. She determined to bear it no longer, though what she could do was not then apparent.

Barbara, too, was not at all in peace with herself. This stalwart young fellow, so earnest and brave, this young giant of the backwoods, hurling the mountains of ignorance amain in his struggles after knowledge, this Saul among his companions, towering head and shoulders above them not only in stature but in intelligence and purpose, was by no means unattractive to her. That he loved her she could not doubt, that she could love him she sometimes thought. But then there came to her mind the memory of Boyd Estill, the fine, handsome fellow, generous and noble, quick in temper, but quick also in his courage and manly strength, and she hesitated.

“Barbara,” said her mother that morning, “I’m troubled about you, my dear.”

“Alas that I should be a care to you, mother dear! Tell me, what is the matter? I’ll give all my goods to feed you, and my body to be burned——”

“All these would profit me nothing, my child. I could spare your goods, which, alas! are too few, but I could not spare my merry, cheery, naughty girl.”

“What can I do for you, mother?”

“It is not for me that I want you to do; it is for yourself.”

“Well?”

Barbara was sewing up a tear in one of the sheets that had constituted the wardrobe of the recent ghost.

“I don’t like to have you keep those sheets.”

“Are you afraid of them, mother?”

“No, bless me! I don’t like to have you accept presents from that young man.”

“Presents, mother? Do you call this a present? Are dilapidated ghosts and ghostesses to be counted gifts prohibited by good manners? They never taught me so in school, mother. I want these sheets. They are the trophies of my knight-errant! They are the beginnings of my future outfit! They are all that I shall need if I myself decide to personate the late lamented Deek Morgan, and revisit the glimpses of the moon. See how I would look in them, mother! I can robe myself *à la* Hamlet’s father, and say:

“I am thy daughter’s spirit,
Doomed for a certain time to walk the night”—

What’s the rest, mother? I never can remember more than two lines of my Shakespeare.”

“You foolish girl! Keep the sheets! It is not *that* I care for, and I am not sorry to see your folly now and then. I am glad that you can be happy. Indeed, we have been happy here, have we not? Much more so than I feared. But I am not quite happy over this, and I have fancied you were not quite yourself lately. I can not say more. I am almost breaking my promise in saying so much. Only, my child, remember how much of my life and your father’s is bound up in yours.”

Barbara was thoughtful that day, and in the afternoon she went to school to assist in some preparations for the exhibition.

On her way to school she met Granny White, going up to Blake’s to barter some ginseng for coffee.

“Howdy, honey? Lord love you, dear! I’m mightily pestered about you all!”

“About me, granny?”

“Yes. The sign didn’t work.”

“What sign?”

“The sign I tried for you all.”

“I didn’t know about that. Tell me what it was.”

“I soaked two coffee-grains—one for the preacher and one for the blue-grass feller.”

“That was kind, I’m sure, though I am afraid one of them at least will not be here to drink it.”

“Hit tain’t to drink, honey. No, no! You rub ’em with ile first—ile from the liver of a black cat that was killed in the dark of the moon.”

“Mercy! I’m glad it isn’t to drink!”

“And then rile the spring and wait till hit clairs, and dip in a cymlin inter the east side o’ the spring and put the coffee in thar—when the sign’s in the

heart comin' up, and ever which one that swells most is the feller."

"That is interesting. Well, which swelled most?"

"That's hit. I dunno."

"You don't? Haven't you taken them out?"

"Oh, yes, I done that to-day. But the thread I tied around one of them come off, and I cyan't tell which is which. One's swelled a heap more'n t'other, but I dunno which one hit is."

"That's unfortunate."

"Yes, and hit's a bad sign. I'm afeard you're goin' to have trouble, honey, with them two fellers."

"Oh, well," laughed Barbara, "I'm grateful for your interest, anyway."

The old woman laid her skinny finger on the fair young hand and said:

"I kin tell you, honey, how to ketch the one you want."

"Tell me, please."

"Take the parin's of yer own toe nails, and wash 'em in water tuck from the spring like I told you, and when the sign's in the heart goin' down. Hit's got to go down this time. Then take the coffeepot and dip some water from the spring, and bile the parin's in hit. Then rench out the coffeepot, and when he comes have him drink coffee from that pot. But they mustn't nobody else use it atter you fix hit that away till the feller does."

Barbara tried to preserve her gravity, but it was no use.

"But what would happen, granny," she asked, "if both should come at once?"

"But they cyan't! One of 'em ain't here!"

“O granny! You’re prejudiced on the case. But it isn’t that I need to know. What shall I put in the coffeepot to know which one I want, or whether I want either?”

“I don’t know no sign for that,” said granny sadly.

“Nor I,” said Barbara. “Good-by, granny. This will buy you a pound of coffee, and you may use your ginseng for a pretty new apron.”

“Lord love you, honey! You’re the prettiest gal ever I seed, and the preacher ain’t ary grain too good fer ye! Hit would hurt Lib Preston mightily if you was to git him, and Libby is a right nice girl, too, but he ain’t none too good fer ye, honey, nary grain.”

Liberty Preston was putting away her needle after sewing up Dolly Martin, and was in no amiable mood. Still she welcomed Barbara, and they conferred together concerning the music. For great preparations were under way for an exhibition, and a half hour each day was given up to formal exercises in preparation for it, and there was much rehearsing and conferring at recess. It was to be, by any standard of comparison, the grandest affair of its kind that Pine Knot had ever known, and the music was to be an important feature. So they conferred together, and on that afternoon shared the responsibility for the last half hour, which was the rehearsal hour. But there was a visible coldness between them, and Barbara felt herself unwittingly exulting that she was the victor, and that this her rival was cherishing toward her the hatred of failure. She reproached herself for this feeling, but asked herself: “What have I done? I’m sure it is not my fault.”

When school was out, Barbara tried to avoid Lib-

erty, and to walk home with other girls, for her father was detained at the schoolhouse, but Liberty kept close beside her with an air that sent the other girls by themselves. They walked together thus to where the road forks to go up to the house, and halted under the dead tree in the road.

"Good evening," said Barbara, glad to end the walk.

"Hold on," said Liberty.

"Well, what do you want?"

"I want to ast you one question."

"Ask it."

"Do you love Jim Fletcher, or don't ye?"

"It is he if any one who should ask me that."

"And it's me that's got a right to ast it too."

"What right have you to ask it?"

"I've got a good right to."

"Yes, but what right? Is he engaged to you?"

"No, nor to you neither."

"Who told you so?" It was a cruel question, and it went to Liberty's heart.

"He ain't, is he? He ain't promised to marry you, has he?"

Truth no less than kindness prompted Barbara's swift denial.

"No," she said, "he is not engaged to me."

"Well, then, do you love him?"

"What right have you to ask me? I have as good a right to ask you."

"Ast me, then, and welcome. I'll tell ye. Yes, I do love him. I've loved him more'n a year."

"Does he love you?"

"I don't know whether he does or not, but I just

as good as know he did until you come. And now you're sashayin' off with him at your heels, follerin' where you crook your finger, and like as not makin' a fool of him in the end. If you break his heart, I—I'll kill you! I will—I will! I can stand it to have my own broke, but if you take him away from me, and break his, I'll kill you sure!"

The hot passion melted into tears, and Liberty buried her face in her clean white apron and wept bitterly.

Barbara looked at her a moment in indecision, and then put her arm around her.

"You do love him, Liberty, don't you?" she asked.

"Yes, God knows I do! And I just want you either to take him or give him up, one, and let me know which. I can't stand this no longer."

Barbara led her a little from the road into the wood and sat on a log beside her.

"You poor girl," she said, "I wish I knew my heart as well as you know yours. Don't cry, Liberty. We must be friends. Come, you have told me your heart, and I will tell you mine. I don't know, Liberty, whether I love him or not. I admire him very much. He has been in our home so much—he comes almost every night, you know, and is almost the only young man I have seen—I could not help coming to admire him, and sometimes when I have seen him struggling so nobly to learn, fighting so bravely against disadvantages that have hemmed him in, and unconsciously showing his manhood at every turn—sometimes, Liberty, I have almost loved him. But I had a friend once, and we liked each other. We had a quarrel, a little quarrel it was, and I came away before we made

it up. If we had stayed where we were, I am sure we should have made it up. But we parted with no word to each other. I often think of him, and sometimes I think that I love him, and I wonder whether he loves me. But I don't know. And I wish I did. But, Liberty, let us be friends. I will not take your lover from you. I—I will harden my heart against him. I will not be selfish. I can not send him away, for he comes to see my father, and not me. He comes to study, and not to visit. And I will be true to you."

Liberty looked up, and their eyes met.

"Will you?" she asked. "Will you?" And then, as Barbara's own eyes filled, she added, "I believe you sorter love him yourself!"

CHAPTER XIX

THE CIRCULAR RAINBOW

THE election of 1860 passed uneventfully for the most part in Pine Knot. There were two elections, in fact—one in Pine Knot, Kentucky, and one in Pine Knot, Tennessee. The Kentucky election was held in Best's barroom, and the Tennessee election was held at Post's. The election was honestly conducted, for there was a difference of opinion among the voters. Time had been in a presidential election of general interest when the Pine Knot mind was a unit, that the presence of the State line added its special glory to an election. Every one in Pine Knot, for instance, had voted for Henry Clay, and—in that day there was but one hotel, and the polls for the Kentucky election were established in a covered wagon—each voter, having polled a good and honest vote in his own State, stepped over the line and voted in the other. But in 1860 there was sufficient difference of opinion to make such a feat impracticable.

The voting was done *viva voce* in both States, and has so continued almost to this day. Indeed, in a county not far from that in which Pine Knot is located, the righteous populace tore out the booths established by the new and cumbersome Australian

system, and as recently as in 1898 voted in the old way.

“Hit’s a daggon furrin invention,” said a local politician, “and hit’s a temptation to fraud. When a man git’s in thar with his lead pencil, who knows whether he votes the way he says he will?” And so the booths came out.

But there were no booths in 1860, and every man stepped up and named his candidate, and as he walked away the clerk shouted in the ears of all men: “John Strunk voted for Bell and Everett! Joe Cecil voted for Abraham Lincoln!”

There was a good deal of confusion in the Pine Knot mind. There were four tickets, which were two too many, and it was not certain just what was the difference between Bell and Douglas, or just what Lincoln or Breckinridge represented.

Sim Cressy waited around to meet his old crony Dan Spaulding, and they commiserated each other on the fact that they could not vote together as they had done in some years.

“How be you alls in Kaintuck votin’?” asked Sim.

“Dinged ef I know. I sorter had an idy of votin’ for Douglas.”

“Did ye? That’s too bad. I sorter layed off to vote for Bell ’n’ Everett. What’s the difference?”

“Dinged if I know,” replied Dan again.

“What be you, Dan?”

“I ain’t quite made up my mind. I know one thing. I ain’t no rebel.”

“Nor me.”

“And I ain’t no black abolitionist.”

“Nor me.”

“Nor I ain’t none of them daggon fellers that thinks they know more’n their neighbors.”

“Nor me.”

They stood on the State line where the way parted to the polls of the two sovereign States. At length Dan said, with the suggestion of a smile on his withered old face that peered out from its ring beard as if from a bag, “Sim, I reckon I know what you be.”

“Well, I wisht you’d tell me, for I’d like to know.”

“You’re jest a ingorant old fool.”

“Dan, you’re right, by golly! And say, I know what you be.”

“Well, what be I?”

“Well, you’re another, or I’m a possum!”

“That’s jest what I be, old feller, that’s jest what I be! Say, before we vote, let’s go over and take some-thin’.”

“That’s the first sensible word you’ve said to-day. I’m right with ye. And say, I hate not to vote with you. Let’s split the difference, and vote for Lincoln. He’s a mountain boy, and some kin of ourn, I reckon.”

“All right, Sim. I’ll do it.”

The two old men went into Post’s and drank their uncolored corn juice with a dry eye, and parted at the door with the affectionate sally:

“Say, Sim, you’re a ingorant old fool, now ain’t you?”

“That’s what I be, Dan. And you’re another!”

“Don’t you go to callin’ me no opprobrious names, Sim.”

“I’ll call you all the appropriate names I please, Dan—you ingorant old fool—he, he!”

This pleasant conversation accounts for two votes

cast for Abraham Lincoln, whereby his minority in two States was made less small, though the electoral vote of both States—and of these and Virginia only—was cast for Bell.

But this was not the general character of the Lincoln vote. There were two warm political speeches that day—one by Mr. Buzbee and one by James Fletcher, and both were for Lincoln. There was some opposition to Mr. Buzbee's, for his abolitionism came out in the most uncompromising way, and not all his hearers by any means were ready for it. Indeed, as the day wore on, and liquor flowed somewhat freer, there was some talk of a merry party to take him out that night and switch him, with a warning to leave the county, but nothing came of it. Still, he made some enemies that day, from whom he had to hear later. Fletcher took the stump, literally, for it was a stump on the State line that afforded him a rostrum, and pleaded for a vote for the whole nation, a vote that was first of all to keep the Union whole, and next to limit the political power of the cotton States, between whom and the manufacturing interests of the North the great border portions of the nation were forgotten. It was a line of thought that had come to him from the reading of the Knoxville Whig and from his debates with Mr. Buzbee, but he developed it independently, and made a strong impression upon the voters. When the votes were counted that night—and they were counted while being cast, for that matter, for every one could tell, if he chose to count, just how the vote stood at any time—there was found to be a clear majority for Abraham Lincoln, and he was thenceforth inaugurated in the thought of the community as

the President of Pine Knot and the nation. Within a week, for news had come to travel rapidly, they learned that the nation had agreed with them, and they congratulated the nation on its good sense.

The Friday following the election, Buzbee, Renfro, and Goodwin set out at three o'clock, the school having been dismissed an hour earlier than usual, to camp for the night near the Falls of the Cumberland, and spend the day Saturday in their explorations. Mr. Buzbee was confident from the specimens of rock he had brought away with him that the silver lode must lie below the falls, instead of above, and that the wisest course for this more extended trip would be to confine all investigation to the lower strata, giving over all thought of the money that might be hidden until they should locate the mine. Renfro and Goodwin, too, had found occasion for some special labor, for the system of land occupation which prevailed in Kentucky often resulted in overlapping titles, and it was judged wise for them, before any demonstration was made, to inspect carefully their titles as recorded at Whitley Courthouse, and to make good any possible defects.

Meantime, working quietly in their inquiries, they unearthed a good many interesting stories about the mine. There was one of an old man and his son who were hunting in the region near the falls. They sought shelter from a storm in a "rock house," an overhanging cliff that deepened into a cave. The son, tiring of the confinement, began a cautious exploration of the cave, and passed straight back in the darkness into a large room, where he found some rusty picks and other mining tools, with decayed and worm-eaten handles. Groping his way still farther, he found himself in an-

other room, which, suddenly illumined by a flash of lightning, revealed in the streak of light that penetrated the dense shadows a great chest of silver. He shouted to his father to come and help him carry away the wealth which he had found, but in answer to his shout there rushed out at him a frightful shape, the ghost of one of the partners of Swift, who had been murdered by one of the others, and who guarded this treasure that lay beside his skeleton. The son and father fled together out into the storm, and heard a mighty roar behind them as the rock house fell, and they were never able to find the place again.

“It is a superstitious tale,” said Buzbee, “but it undoubtedly has a historical basis. The sound which the boy heard was the echo of his own shout; the shape was a creature of his own excited imagination, or a glare of light from another lightning flash; the fall of the rock house was another roar of thunder. In their fright they lost their bearings, and were unable to get back, which is little wonder. But the cave is there, somewhere, and the mouth is doubtless open.”

There were other dark tales of murder and robbery, of the frequent discovery of the mine or of some part of the buried treasure, and the sudden disaster or flight of those who found it.

“If we find it, we shall not leave it,” said Mr. Buzbee.

“I’ve got a silver dime in this pistol,” said Goodwin. “That’ll stop a witch, and I reckon it will a ghost.”

So eager had been their search above the falls, that the falls themselves had hardly been noticed on their first visit, though the roar of the plunge could be dis-

tinctly heard for a long distance. But on this visit it became necessary to inspect the rock at and below the falls, and this brought to Mr. Buzbee's view the beautiful cataract. Shut in between high ranges of hills, the river wasted its wealth of scenery where few human eyes beheld it, but if the stream above and below was beautiful, that at the falls was of transcendent beauty. The three men stood upon the bluff beside the curtain of falling water, just as the sun was rising over the hill to the east, and the November wind, that was crisp but not cold, was playing with the mist. Mr. Buzbee gazed above him, beneath him, and about him, now at the glorious sunrise, and then at the whirling, foaming abyss that lay seventy feet below, and for a time forgot the wealth which he was seeking in the wealth of that rare moment.

A rainbow came and vanished in the spray, and, as he drew nearer to the verge, the arc lengthened, until, lying prone upon his face and looking into the pool below, he saw the rainbow increased to a complete circle.*

"It is the rainbow of our hope!" he cried, "and it is complete! See, see!" They could not hear his words for the din of the waters, but they looked where

* At the Cave of the Winds, at Niagara, one is told by the guide, and in the printed descriptions, that this is the only spot on the globe where one may see a rainbow that is a complete circle. It is a mistake. At the Falls of the Cumberland the author has seen a circular rainbow. There is no reason why it should not be seen at other cataracts under favorable conditions of sun and mist, if the observer can secure a suitable viewpoint. The lack of this in general accounts for the extreme rarity of the phenomenon.

he pointed, and dragging themselves to the edge of the cliff, they looked at the seven-hued circle, if not with his appreciation, at least not without admiration and awe. Then with a feeling as if a benediction had come down upon them, they clambered down the rocks, and renewed their search.

CHAPTER XX

THE WIDOW'S REVENGE

IT can not be claimed that the success of the closing month of school was wholly due to the labor of the teacher. Faithful his work had been in the beginning, and rare had been his devotion, but the last month was something of a contrast. Not that he meant to slight it, but his mind was elsewhere. He came in the morning barely in time for the beginning of the day's work, and was off at night as soon as school was dismissed. He brought books to school which were not text-books, and was seen reading at noontime so intently that he once forgot to call school until half an hour after the time. On Fridays he was off as soon as school was over, and once he did not return on Saturday night.

"It is holy work," he said. "There never was more sacred work than this," and he came back fatigued to the point of exhaustion late on Sunday night. His wife and daughter were anxious. He talked to them little, and when he spoke it was in terms which they little understood.

"My dear," said he to his wife, "it is unconstitutional to take private property for public purposes without just compensation. The money consideration thus makes abolition almost impossible, and the care

of the emancipated slaves will be a task nothing less than Herculean. But we have the resources in sight, my dear. They are almost within our grasp, and they are consecrated to this object."

"Has Goodwin consecrated his share?" asked Barbara, somewhat cynically.

"Not formally—no. But his interest will grow, I make no doubt. The scheme must appeal to him. I have talked with him but little, in fact. We have been busy with the preliminaries. But my own third, my dear, is ample. Let me tell you that I now believe we have located the lobe. We have worked long at it, and have explored right and left. I am confident that we have it. It is exactly under the falls. The cataract itself has been the angel at the gate with drawn sword, forbidding entrance into this cave of untold wealth. The sides have caved as the falls have receded, and the detritus covers the stratum which bears the ore at almost every exposed point, and those that are exposed are so inaccessible that they can not well be found. In one such place, however, I have found the marks of picks and the holes made by drills for blasting. But this I did not find till I had first located the stratum behind the sheet of water."

"You climbed behind the falling water, father?" asked Mrs. Buzbee anxiously.

"Yes, my dear. I will admit that it seemed dangerous. But we had searched up and down, and I had been able to examine almost all the exposed strata except that. The way was narrow and the rocks were slippery, and the roar behind the falls was terrific, but we gained it, and there I found these specimens. See them sparkle!"

He held them in the light, and the shining little particles glistened brightly.

“There are millions of tons of it!” he said.

“Are you sure it is silver, father?” asked Barbara.

“Silver, my dear?” asked Mr. Buzbee, with just a touch of annoyance, so rare in him. “What else can it be? Of course it is silver.”

“Have you analyzed it?”

“Not yet. We must contrive a little crucible, and then a larger one. I am studying now the process by which we may ‘cupel,’ as they call it, the molten ore. I have been buying books. My dear, I am sorry to say that I have had to spend the last three dollars I received from tuition fees for another work on mineralogy. I know we needed it, my love, but bread is a secondary matter to us now. In this great cause, ‘man shall not live by bread alone.’”

“If you are sure that is silver, father,” said Barbara, “we can spare the tuition fees; but if it is not, we shall be short of food before the end of next week.”

“Bear with me for a few anxious weeks, my dears. If I rob you it is that, being poor, we may make many rich.”

Barbara looked at her mother, and saw the tears rising, and she went over and kissed her.

“Never mind, mother. We have not yet come to the condition of old Mother Hubbard. There’s a pie in the cupboard, and I mean to make a hoecake, the best that you ever saw.—And you, father, shall have some, too, and you shall watch me turn it. Do you think I could toss it up the chimney, and, running out of the house, catch it the other side up? I am

told that no mountain girl is fit to marry till she can do so."

So the matter settled itself at home, and at school it moved on fairly well. Barbara went daily now, and taught a number of her father's classes, and Fletcher took others. Mr. Buzbee gave daily talks on geology, interesting the first day or two, but monotonous as he got beyond the depth of the pupils, and was manifestly rehearsing his own reading rather than primarily instructing his school. His other classes he heard in a listless way, though Barbara's reminders saved him several mistakes. But fortunately it was near the end of the term, and the thought of the school was on the exhibition. So, while there was some complaint, and even Bill Blake joined in it sparingly, while Noel Davis was vehement, the dissatisfaction was not so general but that the interest in the exhibition overtopped it.

At night Mr. Buzbee was busy with his lump of charcoal and an extemporized blowpipe, which he produced as soon as he came home, and put out of sight reluctantly on the appearance of Fletcher. The evenings were less enjoyable than formerly, partly because of his preoccupation, and partly also because Fletcher noticed a change in Barbara. But he loved her the more as she seemed further from him, and she, alas! there were moments when she almost regretted her rash promise to Liberty Preston. But she and Liberty remained warm friends. And Liberty herself came to see that it might be possible for Barbara to turn Fletcher away, but impossible for her to deliver him over to her.

"Liberty," said Barbara, "I want you to come over and spend the last week with me."

“ You mean to stay at your house? ”

“ Yes; we shall be working together for the exhibition, and we can plan better if we are together at night.”

Liberty hesitated and said, “ I don't believe that's the reason you asked me.”

“ That's one reason.”

“ Do you think I better? ”

“ I don't see what harm it can do.”

“ Well, I'll come over this one night. But I won't come again. No, Barbara, you needn't urge me. I'm not going to put myself in his way. One night at your house is all right, but I ain't going there reg'lar.”

Mr. Buzbee was manifestly disappointed to see Barbara bring home a friend. “ My child,” he said, “ I am glad to have you hospitable, but this is inconvenient. I have an experiment of unusual interest on hand to-night, and Mr. Renfro and Mr. Goodwin are coming over.”

“ My love,” said Mrs. Buzbee, “ where will she sleep? And what can we give her to eat? ”

“ She will sleep with me, of course. It is not unusual for a family and their guests to occupy one room. Have I not been invited to ‘ go by ’ with forty families with an average of a dozen children and only one room? And as to eating, fear not, mother dear; I'll make a famous hoecake.—And, papa, you may just put away your old rocks and pipe and charcoal. You're going to sit up and be sociable to-night.”

Soon Liberty came over, and the chicken which she brought from Mrs. Lake's certainly did improve the supper.

Goodwin and Renfro came that evening, disap-

pointed, indeed, that they could not pursue their experiment, yet taking in the situation. So they sat before the fire and cracked chestnuts and ate popcorn, and had a rather merry evening. Fletcher came, too, and Barbara held him and her father to the lesson, for she wanted Liberty to see how the time was spent. But when the lesson was over, she caused him to move up his chair, and she had him set it beside Liberty's. Fletcher entered heartily into the spirit of the occasion, and was pleasant with Liberty, though Liberty felt sure he would have liked his chair beside Barbara's.

