WEBS OF WAR

IN WHITE AND BLACK

ANNIE E. WILSON

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By

ANNIE E. WILSON

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To

Those who know where truth ends and fiction begins.

PREFACE

The author does not claim invariable "fidelity to truth" in the following pages. On the contrary, would prefer that the book be received as fiction, with only such an admixture of fact as the memories and observations of any life will supply.

Happening to teach within a mile or two of the battlefield of Sayler's Creek, or Sailor's Creek, as it is generally known, while the events of those stirring times were still freshly and vividly remembered it was easy to imbibe the spirit and atmosphere of the place and period. Many incidents came to hand ready made, others—well, the novelist has the privilege, I believe, of supplying from the realms of fancy whatever seems desirable to make a good story.

The battle, one of the fiercest as well as one of the last of the Civil War, the passing of the two armies in rapid succession through that section of Virginia, and the demoralizing state of lawlessness, poverty and depression consequent on the close of the war are still ineradicable memories to many, and in using them for the background of my story, those who have lived in the county through it all think my portrayal of the condition of things not very greatly exaggerated.

At any rate, my labor shall not have been in vain if any reader shall be led thereby to appreciate more fully the dire perils through which the South, both white and black, passed during that transitional period, and to realize with some kindly indulgence that the deplorable harvest of crime which has of late

years swept over the country is but the natural, inevitable outgrowth of that upheaval of social conditions, and, to wait with more patient forbearance for time's readjustments. As we all know, there are always emissaries of evil ready at hand to use for their own profit those who from any cause have their weak side suddenly left unprotected. This was the case with the Southern negro. And the Southern whites who lived through those times declare that it is only a miracle of gracious Providence any of the Saxon race are left to tell the tale.

THE AUTHOR.

Webs of War

CHAPTER I.

SUNBONNETS.

Whatever March may have borrowed from April the latter had nothing lacking of its own for its first day in the year 1865.

It was as balmy as spring sunshine could make it, and the wheat fields shimmered in smiling green. An almost Sabbath stillness brooded over the fair, rolling hillsides and the fertile low grounds along the Appomattox River and Sayler's Creek.

Already trees and shrubs were robing themselves in matchless tender shades, and daffodils and jonquils were springing into sight everywhere.

Robins and blue birds, wrens and sparrows and, queen of them all, the mocking bird, were the busiest of householders choosing sites for their new homes. In short, Nature was like a little child who having taken a refreshing nap in its mother's arms is awakening to the lively consciousness of its responsibility to help make the world a happy place to live in.

The cows browsed in the meadow with soft tinkle of bell and the wise-eyed shepherd dog lay basking in the sun, blinking his eyes watchfully in the direction of his sheep. Half a dozen hens and their tribal chief had their heads together down by the barn discussing in subdued voices some subject of vast im-

port in the gallinaceous kingdom, while a pair of wily guineas were seizing their opportunity to sneak off in search of a new hiding place in the blackberry thicket, as their nest had been pryed upon and mulcted of its treasures the day before.

A lot of fluffy yellow balls peep-peeped drowsily in the yard around their imprisoned mother while a hawk watched them greedily from the large elm tree.

The negroes plowing for corn on the eastern slopes seemed to feel something of the hush of nature for, instead of the usual brawling good natured words of abuse to their lazy mules they used for whip and spur only snatches of weird religious melodies in response to which the mules jogged patiently on as if thereby reminded of the coming Sabbath rest.

Into this brooding silence a shrill, human sound broke, cutting the ear like a sacrilege until one knew its source.

A party of girls had dashed aside their books, broken loose from the house and were racing down the hill—hair and sunbonnets windward. Every now and then they would pause and repeat their call made by a strong expulsion of air across the vocal chords accompanied by the rapid flapping of the hand on the lips.

Throwing their heads back they sent the sound far up the opposite hill and, listening, they soon heard the answering signal and another sunbonnet was seen to emerge from the pines and run down the footpath to meet them at their common trysting place—the old ruined mill on *Sayler's Creek.

*The name of the creek had naturally been spelled "Sailor's" until recently in pulling down the old mill the name of the original owner was discovered cut into one of the timbers and it was "J. R. Sayler," from which, no doubt, the name of the creek came.

"You've got a new bonnet!" was the first exclamation.

"And it isn't homespun, either!"

"No, Cousin Robert runs the blockade, you know, and he sent twelve yards of French calico to mother to make a dress apiece for Mame and me. In cutting them out mother managed to save enough for my bonnet."