It was ten o'clock when the men rose to go. That was a very late hour for any of them, and all apologized for staying so long. But before they got away the door was pushed open and in stalked Widow Braniman. She had never entered the door before, but had ridden up to the step and called. She had come on foot to-night, and was wet from fording the branch. She pushed the door open without a word, and strode in. She was taken aback for a moment by the presence of so many people, but it was only for a moment.

"Good evening, Mrs. Braniman," said Barbara. "Take a chair."

"I won't do nothin' of the sort," she replied. "Take a cheer yourself, and git out of the way with it!"

She was quivering with anger as she spoke.

"Mrs. Braniman," said Mr. Buzbee, "what is the meaning of this?"

"What is the meanin', you biscuit-faced old hypocrite! You know what's the meanin'! I want you to fetch back Noel Davis!"

"I beg your pardon, my good woman——"

"Daggon ye! Call me yer good woman, and I'll hit ye!"

"Look here, Mis' Braniman," interposed Renfro. "This ain't no way to act. What's come over ye? What's the matter of ye?"

"Why, Mr. Buzbee here, he sot me up to be good to Noel Davis, so's he'd talk to me, and I done it, and he's ben a-comin' and a-comin', and I hadn't no manner of suspicion but what he was talkin' to me all the time; and to-night he's run off to Tennessy with my oldest darter Sal, and they're goin' to git married, ef they ain't married a'ready!"

"Well, now, that's too bad," said Renfro. "But, say, Mis' Braniman, hit don't make no difference, p'tic'lar, as I see: hit's all in the fambly."

"You shet up, Bill Renfro! You needn't a-make fun of me! I ain't in no mood for that."

"But, say, Mis' Braniman, think how much better this is. You've got a heap better chance at him as a mother-in-law than as a wife, and you ain't, as you might say, responsible fur him so much. Don't you see?"

"Be you in airnest or be you jest a-devilin' me?"

"Dead in airnest, Mis' Braniman. Why, looky here: they ain't but mighty few men I'd want fer husbands, nohow, and jest between you and me and the post, Noel ain't one of 'em. But they's a heap I'd like to be mother-in-law to, and Noel's the very first one I'd take to train."

There was a hearty laugh all round at this, and even the widow joined in it.

“There is times,” she said, “when I more’n half suspicion that you ain’t more’n half idiotic.”

“Thank ye, Mis’ Braniman. You’re complimentary to-night. Now, what you’ve said is true, and this here is one of my good nights. Now, ef I was you, I’d be a first-class mother-in-law to Noel, I would for a fact. I’d make him come to taw. Why, Mis’ Braniman, you’ve got the opportunity of a lifetime, as I heerd a feller say. Dog my cats if you ain’t! Noel needs such a combin’ as you’ve got it in your power to give, he jest pinely does.”

Mrs. Braniman thought it over for a moment, then she burst into a hysterical laugh, which modulated into a cry, and ended in a laugh no longer hysterical, but determined and a trifle threatening.

“I’ll do it,” she said. “Don’t none of you here say a word. I’ll pack up my mess of young uns and move over and live with him, and ef I don’t comb his wool!”

“I wouldn’t be too hard on Noel,” said Mr. Goodwin.

“Shet up!” said she. “Daggon me if I wouldn’t like to be your mother-in-law!”

“Noel’s enough for a starter,” said Renfro.

“You have other daughters, haven’t you?” asked Mrs. Buzbee, seeking to turn the conversation.

“Yes,” said she, “I’ve had sorter bad luck with ’em. The chimbly fell down and killed all but nine of ’em.”

Mr. Buzbee had heard this before, but he had forgotten it, and now, as then, he extended his sympathy, which was spurned. The widow felt better, however, for getting off her accustomed joke, and

rose to go, charging all to be silent concerning her visit.

“I won't let him know that I've been mad,” said she, “and you mustn't none of you let on. I had to walk—Sal rode off on my horse. I keered more for that than for Noel, anyhow.’

So she departed much less angry than she came, but she never forgave Mr. Buzbee. Both she and Noel were from this time forth his implacable enemies.

CHAPTER XXI

THE MEANING OF IT

THERE was no pretense of getting the company inside the schoolhouse. They built fires in the woods and ate their dinner about them, coming in in detachments to listen to the examination in the morning, the grand general exercise which preceded the afternoon recess, and the spelling match which concluded the daytime programme. The wind whistled about the house and found its way through the cracks, but the great fireplace was filled till the fire dogs groaned, and the back log, that had required four men to bring in, glowed cheerily.

The trustees were out in force. The law required one trustee to visit the school each week, and the trustees never considered their office a sinecure. Noel Davis was present with his new wife. They rode one horse, and Mrs. Braniman rode her own, so that one point was evidently settled in her favor.

The winter sun set early, and the exhibition, consisting of dialogues, recitations, essays, and music, began "at early candle lighting," which was before six o'clock.

However willing the people had been to take turns in the afternoon, there was a universal desire to get in

for the evening; and it was wonderful to see how the log walls expanded to take in the multitude. Pine Knot was there in force, from Granny White to babies in arms, whose mothers nursed them as they sat the exhibition out.

People near the walls got cold and people near the fire got hot, so there was a constant movement to and from the fire, but every square inch of floor was filled. There had been some drinking, and a few men from a distance were noisy, but they were removed without trouble, and the exhibition proceeded in order.

So the children spoke their pieces and sang their songs, and the older pupils read their essays and went through with their dialogues. Fletcher made a speech for the pupils; four of the larger girls sang a farewell song which ended in sobs; Bill Blake made a speech for the trustees, in which he said that this had been the best school ever kept in Pine Knot, and that it was the universal desire of the patrons that the teacher would make up a subscription school and continue two months longer, or at least till Christmas; and Mr. Buzbee made his closing address, thanking patrons, pupils, and friends, and thus the term came to a close. The complaints of the last month were all silenced in the glory of the finale, and John Howard Buzbee rejoiced in the consciousness of success. It was a rare feeling with him, and, notwithstanding some inattention in the closing weeks, he richly deserved it.

In answer to the request that he would continue, and teach a subscription school, he replied that for the present he had other and important interests, but that he would consider the matter, and perhaps would do so later. It was evident that his mind was upon some-

thing else, and curiosity, already rife about the mysterious trips of the three men, now linked together all manner of impossible fancies. Perhaps the least improbable of these, and the one most currently credited, was that, aided by Goodwin and Renfro, whom he had converted, or who had been bribed by Northern money, they were making a refuge for fugitive slaves far back in the mountains.

Such rumors gain credence in inverse ratio to their probability, and as the public generally comes to its conclusion by the elimination of possibilities, and pounces upon the one that is left, so it came to pass that people in general, having easily disposed of the few other theories that presented themselves, settled back content with this.

Therewith grew up a strong feeling of opposition to Mr. Buzbee. It was not so much because he was an abolitionist—though a name is ever a fearful thing, and a man is saved or half damned in popular thought as soon as he can be made to answer to one—but because he was concealing something. It made him other and more formidable than he had first appeared.

“I tell ye,” said Noel Davis, as he sat before Blake’s store, looking up the road with anxiety now and then lest his mother-in-law should fulfill her threat and ride after him to husk corn—“I tell ye, we’ve been a-harborin’ a wolf in sheep’s clothing. What’s *he* off here in the woods fur, keepin’ a little school? He could be a senator or a big preacher or something of the sort if he’d a-wanted to.”

“Or a doctor,” said Neze Post. “I had a cattle buyer sick at my hotel one night, and we went for him, and, by gum, he uncurled him from where he was all

drawed up at the foot of the bed, and had him stretched out and drapin' off to sleep in ten minutes."

"Did he charge him anything?" asked Blake.

"No. He wouldn't make no charge, but——"

"You'd ought to 'a' added that to your bill, Neze," said Best.

"I reckon so. I ain't larned your way of keepin' hotel yet. But I was a-goin' to say the man gin him five dollars. He left it with me, and I tuck it over and gin it to his gal."

"Lucky you gin it to her fur bread and butter, stidder givin' it to him for his abolition tracks," said Blake. "They keep a-comin'. Every mail fetches him something, but they're books now, mostly."

"I don't guess he's lacked fur bread and butter," said Noel. "He's allers had enough when I've been thar, and he ain't had a cent of his school money yit. That won't come in till New Year's."

"How d'ye s'pose he's lived?" asked Post.

"They's been tuition, and a heap o' things brung in on account of him not boarding around," said Blake.

"That wouldn't dress his wife and gal the way they're dressed," said Davis.

"They had them clothes before they come," said Blake. "They ain't bought hardly a rag here."

"Yes, but how'd he git 'em thar, I'd like to know? And how's he able to be so daggon independent about takin' money for doctorin'?" demanded Noel.

Alas! ever since Paul was accounted no apostle because he preached the gospel without charge, it has been thus that men have found in generosity the final argument against its possessor. Mr. Buzbee's ability

to live without money was the convincing proof to many besides Noel that he was in the pay of an abolition society contemplating some sinister undertaking.

“ Well, what do you reckon they’re goin’ to do with the niggers when they git a hull passel of them off thar by the river? ” asked Best.

No one answered for a moment. Noel Davis, however, filled his pipe with a self-conscious air that drew attention toward him. He did not hurry about filling it either, but went inside for a coal and came out putting it down on the top of his tobacco.

“ I’ve got an *idy*, ” he said.

“ What is it? ” asked Best.

Noel puffed away for some moments to get his pipe well started, and held the attention of all while he was doing it. Such a tribute does the world pay now and then to the man who has an idea. It is rare, to be sure, but at rare intervals it stops its senseless chatter and waits for the idea to clarify while the possessor thereof gets his pipe a-going. Such a tribute at this moment did Pine Knot pay to Noel Davis, and Noel prolonged it with a delicious sense of variety.

“ Well? ” demanded Blake, growing impatient.

“ Yer settin’ on the aig of that *idy* a consid’rable spell, Noel, ” said Best.

“ It’s done hatched, ” said Noel.

“ I allowed it was addled by this time. Well, trot it out. ”

“ Do you fellers remember John Brown? ” asked Noel.

“ The one they hung in Ole V’giny? ”

“ Yep. ”

"I don't guess we've ary one of us forgot him," said Blake. "What d'ye mean?"

"He's another," said Davis laconically.

"Another what?"

"Another John Brown."

"You go to thunder!"

"What fur?"

"Mr. Buzbee ain't no fighter!"

"*Ain't* he? And all the time the boys was a-hold-in' off and not barrin' him out of the schoolhouse because he seemed so sorter meachin', wasn't he a-packin' stuff in his little bag that he packs to school every day to blow the schoolhouse higher than Gilderoy's kite? You think they ain't no fight in him! Well, mebby one of you wants to face him, that's all. Still waters runs deep, I've heerd tell, and I'll be hanged ef I ain't more a-feard of a quiet, sneakin' cuss that pretends to be one thing and is another than I be of a man with a gun out in the open."

All this was new to all but Noel, and was a rather wide deduction from Mr. Buzbee's pound of sulphur. But it had its impression. Even Blake was moved by it, and the rest almost shuddered as they thought of the schoolhouse blown to atoms, and coming down with shattered members of Pine Knot children over the adjacent portions of the two States of Kentucky and Tennessee.

"Well, Noel?" said Best, as the former paused to resume his smoking.

"Well, you know what that man Brown was meanin' to do—how him and the secessioners of the North was a-goin' to upset the Gov'maint and make

a new one with a nigger for President and a nigger Congress, and nigger sheriffs and postmasters and all that. Well, they had to let go of that fur a while, for the niggers wouldn't fight, but they had shipped in a lot of rifles and knives and pikes and things to arm the niggers with."

Again he paused and the silence showed that his argument was followed with interest.

"But Mr. Buzbee ain't had no guns shipped in," said Blake.

Noel still smoked in silence.

"Noel!" said Best.

"Wha' d'ye want?"

"Wake up, and go on!"

"I've got done."

"No, ye hain't."

"Well, wha' d'ye want me to say?"

"Bill says Buzbee ain't had no shootin' arms sent in."

"He does, does he?"

"Yes, and you heerd him, and you didn't say nothin', but jest went on smokin' and lookin' like you didn't believe it."

"Well, if Bill Blake says so, I reckon hit must be so."

"Daggon ye, what d'ye mean?"

"I hate to tell a good feller like Bill he lies."

"Look here, Noel," said Blake, "go on and tell what ye know, and shet up yer no 'count talk."

"Well, if you say he ain't had no guns sent in, I ain't a-goin' to dispute ye."

"I was a-sayin' what I believe, and what I'm goin' to believe till I git some proof. If you've got any proof,

spit it out, and not set thar talkin' like a cymlin-headed fool."

"Well, he ain't had much of anything shipped in here, has he?"

"Nothing but his mail, and his abolition tracks and books," said Blake.

"Well, if he wanted anything sent in that was honest and right, he'd be likely to have it come here, wouldn't he?"

"I don't know no reason why not."

"Well, you don't see no sorter reason why he should be shippin' in stuff by way of Rockhold, do ye, ef what he's gittin' is straight goods?"

"There mout be and then there moun't," said Bill, not to be drawn too far in preliminary concession.

"Well, mebbly you kin think of some good reason for him havin' stuff sent in by way of Rockhold, and packin' it off to the river," said Noel, knocking the ashes from his pipe, and slowly rising as if to go home.

"I don't have no cause to think up no reason yet," said Blake.

"You don't?"

"No. I hain't no reason to think he done no sech thing."

"Oh, well, if you hain't, all right. But I know he has done it."

"Has had guns sent to Rockhold?"

"I didn't say they was guns."

"What was they?"

"Bill Blake, sometimes you talk like a daggon fool. S'posin' they was guns, would they be marked guns on the boxes? Was that the way John Brown's things

was sent in? Was that the way them Berea folks had their stuff sent in?"

"The Berea folks didn't have no guns," said Blake. "That was only a thing for making candles."

"That's what they said," said Noel.

"That's what it *was*," said Blake. "I've seen 'em myself in Loussville, to save dippin'. And them folks that drew 'em out is fools. That man Rogers is as good a man as you'll find in Kaintuck, and Fee, for all he's an abolitionist, is as white a man as you be, and a blamed sight more!"

"Then why did they drive 'em out?"

"'Cause they was a set of fools, and skeered at a candle mold."

"All right," said Noel. "Hit's time for me to go. They ain't much fun arguin' with a man that is so daggon sure he knows it all. That's why I git sorter tard talkin' to Mis' Braniman. But she's an improvement on you, Bill, the way you're feelin' this evenin'. I reckon I'd best go home. Hit's gittin' to-wards night, and I wasn't a-lookin' for no mail p'tic'lar."

"Well, hold on here. Afore you go, tell us a little more about that stuff he had sent to Rockhold."

"Well, Mis' Braniman was over that away last week. She's got kinfolks thar and at the Joefields. She was a-feelin' sorter tard, and she 'lowed that, now she had some one to leave the young uns with, she'd sashay around a little more. And I wasn't in no sorter notion of astin' her not to go, ef she wanted to. And over thar she heerd about him a-gittin' some boxes of heavy stuff shipped in thar. They come from the North, somers, and they didn't have no idy what was in 'em, and didn't suspicion nothin', till Mis' Brani-

man up and told 'em about his bein' a abolitionist and bein' off in the woods by the river on some big abolition scheme. She told 'em of his quare talk about the greatest thing that had been done for humanity, and some sich she'd heerd, and I reckon from the way she tells it she got 'em consid'able stirred up. The Rockholds owns niggers, you know, and so does a heap o' others about there. And one of 'em by the name o' Perkins has a nigger that kin read, and Buzbee met him, and says, 'Say,' sezee, 'kin you read?' 'Yes, massa,' says the nigger, 'I kin read.' 'Read that,' sezee, and he gin him a track on slavery by John Wesley, with some stuff writ onto it by John G. Fee. Well, the niggers there is mostly Methodists, and they think Wesley's one of the angels, like Gabriel, I reckon, and they all know about Fee, and think he's a prophet. Perkins had to lick the nigger to make him tell, and he gin up the track. Perkins is goin' to the *gran'* jury next Monday and git a indictmaint agin Buzbee if he kin. If he cyan't, then there's other ways o' killin' a cat besides chokin' 'em on hot butter."

"Have you seed Perkins yourself?" demanded Blake.

"Mebby I have and mebby I hain't," replied Noel.

"Be you goin' to court a Monday?"

"Mebby I be and mebby I ain't," he answered again.

"Well, what I want to know is, be you and Perkins and a litter of them Rockhold fellers fixin' up a plan to run Mr. Buzbee off?"

"Looky here, Bill Blake," replied Noel, "I ain't on the witness stand, and you ain't no jury. Now I've said all I'm a-goin' to. Lordy, I wisht the old

woman was over there yit. I ain't the man I onct was, boys. Things is consid'able changed at home. Not that I've got anything to say agin Mis' Braniman. She's a mighty smart woman. But gittin' married has its resks—it has, fer sure."

CHAPTER XXII

THE GLORIOUS DISCOVERY

“Is your pa at home?” asked Bill Blake on Sunday morning.

“No,” said Barbara, “he has gone with Mr. Renfro and Mr. Goodwin.”

“To the river?”

“I suppose so.”

“How long’s he been gone?”

“Since Monday.”

“Ever stay like this afore?”

“No; he could not, on account of the school. He is much interested in some work there.”

Bill Blake rode off again. He fed his horse and ate his own dinner, thinking very hard the while. Then he saddled his horse again and started toward the river.

“They’s two more jurymen on Marsh Creek,” he said. “I’ll see them, anyhow, and mebbly I’ll go on.”

He called on the first of the jurymen as he passed.

“Howdy, Dave?” he called from the fence.

“Howdy, Bill? Light and come in and set with us.”

“No. Hain’t got time, I reckon. Say, you and Nick Tettters is on the jury, ain’t ye?”

"Yes. Nick's here now, come over to see about gittin' off in the mornin'."

"That so? Well, that's lucky. Call Nick and come to the fence.—Howdy, Nick? You two on the *gran* jury? Well, I'll be daggoned! Ef hit's come to this! I reckon they's a pretty good show fer the rest of us ef the jury begins at home!"

"You jest git off that nag and talk that away to me," laughed Nick, "and I'll duck ye in the branch."

"No more'n I expected!—You hear him, Dave! You'll have obleeged to sware to what he's a-sayin' now! That's a threat of 'sault and battery! But to a feller that's done as much devilmaint as Nick has, one more 'sault don't count, har'ly. Well, when they make up juries outer sich fellers as you alls, hit's pore show fer honest men."

"Quit that slander, now, and save yourself a lickin'. I'm a-goin' to report you to the jury fer sellin' me cotton jeans for all wool."

"All right, all right! I only wisht I could make you pay the value of cotton."

Strangers to Pine Knot have sometimes accused its residents of lacking a sense of humor. There are different kinds of humor, and Pine Knot simply overflowed with its own kind. It was thus that its people were wont to meet, and preface their serious business with remarks of this character.

"Well, what do you know?" asked Dave.

"I know you fellers is likely to do a heap more harm than what you do good, and I come over to put a stop to some of it. You know our teacher?"

"Buzbee?"

"Yep."

“Seed him at the exhibition. He’s a main buster, ain’t he?”

“Best teacher ever we had, and as good a man as ever lived.”

“He’s a abolitionist, ain’t he?”

“Yes, but a mighty white one. But he’s stirred up a hornet’s nest of some sort over in Rockhold, and they’re comin’ down to the *gran’* jury to-morrow to git a indictmaint agin him for incitin’ slaves to run away. Noel Davis is behind it, and he’s a first cousin to the old scratch, and his mother-in-law, she’s got a tongue that the devil started to make into a rattlesnake, but got it too long. Now, I don’t know what they’re goin’ to swear to. This man Buzbee’s the smartest man and the foolishhest ever I seed. In some points he ain’t got no more jedgmaint than a child. He’s off in the woods now on some fool scheme, huntin’ rocks or bugs or toads or some blamed thing or other—I dunno what, nor keer—and them fools is jest fool enough to think he’s goin’ to lead an army of niggers out there into the wilderness, and feed ’em with manna, I reckon, and they’ve gone as crazy as he is about it. I jest thought I’d ride over and say, if the matter comes up, ‘Don’t you pay no sorter attention to it.’”

It was on this wise that Bill Blake had gone the rounds of the jurymen within reach, and, whether he had any influence or not, the records show that an attempt was made to secure an indictment, and that it failed for lack of sufficient evidence. But Noel Davis was at court that Monday on other business than that which the court recorded, and he carried with him a paper to which he secured a number of signatures,

pledging the signers to secure the removal of J. Howard Buzbee from the county, "peaceable if we can, forcible if we must."

Having done so much, Bill Blake felt some curiosity to know what the three were actually doing back in the hills. Some thought was in his mind that he had earned a right to know; some thought as well that positive knowledge on his part would make him of service; and some also that Mr. Buzbee ought to be warned. That Mr. Buzbee's intentions were honorable he fully believed; that Renfro, also, though less altruistic, was above all schemes of dishonor, he also believed. But he just as truly believed that Renfro was on no quest of bugs or toads, and that Goodwin was not spending his time and labor without some thought of his own interest. So he did not lack motives to turn his horse's head toward the river, and as the afternoon was waning he hastened. He had gathered enough to feel sure that the work in progress, whatever its character, was at the falls, where he knew the land of Goodwin and Renfro joined. Thither he rode as fast as his good horse could carry him.

Fording the river he turned down stream, and nearing the cataract, hitched his horse, and clambered among the rocks. A fire attracted his attention to a ravine hard by, and he stepped cautiously thither. A small furnace was belching and roaring, and Buzbee, Renfro, and Goodwin were standing beside it, intently regarding a small molten mass.

"This is the moment that proves it," said Mr. Buzbee.

"Is it now we get the coloring?" asked Goodwin eagerly.

“What do you know about the coloring?” demanded Renfro.

“I’ve listened at Mr. Buzbee when he’s told us,” said Goodwin.

“He has quite astonished me by his apt learning,” said Mr. Buzbee. “It is to his suggestion we are indebted for our present success. We could not have done this without the charcoal.”

“I only hope we’ve got it,” said Renfro. “What’s the coloring?”

“At the instant the last of the lead is absorbed by the cupel— You get my meaning, do you?”

“No, I don’t.”

“Well, we introduced the lead into our former blast to separate the silver from the slag.”

“I know that.”

“Now, we are refining, or cupelling, as the term is, so as to separate that lead from the silver.”

“Yes, I understand.”

“Well, this cup we have made out of the bone ash and wood ash mixed and molded is called a cupel, and is made to absorb the lead.”

“I understand.”

“Now, the instant that the last lead is absorbed we shall see a beautiful sight. It is known as the corrosion, or coloring. It is the sure test of pure silver. It will not come unless we have silver nor until it is pure. A rainbow streak will shoot— See! see!”

They drew so close to the furnace that the heat must have burned their faces. A minute they watched the colored prismatic lights shoot back and forth across the surface of the ashed dish. Blake could almost see its reflection in their faces.

“That’s hit, ain’t it?” asked Renfro.

Goodwin did not need to ask. He took a long-handled shovel, and slipping it under the dish, removed it from the fire. The dish broke as he set it down, and the silver ran out and cast itself into a little ingot in a depression of the rock. They all stood above it a moment in silence. Goodwin burned his fingers in his eagerness to hold it in his hand. Renfro cried:

“They’s enough in that little bit of ore to make a silver dollar!”

His estimate was a close one.

Buzbee stood without a word till the little bar was picked out and handed around. Then holding it in his hand, he seemed suddenly possessed with a new spirit.

“It is true!” he cried. “Thank God, it is true! All my dreams, all the travail of centuries, have waited for this moment! Glory to God! glory to God!”

Goodwin and Renfro shouted with him, and the roar of the great cataract found its echo in their rejoicings. Blake heard them, felt the thrill of their enthusiasm, and then, remounting his horse with a guilty feeling, hastened away.

CHAPTER XXIII

FOR THE CAUSE OF FREEDOM

MR. BUZBEE came home late that Sunday night. He was haggard and worn, and had a troublesome cough, the result of exposure to the damp, cold winds.

“My dear,” said he, “I must leave you for a time.”

“You have been leaving me, John,” said Mrs. Buzbee. “We have seen very little of you since school closed.”

“I know, dear. And I must be absent still more. I am going North.”

“What will you do North, husband? These are times of excitement there. It is no time to do your work.”

“It is the fullness of time,” said he. “It is the time for which the ages have waited!”

“What do you mean?”

“We have made our discovery!”

“O father! is it really silver?” asked Barbara.

“Yes, my child. It is. See here!”

He laid a little ingot on the table, and they examined it with interest. Barbara’s cheeks flushed, and her mother, even, grew less pale. She had been unusually pallid lately.

“And this actually came from your mine?”

“It did, my love. We smelted it to-day.”

“To-day, father? This is Sunday.”

“And therefore the more appropriate day for such a discovery. This is the most glorious day the earth has seen since Jesus rose from the dead. Nay, think me not irreverent. I was never so reverent as at this moment. Sometimes in these dark, anxious years I have questioned the Divine goodness. All this I now acknowledge to you, and I repent of it. My faith was never so strong as to-day. As I have ridden home this night, a weary, weary ride, tired in body and in brain, I have felt the pomp of the conqueror, returning in triumph! I have ridden to the music of the morning stars which sang in echo to the shout of the sons of God when they beheld the wonders of creation! These mountains, my dears, these mountains, the home of free men, shall build the shrine of a more perfect freedom. These mountains that have given to the world Helper's great book, *The Impending Crisis*, shall show to the world how that crisis may be, and please God shall be, averted. These mountains—baptized with the tears of Lundy and Birney and Fee and Clay, and the blood of the heroes of King's Mountain and the Alamance—these mountains shall give of the silver in their rich veins as they have given the blood in the veins of their sons for human freedom.”

If at another moment, and in lack of other proof, Barbara had seen in her father only the visionary and the deluded enthusiast, she could not doubt him now. He stood so erect, so grand, he uttered his eloquence with such a consciousness of unselfish loyalty to truth

and goodness, that Barbara and her mother were both swept away. Barbara seized the little bar of silver and kissed it again and again, and handed it to her mother, who bent over it and wept.

“And now—oh, my dear, dear noble father, we shall never be poor again, shall we?”

“No, my love, we are rich.”

“And you will take comfort, and buy yourself better clothes, and us a home, will you not?”

“Perhaps—perhaps. But I had not thought of this. I can not rest now. There is much to be done. I must go North, and see my old friends, who are abolitionists, and sell stock in this mine, the profits to be devoted to the cause of freedom. I will go first of all to Abraham Lincoln, and from there I will go to Boston and see Garrison and Phillips and the rest.”

“But how will you go?”

“Renfro and Goodwin furnish the money, and charge it against the profits of the mine. Mr. Goodwin suggested that I should discount my school warrant, and thus secure the money, and I consented, but Renfro reminded us that you would need it to live upon while I go.”

“Thank God!” said Mrs. Buzbee.

“That man Goodwin is a villain,” said Barbara.

“No, no, my daughter,” said Mr. Buzbee. “He has become a very ardent friend of the cause of freedom! It is he who has suggested the plan of disposing of these shares of stock to abolitionists.”

“Tell us your plan of organization,” said Mrs. Buzbee.

“Renfro is president, Goodwin is treasurer and general manager, and I am secretary.”

“Judas still carries the bag,” said Barbara.

“Do not malign him, my daughter,” said her father; “he has shown wonderful skill in this matter. He has learned smelting and refining quite as fast as I. Indeed, at one time I was almost persuaded that we were deceived, but he quickened my hope again with a suggestion that brought success. The work of refining, or cupelling, which is done with lead, he took under his charge, and will henceforth have the entire work of smelting, while Renfro employs the labor and I sell the stock. But as yet all is a secret. We have carefully hidden all traces of our work till I get money enough to establish a furnace of sufficient size, with crushers and power, to do our work. The falls will furnish power for our blast fans, the woods will furnish our charcoal; we have all we need at hand. I have the analysis here. It shows twenty grains to the ounce. Twenty grains, my dears, and with almost no expense for smelting! There are uncounted millions there! Now, there are perhaps four million slaves. One fifth are men, one fifth women, and the rest children. If the children are worth two hundred dollars each, the women six hundred, and the men a thousand, there is an average of less than five hundred dollars, or about two billion dollars for the whole. That is a vast sum, and the Government would never pay it, because the people could not be brought to vote for the payment of so much from the treasury direct. But, provide the money, and all is easy! And the money is here!—money, not only for their freedom, but money also for their education and to provide them with homes. The supply is unlimited. Under forty-eight feet of conglomerate rock, over

which the falls dash, are eighteen feet of black, laminated shale, with clay-iron stones, and six feet of siliceous shale that is simply full of silver. Think of it, eighteen feet of silver ore! And the mountains there are underlaid with it. Goodwin and Renfro are buying more land, though they own now a vast tract, quite adequate for our needs."

"Are you to be paid a salary for your services as secretary?"

"No, we share alike. But my expenses are to be paid. Oh, but we have had a weary time! We sent for tools—we had to have them—and after many and painful failures we sent for a small crucible. We dared not have them come by way of Pine Knot. We had them sent to Rockhold. It was hard getting them over the mountains, for we had to have them sent securely boxed to avoid suspicion. Meantime we had built furnace after furnace. We found remains of one of Swift's furnaces, which confirms our discovery, though it needed no confirmation. I wish we might have found some of his hidden money. We sorely need some at the start to develop our plant. But no matter. We can toil and wait, as we have done in the past. But success is ours, my dear, success is ours, and the glory is God's!"

There was that in his manner which awed them both as he spoke. A shade of weariness passed over him, and then his face lighted up again.

"Do you know," said he, a little more softly, and with a reverent hush that made his words the more distinct, "I feel to-night as Jesus did when he returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee. In the power of that same Spirit I shall return to the North. I shall

say as he said, 'The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, to preach deliverance to the captives and the recovering of sight to the blind, and to set at liberty them that are bruised, and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord!' Oh, my dears, after this is over, I must return to the pulpit again! There is the great opportunity, after all! But meantime I must preach this glorious message, and I will ring in the ears of the nation the glad word, 'This day is this Scripture fulfilled in your ears!'"

CHAPTER XXIV

THE MOB, THE MAN, AND THE GHOSTS

THE six muffled figures paused under the dead sycamore tree at the forks, and discussed the plan a little before proceeding.

"I wisht they was more of us," said one of them.

"Hit's a sight easier to sign a paper than to come up to taw," said another.

"Mebby we'd best put it off," said Noel Davis.

"Put it off? And then what? Be you goin' to fetch us over here from Rockhold agin for nothin'?" asked another testily.

"Don't git mad. You've been drinkin' too much."

"No more'n you have. You're plumb drunk," retorted the other.

"Here, boys, this won't do. Are your masks all right?"

"I reckon so."

"Well, we'll ride up to the house and fetch him out, and then we'll come back to this tree, and like as not they'll be more here by the time we git back. They got to come this way, one road or t'other."

With some misgivings they assented, and soon the house was surrounded, and a voice called out, "Hello!"

“What is wanted?” asked Mr. Buzbee from his bed.

“I want Mr. Buzbee. There’s a woman sick over here a piece.”

“I will come at once,” he said. “Wait till I get my clothes on.”

He rose and dressed, and, opening the door, was seized on the threshold by two men, who threw him heavily upon his back and bound him hand and foot. It was over in a minute, almost before Mrs. Buzbee could scream. A heavy hand was laid upon her mouth, and the masked figure with the other hand put out the light.

“Stay where ye be, right in this bed, and don’t ye stir nor make a light, or we’ll shoot it out!”

They were gone, and Barbara and her mother lay for a few moments in terror. Then Barbara slipped from the bed and hastily put on her clothes. “Lie still, mother,” she said. “Do not move from where you are. I will go for help.”

Thankful for the act which had put out the light, she slipped through the open door and around the house. Her heart was beating violently. Wakened from sound sleep to deathly terror, alone and in the power of masked and desperate men, it was little wonder that she trembled. But she gained courage as soon as she was free from the house and found the way unguarded. She hastened toward the road, yet stopped midway. They had halted at the tree in the fork. She crept nearer and yet nearer, and there against the white trunk she saw her father, tied to the tree, and surrounded by his captors, some mounted and some on foot.

Seeing no opportunity of assisting him, she crept away again, and, making a detour, gained the road. If she could only get to Renfro's or the hamlet! But they were between her and these. The nearest house was Granny White's, and she sped thither. She was running, breathless, down the crooked road, when she fell into the arms of a man, who held her just a moment, first in surprise and then, perhaps, almost unconsciously, for joy.

"Why, Miss Barbara! Is this you? And so late!"

"O Mr. Fletcher!" she cried, clinging to him. "I am so glad to find you! Oh, come with me, and help my father! They have bound him! They are masked and armed! Come, come!"

She seized his hand, and would have dragged him on.

"Stop!" said he. "Tell me first, that I may know what to do."

"There are five or six of them," said she. "I do not know who they are. They lied to him, and told him a sick woman needed him, and they sprang upon him when he opened the door to go with them. Oh, the cowards, the brutes!"

"And where are they? Speak a little lower."

"Down by the tree at the fork of the road."

"Wait till I cut a club," said he. "We will release him."

They walked back together, arm in arm. They were near the house, when he said:

"Miss Barbara, have you heard the story about that tree?"

"Yes," said she. "You met the ghost there, you remember."

“Yes. You have the sheets?”

“I have them. Why?”

“These men outnumber us. Besides, they are armed. But they are superstitious, and I know how dreadful a thing in white can be made to look in the dark. We must recall the ghost of Deek Morgan. Slip into the house and get the sheets. I will wait for you outside.”

“O Barbara, my child, is that you?” asked her mother anxiously.

“Sh—h! mother, do not speak! I will be back soon! Mr. Fletcher is with me!”

Barbara returned in a few moments. “They were more kind than they thought when they put out the light,” said she.

“Come,” said Fletcher, and he led the way around through the woods behind the tree and at a safe distance.

“Now,” said he, “you must help me to be a ghost.”

“No, no!” said she. “You would never do. I will be the ghost. I will wrap myself in these, and frighten those who are to be frightened by ghosts, and you must go around with your stick, and fall upon them as they run.”

“I don’t like to have you do so,” said he. “They are armed.”

“But they will hardly shoot at a ghost; and if they do, it is too dark for certain aim. Besides, even if there is danger, it is my father for whom I face it.”

“Very well, then. We should act quickly. They may be waiting for re-enforcements. I will go around and get as near as possible. You move straight ahead,

and be sure that I shall be ready to support you as soon as you get there."

Save for the bottle that went around more times than once, there was little pleasure among the group at the foot of the tree. The Rockhold men were blaming Noel that he had not brought out a larger Pine Knot contingent, and he was threatening them all that he would turn State's evidence against them if they did not proceed.

"But we ain't enough," protested one of the men. "A thing of this sort ain't safe unless there's twenty-five at the least. The grand jury will never indict a crowd, but a half dozen is sure to ketch it every time." These two sat on their horses. The others, two of whom held their horses by the bridle rein, stood near. After this quiet conference, they approached Mr. Buzbee, who stood tied to the trunk of the tree, and removed his gag.

"Looky here, old feller," said one of them, "if we let ye go, will ye git out of here?"

"I make no promises," said he quietly.

"If ye don't, we're a-goin' to strip ye and lick ye like blazes!"

He made no answer.

"Will ye go?"

"I have told you that I would make no promise."

"Well, ye cyan't talk no more abolition talk in this county, we kin tell ye that."

Again he was silent. They thought that he was considering the matter, and pressed him again.

"Gentlemen," said he, "your threats do not move me. Right is on my side, the law is on my side, God is on my side, and final success is on my side. I am

alone and at your mercy. Do your worst. You may flay me, burn me, crucify me, but you can not move me."

There was nothing of boastfulness in his tone. An enthusiast he was, a visionary, but no coward and no boaster, and each of them felt in his heart that he said the truth.

"Let's let him go," said one of them.

"Let him go, ye cowards?" said Davis. "If ye do, ye won't let me go, I kin tell ye that!"

So they stopped and drowned their dissension in another drink.

"Boys," said one of them, "ain't this the place they say has a haint?"

"Shet up, I tell ye!" said Noel.

"What's that?" asked another of the Rockhold men. "I never heerd tell of that. What sort of haint is it?"

"Shet up, I tell ye!" said Noel.

"Look here," said one of them, "I don't like this! What sort of trap is this you've got us into?"

Just then there came a faint, moaning cry from behind the tree. There was a dead silence, and every man strained his eyes. In a moment there was another cry, like that of a panther, a short distance up the road. They turned and looked in that direction. Noel was the only man who stirred, and he got nearer his horse. Then there was another cry, a shriek that almost curdled their blood, from where the first sound had come but nearer, and looking, they saw a gigantic, tall, white figure, bending, swaying, and approaching them. A single shot was fired at it, but only one man stopped to shoot. Pell-mell they started, and,



"If we let ye go, will ye git out?"

while they were gaining their saddles, a great, huge, black figure burst in among them, laying about him with a heavy green hickory stick, that raised a black bruise wherever it struck. One of them left his horse and broke through the woods, and another was thrown and dragged by his stirrup as the horse started furiously from a blow of the club.

It took but a minute, and when Fletcher returned from a chase of the hindmost, whose terror, lest the devil should get him, was not without reason, the ghost was embracing the man who stood bound to the tree.

Fletcher's sharp knife quickly cut the thongs, and Barbara was at him again.

"O father, O my dear, brave father! Don't you think I'm a lovely ghost? Oh, I'm so glad we have saved you!"

"Barbara, my child," said her father, "your ruse was very skillful, my dear.—And, Mr. Fletcher, I must thank you.—But now let me hasten to your mother, who must be frightened, I know. Take off those sheets before you return, Barbara. Your mother is not superstitious, but she has suffered a severe fright, and I would not have her see you thus. In truth you might well frighten any one."

"Help me, Mr. Fletcher," said Barbara. "I am entangled in my ghostly trappings. Was I not a tall ghost? I needed but one sheet to wrap me, and having one to spare, I elongated myself with two sticks. Oh, it was fun to see them run! And you struck out like a gladiator! I could not see you strike, but I could hear your blows. O Mr. Fletcher! how can I thank you enough? You are so strong, so brave, so kind!"

Fletcher was untying a knot, and as she spoke it

gave way, and the sheets fell about her to the ground. He stood a moment with his hands on her shoulders, then caught her in his arms, and held her, unresisting, and kissed her.

“O Barbara, Barbara!” he cried. “To be praised by you is worth a life! I love you, my darling, I love you!”

“You must not,” she cried, though the words hurt her; “I can not let you speak so!”

“But I love you,” he said. “You can not forbid my loving you?”

“Yes,” she said, “I must not let you do so. It would be wrong. I can not encourage it.”

Barbara was sincere in this; and yet she thought that he would press his suit, and give her opportunity to explain a little. She did not want to betray Liberty, nor on the other hand did she want Fletcher to believe her unmoved by his appeal. She waited, expecting him to proceed.

Now, many a woman pausing thus and looking back, has been overtaken like Lot's wife; and Barbara was not wholly free from danger in that moment. For her heart swelled with admiration for the stalwart fellow who had come to her in the hour of need, and the cheek burned with a warm thrill where he had kissed her.

But James Fletcher did not press his suit.

“I did not expect you to love me,” he said. “I know how far above me you are in everything. It is enough for me that you know that I love you. I've never expected you to love me. I never expected to tell you that I loved you. But I am glad to have told you. You praised me just now; it was heaven to hear

you. It is not that I love flattery. I am ambitious, but not foolishly vain. But to merit your praise is a joy! Oh, if I could hope that you could love me! But I know that this can not be! I will not ask it. But, oh, let me ask this one thing: is there any other reason than that I am not good enough or wise enough? Is there any one else?"

"Yes," said Barbara, "there is some one else."

"I reckoned likely," said he.

"But——" said Barbara.

"But what?" he asked eagerly.

She bit her lip hard. What was she about to say? That the person in the way was not Boyd Estill, but Liberty? That she was refusing him not for another man's sake, but a woman's? For shame! She would say nothing of the kind. And, then, was she so sure, after all, that it was not partly on Boyd Estill's account?

"What is it?" he asked. "You do not mean——?"

"No, no!" she said; "I do not mean what you are thinking. I have said it and mean what I say, and it is final. But I can not have you think that it is because you are not more—more——"

"Because I'm so ignorant?"

"No, no! It's not that at all! You are not ignorant! You are strong, brave, true, and you will yet be learned! A courage such as yours must succeed. And you will bring honor to the woman you marry. She will be proud of you! Yes, and I shall be proud of you, too!"

"To have you for a friend is more than I deserve," said he.

“I am your friend, Mr. Fletcher,” said she, “and I, too, am in need of your friendship. My dear father is starting North, and no one knows how long he will be gone. Our old friends in Lexington seem very, very far away. We shall need all our friends here.”

“Count on my friendship always,” said he.

“Thank you,” said she. “And now I must not wait here another minute. Mother will be anxious for me. Yes, I shall be glad to have you walk with me to the house. Will you carry my armor? You have borne it once before and right worthily! And now I must go in, mother will be terrified by this adventure. I ought not to have stayed away so long. Adieu, sir knight!”

CHAPTER XXV

A BLUE-GRASS CHRISTMAS

"CHRISTMAS gift, father!" called Boyd Estill, throwing his bridle rein to a negro who was riding on a mule behind him, and flinging himself from his horse.

"Christmas gift, indeed! And what gift have you brought me, leaving the house before breakfast and off the whole morning?"

"A good brush, as you see," said Boyd, exhibiting the tail of a fox. "We had a right good chase, and old Major led the hounds all the way."

"Ah, that's not so bad! I could ride to hounds myself once. To be gone the whole morning fox-hunting, and Christmas at that, is bad indeed, but to bring home the brush is ground for pardon."

"I bring it to you, sir."

"That's well. Was there no young lady in the party that deserved it?"

"Not any, sir," said Boyd with a forced laugh. "I'm wedded to my horse and dogs, I reckon."

"Ah, well! It's no harm in a young fellow. I saw you riding up the avenue from the pike; hang me if I'm not tempted to flog you for riding so well. You'll be thinking one of these days that you ride better than

your father. But go now and get ready for dinner. Mr. Bernaugh will be over right soon."

"I'll be ready soon, sir.—Here, Sam! Tell Nicodemus to rub down that horse well before dinner, and give old Major something good for his Christmas dinner."

Mr. Estill returned to the fire, yet walked nervously to the window from time to time.

"Hey there, Sam!" he called. "Sam! Here comes Mr. Bernaugh. Run and take his horse."

He was out at the stile ahead of Sam, however, welcoming his guest.

"Christmas gift, old friend!" he called, and from the quarters and kitchen the negroes ran out calling, "Christmas gift!"

"Howdy, howdy?" called Mr. Bernaugh, flinging his rein to Nicodemus.—"Now, looky here, Nic, you yellow rascal, if you get to studying about your Christmas dinner to-day till you forget to feed my horse, I'll get me a hickory and wear you out—you hear?"

"That's the way to talk," laughed Estill.—"You feed him well, Nic. I don't reckon he gets much to eat at home!—That's a fine horse, Bernaugh. Gaited like a rocking chair, isn't he? I'd like to own him. You didn't think of bringing him over for a Christmas gift, did you?"

"Not this Christmas. But that reminds me.—Here, Nic! Here's something for you alls!—Chloe, you see that he divides it fair, will you? And if you give us as good a dinner as I reckon you ain't forgot how to cook, I've got something at home I'll send by one of my niggers when they come over to-night to help you start in Christmas week."

Nic led off the horse, pleased with the largess and with the threat of the flogging; for the latter was only Mr. Bernaugh's way of saying that he knew his thoroughbred was safe in Nic's hands.

"Come in," said Estill. "They're like a crowd of children. You can't get rid of 'em at Christmas time.—Hello, here, Brutus! What you hangin' round here for?"

"Jest to wish Maws' Bernaugh Christmas gift, sah," said the old negro.

"Hello, old nigger! How're you running? Good Lord, I thought you was dead!"

"Po'ly, Maws' Bernaugh, po'ly," and then in another tone: "No, sah, Maws' Bernaugh, I ain't dead! Ef I had a-ben, I know you sho'ly gwine come to my funeral, now ain' you? An' I'm gwine to live till spring, bress de Lawd!"

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, I mos' generally notice when I live till Christmas, I lives t'rough till spring!"

"Well, how much'll you let me off for? I thought when I sold you I'd got done givin' you Christmas gifts. Will a dollar do you? All right! Now you divide that with Chloe; I promised her something for cooking the dinner.—And look here, Brutus! I told Bill to ride over with a haunch of venison—did you steal it all, or will we have some for dinner?"

"Hit's dah, sah. I didn't steal none of it. Chloe's done roastin' it wid de turkey."

"All right, if you've left a little of it."

"He's a good honest nigger," said Estill.

"Salt of the earth, sir; salt of the earth," said Bernaugh. "I hated worst way to sell him to you."

“ Don’t blame you, sir ; not a mite.”

“ Him and Chloe’s got another baby, I hear. What’s the name of this one? ”

“ Dog my cats if I can remember!—Here, Brutus! What’s the name of the last chap of yours? ”

“ Bessie, sah,” said Brutus.

“ Yes, I know. But call Dinah.—Here, Dinah, I want the full name of your Bessie.”

“ Yes, sah. Hit’s
Bessie Fee,
Cora Lee,
Who but she?
Estill.”

“ That’s good! Still stick to your poetry, don’t you? ”

“ Yes, sah.”

“ And let’s see. What was the other one you had since I sold Brutus? ”

“ Joseph Estill,
William Bernaugh,
'Postle Paul,
And Caleb after all,
Estill.”

“ And which of us three do you call him for—me or Mas’r Estill or the Apostle Paul? ”

“ I calls him Benny, sah.”

“ That’s a fair compromise. Now we won’t have any trouble. And what’s your oldest? ”

“ Lena Belle,
Arise and tell
The glories of Immanuel,
Estill.”

“ That’s good. Here’s half a dollar for Christmas,

besides what Brutus has got for you. Now you cook that venison good, or I'll get your Mas'r Estill to sell me one of them little niggers of yours.—You've got a fortune in that gal, Estill. She's a poet. I ought to have bought her, instead of selling you Brutus."

"I'd hated to have sold her," said Estill, "even to you."

"And I felt just so about selling Brutus, for all he's so old."

"Well, the niggers can't always marry on the plantation, and it's better to let 'em live together. I had to feed him Sundays for three years before you sold him to me, and I reckoned it was cheaper to buy him and done with it."

"He was getting old, and I reckon you got the worst of the trade. But I hate to sell a nigger worst way in the world. I wouldn't sell one on any consideration but for his own good. I did sell one down the river years ago, but he was a sullen devil; I couldn't manage him nohow, and I got plumb afraid to keep him. But, except for him, I never sold one but to a neighbor and for good reasons."

"Same with me. My farm's overrun with niggers now—more'n I've got any use for, but I hate to sell 'em. Now, sir, I've opened a bottle of the pride of Bourbon County that my old friend Colonel Cole made for me thirty odd years ago. It's cost me, principal and interest, about the price of a good likely nigger, I reckon, and if that interest keeps running on, I'm a bankrupt, sure!"

"I'll stop the interest on one glass," laughed Bernaugh. "Hot, if you please, and a little sprig of mint,

if you've got some handy. It's a good appetizer for a Christmas dinner. Where's Boyd?"

"Dressing. He's been off after a fox, and got him, too. He wouldn't have been back if he hadn't."

"Now, look here, that's big talk! I used to ride to hounds myself, and for all I'm older than you, I believe I could outride you yet! But I've come home a many a day without a fox."

"Boyd don't."

"Well, now that reminds me. Do you know any reason why that affair between him and my girl didn't come about better?"

"I don't know a thing."

"I'm afraid Boyd struck a cold trail there."

"A fox and a woman are two different sort of folks."