The material was beautifully soft and fine and the color so delicate the girls looked at it enviously. Theirs were prettily checked with narrow stripes of white and black, but they were heavy and coarse in comparison for they were woven in the plantation loom from the cotton brought in bales from the cotton belt and used for clothing for the negroes, shirts for the soldiers and dresses as well for the daintiest ladies of the land. The envy of the girls, however, was not of long duration. It was a pleasure to see pretty things even on somebody else.

"When did you see Mr. Monnot?" Abby asked, suddenly becoming aware that Pansy was unusually quiet and that Miss Phenie and Hazel had strayed off down the creek leaving the two of them alone.

A slight flush stole into the soft, dark cheeks at the question. Whereupon Abby caught them between her two hands and forcing the dark eyes to look up into hers said:

"Tell me, Pansy, tell me quick, what has happened?"

But Pansy only laughed with a happy shyness.

Abby put the new sunbonnet on her again and peeped up into it out of her own.

"He says this is the way he fell in love with you, the first time he was detailed to go out for buttermilk. He says, "those shy, bright eyes peeping at

him out of a long sunbonnet fairly took his breath and he fell in love on the spot."

"Did he say that to you? He told me so, too."

"When? Last night? Pansy, you've simply got to tell me. Did he up and down ask you to marry him?" There was a note of real anxiety in the laughing voice.

The color came slowly back into the velvet of Pansy's cheeks as she replied:

"He told me he loved me—as he had never loved any one else—though he could not ask me to marry him now and share the uncertainties of a soldier's life—but, when the war is over——"

There was a distinct note of impatience in Abby's "O pshaw! suppose the war lasts forever!"

"He says," continued Pansy, unheeding, "that the rumors from Richmond and Petersburg look as if things were coming to a crisis down there and we may hear——"

"When we was gals together you used to tell me all your secrets and now you are shutting me out entirely with these pretty new sunbonnets!"

The scamp, Ide Carrington, had plumped himself down unceremoniously between the two girls and, catching an edge of each bonnet, drew them together so as to cover his own head as well as theirs, then, looking from one to the other with the side-wise mischievous glance of a squirrel—

"Now!" he whispered insinuatingly, "nobody can see, tell me all about it?"

But he only got a pinch on each freckled cheek for his impudence, and the girls jerking away from him ran off in the direction of the foot-bridge.

CHAPTER II.

NEWS FROM RICHMOND.

"Elmwood," the home of the Woodsons, was one of the most attractive in that corner of Prince Edward County. Mr. Woodson was a self-made man, having had very little help from the outside in the shaping of his mind and character, and none whatever in amassing his fortune. At seventeen his father, who was a very arbitrary man, had offered him a college education culminating in law, with the alternative of an independent choice and no further help of any kind from him.

Now, although education was the lad's highest ambition, he felt rather a disinclination for the study of law. At any rate, he did not care to hamper his liberty of choice at that age. Hence, he chose independence and nothing, accepting at once a clerkship in a small country store.

Perhaps he did not realize that his father's ultimatum was to be so literally carried out. When convinced of this fact by several hard experiences, he saved his earnings for two years and went to New Orleans, landing in the city with ten dollars in his pocket. By the time he was thirty or less he owned a small, well stocked cotton plantation in Mississippi. About the time he had attained this measure of reward for toil and pluck, his father died and his stepmother would have nobody to settle up the estate but "Tom."

He returned to Virginia for that purpose. as he

supposed, temporarily. As is usually the case, he found himself entangled in law business, and necessitated to sell his Southern property at a sacrifice and remain where he was. He bought, in course of time, the portion of the farm which should have been his by right, and might have been if he had not been too sturdily independent to claim it, and lived at the "old place" to care for his mother, while working both farms.

When he married he built, and carried his mother home with him. But it took longer to accumulate under the circumstances, and it was some years before he felt justified in furnishing his new house as he desired to have it, and this was not long before the war. In fact, it was never quite completed. The roll of oilcloth bought to cover the two wide, airy halls above and below unfortunately did not get tacked down before the first gun was fired at Fort Sumpter. Consequently, it remained rolled up as it had come from the depot until the war was over.

"It will not do to be decorating one's own house at such a time," Mr. Woodson would say, when any one ventured to suggest putting it to the use for which intended.

Mr. Woodson was thoroughly loyal to his state and the South, but he had opposed secession and war with all the influence he possessed. And when, for Virginia, it became inevitable, he predicted how it would terminate. In consequence of this conviction, an increasing despondency had taken possession of him.