"Ye-es, maybe so. But I've often wondered. Estill, this is a sad day for me. It's the first Christmas ever I ate dinner out from under my own roof."

"I—I sort of had that in mind," said Estill.

"I know you did! I know you did! And I didn't mean to say a word! Estill, I'm a heart-broken man! This day, that ought to be a happy one for me, is full of bitter memories. My wife is gone—and what a woman she was, Estill! The queen of 'em all, sir. The queen of 'em all. God help me, but I never saw her equal, sir! Never, on God's green earth! And she's dead. And then my daughter, married to that wild-eyed abolitionist. Oh, I know I'd shoot any one else that would say a word against the man my daughter married, but— Estill, I'm a heart-broken man!"

"I know it's been hard," said Estill. "And I've

felt for you through it all. He's a man of fine education——"

"Yes, yes! And I could have been proud of him if he'd been different in other things. But no more judgment, sir, than a yearling calf! No, nor so much! It isn't that I feel bad because he don't earn a living, though. How much do you suppose he's sent to his wife in the last ten years? Not a red cent, sir; not a red cent! Love her? Of course he loves her! His way! But it's a right poor way. I get mad when I think of it! But, as I was saying, it ain't that. I've got enough. And while they don't know it, I've never touched a penny of the money my wife left for Barbara—not a penny of it! She supposes it's all gone for her education, but it's there, every red cent of it, sir! You know, Estill, I always wanted a son. But I had but one child, a daughter, and my wife was never strong after her birth."

"I know," said Estill.

"Of course you do. It's an old story to you. And I won't say any more, except all the hope I've had has been in my daughter; all the hope I have is still in her and in Barbara."

"Yes," said Estill, "and you know how I'm fixed, too. We're pretty good running mates, though I haven't had so many disappointments as you. But all my hopes are in Boyd. And if I could see him married, and to your Barbara, I'd give half I'm worth to-day!"

"I'd cover your money!" said Bernaugh.

"But Boyd's a fellow you can't drive," said his father.

"Nor the girl!" said Bernaugh. "Her mother,

for all she was so gentle, was high strung. She's a thoroughbred, sir! You can't lay the whip on her! And Barbara's like her! I'm pretty hard on the bit at times, and I was at fault, I know. I got to talking politics with Buzbee. Now it's as much as two sensible men can do to talk politics just now, and on the same side at table, but with a man with no horse sense on his side, and a quick-tempered old fool on mine, I made a mess of it. And when I jerked on the bit of my daughter, the rein didn't hold, sir! That's just what it didn't do! And now they're down there starving, I reckon. The Lord only knows what they'll have for Christmas to-day!"

"If we can only have Boyd marry Barbara," said Estill, "it'll straighten out the whole affair."

"So it would. If Boyd could bring Barbara here, why, we'd have her first here and then there, and here her mother could visit her, and we'd soon have things fixed all right again. And, while I hate to argue with him, I can't quite hate that hair-brained son-in-law of mine."

"Sh—sh!" warned Mr. Estill. "Here comes Boyd!—Well, Boyd, it took you a right smart while to dress."

"Yes," added Bernaugh, "a young buck like you needn't spruce up so to dine with two old fellows like us."

"I have to dress up to seem as young as you two," said Boyd.

"Well, is dinner ready? I was plumb uncertain whether we could have any dinner to-day, but Bernaugh has sent us over some venison," said Estill.

“Yes,” said Bernaugh. “We tried one haunch and found it tough; so I sent the other over.”

“Come out and try it,” said Estill.

“Well, Boyd, and what’s the talk about politics?” asked Bernaugh.

“South Carolina has seceded,” answered Boyd briefly.

“Impossible!” said Bernaugh.

“True, nevertheless,” said Boyd.

“Oh, for an hour of Andrew Jackson in the White House!” cried Bernaugh.

“Or Henry Clay,” said Estill.

“Anyhow, I think we’ve got the poorest frame of a man in the White House now we’ve ever had! Think of his rattling round in the shoes of George Washington! This last message of his was a disgrace to the American people, sir—a disgrace to the American people!”

“Didn’t you vote for him?” asked Estill.

“Certainly I did, and being a Democrat I can say what I don’t want an old-line Whig like you to say. I believe in State rights myself; but when an American President says in his message that the Southern States would ‘be justified in revolutionary resistance to the Government of the United States,’ he ought to be impeached!”

“I don’t agree with you,” said Boyd. “If we believe in State rights, let us live up to our principles.”

“A right is one thing,” said Bernaugh, “and good sense and justice is another. We’ve got a right to secede—I believe that, under the Constitution; but we’re fools if we do it. Are we border States going

to play monkey for the nigger-buying cotton States, and burn our fingers raking off their chestnuts?"

Boyd flushed. Then, biting his lip, he added: "I reckon, Mr. Bernaugh, you and I'd best come to terms like father and me. We don't agree on this matter, and, except for telling the news, and talking a little about what's going to come of it, we don't discuss it much."

"That's best," said Bernaugh. "If we'd stuck to that in our house it would have been better. You're a member of the State Guard, are you not, Boyd?"

"Yes, sir. And we have begun to drill in anticipation of war."

"And on which side will you fight?"

"On the side of the South."

"Against your country?"

"My country is first of all my State; after that my allegiance belongs to the Southern Confederacy, whose germ we have in the secession of South Carolina."

"Ah, well! Let us stop talking about it. But this is a sad Christmas in many a home in Kentucky."

CHAPTER XXVI

THE NEW TEACHER

DAN BRAFFORD'S tall horse brought the news of both at once, bearing them through the swollen streams of the last of April, and along the muddy and deeply gullied roads, the news of the great fortune of the Freedom Mining Company, and of the actual beginning of hostilities in the attack upon a Massachusetts regiment in the streets of Baltimore. The latter news he carried by word of mouth; the former he bore locked up in his mail bag in a letter addressed to Mrs. Buzbee. Mr. Buzbee had actually sold five shares of stock, and had received the full payment in cash, five hundred dollars!

The month had gone wearily enough. Mrs. Buzbee had pined and drooped. She and Barbara had had scant food a part of the time, and they never were overfed. Something they suffered, too, from the suspicion which the community had come to cherish against Mr. Buzbee, and which seemed to make the whole family semi-impostors. They suffered no persecution, and were never in danger, but the sense of their isolation grew upon them, and gradually Mrs. Buzbee failed under the stern conditions that surrounded them.

Mr. Buzbee's pathetic letters added to their burden. It was pitiful to read of his repeated rebuffs and failures, and to imagine the hardships which they knew must be, but which he did not write. At last, when the tide turned, and he began to receive money, they waited in vain for the money they needed for themselves, but which did not come. He was so intent upon his great scheme, that he did not think of their need. Charity may begin at home, but philanthropy is usually far-sighted and overlooks the need at hand. For that matter, all our man-and-brother theories work better at a safe distance.

But Granny White was a true friend. Superstitious, ignorant, and narrow, she was yet discerning, kind, and true, and again and again she made the two lonely women feel the comfort of her friendship. The Renfros too, were faithful, and Simon Peter or Dinah came often with a sack of meal or a dressed chicken. Now and then Liberty Preston rode over from No Bus'ness, and often she brought a jar of preserves or a peck of flour.

With the coming of the spring their burden lightened; for, though Mr. Buzbee's success brought them no money, it brought them hope, and gave relief from the suspicions of the people, who, hearing the glowing accounts of the success of Mr. Buzbee, began now to laud his learning and to speak of him in terms of unstinted praise. A few there were, however, who still uttered their predictions of evil.

It is told us often that misfortunes never come singly; let us gratefully remember that as much may be said of our blessings. With the spring came Liberty Preston to the home of the Buzbees.

“I’ve made up my mind, and I don’t want you to tell me no,” she said to Barbara. “I’ll pay a dollar and a half a week for board—that’s what I paid at the Lakes’s—and a dollar a month tuition, and I’ll help with the work, and part of the time I’ll go home Sundays. But you’ve got to learn me part of what you know. I’m plumb ashamed of myself when I think what a dunce I am, and I want to learn.”

It proved an admirable arrangement. It made the home a place of life as the girls ran in and out; it brought out the books and gave life a new object; it gave a basis of reality to Barbara’s cheery laugh, which had sometimes seemed a bit forced; and it provided means of support. Jim Ballard sent over to inquire if his daughter might attend; Tom Lawson squeezed a dollar a month from the joint profits of blacksmithing and witch-doctoring, and sent his daughter. A few others came irregularly, some for a single month. An income of perhaps twelve dollars a month was thus provided by the little private school and its one boarding pupil.

Mrs. Buzbee now and then exhibited a little more of cheerfulness, and sometimes was seen to smile. But it was a wan, weary smile.

Fletcher came irregularly. A long visit to his mother at Roundstone during the winter found him engagement in a “work”—that is to say a protracted meeting, which resulted in the establishment of a circuit which he began supplying until conference should permanently assign the field. He came three or four times to Pine Knot, and while he called each time, and manifested the utmost kindness, he showed nothing more. He treated Barbara precisely as he did

Liberty, and seemed so absorbed in his work that Barbara suspected that he had forgotten all about his passion for her.

This irritated Barbara. To be sure, she had refused him, and finally. And yet— Why must a man take a woman's answer so seriously? Of course, she meant it seriously, but still a man of more discernment, or more delicate and sympathetic nature, would have discerned something—at least of the motive of her refusal. To be making a martyr of one's self is well enough, but martyrdom flourishes best when it has appropriate recognition; and Barbara now and then felt that he ought, in simple decency, to look into the matter far enough to know how unselfishly, how self-sacrificingly, she had refused him.

It was after his visit in June that she felt this most, and something of it she must have shown to Liberty. Fletcher had come to tell them that he had secured the school for the coming term, and that he would "take up school" early in August. Barbara's pleasure in the announcement was short-lived; for his joy in the attainment of the hope so long deferred was so clearly in the end he hoped to attain through it, and took so little account of any other consideration, that her heart went down. The opening of the public school would rob them, too, of their means of support. Why need he begin so early? To be sure, there had been complaint that the school last year was protracted too far into cold weather, but still he need not have hurried it quite so much. Anyway, what were they to do now? But for the presence of her mother and Liberty, she would have had a good cry.

She did have it. Going to the spring after water

she sat beside the branch, filling the gourd and emptying it out again, and thinking and thinking till she was all in tears.

Poor girl, she needed the relief! And if in this one matter she showed weakness, in all else she had been strong. Patient, uncomplaining, she had borne her mother's growing weakness with unfailing courage, supplying from her own overflow of hope and good cheer the lack of fortitude in her mother's life. Through the long, terrible winter never once had she shown impatience or despondency; and in the months that followed, working to keep the wolf from the door, with hardly a brave or cheerful word from her mother to lighten the burden, she had endured in the spirit that bears and hopes and believes and that never fails. She had earned the right to a good cry, for she had proved herself nothing less than a heroine; and even in an affair of the heart if she showed weakness it was in good part the result of the other burdens which she was supporting bravely.

There Liberty found her at the spring, and put her arms around her and kissed her.

"Barbara," she said, "I know what's the matter. You can have him. I ain't a-caring."

"Oh, no, no, Liberty!" said Barbara. "I promised you, and I will keep my word!"

"You have kept it," said Liberty. "And I've had my chance. He don't care for me, and I'm not going to break my heart about him. You can have him. There's as good fish in the sea as has ever been ketched." She spoke a little resentfully, and then, standing erect, she lifted Barbara to her feet and kissed her again.

“ You dear girl ! ” said Barbara.

But Liberty caught her arm and began dancing her around, singing—

“ I'll get another one, skip-t'-m'-loo !

I'll get another one, skip-t'-m'-loo !

I'll get another one, prettier, too,

Skip-t'-m'-loo, my darling ! ”

“ All right, Liberty, ” laughed Barbara through her tears. “ But you couldn't sing it if you felt toward him as I do. ”

“ I couldn't ? ” asked Liberty, looking at Barbara hard. “ Well, maybe not. But the sooner you get to singing it with me, the better it'll be for you. There's nothing comforts a woman so much as to look in the glass and to reckon she's got another chance. The question how much you cared for the last one won't grease the griddle now. ”

“ O Liberty ! You're only joking ! ”

“ Well, what if I am ? Ain't that the best way to do ? Come, cheer up ! ”

“ I'll get another one, skip-t'-m'-loo !

I'll get—— ”

“ I'm tempted to box your ears ! ” laughed Barbara.

“ You dassn't ! ” replied Liberty saucily. “ School's let out ! ”

Just before his school was to have begun, Fletcher came over again.

“ I've come to ask you to teach the school for me, ” said he to Barbara. “ I've got to give it up. I've seen the trustees, and they consent. ”

“Why, Mr. Fletcher! You don’t mean it? No, no! You must not!”

“I’m going to enlist,” said he.

“But I thought the Governor had refused to send troops from Kentucky?”

“So he has. But troops will be enlisted at once. I am going to the new camp on the Kentucky River. I can not stay at home when my country needs me.”

“But think of the sacrifice you are making,” she said.

“I will sacrifice more, if necessary,” said he quietly.

“Come in and see mother,” said Barbara. “She will miss you.”

“Howdy, Mrs. Buzbee?” said Fletcher.

“I am glad to see you, Mr. Fletcher,” said she. —“Barbara, set a chair.”

“I’m going to leave you soon,” he said. “I’m going into the army. I start for Camp Nelson tomorrow.”

“And must you leave us, Mr. Fletcher?” asked Mrs. Buzbee. “Oh, this dreadful war! Half my friends are on one side and half on the other. And my poor, dear father will be heart-broken! And poor Mr. Buzbee is away on this dreadful mining business, that seems so long in coming to anything! Our friends seem very few, and scattered far. We shall miss you, Mr. Fletcher.”

“Here comes Liberty,” said Barbara.—“O Liberty, Mr. Fletcher has given up the school to go to the war! Isn’t that too bad?”

“Just what I expected of him,” said Liberty. —“Howdy, Mr. Fletcher? I wish now I’d listened better to your sermons.”

“I don’t believe you remember a word of them,” said Fletcher.

“I reckon not. Who’s going to keep the school?”

“Miss Barbara.”

“That’s right. She’s a right good teacher.”

“And you are to be my assistant, Liberty,” said Barbara.

“I’m willing,” said Liberty.—“Well, Mr. Jim Fletcher, we hate to see you go, but they need you.”

“So they do,” said Fletcher. “Good-by.”

And so he went. Barbara tried to be brave that afternoon and succeeded in keeping a cheerful face till they had gone to bed and Liberty was still. Then she had a quiet little cry. But she stopped when she heard Liberty gently sobbing beside her. Or, stay! Was Liberty really sobbing? For the moment Barbara detected the sound and the quiver of the bed, and by her start proclaimed that she was awake, the sobs, if they were sobs, modulated into a melody, and she heard Liberty humming, under the quilts:

“I’ll get another one, skip-t’-m’-loo!
Skip-t’-m’-loo, my darling!”

CHAPTER XXVII

THE FREEDOM MINING COMPANY

It was a weary man who made his way from city to city in the North for nine long months in 1861, trying to sell the stock of the Freedom Mining Company. His threadbare clothes grew thinner, and his form more bent, and his cough harder and more frequent. There were few who had time to hear him, and few of those who heard him heeded. How he lived through the first half of his journey he could hardly tell. A few times he spoke, and took a collection which paid his railroad fare a little farther on, and he seldom had to pay for lodging. But the stock which he had hoped to sell he did not sell.

One raw April day, when the streets of Boston rang with the word that a Massachusetts regiment had been fired upon in Baltimore, and the people were thronging the streets and buying the extra papers that were issued, he turned aside, weary and heartsick, and sat him down in the office of a busy man.

"I came to see Mr. Stearns," said he, "but I know that he will not want to talk with me to-day. If he will appoint a time, I will come again."

"Of what do you wish to talk?" asked the kind-faced, full-bearded man whom he addressed.

“About the sale of stock in a silver mine, and the freedom of the slave,” said Mr. Buzbee.

“I have no time to talk of the former, but am never too busy to talk of the latter,” said Mr. Stearns.

“The two are one subject to me,” said Mr. Buzbee, and then he told of his scheme.

“Have you sold much stock?” asked Mr. Stearns.

“Not a share,” said Mr. Buzbee sadly.

“Has your silver been tested?”

“Oh, yes, I took pains at once to have my sample analyzed, and it is pure. I have the analysis of the rock, showing its richness.”

Then he told him the story of those weary months, how of those to whom he had talked few had any interest, and of those who had interest few had money, and of those who had money few had confidence in the scheme. He told how one man had complained of the war tax, and another of the uncertainty of trade, and another of the shutting up of his cotton mills, and another of the closing of his branch house in Atlanta; and so of the ready excuses, and good ones for the most part, of those who should have been, as he thought, the friends of his project.

The keen business man looked over the papers submitted to him, and kept back the doubts that presented themselves to his mind.

“I am not in possession of sufficient knowledge of mining,” said he, “to be sure how good promise there is that this scheme will pay. But on this day when Massachusetts men are giving their lives for freedom, I can not withhold money.”

Then he called for his check book and said, “I will head your list, and take five shares.”

“ You need not pay it all now,” said Mr. Buzbee. “ The assessments are payable quarterly.”

“ I will pay mine in cash,” said Mr. Stearns, and drew his check.

“ Five hundred dollars !” cried Mr. Buzbee. “ It is years since I have seen so much !”

“ I hope you may see much more from your mine,” said Mr. Stearns. “ And now let us not talk more of mining. Come out with me for the night. You shall have a comfortable bed at my home, and meet my good wife, who is as much interested in these matters as I.”

It was an oasis in a desert experience. Mr. Buzbee sat that night in a home of wealth, unostentatious but elegant, hospitable yet not condescending, cheered by the sympathy of two warm, true hearts. It was of this merchant, now long dead, that Whittier wrote :

“ Ah, well, the world is discreet,
There are plenty to pause and wait,
But here was a man who set his feet
Sometimes in advance of fate ;

“ Plucked off the old bark when the inner
Was slow to renew it,
And put to the Lord’s work the sinner,
When saints failed to do it.”

From this home Mr. Buzbee sent the letter telling of his great good fortune—the letter that brought such comfort, though no money, to his needy household.

From this time Mr. Buzbee’s fortunes revived. Many a business man looked at the name at the head of the list and bought a share or two, and the five hundred dollars soon were as many thousands. Then

—blaming himself for his selfishness the while—Mr. Buzbee made some slight additions to his wardrobe, and bought meals which, while frugal, were not the starvation affairs which he had long been living upon.

“Victory is ours,” he wrote home. “I am sending another thousand dollars to Mr. Goodwin. We have now almost enough to complete our furnace, and it will be adapted to the smelting of large quantities of ore. Gold and silver are becoming scarce, and are at a premium. A dollar in silver will soon be worth two in paper. We shall thus make our money go further. We have toiled long and have taken nothing: we are about to let down our net on the right side of the ship, and bring it up laden. And oh, how eager I am to get to work, and to convince the world of our success before there is more of bloodshed! I hope to return soon. But I must not tarry at Pine Knot. I am writing Mr. Renfro to have a cabin built for us at the falls. Move there as soon as possible and I will meet you there. I go to Washington soon to call upon President Lincoln. I send you ten dollars. It is the gift of a good woman, the Mrs. Stearns of whom I have already written. She forbade my sending it to the mine, and insisted that I spend it for myself or send it to you. I have need of nothing, now I see success. God bless you both! I am coming to you soon.”

At length the day came when he stood on the steps of the White House and asked to see the President. The guard at the door asked him his business, and, learning that he had stock to sell, refused him admission. He was turning sadly away, when a man within stepped by the guard, and asked, “What is it he wants?”

He was very tall and dark, with straight coarse hair, and eyes that looked sadly out of their cavernous recesses. He wore a somewhat shabby black coat and carpet slippers run down at the heel.

“ Mr. President,” said Mr. Buzbee, “ I desire to talk about the freedom of the slave.”

“ What office do you want ? ” asked Lincoln.

“ None,” said Mr. Buzbee.

“ Do your friends want any ? ”

“ If they do, they are their own representatives. I have no request to present for them.”

“ Come in,” said the President. “ You are the first man I have seen to-day who did not want an office.”

Then Mr. Buzbee entered and talked with President Lincoln. “ I have no money to buy stock,” said the President, “ and, if I had, I could not lend my name to a financial concern of which I have no personal knowledge. But I enter with sympathy into the spirit of any effort to remove the burden of slavery peaceably. I am in entire sympathy with the plan of compensated emancipation. I am about to recommend such a plan to Congress, and I am confident that the coming session of Congress will prohibit slavery in all the Territories now existing and all that may hereafter be erected. Do you think the border States will stand this ? ”

“ I am sure they will ! I am sure they will ! ” said Mr. Buzbee.

Mr. Buzbee went out from the White House cheered by the sympathy of the President, and assured that it was in his heart to labor, “ with malice toward none and charity for all,” for the united nation, which

in the end must be a free nation. So he turned his face toward the mountains.

He did not get home, however. Letters from Goodwin assured him that the furnace was in process of erection, but that it must be larger than had been planned, and hence there must be more money. So he set forth again to sell more stock. It was not so easy to sell it now. Bull Run had disheartened the nation. The first enlistments were expiring, and many men were returning to their homes sadder and wiser than when they set out to put down the rebellion in ninety days. The country was awaking to the fact that a long and terrible struggle was ahead, and it had lost faith in a gradual emancipation, or in any financial solution of the problem.

Still, the weary man, who was sick as well as weary, trudged the streets of city after city, struggling in his own unselfish soul over the problem which was taxing the nation's thought and sinew, and struggling with it alone.

Still, now and then he sold more stock, and sent the money home. He began again to starve himself, that he might send the more. His eagerness to return and see some actual output grew every day, but letters from Goodwin restrained him, each with its call for more money.

So the summer passed and the autumn came, and with its raw winds his strength diminished. Sick at last beyond all denial, yet keeping himself alive upon the hope of his return, he set his face homeward, and when he saw the mountains again October had turned the gum trees to a blaze of glory, and the hickory nuts were dropping through the curled and yellow leaves.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A MEMBER OF THE STATE GUARD

HISTORY was striding on rapidly during these few months. Early in the new year Mississippi, Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas followed South Carolina in passing ordinances of secession.

In the border States, however, the case stood differently. North Carolina, Arkansas, Missouri, and Tennessee all voted secession squarely down, and Kentucky refused even to consider the matter. Virginia and Maryland hesitated.

Fort Sumter was fired upon. The call for troops went forth, and the nation's blood gave a great leap. Men who had hesitated did so no longer. Men who had believed in peace saw now the certainty of war.

Boyd Estill was a member of the State Guard of Kentucky, an organization distinctly Southern in its sympathies, and subject to the control of the Governor, who also sympathized with the rebellion. That the State Guard would see immediate service was confidently expected, but it saw none. Its members were spoiling for fight, and the provocation was not far distant, but fight they could not, and the position was most trying.

The spring wore away. Summer ripened into autumn. The August elections were over, and the rest of the South was hot for action. Tennessee, voting strongly against secession at the first, had been carried out of the Union by the indomitable will of its Governor, Isham G. Harris, and finding itself out, by a reluctant vote, strongly opposed by the mountain district, had consented to the separation. Virginia, too, had joined the Confederacy. And yet Kentuckians of Southern views had no opportunity to act. The special congressional election in June showed fifty-four thousand majority for the Union. This left Kentucky Confederates little hope.

One afternoon in August Boyd Estill turned from the limestone pike that led from Lexington to his home, and riding up the avenue lined with tall old trees, flung his rein to Nic, and strode into the house.

“What news, Boyd?” asked his father.

“Nothing, except that I’m sick of this inaction. I’m going South to enlist!”

His father heard him sadly, but, checking his emotion, said: “I had come to expect it. I am sorry, very sorry. Alas! my son, I had not thought to live to see you fighting against our country. But if you go, you go with my blessings upon you, if not upon your cause.”

“Thank you, father. You have been more than kind. I would give anything to see things as you do, but I can’t.”

“Let us keep our truce,” said his father. “We have had one quarrel and it is over. Let us not discuss it again. The home is yours, Boyd. You go

forth to do what I am loath to see you do, but you are my son still. Where will you go?"

"To join Zollicoffer. He is at Knoxville now."

"Tell me a little more about it. What is moving you to this at present? The Governor sympathizes with you, and so do the State Guard."

"Yes, but to be a member of a military organization and to be idle now is intolerable. There is nothing to fight."

"But it is only a few months since you were glorying in Governor Magoffin's position of an armed neutrality."

Boyd laughed. "Lincoln has taken us too much at our word."

"You mean that you did not expect him to respect it?"

"Well, at first we did, but just now it is not neutrality we want, but action."

"For my part, my son, I thank God for every day of peace. When I read the accounts of fighting begun in Virginia and Maryland, I shudder, and am thankful that as yet Kentucky has escaped."

"I wish we could go with the other Southern States," said Boyd. "Have you seen this poem from the Memphis Appeal? It appears to have been written to be sung to Yankee Doodle. It reminds us how Kentuckians are scattered throughout the States that have seceded, and asks us to come with them. I will read two or three stanzas:

" ' Kentucky boys and girls have we—
 From us ye may not take them ;
 Sad-hearted will ye give them up
 And for the foe forsake them ?

“ ‘O Tennessee, twin sister, grieves
 To take thy hand at parting,
 And feel that from its farewell grasp
 A brother's blood is starting.

“ ‘It must not be!—Kentucky, come!
 Virginia loudly calls thee;
 And Maryland defenseless stands,
 To share what fate befalls thee.

“ ‘Come, ere the tyrant's chain is forged,
 From out the war cloud looming;
 Come, ere thy palsied knee is bent
 To hopeless ruin dooming!’ ”

“ I have not seen it.” said the father. “ But I have clipped a poem from the Cincinnati Commercial here which I greatly admire. You know that in 1850 Kentucky sent to the Washington Monument a stone on which was inscribed :

“ ‘ Kentucky.—She was the first State to enter the Union after the adoption of the Constitution, and will be the last to leave.’ This poem refers to that inscription :

“ ‘ ‘The first to join the patriot band,
 The last bright star to fade and die.”
 Oh, first-born daughter of the land,
 Wilt thou thy sacred vow deny?
 By all the lofty memories bright
 That crown with light thy glorious past,
 Oh, speak again those words of might—
 “ The first to come, to leave the last ! ”

“ ‘ The land for which our fathers fought,
 The glorious heritage they gave,
 The just and equal laws they wrought—
 Rise in your might that land to save !

No parricidal daughter thou,
 No stain be on thy fealty cast,
 But faithful to thy boast and vow,
 "Be first to come, to leave the last!"

"Oh, list not to the siren voice
 That woos thee to a traitor cause ;
 But answer, "I have made my choice,
 I will support my country's laws."
 Go, spurn disunion's foul cabal,
 All party ties behind thee cast ;
 And still at honor's, duty's call,
 "Be first to come, to leave the last!"

"Land of my birth ! how dear to me
 Has ever been thy spotless fame ;
 Oh, may I never, never see
 The brand of *traitor* on thy name !
 Go, gird thee in thy armor bright ;
 Be faithful to thy glorious past ;
 And in the battle for the right,
 "Be first to come, to leave the last!"

"It is beautiful!" said Boyd. "But, O father, I must go with the South!"

"Be it so, my son. But my heart still is with you, and with my country. I had hoped that you would have married ere this, and that I should have turned affairs over to you. I am an old man. I would have liked that pretty Buzbee girl for a daughter, and to have seen you here in the old home, with grandchildren to play about my knees. But war puts such things far out of the way. You hear from her, I suppose?"

"No sir, I do not. I quarreled with her when I did with you."

"And have not made up with her as you have with me? She is well worth it, Boyd."

“ I quite agree with you, sir. And, while I have tried to turn my thoughts away from her, I find myself caring more for her even than I thought. If she hadn't such an old fool of a father——”

“ A most unpractical man—a fanatic. I never agreed with him. But he is a good man, and sincere, though fanatical to a degree. Still, love does not stop at such barriers.”

“ No, sir, and to tell the truth I plan to see her as I go to Knoxville. She is at Pine Knot, I learn, and I hope to find her still caring for me as I do for her.”

“ Woo her, Boyd. Ay, and marry her if you will, and send her here to comfort me while you go off on your wild-goose chase. Well, you and I may as well talk matters over frankly. We understand each other. What came of this last exploit of the State Guard? ”

“ Nothing. I feel as if we had made fools of ourselves. Lincoln is laughing at us in his sleeve, I doubt not.”

“ I dare say. You appealed to neutrality, and to neutrality you have had to go.”

“ Yes. After Sumter was fired upon, and the call for troops was issued, Magoffin sent his distinct refusal. It was as curt and sharp as could be.”

“ It was worse than that. It was insulting.”

“ Very well. Perhaps it was. Well, the Northern papers urged Lincoln to treat it as an affront, asserting that it contained in it the very principle of State rights.”

“ And so it did, but Lincoln was too shrewd to interpret it so.”

“ You know what he told Garret Davis? ”

“ Yes, that while he held that Kentucky ought to

furnish her quota of troops, he would not coerce her, nor treat her neutrality as hostile."

"He went even further to Congressman Underwood, saying that while he hoped Kentucky would stand by the Government, if she did not, but would preserve her neutrality, he would see that no Northern soldier entered the State, and that no hostile foot tread Kentucky's soil."

"That was fair enough on the face of it," said Boyd. "But what do we have? Yankee soldiers mustering under our very noses, and received into the Federal army as companies and regiments."

"And so," said his father, "your Guard went out to resist invasion?"

"Yes, and like the King of France with twice ten thousand men, we have marched up a hill and then marched down again."

"What did you find?"

"These troops are all Kentuckians."

"And the officers from the regular army?"

"They are Kentuckians, too. There is Anderson, sent here from Fort Sumter. He is a Kentuckian. There is Nelson, right out of the navy, and made a general. Why? Simply because he is a Kentuckian, and Lincoln will not break his promise. But all the time there are these thousands of men mustering at Camp Nelson, and virtually holding Kentucky in the Union by force of arms. And can we attack them? No, for they are Kentuckians. Can Jeff Davis send in troops and attack them? No, for he is bound to respect our neutrality, and fears to make us more solidly Union by invasion. But all this time, though Confederates are mustering along the Potomac, and

Confederate bugle calls are heard across the river in Washington, the line of the Confederacy is pushed a hundred miles and more south from the Ohio, and held there by men under arms, arms sent by Lincoln, and they are drilled by officers sent by Lincoln, but we dare not lift a finger because they are Kentuckians! Why, on this last movement of ours we rode on the same train, these blue-coated Federal soldiers in one car and we in another. Dared we shoot? They are Kentucky citizens, bearing arms as they have a right. We, too, are Kentucky citizens, bearing arms as we have a right. But we are impotent, while they are able to muster by thousands, making an army in our midst. It is a perfect farce! The Northern newspapers that are crying out against Lincoln for recognizing the neutrality of Kentucky are the greatest fools of the century, unless it is we, who have been fooled by supposing that Kentucky's neutrality would benefit the South."

"Yet, the North has criticised Lincoln severely."

"So it has."

"I read an article by James Russell Lowell, asking 'How often must we save Kentucky, and lose our self-respect?'"

"And I have seen a quotation from a Boston minister, who says sarcastically, 'Abraham Lincoln hopes that he has God on his side, but thinks he must have Kentucky.'"

"The truth is," said Boyd, "that Lincoln has understood the situation too well. He will hold off until the South, angered by this Federal army which it sees here, invades the State. All the time he will be gaining the sympathy of undecided people, who are

ready to turn against which ever party proves the aggressor in Kentucky. The State will then have to declare itself, and the June elections show that it will be for the Union."

"God grant it!" said the father.

"Well, I shall not be here to see it, unless I come in with the invaders. I go next Monday to Knoxville."

"But what about leaving the State Guard?"

"The State Guard!" laughed Boyd. "That has collapsed. They were about gone up before, so many have resigned. A few have entered the Federal army, but most have gone South. A dozen go with me. We shall go straight through to Knoxville, and enlist under Zollicoffer."

"If you must fight at all," said his father, "there is no better man on the Confederate side than General Zollicoffer. He is a true man and a gentleman, though a rebel."

So the father and son came together after their one bitter quarrel, discussed their differences warmly, but in kindness, and the son went forth from his father's roof to fight in the Confederate army.

CHAPTER XXIX

NEAR THE CATARACT

THERE was a great sensation in Pine Knot when the first money was received from Mr. Buzbee. All concealment was now at an end, and work was begun in earnest. Blake confessed to Renfro that he knew of the mine, and, assured by this investment from the North, pleaded to be allowed to buy some stock, and was sold two shares. Noel Davis, too, was an early investor, and a number of the people round about sold their cows and made their first payments. Then the working force was gathered. It was a motley crew. The jail doors were allowed to swing rather freely just then, and prisoners were permitted to escape on condition of joining the army, and some of them preferred to invest in silver. One or two runaway slaves came up from the South, and the mine proprietors were too intent on larger matters to ask them many questions, and they were too far back in the hills to fear arrest. Goodwin and Noel Davis, however, had them in mind as a possible asset in case of need. There were some deserters from the two armies, who settled their differences peaceably in their quest for silver.

For several weeks no building was attempted. Renfro favored the immediate erection of a furnace, but Goodwin declared the amount of money on hand too small, and set the men at work hunting for the trees with the compass, square, and trowel, and the search of the rock houses for the missing hoards of John Swift. At length, as the men wearied of this, the erection of a furnace was begun, but work was soon suspended awaiting the receipt of more money. The people who subscribed for stock were impoverishing themselves to pay their assessments, and were only partially satisfied by Goodwin's explanation that the greater part of the money had been sent away for machinery, some of which had to be made to order.

Smart rode hither and thither, selling stock in the mine, and taking as payments all manner of personal property, which he disposed of, and credited the same to the stock account of the investors. The prices allowed were so generous that they offered great temptation to those who had anything to sell. When Tom Lawson learned that he was credited with thirty dollars for his cow, and then found to a certainty that Smart had received only twenty-five dollars for her, he felt so elated over the matter that he straightway sold Smart his mule, which the Government contractor at Whitley Courthouse was willing to buy for a hundred dollars cash; and Smart sold him two shares of stock, with fifty-five dollars paid up on each. Tom Lawson was of two minds about it—delighted to be making money so fast, and troubled a little in his conscience; so he spoke to Goodwin about it. Goodwin replied that it was all right; that Smart had, indeed, been over-generous in the matter, but that it was the

policy of the company to favor the neighbors and the early purchasers; and he advised Tom to keep still, and hold on to his stock, which would be worth a thousand dollars a share some day.

So matters went on until autumn.

“You’ve got to go off for a visit, old gal,” said Goodwin to his wife. “You’ve got word that your aunt is sick, over in Letcher County, do you understand? Smart’ll go with ye, and git ye settled down.”

“But I ain’t got ary aunt in Letcher,” said Mrs. Goodwin.

“You hain’t?” laughed Goodwin. “Well, then, you kin sorter adopt one—cyan’t she, Smart?”

“She’s sorter fell heir to one,” laughed Smart.

“Now lookye here,” said Goodwin, “when you git thar, mebbly hit won’t be in Letcher, atter all. But hit’ll be Letcher till you git thar. And hit’s your aunt you’re goin’ to see. She’s right sick, and I don’t reckon you’ll git back before spring. You’ll take the boy, and Smart’ll take keer of you till I come.”

“What’ll you be doin’?” she asked.

“I’ll be a-sellin’ off my hogs and cows and things. The war’s makin’ good prices, and I’ll invest in stock.”

“In stock!” laughed Smart.

“Peleg,” said his wife, “you ain’t a-puttin’ too much into that mine, be ye?”

“Well, not skursely,” said he dryly.

“Not skursely!” echoed Smart with immoderate laughter.

“If you’ve got ary thing you’re sorter sot your heart on, you best take it,” said Goodwin; “but you mustn’t take no more’n what you need for a long visit. But you ain’t a-comin’ back right soon.”

“When I come back, Peleg, will you git me a new house, or——”

“Yes,” said he, “but hit won’t be the one we talked about. That’s too small game. I’ve had to sell a heap of my land around here—for to buy stock, you understand—and when I build, hit may not be right here. Now that’s enough. And don’t you say a blamed word without that you’re goin’ to your aunt’s over in Letcher—you hear? You’re a-goin’ to start a Monday.”

Goodwin spat straight into the fire, looked stern and uncommunicative through his glasses till his eyes met Smart’s, when his face relaxed a little.

“Quit laughin’, you fool!” he said to Smart, but not very severely.

But Smart only laughed the louder, and as he saddled his horse to ride off after some hogs which Goodwin had bought, and paid for, in part, with stock, he pulled his nondescript hat lower over his close-cropped head, and sang gleefully :

“My true love she lives in Letcher,
Ho-de-um-de-diddle-a-de-day !
She won’t come, and I cyan’t fetch her,
Ho-de-um-de-diddle-a-de-day !
Chickens is a-crowin’ on the Sourwood Mountain,
Ho-de-um-de-diddle-a-de-day !
Seen so many pretty girls I cyan’t count ’em,
Ho-de-um-de-diddle-a-de-day !”

Meantime the school was closing a successful if not a brilliant session. There was some prejudice against women teachers, and the community was too much disturbed about the war and the mine to give the school a fair chance. Barbara and Liberty did

their duty with fidelity, and Barbara delighted daily in the companionship of her friend.

They laughed together over the ghost, when Liberty confessed her share in the enterprise, and they agreed in their admiration of Fletcher, and in their sympathy for Joe Lakes, who still worshiped Liberty afar off, but was too great a man to come to school to women.

They did not see Fletcher, and they seldom talked of him; but Barbara cherished the thought that she was no longer in honor bound, and easily convinced herself that she cared the more for him now that he was so far away, and was doing his duty so nobly. And yet, and yet, there were times when Barbara thought of Boyd Estill. But all the while Liberty thought not at all. At least it seemed so; for in the moments when Barbara caught her at what might have seemed to be thinking, she began humming. There was no resisting it, and after awhile Barbara began humming with her, though with a heavy heart sometimes:

“ I'll get another one, skip-t'-m-loo !
Skip-t'-m'-loo, my darling !”

All this time Mrs. Buzbee failed visibly. Barbara often feared that she would not live till her father's return. Once she broached to her mother a topic often in her mind, and raised the question whether it were not better for her to write to her grandfather, and ask to be received again into the old home at Lexington. But her mother with great spirit instantly vetoed the suggestion.

“ No, no, my child ! How can you think of such a thing ? We have burned our bridge behind us. So

long as your father lives it is impossible. To return would be to desert him! No, no, my child!"

"It was for your sake I proposed it, mother, not my own."

"Then for my sake do not mention it again."

In September word came from Mr. Buzbee that he was starting South, and that they must move to the falls, as he would be employed there constantly. Renfro had a pole cabin hastily constructed, so rude and bare that they longed even for the cabin of Deek Morgan, and there they moved, when school was out. The journey was almost fatal to Mrs. Buzbee, and the suspense that followed was nearly intolerable. For still Mr. Buzbee delayed to come, and the crowd that had gathered about the mine was not one in which they could feel at home. And so October came, and the rainbow that hovered in the mist above the falls fell on the foliage on the hillsides above, and Nature was glorious in her shroud.

Early in October a dozen well-mounted Kentuckians, who rode like human centaurs, pulled up in front of The Best Hotel, and called for refreshment.

"'Light, gentlemen, and lift your saddles," said the pleased proprietor. "If we cyan't treat you good, we'll treat you clever."

He did his best, no doubt, but the well-fed young men from the blue grass, whose military experience in the State Guard had been mostly of a picnic nature, enjoyed the dinner but moderately, and complained against Boyd Estill whose whim had brought them out of their way.

“What is it, Boyd? Tell us what you wanted in Pine Knot?”

“What have you against Pine Knot?” asked Boyd.

“Nothing except that it is tough as a pine knot,” answered one of them.

“You libel it,” answered Boyd.

“Perhaps so. But I pine not for any more of its board. Come, let us go on.”

“Rest your horses for an hour,” said Boyd, “and I will go with you. I must make a visit here.—Landlord, where is the schoolhouse?”

“’Bout half a mile up yan branch. Wha’ d’ye want o’ the schoolhouse?”

“I want to see the teacher, Mr. Buzbee.”

“That ain’t the way to go, then. He’s gone to Boston.”

“How long has he been gone?”

“Sence ’long about Christmas. Wha’ d’ye want to see him about?”

“I have some business with him. Is—is his family here?”

“Nope.”

“Did they go to Boston with him?”

“Nope. They moved, Mis’ Buzbee and Miss Barbara did. They moved back into the mountains towards the river a-yistiddy. They’re clar to the jumpin’-off place, whar the water gives its first leap afore it gits to the out aidge of the world.”

“Where is that?”

“That’s at the Falls of the Cumberland. Hit’s a good long ride from here.”

“Boys,” said Estill, “I’m sorry, but I must ask

you to ride on without me. I'll meet you in Knoxville. I must go to Cumberland Falls."

"Ah! this is the situation is it, Estill? This is the fair puss in the meal? You bring us around Robin Hood's barn for an unexplained reason, and lo, it's a mountain beauty you're hunting! And you want us to ride on, while you go and visit her? No, by the girl I left behind me!"

"I was jest a-goin' to say," suggested Best, "that if you fellers has any notion of goin' to Knoxville, hit ain't best for ye to scatter much. They's a heap of fellers a-comin' up from Tennessy now to enlist at Camp Dick Robinson, and the most of 'em are right smartly in airnest."

"You think to frighten us?" asked Boyd.

"No-o. Not adzackly. But if all I've heerd is so, something is goin' to take place and happen right soon now. They's a heap of fellers moving North, and the rebels theirselves is movin' somers. I've heerd that old Zolly means to move through the Gap into Kaintuck. But I ain't no reb. I've give you fair warnin'. My meat's as good to one as another, and one man's money's as good as another's to me. I've told ye what I think. Now do as ye please."

Convinced that a visit to Barbara was impracticable, yet comforting himself with the thought that Knoxville was not so far away, Boyd reluctantly joined his companions and moved South, submitting to their jests about having taken them out of their way for a love affair. And so Barbara did not see the man who loved her.

CHAPTER XXX

THE PLUNGE

THERE was never a more beautiful autumn. Had things been different, Barbara could have gloried in those weeks beside Cumberland Falls. But they were weeks of constant anxiety and continued disappointment. Mr. Buzbee did not arrive, and the hope long deferred made their hearts sick. Barbara knew that her mother was dying, a martyr she sometimes said to herself—and then checked herself in the act of saying it—a martyr to her father's fanaticism.

Meantime the men, who had been paid but little, and were put off with promises of Mr. Buzbee's return, grew almost desperate. Renfro led them on quest after quest, searching for the hidden money. A single find just now would be a Godsend. But they did not find it. Then they dug ore, and began a furnace; but this again was stopped "for lack of funds."

There was something queenly in Barbara in those days. The long, hard winter, the experience in the schoolroom, the endurance of suspicion and neglect, the positive privation and all had made a woman of her. As her mother's strength diminished, her own fortitude increased. With a dignity and maturity which she had not possessed before she bore those

anxious days that slowly grew to months. And the longest and hardest of them all were those beside the falls when the beauty of Nature seemed to be mocking her own sad heart. At length her father's delay became almost intolerable, not only because of her mother's extreme weakness, but because of the danger from the mutinous men.

For a time all labor was suspended. Finally, when riot threatened, work was resumed, and the small, rough furnace was completed. The men set themselves eagerly at the digging of ore, and then came another delay while they burned the charcoal. Then came the first real sign of a result, for the furnace, heated till the flame roared out of the top, reduced the rock to a molten mass, and when they punched in the clay that stopped the furnace, the liquid metal ran out and filled the little trenches that had been made for it in the sand.

The men gave a great cheer. They were seeing the silver at last.

"But this ain't all pure silver," said Goodwin, hastening to correct a misunderstanding that might be serious. "Hit's 'most all silver, but not all. We'll have to cupel it, and for that we'll have to wait till Mr. Buzbee gits back. He's on the way now."

The men accepted this explanation grudgingly. Both the workmen and the local capitalists, who had recently increased to a considerable number, were eager to see the first pure silver. Still, they possessed their souls in what for them was patience, and every day ran another blast of the unrefined ingots, which soon lay rusting about in great heaps.

At last Mr. Buzbee came. He was a weak and hag-

gard man, and barely able to sit upon a horse. Barely able to reach the cabin by the falls, he sank upon his bed, hardly able to rise and stand by the bed of his wife, who seemed to have lived only that she might see him again.

“But, oh, my dear,” he said, “it is glorious! I shall not live long, I know. I am a sick man, but I have lived to see the triumph of that for which we have labored. We wait, my dear, only for the first marketable output from our mine. Then the world will know! Then the proclamation may go forth! Then the President may send to Congress his message, and add that the money is in sight! Then this awful war will cease, and we shall die, but the country will be united and free!”

Next morning Mrs. Buzbee was worse, and her husband was better only because he must be so. Goodwin had gone to Rockhold to see about the lead that he had ordered to use in cupelling the ingots. He left word, however, that he would be back by night, and to melt up as much of the ingot as they had lead to refine it, and he and Mr. Buzbee would attend to it together.

Mr. Buzbee rose in pain and weakness and came to the furnace to see the work that had been done.

“Is this all?” he cried, when he saw the rude little furnace.

“All but a cupelling furnace,” said Renfro.

“And where has the money been spent?”

“Goodwin says he’s put in every cent he got.”

A black suspicion crossed the mind of Mr. Buzbee, but it was such a stranger to his thought that he instantly dismissed it.

“And what are these?” he asked, pointing to the ingots lying about.

“That’s what we’ve cast ready for refining.”

“But this is simply pig iron!”

“Well, Goodwin said that was the way. Don’t it count for nothing?”

“Possibly—possibly. The rock has been eliminated. But we must remelt it with lead before we get it ready to cupel. Lead and borax. Is there borax here?”

“Yes, and lead.”

“Well, then, remelt as much of this as there is lead and borax to make flux, and spend to-day and to-night in getting it ready. Then you must get bones enough to give us bone ash to mix with our wood ashes for the cupelling. I will give full directions, but I must read them over again. Make these preparations. We shall see no silver to-day. I will read as I sit by Mrs. Buzbee. To-night Goodwin will return. To-morrow we will cupel.”

The unpaid, disappointed, brutal men liked it little that they were sent out after other material. But it was a new sort of work, and hence presumably progress. They uncovered the charcoal pit which they had burned, and heaped the charcoal near the refining furnace. They searched for bones, and found them—some they thought were human bones, but these, far from making them shudder, only reminded them again of Swift, to whose party they presumably belonged.

All day Mrs. Buzbee grew steadily worse, and Buzbee was so sick that only his duty to his wife and his eagerness to see the result of his labors kept him up. All day his wife lay, growing weaker; all day he sat

by her side, one hand in hers and one holding a book, returning her appealing look with haggard glances of sympathy that quickly sought the pages of his book again.

Now and then he would slip away for a moment and see to the burning of the bones, and later to the making of the little ashen saucers. Then with a guilty feeling he would come back, resolved to devote himself to his wife, but soon he would find himself stealing furtive glances at his book. All the time the hectic flush was on his own pale, dying face.

Another night passed, and in the morning Mrs. Buzbee was still alive, but the end was manifestly near. Barbara had ceased to hope for anything else, or to pray that it might be delayed. Mrs. Buzbee was conscious, and bore her weakness with patience, yet her eyes hungered for the undivided thought of her husband, and that she did not get.

Goodwin had not returned the night before, but was confidently expected early this morning. Against his return the furnace was heated, and some of the ingots were remelted with lead and borax, and run off in slag at whose bottom the lead settled, and that, as Mr. Buzbee explained, contained the silver. This was a revelation to the workmen. The bars which they had run out before they had supposed almost pure silver. These, as now remelted, left but a paltry residuum, and this must be still further diminished. Yet doubtless there was silver there, and for this they waited.