On the evening of the first of April, '65, the girls had freshened themselves up after their adventures at the mill and were having a gay old time with Ide Carrington, who had stayed to supper.

At that time Ide was a most irrepressible youth

whom nothing could sober for any length of time. And, as he was the only young person in his own family, he greatly enjoyed being made at home in the lively crowd at Elmwood.

At the moment, his own homely face was sober enough, but Miss Phenie and the girls to whom he was chatting were continually breaking out into merriest laughter.

It was hard to see how any one could find objection to it, yet to Mrs. Woodson it was quite evident it was grating harshly on her husband's nerves. The young people had gone out on the veranda for a drink of water, and, bewitched by the moonlight, had remained.

Every habitué of Elmwood knew that a bucket of water was never missing from its place on the table at the sitting room door, though it always seemed to have been just freshly filled from the spring. And that end of the veranda was the most popular spot about the house throughout the summer.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson sat within, he chewing his cud of gloomy thoughts and bemoaning the incomprehensible levity of the young people, forgetting what a veritable imp of mischief he himself had been before the strenuous hardships of independent manhood came upon him; she knitting interminable stockings of the war times cotton for the clothing of her household. The busy fingers did not hinder the alert glance and ready smile which went out to the merry sounds on the porch, yet invariably came back with anxious questioning to her husband's face. She knew how he felt. Still, she could not bear to see the brightness of her children's youth o'ershadowed by their father's morbid premonitions.

"They will never be young but once, and it is hard

on them at best never to know anything in all their girlhood save the privations of war times," she would often say to him privately.

Sometimes she could get him to realize this. But this evening she was just heaving a deep sigh over the necessity for checking their innocent mirth when a diversion occurred in the sound of approaching horses, and three soldiers dismounted at the gate.

A battalion of Louisiana artillery had been for some time stationed as guard at "High Bridge," and many of them had become frequent and welcome visitors at Mr. Woodson's.

Having responded to the cordial greeting of the old people, Mr. Breau immediately followed the sound of happy voices out to the veranda, while the other two sat down within to tell the latest news from the front.

It was brief enough—a single item, but the fact that the Confederate line had been broken at Petersburg carried consternation to every heart. When they had told how the news had come as a voucher for its reliability, Mr. Woodson exclaimed:

"It means the immediate evacuation of Richmond and Petersburg?"

"I'm afraid it does."

"Then what?"

The young men shook their heads as cheerily as they could, murmuring, "Only General Lee knows!"

Mr. Woodson got up abruptly and went out. For a long time his measured footsteps could be heard on the back porch.

"I have no doubt 'Marse Bob' will pull us through all right some way," Sergeant Demesmé announced convincingly.

"I hope so indeed!" ejaculated Mrs. Woodson,

listening the while with a sigh to her husband's moody footfalls.

Her knitting needles went in and out as usual, only with a little nervous catch and now and then a dropped stitch over which she would bend with unwonted attention.

Lieut. Molère had followed Mr. Breau, and soon they all came in together, the girls and Ide sobered by the news.

Sergeant Demesmé watched the pairing off with a sly gleam of humor. If there was anything beyond, nobody suspected.

"That's right!" he said emphatically, shining his eyes at the girls. "Don't you try two strings to your bow. You stick to one, den he stick to you. I know," winking his eyes wisely. "Here, lem-me try your fortune?" He got a sprig of arbor vitae from the bush near the door, and looking significantly at Miss Phenie and Mr. Breau, began, touching each spray of the evergreen with his plump forefinger:

"He lorve—he lorve much—he lorve leetle—he lorve not t'all; he love—he lorve much—he lorve leetle, Ah, for shame, Sabin! one string no hold anybody lest it be good and strong."

As the Sergeant began again, with his eye on the other two, Mr. Breau turned to Miss Phenie with a protesting wistfulness in his own brown orbs, and to hide a possible flush she went to the piano and began to sing:

"I've left Balmoniac a long ways behind me,
To better my fortune I've crossed the big sea;
I'm sadly alone,—not a creetur to mind me,
And faith I am wretched as wretched can be."

Lieut. Molère's fortune had come out "Lorve much," apparently to the infinite satisfaction of the

oracle. Neither did the handsome black eyes of the young soldier deny the soft impeachment, though he gave joke for joke and not a word escaped him that any one might not hear.

At the supper table there was further discussion of pending events. The battalion had orders to be ready to move on fifteen minutes' notice with three days' rations.