The day wore on. Goodwin did not return. The men's faces, aflame with the heat, grew dark with sus-

picion and passion. The sun set, and the twilight deepened.

“Put away your book, father,” said Barbara. “The end is near, I am sure.”

With a sigh he laid his book aside, and took the wrist of his wife in his hand. The pulse grew unmistakably fainter. He administered a mild stimulant; it was all there was left to do. She brightened and looked up in his face and smiled, but it was a wan, weak smile, and had in it memories of many things.

Blake and Renfro came tiptoeing in, and stopped, hushed by the sight before them. At last Renfro spoke.

“Mr. Buzbee,” said he, “hit’s a sin to say a word, but we just got to. Goodwin ain’t back, and the men are crazy to see silver. They’ve got some whisky somehow, I don’t know how, and they’re about wild. We’ve told them everything we kin think of to pacify them, and we cyan’t do it no more. We’ve got the refining furnace hot, and the cupels are all ready. Come, jest long enough to finish one little lot, if it ain’t more than ten cents’ worth. We—we wouldn’t ast it, but if you don’t, I believe they’ll kill us all by morning. The men that lives around here, our own sort of folks, you know, they’re doin’ their best to hold ’em back. They’ve got their own little money in it, and they’re beginning to suspect they ain’t been dealt with fair. They ain’t so desperate as the workmen, but they’re gittin’ right mad, too. Come jest long enough to finish one lot, and we won’t pester ye no more.”

Barbara looked at her father, and he turned to her

appealingly, as he always looked to some one to decide for him in such cases.

“You must go, father,” said she, “but hurry back.”

He looked at his wife, and her eyes gave their assent, but she moved her head ever so little, and he understood it, and, bending over her, kissed her. Then he hurried out.

The refining crucible was built a little apart from the main furnace, and was sheltered by the high walls of the bluff. It was glowing with a great heat, and the men were gathered about it, for they had been told that Renfro and Blake had gone to bring Buzbee. Their dark looks brightened a little as the three men came walking down. They stood aside and let them through to the door of the furnace.

Mr. Buzbee took the shovel, and, opening the muffle, set in a half dozen of the saucer-shaped ash dishes, and, taking up the leaden lumps with a pair of tongs, placed one in each.

“It will not take long now,” he said. “We will open these doors soon that the air may pass through, and separate the molten metals. Forgive me, my friends, for neglecting you. Only the most painful duty has kept me in my home this day. But you shall see now that you have not trusted me in vain. I am sorry not to have had much experience in this work, though I have learned the process by reading. Mr. Goodwin, if here, could assist me very much. But I can do this, and then I must hasten to my dying wife.”

There was a silence that had in it some element of sympathy. The small investors who had put in

their all stood nearest, and the menacing rabble huddled a little farther back.

“We’re mighty sorry to call you away,” said Jake Crawford, “and, much as we want to see this, I for one would be willing to let it go for to-night.”

“No, no!” cried the crowd.

“No, my friends,” said Buzbee; “you shall see silver before I leave you. We will open these doors now, and let the oxidation begin.”

After a little while he opened the front door of the muffle, and the expectant throng huddled closer. Within, a half dozen saucers of boiling lead were bubbling and spluttering and diminishing.

“Hit gits less and less,” said Blake.

“That is the lead absorbing,” said Mr. Buzbee. “The silver will remain. And now, watch, for the beautiful moment is at hand. You are soon to see the coruscation, which will shoot the surface over with rainbow streaks!”

They gathered nearer, but few could look within at one time. Nearest stood Blake and Renfro, and the stockholders were behind them. The bubbling masses grew less and less, and in one of the cupels it disappeared entirely, leaving a thin, leadlike scum. A horror seized Mr. Buzbee, and he strained his eyes at the next one. In another moment it too was gone, and the cupel was empty. A third went out unwatched, and the three that remained were sinking low. For a moment Mr. Buzbee stood dazed, and then the life within him seemed to him to go out, even as the lead went out of the ashen saucers, and he stood with a vacant stare watching the remaining cupels as one by one the metal vanished and left no silver in

the bottom. It was a moment of blackness from the very pit; of blindness and groping; of stupor, yet of pain such as can come only from the refinement of cruel torment.

Fortunately, those behind did not see all this in the face of the man whose eyes like theirs were upon the furnace door. Nor did many of them see within, or all of these understand what they saw.

“Father, father!” cried Barbara, running in at the moment. “Come! You must come this moment!”

Mechanically he turned, and she took his arm and hurried him away.

Renfro slammed the door of the furnace, and said: “Men, this is plumb wicked! It’s plain we ain’t a-goin’ to be able to finish any of this to-night. We’re keepin’ a sick man that’s turned heaven and airth for us away from his dyin’ wife. We just got to leave this thing go till mornin’. Mr. Buzbee has done all we ast, and more’n we’d orter ast. Now we must let him go till mornin’. In the mornin’ we’ll finish up this that’s begun, and do some more, and pay you all off.—Blake, you help Mr. Buzbee to the house.—Don’t nobody interfere with this furnace to-night, for if you do, when hit’s so hot, like as not you’ll crack it, and we cyan’t do nothin’ to-morrow if ye do that.”

The men dispersed, though not without grumbling. They had waited and been disappointed again and again. However, the stockholders assured themselves that an honest effort had been made in their behalf, and this temporarily assured the others. But they talked together, and those who had stood back recalled Mr. Buzbee’s promise of the rainbow streaks, and those who had stood near told what they had seen.

Then the suspicions grew to mutiny, and the anger of the drunken rabble rose again.

Renfro had walked slowly from the furnace, attended by a group to whom he was explaining the need of delay. As soon as he was able he dismissed them with a plea that he must go to Mrs. Buzbee's bedside. As soon as he was alone he ran with all his speed to the rock house that served as a stable.

"Here, Pete!" he whispered. "Git up and hitch up the mules! Quick! Hitch four to the covered wagon, and have 'em ready to start when I come back! Put the saddles on to my horse and Blake's, and turn the others loose!"

Then he hurried to the cabin. Just before him entered Granny White. "O Miss Barbara!" she cried, "you alls must run from here right off! Goodwin has done run off with the money, and when these men find it out, they'll kill you alls—every one of you!"

Without a word Renfro stepped to the head of the bed, and motioned Blake to take the foot.

"What do you mean to do?" asked Mr. Buzbee, but they did not speak. They lifted the straw tick with the dying woman on it, and, motioning the others to follow, hastened through the door. It was dark, and the men at the crucible below found it yet darker by reason of the light of the fire which was in their eyes while they poked about the slag.

They laid the pallet in the wagon, and Mr. Buzbee, unable longer to sit up, was placed upon it with his wife. Barbara and Granny White sat down to care for them, though they found themselves unable to do much aside from holding on.

“Go!” said Mr. Renfro, and Simon Peter plied the whip. The four mules started on a run up the river and through the ford, up the steep and sidling bank, and on through the dark, rough road that hardly could be called a road.

Blake and Renfro leaped to their saddles. “Start on,” said Renfro, “and what horses will foller you let ’em foller!”

Then, breaking a switch, he whipped the loose horses till they scattered in the woods, some of them following down the road after the wagon.

The noise of the wheels started the men at the furnace, and a wild yell broke forth from them. Renfro struck his spurs and hastened after the wagon, which he overtook at the ford.

“Drive on!” he cried. “Faster! Don’t stop for nothing!”

Simon Peter jerked his rein and cracked his whip. The mules started forward, the wagon lurching heavily from side to side in the water.

“Wait here with me!” said Renfro to Blake. “That’s a band of devils straight from hell, and if they catch us, our lives ain’t worth the cost of a coffin! If we had a road we could beat ’em, but a man can go faster than a wagon till we get to the top o’ the mointain! Wait here by the bank, and the first two men that come near enough to shoot, shoot!”

They had not long to wait. They came dashing through the rapids, a cursing, murderous crowd, the most brutal well in the front. Big and black their shapes rose up in the night, against the faint red of the furnace in the distance.

“ Now ! ” whispered Renfro, and two sharp reports rang out.

There were cries of pain, there were sounds of splashing, and calls for help that drifted swiftly down the rapids. One grew silent after a minute or so, but the other called in more and more of terror till at last a frightful shriek was drowned in the roar of the falls.

The two horsemen turned and rode up the hill. There was momentary confusion among the pursuers, and for a little time it seemed that they had given it up, but later they came on again with shoutings more terrible. They sounded ominous to the two horsemen that guarded the rear of the wagon, but they rode on in grim silence. They struck terror to the heart of Barbara and Granny White, but they clung on and spoke no word. But Mr. Buzbee lay as one incapable of pain or terror, dazed, stunned, made senseless by this crowning disappointment. Once or twice he seemed to realize his condition and cried out, “ My God ! my God ! why hast thou forsaken me ? ” But for the most part he lay benumbed, nor heeded the death moan in which the spirit of his wife found its release.

Again the pursuers gained, and again the horsemen dropped back and waited in ambush. Again their shots were followed by a brief respite, and now, the top of the mountain reached, the mules ran dangerously along the ridge. Simon Peter gave up attempt to guide them, but gave them their head, and, trusting to their instinct to find the road, crouched over the pommel of his saddle and urged them on. Huge branches struck the wagon. Great stones and roots pitched it from side to side. At times it seemed that it would be broken and disabled, or its occu-

pants spilled out, but the faithful black driver still urged the mules on.

But now came a new peril, for behind them as they listened they heard the sound of hoofs. The pursuers had captured some of the loose horses, and, mounted on them, were sure to overtake them. They might have hoped to tire out the men on foot and leave them behind, but not these. The horses were fresh and strong, and the battle would be between two on the one side and a number on the other much larger. As they listened, the noise of hoofs grew stronger, and the voices—and they were cruel and bloodthirsty voices—showed that the number was not small.

“On, Pete, on! God bless you, old fellow! Get us through to-night, and you’re a free man to-morrow!” cried Renfro.

And then he added: “Hit’s fool talk. He don’t want to be free, but hit’s the only thing I kin think of to encourage him.”

Still they moved on, and the miles sped faster now. The trail grew into a road, and, while a most atrocious one, was better than that over which they had passed almost miraculously. But the horsemen were coming behind them, and not a mile away.

“There’s one thing we kin do,” said Blake. “We kin stop here and unload, and git well back in the bushes, and have Pete whip on as fur’s he thinks he kin git, and then he git off and run, and start the mules on.”

“I was thinkin’ of it,” said Renfro. “It’s the only thing they’s left for us. I’ll ride on and tell Pete what to do.”

“What’s that light?” asked Blake.

Far down the road a fire shone through the trees, and burned out a hemisphere of the October night.

"On, Pete, on!" cried Renfro. "Make that fire and we're safe!"

"Halt! who comes there?" The challenge rang out clear and strong, but the sentinel stood aside and let the wagon pass, for the mules that were white with lather could not be stopped at once.

"Friends!" shouted Renfro, "and we need help! They's a band of cutthroats atter us!"

"Officer of the guard!" called the sentinel. "Turn out the guard!"

Sleepy men in gray crawled out and got their guns. Blake and Renfro stood back a little in the shadow. On came the horsemen, pulling up a little for the fire, and coming to a halt as they saw the soldiers.

"Who comes here?"

"Friends. Who are you?"

"An outpost of General Zollicoffer's army. Advance with the countersign."

"We don't have it. We're following some people that have robbed us."

"Jake Crawford," called Renfro, "will ye listen to reason?"

"Is that you, Renfro?"

"Yes. Be the men that's with you the same sort of fellers you be?"

"I reckon so. All men from around home here."

"Put down your guns, men, and hitch your horses, and come up to-wards the fire. I want to tell you all I know."

It was not strange, now that they thought of it, but it had never occurred to them as they fled, that,

while the men who chased them on foot and were foremost after their blood were the most desperate characters in the company, those who came upon the horses were those who, holding back from the first mad chase, had waited to find their own beasts, and following, still intent on an explanation and some of them on revenge, were less brutal and more reasonable than the men on foot.

Renfro and Blake stepped out into the light.

"We're unarmed," said Blake. "Shoot if ye want to, but hear us first."

"We don't want to shoot nobody," said one of the party, "but we want to know whether it's so that we've been robbed."

"I'm afraid it is," said Renfro. "But it ain't no person you're chasin' that's robbed ye. We've been robbed with the rest."

"Who's done it, then?"

"Come and se' down here, and I'll tell ye 'all I know."

They hitched their horses and came into the fire-light, with faces dark and threatening, but curbing their anger till they could know it all.

"One thing is certain," said Renfro. "Whoever's robbed ye, it ain't Mr. Buzbee. They may not be no Mr. Buzbee by this time, for I ain't much *idy* that him or his wife either could outlive a ride like we've took. And he ain't said one loud word that I've heerd, so I ain't any right to speak for him. But this I know, for I read it in his face, that that man's heart died when he seen that they wa'n't no silver in that blast. Men, we've all been fooled, and Peleg Goodwin's the man. He put that silver into the lead that we cupelled

it with before, and that's the only silver they is or ever was in this mine. That's my honest opinion. And he's been keepin' the money that's come, and dolin' out a little bit for buildin' here and doin' somethin' there, and gittin' trusted for that when he could, and he's kept us all a-waitin' till Mr. Buzbee got home, so's he could git the last dollar; and now he's run off with the money, and left the blame of the failure to come on Mr. Buzbee. Men, we've all been fools, and Mr. Buzbee, with all his larnin', has got a fool streak in him, but he's the kindest-hearted fool God ever made, and he never wronged no man out of a cent. No more did Blake nor me."

"Wha' did ye run off fur, if ye wa'n't guilty?" asked Crawford.

"We wouldn't 'a' done it if we'd been dealin' with men like you. And I'll say this, that even you are more reasonable atter a good hard ride and a little time to think. But if they'd all been like you—men from the county here—I'd 'a' stood up like a man and told you the truth as fur as I knowed it, if you shot me fur it. But you know as well as I do that the men that's been workin' there is the most bloodthirsty devils that ever spent three nights hand runnin' out of the smell of brimstone. And to think of fallin' into their hands, with no more reason than so many mud torkles and as mad as so many painters, and to think of that dyin' woman and that gal—I done just what every one of you'd done, and you know it. And I'll say this too, that whether it's all clear to ye or not, they ain't a man of you but would drap dead fightin' before he'd let that gal fall into the hands of them men. Ef I'd knowed who was ridin' behind us, I'd 'a' stopped

some distance back. Still, I'd a leetle bit druther have my first word with you over somebody's bayonet.— Come, Mr. Sentinal, what's the meanin' of this? We didn't allow they was ary reb nearer than the Gap."

"We marched through the Gap," said the sentinel.

"But this ain't no road from the Gap."

"We had a fight at Wild Cat, and have changed our plan. That is all I want to say," said the officer of the guard. "And now, if you wish to see to your people in the wagon, pass through the line, and camp for the night. We must keep the road clear."

"Come with us," said Renfro, and the men dismounted and came in. The wagon was some distance along the road, and a detail of soldiers went with them to it. Simon Peter had made a light, and had tenderly lifted out the bruised body of Mrs. Buzbee, and Mr. Buzbee lay on the pallet close by, in great pain of body and mind.

"O my daughter!" he cried, "what folly have I done! I have killed your mother; I have ruined all who trusted in me! O my God! was ever a soul so guilty as I?"

Barbara strove to comfort him, but unavailingly; and when he saw the men who had lost their money through the mine, he raised himself to his knees before them and said: "Forgive me, my friends, forgive me! I confess my sin to you as I do to my God! I have not meant to wrong you, but I have ruined you! I have ruined you!"

"Now look here, Mr. Buzbee," said Renfro, "we've all made a blunder, that's plain. But I ain't a-goin' to hear you take all the blame of it. We've all been fools, and one man's been a thief. But we

don't none of us bear you no grudge. We know you're a honest man."

"You are too good—you are too good," said he; and then: "O my poor wife! My poor daughter! God forgive me!" Then he relapsed into silence, save for a grateful word to Barbara, who sat beside him and stroked his hair.

"Git him a tent," said Granny White to the soldiers, and they pitched a shelter tent over him. He sank into a stupor, and Barbara sat beside him.

The men, with homely but tender care, prepared a bed of pine boughs in the wagon, and there laid out the body of Mrs. Buzbee, as they were directed by Granny White. Then the old woman returned to share Barbara's vigil, and at last the thing that seemed impossible occurred: the long, hideous night turned gray in the east, and the sun rose, bringing with it a new day.

CHAPTER XXXI

FANATIC OR PHILANTHROPIST

“BARBARA BUZBEE!”

She started to hear her name.

“Boyd Estill! How came you here?”

“I came faster than I should like to admit. We had a fight at Wild Cat, and the Yankees have the field. But, Barbara, I am surprised to find you here. I am detailed with a guard to escort you to Pine Knot, but I did not know it was you. Is your mother really dead?”

For answer Barbara bowed her face in her hands and wept.

“My poor, poor darling!” said Boyd tenderly.

“O Boyd,” sobbed Barbara, “I am more glad to see you than I can tell! I never needed a friend so much!”

“And I— O Barbara, I have so much to say to you!”

They started early and slowly. Barbara rode with her father in an ambulance, and the wagon followed with the body of Mrs. Buzbee. Renfro, Blake, and the men from whom they had been fleeing rode behind, and a guard commanded by Estill led the way. A messenger was dispatched with a letter to be mailed

to Lexington, and it contained a pass from General Zollicoffer for Barbara's grandfather, for they could not doubt that he would come in this extremity. Toward noon they drew up before the door of Mr. Renfro's, and he and Simon Peter lifted the body of Mrs. Buzbee, and the soldiers carried Mr. Buzbee into the house and laid him on the bed.

There he lay, the man whose life had been a series of failures and who died to be forgotten, save by those who in after years recalled his memory with a smile. But it was a great heart that slowly and more slowly beat out its last two days of life in the home that had first welcomed him to the mountains.

When the community knew that he was dying, they came out with one accord and stood about the yard, and gathered in the house and waited for the end. It was touching and beautiful to see their anger all forgotten, and even those who had lost their little all recalling his kindnesses. Women rode far with children in their arms to show the little ones the man who had cared for them when they were sick. Men talked of the battle at Wild Cat and the war that had come so near, and then of the life of this man. All thought that he had deceived them or was other than he pretended vanished, and popular wrath, content if it finds some one on whom to vent itself, concerned itself with Goodwin, who was safe enough from their revenge. Noel Davis, too, was missing, and there were some who believed that he had gone to join Goodwin, and others that he had been shot at the ford and had gone over the falls. For a good while they did not know which was true, but later in the war he appeared again. If he had gone over the falls, the

Union teamster whose wagon was plundered might never have been shot, or Pine Knot burned.

Mr. Buzbee outlived that day, and toward evening Boyd Estill and his men mounted and rode back.

“ I have much to say to you, Barbara,” said Boyd, “ but I realize that this is no time to say it. You will go to Lexington, of course, and I shall see you there. Yet, before I let you go I must tell you that I have never ceased to love you.”

“ My true friend,” said Barbara, “ you have been so good, so kind! I can never repay you.”

“ But you still love me? ”

“ O Boyd, don't ask me. I'm afraid I don't! ”

“ Barbara,” said he, “ I blame myself. I ought not to have quarreled with you. And having quarreled and let you go, I ought to have found where you were and come to you. I did not know till lately——”

“ You could not have come when my need was greater,” said she.

“ But, Barbara, surely you will not send me away heart-broken? ”

“ O Boyd,” she said, “ I fear you will think me ungrateful. You have been so kind to me, and I care for you so much! You are my own, my true friend, my brother, my own brave, kind friend. Don't think me fickle, Boyd, or heartless! I care for you, indeed I do! I shall never cease to do so. But I do not love you. I'm sure I don't, though I like you truly.”

Boyd stopped in amazement. “ Is it because I am a rebel? ” he asked.

“ Oh no, oh no! I could love you in spite of that.”

“ Or because I am a slaveholder? ”

Barbara paused a moment and said solemnly: “ I



"I can never repay you."

believe my poor father was right in this at least, however far he was wrong in his other opinions, that this war will not end till the slavery question is settled. No, it is not that."

"Then, do you love some one else?"

She did not answer.

"Who is he?" he demanded.

"I—I have not admitted to myself that I loved him. At first for another girl's sake I did not let myself do so, and then for your sake I tried to force him from my heart."

"He does not know that you love him?"

"No. He has no hope of it."

"Then, O Barbara, give me one more chance! Try once more to love me, and let me show myself worthy! I will match myself against him! Tell me what you love him for, and by all that I hold dear I will outvie him! Is he wiser, kinder, richer? I shall make up what I lack, and come back to you!"

"Oh no, it is not that. Boyd, you are twice as handsome as he, and your education is far better. And no man is a truer gentleman than you! But he is as true, and I have seen him struggling to conquer his own passion, struggling to overcome his own ignorance, struggling with the disadvantages of his early life and showing his true manhood, and loving with no hope of return, he does not know it yet, but I tell you—I love him, Boyd. So, do not blame me, but be my friend still as you have always been, my truest, best friend, except——"

"Except——?"

"Except James Fletcher."

Boyd struggled for a time with his own feelings.

Then he offered her his hand. She took it, and he placed his other arm around her waist and kissed her.

"Good-by, Barbara," he said huskily. "God forgive me for letting you go away till we had made up our quarrel, and I had made you mine! Good-by. We still are friends, that's all I have to say. But this man Fletcher, is he in the army?"

"Yes," said she, "in the Federal army."

"We may meet some time!" he said savagely. "No, no!" he added, "I ought not to grieve you so. Good-by. If he loves you more than I do, he deserves you. But I shall love you still. O Barbara, I know better than ever before how much I love you! Good-by, Barbara."

"Good-by, Boyd."

"Looky here!" said Granny White as Boyd rode off, "you didn't send that young feller away, did ye?"

"He had to go," said Barbara. "He was under orders."

"Yes, but that ain't what I mean. He's the feller, hain't he?"

"You mean——"

"The one I tied the thread 'round the coffee grain fur?"

"I'm afraid he is, granny."

"And you don't mean to say you've let him slip?"

"Yes, granny, I've let him slip."

"Call him back! call him back!" cried granny.

"No, no, granny! Besides, it's too late. He's gone."

"What a pity! what a pity!" said granny.

"But, granny, I do not love him!"

"Ye do, too! The foolishness of a gal's talk!"

You jist thought ye keered for the preacher because you was sorter homesick like and he was clost handy! I know you had a sorter admiration for him, but if ever I'd a-seed this one, I could 'a' told ye which one ye loved!"

"You seem to think you know better than I do," said Barbara.

"Sartin I do, and some day you'll know I do," said granny. "But they ain't but one thing to do now, and that's to take keer of your pappy. He was a good man, honey, for all he had so little sense."

It was several days before Barbara's grandfather arrived, and when he came, it was all over. Mr. Buzbee never rallied save for a moment or two at a time, when his self-reproachful words and looks made even his stupor a relief. But at the end there came a brief interval of light and peace, and he drew his daughter down and kissed her, saying: "God bless you, my dear! You have been a heroine through it all." And then came the end.

It was a simple burial, with two coffins made of planed pine boards, covered on the outside with black muslin and inside with white, and the sound of the hammer just outside smote hard on the heart of Barbara. But unnumbered acts of kindness from the people about brought real comfort. There was no time for a funeral, nor was it expected, according to the custom of the country, nor had Barbara the heart for it; but an unlettered mountain preacher, with tears streaming down his face, knelt in the clay beside the grave, and prayed for the orphan daughter. Then Granny White and Liberty led her away, and the earth closed above the double grave.