"So this may be our last civilized meal for a long time," the Sergeant said, dropping his voice with a tinge of melancholy as if to enlist the sympathy of his left hand neighbor.

CHAPTER III.

LOVERS AND GOODBYES.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson had been summoned from the supper table to see "old Meg," who was down with a case of colic, leaving Miss Phenie to play chaperone in a mild way. Mr. Breau was more than content to hold the fort with her in the sitting room, though he confessed to being somewhat depressed by her invulnerable lightheartedness.

"Do not you feel one least bit me-lán-choly to see all of us—your friends—go to the front and be killed?" he asked with a pathetic droop of his handsome young head.

"I might if I knew," she replied, her winsome brightness still unclouded, "but you may not go, and if you go you may not be killed. I must hope for the best."

An eager hope leaped into the brown eyes.

"But—if I should——?"

"I hope you will all make the best of your times—for there may be not many left!" interjected Sergeant Demesmé, passing through from the porch and turning his head conspicuously the other way.

Lieut. Molière had lured Abby out into the yard, where the misty moonlight enfolded them in a white radiance. The fine black eyes were deeper, more impenetrable than usual. Yet there was a something there that is rarely misinterpreted by a woman.

"When I come back—when the war is over——"

Abby turned abruptly away from the soft gleam of the black eyes and exclaimed almost petulantly:

"I wonder how many soldiers are saying those same words into the ears of soft, foolish girls tonight!"

He turned on his heel with a hurt little laugh. "You need not fear any one will ever call you soft, Miss Abby. You are the most indifferent, I had almost said heartless, young lady I have ever met."

"Oh, Lieutenant!"

Abby was all contrition in a moment. For she really liked him. The truth is, the expression he had used recalled Pansy and Mr. Monnot, and she was intensely anxious over that affair.

There was so much joking over "soldiers' sweethearts." Her own mother had cast a passing slur on their seriousness. While the afternoon's conversation had convinced Abby that however it might be with Mr. Monnot, Pansy was thoroughly in earnest.

"Oh, Lieutenant, you do not mean what you say. Neither did I—the way you took it. I cannot tell you the thought which caused me to say it so—disagreeably—but, I am sure you will agree that if my friendship is hard to win, it is worth all the more when won."

"Yes, I do believe it," he replied, recovering his accustomed ease of manner, but he did not again revert to any after-the-war plans he might be cherishing.

"Making the best of your times, eh? that's right. There may not be many left," repeated Sergeant Demesmé, coming out from the house. "An old bachelor like myself can afford to find his fun in other people's woes so long as he keeps clear of them himself."

As Abby looked toward the smiling, teasing soldier, something in her face struck the lieutenant unpleasantly, and seeing his comrade had paused as waiting

for them, the two involuntarily bent their steps toward him.

"Gouthreau has just come with orders for all to be in camp not later than nine-thirty—may have to move any moment."

At the low spoken words the lieutenant became at once the acting officer, and with alert, military steps strode into the house to look after his little squad, leaving Abby with Sergeant Demesmé.

"Do you know something? I believe fortune telling come true," nodding significantly toward their mutual friend, just disappearing into the house.

"That's where you are mistaken," Abby blushed, making no pretence of not understanding.

"No?" bending his tall form to peer into her face.

"Molère all right, I answer for him, and you?—Lem-me try your fortune for him?" He pulled a twig from the bush near which they stood.

"She lorve—she lorve much"—watching keenly every chance expression of her face—"she lorve leetle—she lorve not at all—she lorve—she lorve much—she lorve little?" with his finger on the last little green point he shook his head reproachfully.

"Ah, woman is cruel—cruel when he lorve so much!"

Abby tossed her head with a futile effort to escape the searching raillery of his eyes and murmured:

"You don't know what you are talking about, Sergeant Demesmé."

"Don't I then?—too bad. But this tell the truth sure." Reaching for another sprig—"Come, then, let me tell *my* fortune for *you*. He lorve— *you*, he lorve you *much*—there, I can go no farther,—it is too true for joking."

Abby looked up at her companion wondering. He had said it all so solemnly, yet his face was still a-

twinkle with its usual kindly mischief, though, underneath all, somewhere in his tone or manner, she was reminded of a description he himself had once given her of the beginning of a crevasse in his "own country."

But the minutes were indeed numbered for thoughts like these.

A single flash of unutterable yearning illumined the genial face in answer to her questioning look, and then the goodbyes overtook them. And, somehow, the warm clasp of his hand made her forget the light, jocular words of his adieux.

"Remember me when you pray!" Mr. Breau was whispering to Miss Phenie, an infinite pleading in the handsome young face. And Lieut. Molère's black eyes were full of possibilities.

Thus they were soon all riding off in the moonlight.

CHAPTER IV.

EXPECTANCY.

Monday morning by break of day the atmosphere was fairly teeming with electrical possibilities, rife with the wildest rumors of what had taken place—was taking place or might take place any moment in the direction of Richmond and Petersburg. Before the day was many hours old this much became certain: The line was broken at Petersburg; the position of the Confederate army being no longer tenable the two cities had of necessity been given up to the mercy of the enemy; the army was moving slowly, cautiously westward.

As a wary little mouse escaped for a moment from the paw of its tormentor creeps away under the cat's very eye, yet with so slow, timorous apparently hopeless a motion as to disarm vigilance until it can reach some place of safety or concealment, so General Lee's little handful of fearfully fagged soldiers marched almost within touch of General Grant's magnificently equipped army of not less than 90,000 with exhaustless resources behind them.

And yet there were very few, either in the army or at home, who had any doubt of the final escape and success of Lee's army. Here and there one like Mr. Woodson was filled with Cassandra like forebodings and all knew that this retreat even if finally successful meant hardships untold for the Confederates.

Besides, these soldiers of the Southern Confeder-

acy were not merely soldiers—patriots—the bulwark of the country,—they were also fathers, sons, brothers and lovers.

Mrs. Woodson never sat down to grieve and dread while there was anything left to do for the comfort or well being of others.

The smoke house was still pretty well stocked with hams, and part of a quarter of fresh beef hung in the cellar. Two of the largest hams were set to boil and an immense roast of beef in the oven. For, "High-bridge," Farmville and Elmwood would, in all probability, lie in the pathway of the army, and the soldiers would doubtless be glad of something to eat without having to cook it.

Moreover, if one army were coming their way the other would be sure to follow, and, if the year's provisions had to go it should preferably fall into the hands of friends rather than foes.

Mrs. Woodson had time to cook the remainder of the beef, two more hams and a goodly quantity of bread before the armies got there.

About noon on Tuesday, Lucy and Eddie came running in with the excited cry: "The soldiers are coming!"

Sure enough, there was a squad of gray coats dismounting at the door.

In those days everything was startling. And when these soldiers proved to be strangers,—not their Louisiana friends, there was an instant feeling of the nearer approach of the dread anticipations which had been hanging over them since Sunday.

The soldiers themselves, however, appeared to be in the highest spirits.

"We'll whip them yet!" they reiterated in reckless bravado.

Their gayety was almost too much even for the

young people. Mr. Woodson could not forbear telling them he considered it misplaced in the present condition of affairs.

They looked a little surprised, but accepted the rebuff with tolerable good nature only replying that if he had been in camp as long as they had he would find out soldiers were obliged to keep up their spirits to be able to endure the hardships of such a life.

"If you *can*,—I suppose it is very well," Mr. Woodson conceded, still a trifle ungraciously, and, eyeing them keenly asked what state they were from.

"South Carolina," was the prompt reply. Yet, with a feeling of having lost caste with the old gentleman, they rather kept out of his way for the remainder of their stay and tried to cultivate Mrs. Woodson and the young ladies, hoping they would prove less critical. The men evidently enjoyed their dinner immensely. Before leaving the leader of the squad drew Mrs. Woodson aside in a confidential way and said:

"I guess it's no secret to you that the troops will be coming through this part of the country pretty soon, now, and soldiers are said to have a weakness for silver and jewelry."

He laughed as if he thought it rather a good joke.

"Of course you are going to hide everything of the sort before the armies get here—or more than likely have already done so?" He glanced significantly around the dining room where they happened to be, as much as to say he had noticed there was not much in sight.

"No," replied Mrs. Woodson, indifferently, "we have been too greatly concerned over the affairs of the country to give much thought to our own. We

have not a great deal of silver, but what we have is still where it is usually kept."

He drew a little closer and spoke as earnestly as if it had been matter of vital interest to himself.

"I must seriously urge you to attend to that matter at once. Burying is conceded to be the safest plan and I noticed a splendid place as I rode along this morning." He then described and indicated with his finger a clump of young pines near the lime kiln. "If I had anything to hide, I should certainly put it there. Being a little off the roads the troops may not notice it at all. And, being of limited size the deposits will be the more readily recovered afterwards."