It is not easy to gather incidents of war time in the Cumberland Mountains. The multitude of incidents so trampled on each other that they were reduced to an indistinguishable mass. People occasionally begin to talk to their children about those days, and feel as if they were talking of other people, and so cease. Moreover, it was impossible for them to idealize the war. The world said, "Yonder is the soldier, the hero." The mountaineer said, "Yonder is the man who shoots our hogs and burns our fences and robs our smoke houses." The world said, "There is the man who for his country's sake braves death itself." The mountaineer said, "Yonder is the man whom I saw skulking, till he found a tree to shoot from." The world said, "Yonder are war's awful pomp and glory." The mountaineer said, "Here are the carnage, the murder, the starvation, the heartless cruelty, the unspeakable inhumanity." And so the scenes that for want of idealization could never become poetry or art or song were blended into one black terror. One may not step from a train as it whirls through among those mountains, and accosting the first man he meets, draw on his fund of incident. He must find it in the chance remarks and in the talk by the way. But there are some scenes that are remembered by a few here and there, and there are those people who still sigh when they recall that double grave with the background of the first battle near at hand that seemed to number these twain among its list of the slain. They are scattered now, and none live near the spot or visit the grave, but through the distance in space and time they still see the grief of the brave young girl whose father and mother lay there side by side.

It was a simple thing in its way, but it touched Barbara to the heart, when the neighbors prepared a pair of wooden headstones and marked them with the juice of the pokeberry, as he had showed them how to make the blackboard. They asked for the dates of her parents' birth, and when she went next to the graves they bore these inscriptions:

JOHN HOWARD BUZBEE,

PHILANTHROPIST.

B. Jan. 23, 1800.

D. Oct. 24, 1861.

MARY BERNAUGH,

WIFE OF J. HOWARD BUZBEE.

B. July 3, 1808.

D. Oct. 22, 1861.

“John Howard Buzbee, Philanthropist!” It was a grateful tribute suggested by Renfro, and it comforted Barbara that they should have thought to add that one word. Then she reflected somewhat bitterly that the world at large would have said “Fanatic.”

But it matters little what is said upon a tombstone. Long ere it would have rotted, the artillery wheels had broken it down, and the world knows not which word was there. After all, the difference may not be so great. History has been busy with suggestions that philanthropist is but fanatic writ large.

CHAPTER XXXII

IN LEXINGTON

THE Bernaugh homestead was old and spacious, and there was plenty of room in it for the granddaughter whom the old man brought home from the hills.

“And now, Barbara,” he said, “this is your home, yours now, and yours when I die. I drove your mother from it—God forgive me! No wrong that you can ever do shall ever make you other than mine or this home any one’s but yours. Your grandmother’s legacy is untouched, and is already yours. And you must not leave me, my child. These are hard times in which we are living. I do not see the end. But together we will stay till I leave you for good and all.”

“I will not leave you, grandfather,” said Barbara. “I will stay with you. And, O grandpa, there is one thing I want to speak about. Forgive me if I ought not. But if I have any money in my own right, may I have at once a few hundred dollars of it now?”

“What do you want of it?” asked her grandfather. “No crazy abolition scheme, I hope? Anything but that! Let not that come between us, as it did between me and my daughter!”

“No, no, grandpa, it is not that,” said Barbara. “But I want to repay some of the stockholders in the mine—not the rich ones or the ones far away who can spare it, nor those who themselves were the plunderers of others, but the good mountain people who, trusting my father, and infatuated with the prospect of money, sold their cows or mortgaged their homes for a few dollars to buy a little of the stock. They are not many, and their stock was not paid in full.”

“Can you get me a list of them?” asked her grandfather.

“Mr. Renfro can furnish it, and the sums paid.”

“Get it,” said the old man, “and I will do the rest.”

She flung herself on her knees before him and thanked him with streaming eyes.

“No, no, my child! Not that! Come, sit on my knee instead, and be your mother over again. I am a lonely old man, my dear, and all of hope which I have in life gathers about you. No, no, don't cry. Or, well, run along and have it out, then. I'm a little bit unnerved myself.”

Of one duty Barbara felt sure. She ought to notify James Fletcher of her changed address. She owed it to him for his kindness to invite him to call, even if that were all—and that was not all, she was very sure. He was at Camp Nelson, probably; if not, a letter addressed there would be forwarded to him. So she sat down and wrote a simple note:

“DEAR MR. FLETCHER: I write to inform you of the death of my dear parents, and the great sorrow which their loss has brought to me. My home is now with my grandfather, Mr. William Bernaugh, at Lex-

ington. If you have a furlough and are able to visit me here, I shall be glad to see you, and my grandfather will welcome you to our home.

“ Sincerely yours,

“ BARBARA BUZBEE.

“ LEXINGTON, KY., *November 1, 1861.*”

The times were big with destiny then, and every day brought forth its surprise. The Kentucky Legislature, grown more strongly Union under Lincoln's tolerant attitude, brought over a few more hesitating votes on the day when Zollicoffer marched through Cumberland Gap, and Pope, on the same day, moved another Confederate army across the Mississippi and encamped in Kentucky. The Legislature demanded the recall of the troops. The Confederates replied that they would withdraw if the Union forces were withdrawn. But the Legislature, secure in its contention that the Union troops were native Kentuckians or Tennessee refugees fled to their sister State for protection, and that there was not an invading soldier among them, refused to order the Union soldiers out, and repeated its demand on the Confederates.

The Governor vetoed the bill, because it did not demand the same of both armies, and the Legislature passed it over his veto. It was by the hardest that they made themselves secure in their two-thirds majority that enabled them to defy the Governor. To do it they had to rely on one man whose constituents had ordered him to support the Governor. The member who defied his constituents knew that he could never return to his home among them, and he was guarded

day and night by his associates to prevent his assassination.

Those were stirring times indeed, but the two-thirds majority held; the Governor was shorn of his power; the sentiment of the State, sadly divided, gradually rallied to the support of the Legislature. And then came the final and dramatic act. Neutrality had had its day. The men who had adopted it were hoist with their own petard. Now, with two Confederate armies encamped upon their soil, and refusing to withdraw, all pretense of neutrality was at an end. The loyal faction of the Legislature had tested its power till it knew that it was secure, and then, passing their measure over the Governor's veto, they invited the Federal Government to send in troops to drive out the invaders, and, declaring the loyalty of the State to the Union, pledged themselves to keep her there. On that day, by authority of the Legislature, the Union flag was run up on the State-house at Frankfort, and it never afterward came down.

All this Mr. Bernaugh and his friend Estill talked about as they visited back and forth almost daily, and each of them talked it over with Barbara, and each of them counted her a daughter. The old men were both for the Union, but their hearts were heavy when they heard how Zollicoffer was defeated and killed at Mill Spring, and his army dispersed.

Then Barbara's heart went down, too. Boyd was with Zollicoffer. Had he escaped, or was he killed or captured? Day by day she watched the avenue that led down to the pike; night after night she lay awake and listened and prayed for Boyd's safety.

After a fortnight the word came. He had escaped

to Knoxville, but his brigade was cut to pieces beyond hope of reorganization, and he was going into another regiment. Then they thanked God and took courage, and with divided sympathies, with prayers for the success of the men of the North and for the safety of the men of the South, they watched the progress of the war.

If ever an angel came into a home, or two homes at once, for that matter, it was Barbara Buzbee, who at this time belonged almost as much in one home as the other. Neither of the old men asked her questions about Boyd; they knew that she had seen him, that he had come to her help in time of need, and they assumed that the whole affair was settled. In ways so indefinite and unconscious that she could not contradict them—and she had hardly the heart to do it, anyway—they planned under her very eyes for a future which centered around her and Boyd.

Day by day Barbara found herself more absorbed in the hopes and plans of the two old men; their love of the Union, their pride and sorrow for Kentucky, their glowing admiration of Lincoln, and their anxiety for Boyd. Often she thought of Fletcher, and wondered why he had not responded to her letter, but more and more completely she ran her life and hope into the mold made for them by her grandfather and Mr. Estill.

Indeed, in that distracted time, the two old men had but two things left to hope for—the saving of the Union and the happiness of “our boy and girl.”

“In vain is the net spread in the sight of any bird”; yet Barbara saw the old men weaving about

her the net of their fondest hopes, and she had not the heart to break it.

“Barbara,” said her grandfather, “you ought to be twins. There are too few of you to go round. Pap Estill is that selfish he wants you all the time; and I—Lord bless you, my dear, you are your mother and your grandmother and your own dear self all in one to me. But it’s a bit lonely for you here with us two old men playing battledoor and shuttlecock with you.”

“Dear grandpa,” said Barbara, “I am very happy with you. Yet I do wish I had a friend. You saw my friend Liberty Preston when you were at Pine Knot. I want her to come and visit me. Things are in a bad way there since Mill Spring battle, and it will do her good to come. Besides, I want her.”

“Send for her right away. Write, and say that if she can come I will send for her with horses. And I’ll send you and the carriage to Crab Orchard to meet her. That’s as far as the pike goes.”

“I remember very well how far the pike goes,” said Barbara.

“Tell her to come by Somerset, the road will be better that way now.”

So Liberty came on a visit of indefinite length, and the two girls had a happy ride together in the carriage from Crab Orchard.

Liberty brought new life to the home of the Bernaughes. A girl of natural refinement, she quickly adjusted herself to the new conditions, and her wardrobe was not long in assuming a new appearance. It would have been difficult to tell, save for an occasional

lapse in speech, which was the mountain and which the blue-grass girl; and Liberty set herself to learn and gain as much as possible from the experience. But she was loyal to the mountains, and it did both the old men good to hear her uncompromising mountain loyalty to the Federal cause.

Cheered by her presence, Barbara grew to her old self. The memories of hardship and bereavement remained, but receded into the background. Back and forth the two girls moved between the old homes, singing as they went, the slaves running to wait upon them, and the old men making their excursions the excuse for more frequent visits. But over it all hung the black shadow of the war.

"I never hear you sing 'Skip-t'-m'-loo' now," said Barbara. "Why have you stopped?"

"You've stopped, too," said Liberty.

"It was not I who sang it," said Barbara.

"But it's you that's done it," said Liberty.

"Done what?"

"You've 'got another one, skip-t'-m'-loo'!"

"Liberty Preston!"

"Now look here, Barbara Buzbee! I'm done fooling with you. You're in love with Boyd Estill, and what's more you've always been, if you'd only had sense enough to have known it. But if you don't look out you'll lose him, that's what! And I serve notice on you right now that while I'm not going out to hunt up any man living, you're not going to have Jim Fletcher, and you don't want him, either."

"But I've refused Boyd."

“ Well, you did a foolish thing, that’s all. Now, don’t you break these old men’s hearts telling them about it, for that don’t count. He’ll come back some day. He won’t hold you accountable for what you did then. But he won’t come many times.”

CHAPTER XXXIII

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

JAMES FLETCHER was a good soldier. He carried his gun patiently, he fought on the field heroically. No duty was too hard for him, and he offered himself for services from which other men shrank. Some men said it was his religion; others that he had been crossed in love. But he was not morbid or misanthropic. No man was more cheerful, even when cheerfulness was hardest; still, there was in his life an undertone of sadness, as of a man who had come up against his impassable barrier.

Impassable it was, for he had no hope of winning Barbara Buzbee. But he enshrined her image in his heart—that is, he enshrined an image there which he called Barbara Buzbee, and carefully differentiated it, for conscience' sake, from the real Barbara. There were two Barbara Buzbees he told himself; one of them had refused him, and was engaged to another man—her words could mean nothing else—and her he must not love. But there was another Barbara Buzbee, the ideal Barbara, whom he cherished as an ideal.

It was a rather fine discrimination, no doubt; but it served its end. It gave a name to Fletcher's ideal; it made it lawful for him to cherish memories which

else he must have counted sinful, and it gave him the slightest basis for a hope. It was just a little less than possible that her words had some other meaning; and then, there's many a slip; if anything should happen that Barbara Buzbee—the real flesh-and-blood Barbara—did not marry some other man, it was just possible that he still might win her. Sometimes he admitted as much to himself. But for the most part he lived in the light of the ideal Barbara.

So it was when the critical hour arrived before Fort Donelson, the hour that determined the future of the commanding general as well as of the battle. The Union right had been forced back by the desperate effort of the Confederates to break open a line of retreat, and the boys from the Prairie State who had borne the burden of the attack right manfully were retreating, and even brave Dick Oglesby and intrepid John A. Logan were recalling their broken regiments—in that hour when Grant suddenly changed his plan and ordered the lost ground to be retaken, and Lew Wallace swung out from the center to support the right, there was not a braver man among those who rushed to the charge than James Fletcher. Shivering in the chill wind and wet with the past night's cruel sleet—for he had given his overcoat to a wounded man—shouting with his camp-meeting voice in echo of the rebel yell, struggling through the entangled tree tops, wading through the miry clay, close beside the flag and never behind it, James Fletcher went.

There at the mouth of the cannon and against the bristling bayonets straight to the top of the hill he stood, striking right and left with his gunstock. Hurling a rebel gunner headlong as he was about to fire,

he grasped the flag as it fell from the hand of the wounded color sergeant and planted it on the mud-and-log breastwork. Some men thought he was trying to get killed. But he was not. Straight through the smoke of that battle he had followed the flag, his sense of duty, and the vision of Barbara Buzbee.

When it was over, he rescued the wounded color bearer and hung the flag above him in the rude field hospital. When the roll was called next day, and the thinned but proud regiment was falling in to receive the surrender, the captain of his company walked down the line and in the presence of them all told James Fletcher that he was the bravest man in the regiment.

The men were under a new commander—a quiet, modest man, who wore little gold braid, and who smoked his cigar in a keen scrutiny of affairs and with a dogged determination. The soldiers differed in their estimate of his abilities. But when Fort Donelson yielded to his demand for an “unconditional surrender,” the soldiers got a clew to the meaning of his initials, “U. S. Grant.” Opinion concerning him became more nearly a unit then, and the soldiers followed him south to Shiloh and to victory, and then on to Appomattox and to the coming of peace.

It had been a long and weary winter, full of discouragement and distress. And the substantial victories of January and April had later to be won over again. For, in the summer, when the line of the Confederacy had been pushed far South, and Nashville and Island Number Ten had been captured, there came, through incredible blundering, that sudden series of backsets culminating in the invasion of Kentucky. The Union army that had captured Cumberland Gap

gave it up again, and hastened toward the Ohio River, and Kirby Smith threw his seasoned regiments through the mountain passes and entered the blue-grass region near Richmond, Kentucky.

Fletcher was back in Kentucky with his regiment, one of a few regiments of seasoned troops to sprinkle among the raw recruits that made up Nelson's army of defense, and he was in the line of skirmishers sent out to the Big Hill to dispute the way, and then to fall back toward the Kentucky River; for Nelson had chosen his own battle ground, and would meet the enemy with the river between, and fight from his well-planned intrenchments on the bluffs.

The soldiers understood that this was the plan of the battle, and nothing could have surprised them more than to find as they fell back that General Manson had marched out from Richmond to meet the invaders and to give them battle in the open field.

What would have happened if Nelson had carried out his plan may only be conjectured. But what actually happened was the absolute annihilation of the Federal command. In no other battle of the war was an army so utterly wiped from the earth as in that of Richmond.

It was a Saturday, and no one was expecting the fight that day. The Legislature was in session at Frankfort, secure in its belief that Nelson's defenses at the river were strong, and on Saturday night it adjourned without concern, to meet at the usual hour on Monday. On Sunday morning the members rushed into the bedroom of Speaker Burnam, crying: "There has been a battle, and we are defeated! Kirby Smith is marching toward Frankfort! Cincinnati is in dan-

ger, and the whole North! He will establish a base of supplies on the Ohio River, and cut the country in two from the Ohio to the lakes!"

The hastily dressed members gathered in the State-house, and the Speaker's gavel stilled the noise on the floor. "The House will come to order! We must reconsider and rescind the vote of last night adjourning till Monday, and cause the record to show adjournment to Sunday morning." It was done accordingly. "The reading of the record will be omitted. It is moved and seconded that we do now adjourn, to meet to-morrow at the usual hour, and in Louisville." The action was quickly adopted.

Then followed a scene of confusion. A special train was ordered, and it drew up a long line of freight cars. The State records, the archives, and the documents of the Legislature were bundled into wagons and loaded into the cars. The money from the State Treasury was similarly transported to the train and loaded under guard. All the morning and afternoon they labored to carry all that was of greatest value beyond the reach of the Confederate army.

The train pulled out in the twilight, and arrived in Louisville in the night. Next morning the Legislature unpacked itself and held its session in a peripatetic fashion in Louisville.

The whole North was in terror, as it had good reason to be. The danger that all along had threatened the nation at the East, and which, but for the loyalty of Kentucky, would have menaced the Middle States all through the war, was suddenly at hand. Nor was the terror wholly dispelled till October when the battle of Perryville—an ill-managed battle, and

a meager victory—drove the Confederates from the State.

It was at Richmond, in August, that Fletcher again distinguished himself. His regiment was so scattered that he could hardly find a man whom he knew, and all about him were raw troops, undisciplined and poorly commanded, driven like sheep before the ruthless and well-trained foe. When Nelson arrived on the field, called to the scene by the unexpected sound of battle, his curses were loud and deep and unavailing. He could not rally the disorganized army.

Fletcher was making his way from the field, and one of the last to leave it, when a wounded man in a fence corner caused him to turn aside, and he recognized his colonel.

“Come, colonel,” he cried, “let me help you out of here.”

“You can't do it,” said the colonel. “I'm sure to be captured, and so are you if you stop. Save yourself while there is time!”

But Fletcher got him up on his own strong back, the blood from the colonel's wound dripping warm along his arm and hand, and so he carried him, under fire, till a flanking party intercepted him and they were both made prisoners. The colonel was sent to the hospital, where his wound kept him till after the battle of Perryville, and so he recovered his freedom. But Fletcher went south to Tuscaloosa Prison.

And so time passed on till one day, in the spring of 1863, Fletcher's time had expired, and his regiment was almost disbanded, though he learned that efforts were making to recruit it again to fighting strength. How gladly would he enlist again, he said

to himself bitterly, if only he were out of here! Yet, in the prison he had found his mission, and on its grim walls he hung the mental picture of the ideal Barbara. Noting how quickly the loss of self-respect broke men down, he laboured to keep the prisoners about him clean, to reduce to a minimum the vermin that infested the place, and to keep up the courage and cheer of his comrades. What hope it was that kept him up none knew, and he could only have told that it was the desire for the approval of his God and of fidelity to the ideal of Barbara Buzbee.

It was a disagreeable duty, and one which they hated, but a certain Kentucky regiment in the Confederate army had seen hard service in several campaigns, and was assigned for a time to guard duty at the prison. One night there came an order for a detail to be exchanged, and it fell to Captain Boyd Estill—he was a captain now—to make out the roll. There were certain papers on file, reports as to the condition of this man and that, with reasons given by the surgeon or others why such and such a man should be exchanged soon, and from these he made his first choices. There were others to be chosen, and he ran his eye over the long list of names, wondering upon what principle he should make his selection. Suddenly a name struck his sight, and his breath came quick and fast—James Fletcher, and his regiment and company. There could hardly be a doubt about it. The regiment was a mountain regiment, and the State was Kentucky.

Boyd Estill tipped back in his chair again, and shut his eyes and thought. Here was his opportunity, he said to himself, and why should he not improve it?

He would not harm the man, he would simply leave him. Why should he send him out, and leave another man in, perhaps equally deserving?

He filled out the list, leaving one name blank, and James Fletcher's name was not among those he wrote. Then he folded his list and walked out into the night, and, pacing up and down, fought out his battle alone. It was a hard thing to do, to be sure, but war was made up of hard things, and this was an incident of war. Why should he let this mountaineer, whom chance had thrown between him and his idol, usurp the place that belonged to him? One by one he linked together arguments that almost persuaded him to do it.

Then his heart beat faster as he imagined the result. Perhaps Fletcher would not return—that sometimes happened to men in prison. Some had to stay and take the chances. Suppose that should happen, and Barbara should learn, as learn she would, that he had died in the war? Surely he would be a rival no longer. Boyd could afford to forget her passing fancy for him, and in time, when her heart grew whole again, and he returned with his rank, honestly won, and the greater honors that were no doubt before him, why might he not honestly claim her?

So for half the night he walked and argued the case with his own conscience, and looked up at the stars and asked himself whether indeed there was a God who concerned himself with such affairs, and cared to remember them afterward.

And so the night wore on, and the struggle within him was fierce, and then he thought of the pure soul of Barbara, and how she would scorn the man who

would do what he was thinking of doing, nay, how he would scorn himself. He held his possible self, the guilty, selfish self before his face, and lashed him with his own manly scorn and contempt. And then he fell upon his knees, and looked up at the stars, and went in and filled the blank line with the name of James Fletcher.

CHAPTER XXXIV

WITH THE RANK OF CAPTAIN

It was a beautiful day in the spring of 1863 when James Fletcher returned from prison. The men to be exchanged were loaded into cars, and a fairly long train was made up.

“We’re to be exchanged!” cried one and another.

“Shut up!” growled an older man. “They only tell us that to keep us quiet on the cars. I’ve been moved from prison to prison since the fall of ’61—Belle Isle, Andersonville, Tuscaloosa—I’ve been the round of the noted winter resorts, and every time I’m moved to some hole worse than the last they tell me I’m to be exchanged!”

The hearts of all who heard him fell; and there were others who told a similar story of disappointment. Surely, and with occasional stops, the train moved on, and as night approached they were run upon a siding where, in uncertainty and discomfort, they waited for morning.

There never had been such a day as the one that dawned—certainly not since the earth was new. The sunrise was glorious, and the earth was green and clean and fragrant. Oh, how green were the fields and how beautiful they looked to the sick, dirty, hun-

gry men! And the uncertainty whether they were to step out upon the earth that looked too good to set foot upon, or to be imprisoned again, perhaps this time in Andersonville, grew almost unbearable.

At length an officer walked along the train bearing a handful of small white flags, and he attached one to each car.

Then the men cheered, for they felt sure that those white flags meant that they were about to enter the Union lines. Indeed, the Union lines were just across the river, and as the train slowly started, they could see the Union soldiers turning out in answer to the bugle call. Oh, what a clean army it was! They had worn out their old clothes in the winter's service, and all had drawn new clothing, and the new buttons could be seen farther than the color of the coats that bore them!

Slowly the train moved across the river, and then, a car at a time, the prisoners were taken out. Two Confederate officers compared lists with those of Union officers, and checked the men off, car by car.

Within the cars huddled the men in their rags and filth; without stood the clean soldiers in their new clothes; and as the prisoners came out, they were marched a short distance away to a clean spot where the regiments nearest were already making coffee, and would soon pitch tents for them. And now and then a cheer went up as some one recognized a comrade among the returned.

James Fletcher stood at the open door, helping out those who were weaker than himself. Two brawny soldiers on the ground below were lifting them down.

"All out? Well, then, jump down!" And two pairs of strong arms were extended to help him.

Then occurred an incident which James Fletcher remembered all his life; nor does greater honor come often to any man. Back in the crowd two men recognized him—his old captain, promoted now, the colonel of another regiment—and the color sergeant, now a captain, whose flag he had rescued and whose life he had saved at Fort Donelson. These two rushed forward, his name on their lips. All unmindful of their new uniforms and of his foul rags, they seized him, an arm around him on either side; and so, amid the cheers of the men in blue and the men in rags, they bore him from the prison train out into the glorious sunshine. Many a man had a warm welcome as he came from the train that day, but no man was so warmly welcomed as James Fletcher.

“I never look for greater honor,” he said years afterward, “nor can so grand a thing happen to me again on earth. But I sometimes hope for something like it in the day of the new heaven and the new earth. I’ve thought that maybe in that day Jesus Christ would cover my rags with his own righteousness, and bear me into the kingdom. Then I shall remember that day again.”

There was delay in sending the prisoners North, but after a few weeks Fletcher was returned to Kentucky, where his own regiment was recruiting at Camp Nelson. There he was glad to meet his old colonel, whom he had seen last as he was bearing him from the battlefield at Richmond.

“How are you, Fletcher?”

The colonel greeted him with a ringing slap upon the shoulder and a warm word in his ear.

"How are you, colonel? How did you come here?"

"I might not have been here but for you. Where have you been?"

"In Tuscaloosa."

"Well, you look better fed than some boarders from that hotel. Your time expired while you were in prison, I suppose you know; but your pay runs on."

"I reckon so. And I'm going to enlist again."

"Of course you are. And in the old regiment."

"I reckoned it would have been recruited up before this time."