As he waxed eloquent on the advantages of his suggestion, Mrs. Woodson gazed at him sharply, curiously, but made no further response. Hence the man no doubt imagined he had duly impressed her with his wisdom and his personal interest in her affairs.

"I strongly suspect their loyalty to the Confederate Government is only coat deep," muttered Mr. Woodson with his most severe expression as he watched the party galloping so light-heartedly up the road and through the big gate into the woods.

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Woodson sighing as she turned back into the house, "among the thousands it could only be expected that some should be not quite of the right stripe—but, I'm glad we haven't come across any like that before."

Something about them had ruffled her feathers as well as those of her husband.

As the day passed without further invasions they put them down as deserters or stragglers and so not to be accounted for like genuine soldiers,—mayhap, who could tell,—actually Yankee spies. They

could not talk them over with their Louisiana friends for the reason that since Saturday they had seen nothing whatever of them. Ide Carrington reported the Battery had been removed to Farmville with the exception of a bare guard for the Bridge, which did not include any of their special acquaintances, and if it had they could not have left their post.

Nothing else broke the monotony of the long day of waiting and dull expectancy.

As Abby was getting a drink of water before going to bed she heard subdued, mysterious voices below at the kitchen door.

She tiptoed to a position directly over the speakers and made out that some one was in secret confab with Aunt Suky, the cook. Moreover, she could not fail to recognize the harsh, rasping twang of a voice heard not many hours before. Yet not one word could she catch from either side. Her mother happening to appear at a near window, she beckoned for her to join her. Mrs. Woodson also instantly recognized the voice of the stranger but was equally unsuccessful in discovering the subject of conversation.

However, both felt confirmed in the instinctive suspicion of which each had been conscious from the first with some self reproach that as Mr. Woodson had put it, their dinner guests were Confederates only through the thickness of their uniforms.

As soon therefore as Mrs. Woodson saw the dim figure of a man sneaking off in the shadows along the roadside toward the negro cabins, she called to Suky and asked her what the Yankee soldier had come back for?

"What sojer you talkin' 'bout, Mis' Sue? I ain' seen no sojers 'cepin' tis dem what you axed fer dinner."

She wrapped her hands in her apron and unwrapped them again looking considerably confused and restless.

"Was not one of those same men who were here for dinner down there talking to you a few minutes ago?" her mistress questioned.

"Huc-cum you ax me 'bout sojers, Mis' Sue? What I know 'bout sojers?" And Suky looked very stupid and injured.

"Because I saw the man and heard him talking to you, Suky, and there is not a speck of use in your trying to deceive me. All I want to know is what was the man talking to you about?"

Suky dropped her chin, gazing at Mrs. Woodson in undisguised apprehension.

"Laws a musy, Mis' Sue,—de man ax me fer a piece a bread en a goad o' water, en I gin hit to him. Bress yer heart, honey, I warn' gwine ter listen to none o' his foolishness."

This was all the satisfaction Mrs. Woodson could get. And when her husband started out to see what his authority would do, she interposed.

"We will soon be within Yankee lines any way and we had just as well make up our minds to stand a few things we cannot help. Poor foolish negroes! The greatest pity is for them!"

CHAPTER V.

ON SAYLER'S CREEK.

If "hope deferred maketh the heart sick," what of the suspended anticipation of some dire calamity?

Sunday—Monday — Tuesday — Wednesday were days to remember sighingly for their emptiness.

The very air one inhaled had grown heavy, sultry, portentously still, as if holding its breath for a storm. Life itself seemed to pause. Mr. Woodson got up early each morning as was his wont and went to see the stock well fed; the cows were driven up and milked; the daily rations fed to the fowls and eggs gathered in. Orders were given as usual for the three meals a day, yet all the while with the thought:

"Who knows what may happen before those meals are eaten!"

Mr. Woodson did not pretend to order out the plows. Full well he knew that restless uncertainty pervaded the cabins as well as the house. Miss Phenie had made one faithful effort to get her little school into working order on Monday, but her utter failure discouraged her from attempting it again.

Mrs. Woodson kept the inevitable knitting in hand from force of habit and it went on mechanically. All the powers of mind and body were straining out along the various roads and pathways approaching the house in search of coming events.

These southside Virginia counties had been "shut-ins" thus far. For while the able bodied men and many under the age of full manhood were doing duty

in the army, and the families at home learning every letter in the lessons of privation and endurance, self-helpfulness and self-denial, the excitement consequent on quick transition of occupancy from one army to another, which was such familiar experience in many places along the border, was unknown to them. There had been no fighting in that section, and soldiers, especially in large bodies, were still a novelty. Of the enemy they had seen nothing.