"No, we've been hindered. We had to make the regiment over new, and so many men prefer to organize new regiments. But we're getting pretty near our full strength, and shall move soon. We're camping here. We'll take you in, of course."

"Of course you will."

"Look here, Fletcher, did you know I recommended you for promotion?"

"No. I've been where news didn't come very fast."

"Well, it's on record. I'm sorry all the commissioned offices are taken. Having to get so many men, they came in bunches, from abandoned organizations; and with what officers they had elected, and what we had left over, there are more captains and lieutenants than there are places. I hate to see so good a man as you carrying a gun."

"Colonel," said Fletcher, "there is not a man in the army too good to be a private."

"You are right," said the colonel. "I did not quite mean what I said. What I should have said is, that I am sorry not to be able to place so good a

man in a higher position, such as I know you are worthy to fill. Perhaps we can get you a brevet rank, and something will come of it later. At any rate your record is in Washington, and I shall not forget you if anything opens."

"Thank you, colonel, but I am content with matters as they are."

"By the way," said the colonel, "I have been carrying a letter for you for a good while. It came here and followed our regiment to Fort Donelson and Pittsburg Landing, then somehow missed us when we came North after Kirby Smith. Finally, it got back here again when there was talk of recruiting the regiment, and when I came it was given to me. I have kept it for you."

It was a dainty little note, black-bordered, quite unlike any that Fletcher was accustomed to receive. For that matter, he was unaccustomed to much mail. He opened it and read Barbara's invitation to him to visit Lexington.

"Colonel," he said, with flushed cheeks, "I want to get away for a few days."

"Very well. Where do you want to go? Give me your address, for I may want to write you."

"Care of Mr. William Bernaugh, Lexington," said Fletcher.

"Very well. Don't hurry back if you care to stay. I will send you word if the regiment is to move. I'll set that down: 'James Fletcher, care of—' By the way, Fletcher, isn't it 'Rev. James Fletcher'?"

"I am a minister, sir, but I have dropped my title, though I hope not my religion, until after the war."

"Well, that reminds me. When I said the offices

were gone I forgot that of chaplain. Now you know as well as I do that some chaplains are good post-masters and no more; and on the other hand, some of them are true to the core. Fletcher, I'm going to appoint you chaplain, and send for your commission. You are to be the regiment's chaplain, sir, with the rank of captain."

CHAPTER XXXV

AN IDEAL AND A REALITY

JAMES FLETCHER rode as far as Lexington, and then walked out the pike to the Bernaugh home. He had started at once on receiving the message, eager to respond to it; yet as he approached the house he felt a certain reluctance. He was unused to surroundings such as these. Moreover, for what purpose had he come? To take advantage of this girl's grief or her courtesy and to seek to win her heart against her judgment? No, he would not. He had received his answer in good faith; he would abide by it. The Barbara Buzbee of his heart was an ideal against which he had striven to measure his performance of duty. The Barbara Buzbee whom he was about to see was as any other woman to him; and the Barbara Buzbee of his past was dead. So he said to himself. But it is easier dealing with a memory that one counts dead or with an ideal than with a living woman—or at least Fletcher thought so—and he was about to meet Barbara Buzbee of real life. Just how he should act he did not feel sure.

Slowly he walked up the avenue, stepping aside into the blue grass of the lawn to wipe the dust from his boots. His uniform, he was glad to remember,

though only that of a private, was new, replacing the one he had worn out in prison. He would have a chaplain's uniform soon; he almost wished he had waited for it. With beating heart, but with courage screwed up as when charging a battery, he stepped upon the gallery and rang the bell.

"Ge'man step in?" asked the colored girl at the door.

"Is your master at home?" asked Fletcher.

"No, sah; he done gone to Maws' Estill."

"Is your young mistress in?"

"I ain't right sho. I'll go see."

Fletcher sat in the high old parlor whose wall paper was imported with that which President Jackson bought in Paris for the Hermitage. It was all new to him and very strange. He wished he had written before coming. Who knew whether he would be welcome? He was half resolved to leave his regards and go back to Lexington, and then next day back to camp.

A young lady appeared in the door.

"Why, Mr. Fletcher! How do you do?" she asked.

Something familiar in the voice made his heart leap.

"Miss Barbara," said he, "I am very glad to see you."

"Well, Mr. Fletcher! I'd believe anything reasonable against you, but not to know your old friends! I wouldn't have believed that."

"Miss Liberty!" he exclaimed. "How did you come here?"

“Oh, I rode! Have I changed so much, Mr. Fletcher?”

“No; it was my stupidity. That is, you have changed, but it was not that——”

“Now, I don’t think you’re getting out of that very well. I haven’t changed, and I have? No matter. You have changed! How fine you look in your uniform! Stand up, I want to see you! That will do. No, you need not sit so far over there—unless you want to. I’m sorry Miss Barbara is not home. But her grandfather will be home soon, and he will welcome you.”

Then followed an awkward pause. Fletcher was getting his bearings, but Liberty was quite at ease, and Fletcher could not make himself believe that she was not enjoying his disappointment. He was half angry with her, and yet not wholly displeased. At length, and with visible effort, he resumed the conversation:

“Is—is Miss Barbara far away?”

“No; but she will not be home to-night. She is very busy just now. By the way, when did you meet Boyd Estill?”

“I have never met him. I do not know him. Who is he?”

“Miss Barbara’s lover.” She watched him closely as she spoke. It was kinder, she thought, to tell him plainly. Perhaps, also, she had other reasons.

He gave a little start and grew a trifle paler. Then he asked, “Does her lover live in Lexington?”

“Yes; that is, Lexington is his home.”

“I knew that she had a lover,” said Fletcher simply.

“You did?” she asked in surprise.

“Yes,” said he.

“How did you know?”

“She told me so.”

Liberty wondered how Barbara had told what she did not know. In truth it was what she had told, or rather what he thought she had told, that had enabled him to supplant in his heart the image of the real Barbara Buzbee and to cherish the ideal for which he knew no better name.

It was something of a shock to Fletcher, to be sure, but it was also in part a relief to hear of Barbara's lover. He must rename his ideal; he must no longer give it a name that belonged to another man's promised wife. It would take an effort, no doubt, but he could do it, and he would. He had cherished the name, half against his conscience, but with the conscious self-delusion that he might have misunderstood. There was no longer ground for a misunderstanding, and while he sighed, it was in part a sigh of relief. Now his duty was clear.

All these things James Fletcher thought in a half minute. Then he said:

“Miss Barbara's lover is to be congratulated. I have the highest respect for her, and sincerely wish her and her lover joy.”

Liberty watched Fletcher with a close scrutiny which veiled itself in a careless manner. She was enjoying the opportunity of telling this man who had once passed her for another, that he in turn was supplanted. But her manner changed at his last word. She had not the heart to torture a man who met his fate so bravely. And then she remembered Boyd, and her former question how he had come to know Fletcher.

“There is something strange about this,” said Liberty. “Mr. Estill certainly knows you, and has met you somewhere.”

“I am sure I do not remember him. Where have we met?”

“I don’t know. He is a Confederate captain.”

“I hope it was not on the battlefield,” said Fletcher. “I should be sorry to do anything against Miss Barbara’s lover.”

“He has done something to you, whether good or bad I do not know. But it is on his mind, and troubles him, and Barbara too.”

“Where is he?”

“At his father’s home, on the next plantation. You are not bound to capture him if I tell you, are you?”

“Hardly; and perhaps, if capture were in order, he might capture me.”

“No danger of that,” said Liberty sadly. “He is very sick.”

“I am sorry, but I do not remember him. I hope he is not seriously ill?”

“We hope not. But he has delirium, and there is something on his mind. I am not sure but your coming is just what he will need. Here comes Mr. Bernaugh.—O grandpa!” she cried, and the name showed how she had grown into the life of the home. “Come in at once!”

Mr. Bernaugh entered the parlor.

“This is my friend Mr. Fletcher—Barbara’s friend, too.”

“Mr. James Fletcher?” asked Mr. Bernaugh, seizing his hand eagerly.

“Yes, sir.”

“Sit down, Mr. Fletcher. You are very welcome, sir. You are welcome as a friend of my girls here, and welcome for the cause you represent—though many of my friends wear gray, sir, many of them. It is hard lines for us conservative old folks, sir. But you are most of all welcome just now if you can help us with our sick boy. Tell me, sir—you are a man of honor—did Captain Boyd Estill ever harm you or do a dishonorable thing to you?”

“Never, to my knowledge,” said Fletcher.

“What did he do?”

“I do not remember ever meeting him.”

“That is strange. He talks of you constantly.”

“Mr. Fletcher,” asked Liberty, “have you been in prison?”

“Yes—in Tuscaloosa.”

“When did you get out?”

“Two months ago—in April.”

“That was while Boyd was there,” said Mr. Bernaugh with relief.

“Perhaps,” said Fletcher, “it will be as well for you to tell me more about him. How does he talk? He is delirious, and talks of me?”

“Yes, sir. He seems in his delirium to consider you a rival for the affections of Miss Barbara, sir. I am right in supposing him to be wrong in this?”

“Entirely so, sir,” said Fletcher with a frankness that surprised himself.

“Pardon the directness of my question, sir. I have no wish to intrude, but your understand matters are of such a nature that frankness is necessary.”

“I am entirely willing to tell you,” said Fletcher. “I have the highest regard for Miss Barbara. I do

not deny that at one time I cherished a hope that she would regard me favorably, but we are simply friends, and have been so for nearly two years. If—if I have ever hoped that she would change toward me, the hope has been my own. She has never encouraged it, and I am still and only her friend, with best wishes for her lover.”

“I am glad to hear you say so, sir,” said Mr. Bernaugh. Fletcher was surprised to find himself glad also, and for some reason he was conscious all the while that he was the more glad to have Liberty hear him.

“Mr. Estill,” said Mr. Bernaugh, “is a lifelong friend of our family, as his parents and grandparents have been before him. He and Barbara have been friends and lovers from childhood. You will understand me when I say that, while I have learned through an experience that has cost me years of sorrow not to interfere with other people’s love affairs, it would be a bitter disappointment if through death or disagreement any change came about in this matter. I make this explanation as a partial apology for questioning you on the threshold of my home.”

“I understand you, sir,” said Fletcher.

“But you will understand that my reason, after all, for so discourteous a proceeding is my anxiety for this young man’s life—and honor, sir.”

“Do not apologize, sir,” said Fletcher. “Ask me anything; or better—since as yet I have no clew to the situation—tell me how Mr. Estill talks of me.”

“He was guard officer at the prison in April,” said Liberty, “and I think he must have been in doubt whether to send up your name for exchange or not.

He was much run down after a hard campaign, and on the verge of this terrible fever, and I think he had a struggle over your name. Did you know nothing of it?"

"Nothing," said Fletcher, "but I begin to understand."

"A very hard feature of it, sir, both for his father and for me," said Bernaugh, "is that sometimes he believes himself to have left you there, a victim of his jealousy. Of course we did not know the facts——"

"But we knew he was the soul of honor," said Liberty.

"Yes, sir, we knew it," said Mr. Bernaugh, reaching for his handkerchief, "but when we heard him reproaching himself and suffering remorse—anything that touches the honor of my family, sir—any——" The old man sobbed.

"Let me hasten to confirm your assurance of his honor," said Fletcher. "What you say convinces me that I am indebted to him for my freedom. If he did this believing that I was his rival, he has shown himself a man of the purest honor."

"Come!" said Mr. Bernaugh. "We must go over!—Liberty! Call the carriage. Where are all those lazy niggers?—Here you, Bill! You have the carriage here in half a minute, you no 'count nigger, or I'll wear you out!—Come, sir!—Come, Liberty! We must go over!"

The carriage was at the door, and Fletcher and Mr. Bernaugh were seated within.

"To Mr. Estill's!" shouted Bernaugh; "and if you let the horses stop to graze along the pike, I'll——" But the driver understood the spirit of his

order, and the horses were already tearing down the avenue.

What had he done? Fletcher asked himself as the carriage whirled along the pike. He had renounced Barbara sight unseen. He had come here hoping to marry Barbara—yes, he might as well admit it now. That little note had stirred his heart to its depths. He had come denying it to himself all the way, but hoping against his own acknowledgment to himself that Barbara had relented. And now, on the very threshold, and before he had seen her face, he had disclaimed her, and conceded the right of a rival. Yet he felt strangely at peace with himself, and wishing, in a wholly unaccountable way, that Liberty had driven over with them.

“You’re a godsend, sir, a special providence,” said Mr. Bernaugh, who had been talking all the way. “You are the very man to save Boyd’s life, and restore happiness to our two homes. No man can imagine the agony, yes, sir, the agony, in which I have lived.—Bill, you black rascal, if you don’t keep those horses moving!—Why, sir, I knew that Boyd Estill would never do a mean thing, but to hear him confess it, sir, to hear him confess it in his delirium—good Lord! It was agony, sir, it was agony! If any other man had said it, I’d have challenged him at six paces, sir, old as I am! But to hear him say it, and to be unable to disprove it—! My family, sir, has an honorable record far back into Old V’giny, and the same of Mr. Estill’s! It runs in the blood! Hot-headed and high strung—yes, sir; I know our faults! But honor, sir, honor! And anything that touches the honor of my family—! God bless you, sir!

You've saved his life, I know, and the happiness of all of us!"

This was confusing to Fletcher in a way, but one thing he saw as clearly as he ever saw it through the battle smoke—his present duty. He might regret afterward that he had spoken so quickly, so irrevocably. He might see that he had done wrong not to make more clear the intensity of his love for Barbara. He might long afterward for her whom he had so readily given over to another, but to-day, and now, he had but one duty, and that was to stand squarely by what he had done, and by all honorable means strive for the happiness of Barbara and Boyd.

"God help me," said the old man, when the carriage stopped, "I'm all unnerved! I can't go in now!"

"Leave it to me," said Fletcher calmly. "Wait for me here in the porch."

"Yes, yes! You go in!—Here, you young nigger—you, what's your name?—you show Maw'sr Fletcher up to Maw'sr Boyd's room!"

Barbara sat, pale but calm, beside the bed of Boyd Estill. The sick man, roused from a troubled sleep, gave a moan, and muttered in his delirium:

"It's an awful place, that prison! He's starving there! He's dead by this time! No, he isn't! He's out! I let him out! I wrote his name on the exchange list! I can see it now, JAMES FLETCHER! And he'll marry Barbara! No, he shall not! I'll see him die there first! Who's going to know it, anyhow?"

And so, as for days past, he fought over again the battle he had so bravely won in his night struggle.

The door opened, and James Fletcher entered. Barbara started. Boyd shrieked.

"There he is!" he cried. "I killed him!"

Fletcher passed straight past Barbara and went to the bedside. Experience in sickness such as this made him master of the situation.

"Be still, Boyd," he said calmly. "You did not kill me. You saved my life."

"I know you! I know you!" cried Boyd. "I saw you march to the train! You've come to marry Barbara!"

"You are mistaken again," said Fletcher. "I've come to marry you to Barbara. I'm a preacher, you know, a chaplain. You let me out, and they have promoted me. But you are too tired to-night. You must rest now."

Barbara started and looked up at Fletcher, and then down at Boyd. She turned pale and then flushed, and then she wondered if she was in a dream. Where had he come from? How did he know? What had changed him? She could not answer, but her eyes met those of Fletcher, and she saw in them assurance and strength of purpose. She trusted him and accepted her own part.

"You're a spirit!" cried Boyd. "You're the man I murdered!"

"I'm the man you saved," said Fletcher calmly; "and I'm here to marry you to Barbara. Rest now, for we shall have a fine wedding, and you are tired."

The sick man argued it over and over, but with diminishing vigor. Fletcher's calmness reassured him at length.

"Is this true, Barbara?" he asked.

“Yes,” said Barbara. “It is true. And you must rest now, and get ready for the wedding.”

All that night Barbara and Fletcher watched beside him. A score of times they told him the same story. As often they denied that Boyd had killed his rival. As morning drew near, Boyd fell sound asleep, and Fletcher motioned Barbara to the couch in the corner, where she lay down; and James Fletcher alone watched the night die out and the dawn come in. When Boyd awoke after a rest of four hours he was in his right mind.

“Then it was not a dream,” said he. “Thank God!”

“No,” said Fletcher, “it is all true. Drink this beef tea now, and go to sleep again; for before I go back to camp I must marry you to Barbara.”

They were anxious days that followed, and the delirium returned often, but Fletcher’s presence and Barbara’s assurance came to have a charm that quieted even his wildest ravings; and when, after a week of constant watching, the fever abated, the pale, weak man clasped Fletcher’s strong hand in his own thin white one and said:

“Thank you, chaplain. I reckon you’ve pulled me through.”

Fletcher held the sick man’s hand in his own firm grasp and looked Boyd in the face. “Yes,” said he, “you will recover, and I shall marry you to Barbara. And you are worthy of her, Boyd! God bless you!”

He took Barbara’s hand and stood for a moment holding a hand of each. Then he placed their hands in each other’s.

Barbara stooped and kissed Boyd’s white forehead.

Boyd raised his weak arm, and drew her face down upon his own. They forgot Fletcher, and when they looked up he had gone. They were sitting hand in hand, Boyd half propped with pillows and Barbara close beside him when Liberty entered.

"Don't go, Liberty," called Barbara, as she started back; "you are not intruding."

"I don't reckon you need me," said Liberty. "You all look right happy by yourselves."

"We are so happy, so happy!" said Barbara.

"What about Mr. Jim Fletcher?" asked Liberty, a little maliciously.

"He's a hero!" said Boyd. "He's saved my life."

"I reckon he has," said Liberty quietly.

"It is just like him," said Barbara, "and we are so happy!"

"So I see," said Liberty, "and now what's going to become of the preacher?"

"Is he in any danger?" asked Boyd.

"Oh, I reckon not. Only I was thinking you all are so happy you don't seem to consider how hard it's been for him."

"I have not forgotten it," said Boyd.

"Liberty," said Barbara, "I have an idea that the preacher will not suffer."

"What do you mean?" asked Liberty, flushing.

"Oh, nothing," laughed Barbara.

"I don't see the joke," said Boyd.

"There is no joke," said Liberty. "You ought to be ashamed, Barbara. He's broken his heart for you, and you all are too happy all by yourselves to appreciate it."

Boyd looked troubled. Liberty sat grave and flushed. Barbara hesitated for a moment, and then, breaking into a laugh, danced over to Liberty, and seizing her hands, half forced her from her seat as she tripped around humming :

“ I'll get another one, skip-t'-m'-loo,
I'll get another one, skip-t'-m'-loo,
I'll get another one, prettier, too,
Skip-t'-m'-loo, my darling ! ”

But Liberty broke from her and ran from the room.

There were weeks of careful nursing still in store for Boyd, and Liberty shared with Barbara the fatigues of those days and nights.

Fletcher was constantly at hand, and the relation between him and Boyd grew to be a very warm one. As Boyd grew better and needed less constant care, he and Barbara were left more together ; and then Fletcher would gladly have been more with Liberty. He did not admit that he loved her ; he loved an ideal only, and that had lost its name ; but Liberty had certainly developed into a very attractive young woman, and Fletcher rather longed for her society. But Liberty rather avoided him, and, except for the care of Boyd, they saw less of each other than he could have thought possible. The two old men were always at hand, too, and what with their desire to show Fletcher the farms, and to have him try the best saddle horses for the sake of the fresh air, and his own occasional errands to Lexington for news of the war, Liberty might almost as well have been at No Bus'ness.

All this time the movements of armies went on. Grant was sawing the Confederacy in twain along the Mississippi's length, and was tightening his grip on

Vicksburg, and Lee was crossing Mason and Dixon's line and invading Pennsylvania.

June passed away and July came in, and day by day the patient improved. And as his strength grew they planned together for the wedding, which all agreed must occur before Fletcher went back. As his leave was uncertain, the two old men went to Lexington one Saturday in the beginning of July and obtained a marriage license, to be kept till Boyd was stronger if possible, but to be used on any day when Fletcher found that he must go.

The next day Fletcher walked with Liberty in the orchard toward the pike. It was a hot day, and the shade was attractive, and they strolled among the trees testing the first ripe harvest sweets and the Carolina Junes. It was Fletcher's first real visit with Liberty, and he had no mind to shorten it.

"You look very fine in that chaplain's coat," said Liberty.

"And you in that lovely white dress and sunbonnet," said he.

"Oh, thank you!" she said demurely. "A chaplain should not flatter."

"I mean it," said he.

"Do you really like it?" she asked, standing off a little and making a courtesy.

"Yes; both the dress and you."

"Oh, shame on you for talking to me so! And Sunday, too."

"Is that a wrong thing to say on Sunday?"

"Not if— You didn't know me the day you came, did you? I don't think you were so very glad to see me."

James Fletcher looked at her. The ideal was still in his heart, but an ideal picture is sometimes of the decalcomania sort, and capable of transfer. He looked again at the pretty, coquettish, plucky little woman, and wondered, as during the past weeks he had wondered a thousand times, how he had ever preached at the face under her white sunbonnet and had not seen her beauty as he now saw it. Often of late he had thought of renaming his ideal, but had stopped when he remembered that Liberty with her gayety and coquettish ways was perhaps unsuited to be the wife of a minister, or again when he had doubted whether in her fine clothes and new surroundings she would listen to him. But he looked at her to-day, straight through the picture of the ideal, and lo! like a dissolving view it took new features, and when he sought for the name, it was already named.

“Are you preparing a sermon?” she asked in answer to his stare.

“It is prepared,” said he. “I am about to preach it.”

“It is Sunday; that’s a fact. I hope the sermon is not long? Where shall I sit? I mustn’t get grass stains on my new white mull dress!”

“Stand, then, if you prefer.”

“Very well. Begin. Is your introduction like Preacher Taulbee’s, ‘My dear beloved fr——’”

“Yes, that is it.”

“‘—iends and neighbors and neighbors’ children and dying congregation,’” continued Liberty, imitating the tone of Mr. Taulbee.

“You saucy girl!” said he. “I’m tempted to box your ears.”

"You can't!" said she. "I'll pull my sunbonnet over them, so."

There is a point beyond which it is not safe to tease a man. The white sunbonnet is by nature the most tempting bit of headgear that woman can devise; to pass it in all its crisp, white loveliness and not peep within is at any time an exercise fit for the penance of an anchorite; to see it with a face like Liberty's peeping out, so maliciously tempting, so defiantly inviting, was too much for James Fletcher. A moment he looked, and then he had her in his arms and was kissing her under the sunbonnet with the most reckless disregard of its starched frills.

A full minute he held her so, and then looking down, his eyes met hers under the sunbonnet.

"This isn't very proper for a preacher," said she.

"I will begin my sermon," said he. "'My dearly beloved——'"

"I thought you loved Barbara," she added maliciously.

"I thought so, too," said he.

"Are you sure, very sure, you don't love her still?" she asked.

"I am sure that I love you, truly, and with all my heart," said he. "Do you love me, Liberty?"

"You're crushing my dress," said she, "and my bonnet is all out of shape."

He released her, and then deliberately kissed her again.

"I like the bonnet better so," said he. "I love you, Liberty."

"I love you, too," she answered, "and the bonnet will wash."

For half an hour they wandered in the orchard, making more real the joy that had come to them both. A little cloud of dust far down the limestone pike drew their attention. Out of it emerged a horseman in the uniform of a Union orderly.

“Let us go to the fence, and meet him,” said Fletcher. “He must bring news.”

The orderly drew up at the fence, his horse wet and dusty, and saluting, asked, “Is this Chaplain Fletcher?”

“It is,” said Fletcher. “Have you orders for me?”

“Yes, sir. The regiment is to march on Tuesday. There’s important news, sir.”

“Tell us quickly,” said Fletcher.

“General Lee has been defeated at Gettysburg, sir; and General Pemberton has surrendered Vicksburg to General Grant! Good day, sir!”

“Good day.”

They stood watching him as his horse sped away back along the pike toward Lexington.

“This settles the question of the war, thank God!” said Fletcher. “It may end soon or late, but this day decides it, and the Union is saved.”

“We must go to the house and tell them,” said Liberty.

“We have several things to tell them,” said Fletcher. “Come, let us go.”

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