Mr. Woodson looked out on his fields, cultivated with so much care, and tried to picture them to himself scenes of desolation such as he had read of in the pathway of Sherman's ruthless hordes; Mrs. Woodson wondered if the reckless destroyers would not leave undisturbed her setting hens and turkeys and spare old Betsy the cow for the sake of her young calf!

The girls frequently discussed good hiding places for themselves and their little treasures—after the Confederates should have passed, and conjured up phantom dreads in connection with the idea of remaining for any length of time within the enemy's lines.

How little conception any one had of the reality which was immediately before them.

On Wednesday, after earnest consultation with his wife, Mr. Woodson summoned the negroes, heads of families who were accustomed to come up for supplies. After giving them to understand as clearly as possible how much and how little this passing of the Northern army might mean to them, he explained that the provisions stored to feed them would probably be safer in their own hands than where it was, and proceeded to divide a goodly portion of it among them. Enough was left in the smoke house and store room to avert the suspicion that any had

been disposed of. One barrel of flour only was brought into the house and converted into a lamp-stand by a long table cover.

Later in the day some one found Mrs. Woodson packing a preserve jar with needles, pins, thread, buttons, etc., which, as she said, "We might be sorely bestead for before it would be possible to renew the supply." This, with a few little trinkets and valuables, was buried in a corner of the yard under a rose bush whose supporting frame had succumbed to four years of neglect and left it a mass of prickly green on the never failing bosom of mother earth.

"There is one thing more I must do before either army gets here," Mr. Woodson said resolutely.

This was to have the cask of apple brandy rolled down to the river, knock out the head with his own hands and roll it in.

It was early Thursday morning when Ide Carrington came, for the first time since Monday. He told of a party of soldiers who had spent the previous night at his father's.

"And do you know," he added, with a quizzical shake of his close cropped head, "I firmly believe they were Yankees?"

A knowing smile passed round the circle as they began comparing notes and proving identity.

In answer to the question why he supposed them Yankees, he replied:

"They could match any New Englander living in asking questions, and then,"—his face screwed itself up into a comical grimace,—"the Madam evidently recognized her kith and kin."

The news from the front this time was that the Confederate army had reached Amelia Court House and were slowly moving in their direction.

The county of Amelia was one of their closest

neighbors. A new throb of excitement thrilled them as they thought of General Lee's army, with all the friends and relatives it contained, being so near. Yet everything around them was as quiet and peaceful as if there had been no cruel war going on. Ide persuaded the girls to take a stroll with him down toward the creek. It was the first time they had been outside of the yard since Sunday. All the more beautiful appeared the tender spring green of tree and shrub after these days of housing, and the warm, misting atmosphere was as grateful to the girls as to every other growing thing.

When they reached the brow of the hill from which they were accustomed to signal Pansy they stopped and looked wistfully across the intervening vale towards the pines from whence they had so often seen her emerge in answer to their call. Abby involuntarily put her hand to her mouth to send the usual message up the hills, when suddenly there broke upon their ears sounds of a very different kind. Something they had never heard before, yet could not fail to recognize—the boom-m, boom-m of cannon and the still more terrifying "pop—pop—pop" of rapidly firing rifles.

It could have but one meaning. There was fighting somewhere close at hand.

The little group stood a moment huddled together, with blanched faces and excited eyes, watching through the gathering mist for the flash of the guns. It was no farther off than the pines into which they had been peering a moment ago for the sight of a girl's face. Now, the pretty little body of woods was a bedlam of terror.

As if this were not enough, a great blaze of light burst out upon the sky, and, for a few moments swallowed up everything.

Ide could stand it no longer.

"I'm going over there to see!" he cried excitedly. "You all run back home quick!"

Simultaneously they broke into a wild run,—the girls back the way they had come. Ide down toward the creek with bounding pulses, across the foot bridge and up the opposite hill in the direction of the pines.

Both the Woodson "old place" and Mr. Lockett's house were filled with soldiers and cannon. Ide climbed a tree out of range and hidden among its branches like a squirrel, the whole pageantry of battle horrors was before him.

Sheridan's cavalry had made a sudden dash upon Ewell's corps.

The Confederates rushed into Mr. Lockett's house and began firing back from the windows and doors. But Sheridan, by a fierce onslaught with overwhelming numbers, succeeded in dislodging them from that and the next house also, though they stubbornly disputed every step.

On the whole march from Richmond the Southern army was sadly hampered and impeded by their own baggage train. Not that the soldiers carried with them any excess of luxurious appliances for their camp life, far from it. The truth is, quite a large number of the ambulances were filled with noncombatants making their exodus under shelter of the Southern army from the dreaded change of regime in the deserted cities.

This it was which made the baggage train so disproportionate to the size of the army, constantly retarding and impeding its movements, besides necessitating a heavier guard than could be spared. Again and again all along the way detachments of the enemy would dash in, set fire to a number of the

ambulances or wagons and dash out again, leaving conflagration, consternation and confusion behind them.

Thus, sorely beset, the Confederates past the mill pond and the advance guard reached the two bridges over twin branches of Sayler's Creek. The remaining divisions, alas, became hopelessly blockaded in the deep cut leading to them, and into this confusion the enemy poured a galling fire from the two houses of which they had gotten possession. The inevitable destruction of the whole corps seemed the only possibility left.

Mr. Lockett, knowing the roads as he did, easily surmised what had happened from the direction and fierceness of the firing. He came out from his shelter to see if it would be practicable to get across to the Confederates and tell them of the other road over the hill. Just then he spied Ide clambering down his tree with the same idea, and he would be the better messenger.

Ide needed but little instruction, and, fleet of foot and small of stature, he got his message to General Ewell without mishap. Thus by sending the baggage train by the road he told of the clogging was relieved and the army saved from annihilation.

On his return, Ide stood gazing at the sights and sufferings around him, his soul sickening with horror. Then a piercing cry sounded a moment above the rest and he knew something woeful had befallen his brother Paul.

CHAPTER VI.

ON THE BATTLEFIELD.

At the angle of two roads where the firing had been fiercest the ground was thickly strewn with dead, dying and wounded, men and horses piled in merciless confusion one upon another.

Into this medley of suffering Ide had been drawn by the sound of his brother's voice. The Confederates had passed on, unable to render the least assistance to their wounded comrades.

Stepping carefully over and between the inane masses, Ide peered into pale, distorted faces, eagerly calling his brother's name. There was no response, and the lad feared momentarily the more he should never hear that voice again. Yet, while his own sturdy young heart was so heavy with its burden of dread, he could not disregard the piteous cries for "Water!" water!" which greeted him from all who had life to utter it.

Nobody knew any better than he of the spring close by in the hollow where the water was always cool and clear and a gourd or two handy. But, however busy he might be supplying this demand, and glad as he was to do it for those who had probably given their life for the cause he loved no less than they, his alert young eyes were busier than hands and feet searching every face and form for some familiar lineament by which to identify his brother. At last he recognized the colt they had raised at home. It had been killed, and in falling had caught its rider

underneath. It must have been at the instant of Paul's outcry that the man beside him was struck also. And he had fallen across Paul's head, pinioned and helpless as he was.

Most likely a button or some hard surface had struck Paul on the temple or near it, rendering him temporarily unconscious.

Thus Ide found him,—dead, as he supposed, when by almost superhuman effort he had extricated the body from the man and horse on top of it. For awhile Ide had thought for nobody else.

His jolly face quivered with a great sorrow. His indomitable spirit quailed at the prospect of life so utterly bereft. With scant hope he moistened the dry lips and smoothed back the matted hair from the battle-grimed face, thinking of what they two had been to each other.

The mother of these two boys had died when Ide was a baby. But their grandmother had lived until they were old enough to get along after a fashion by themselves. Some two years or more before the war a young Massachusetts girl had come into the neighborhood to teach. Paul and Ide had both been entered as pupils in her school and been much petted and favored. Paul, however, was not long in discovering her incapacity to give him the thorough instruction he craved and quietly withdrew. She professed to be greatly hurt by this defection, but soon after comforted herself by marrying the father and giving up her school altogether. She kept up the petting for awhile, though from the first it had been received rather unresponsively by the boys, for the reason that they felt an instinctive doubt of its genuineness. She had in consequence the sooner thrown off the mask. Only with consummate ingenuity and acumen she managed to hoodwink

her husband, until, as Ide expressed it, she had him just where she wanted him,—"as meek as a sheep in the slaughter pen."

As might be supposed, life in such a home was not ideal. Paul was glad of an opportunity to escape by going into the army, only regretting what Ide would need to bear alone.

It was not so hard on Ide as might be supposed. He had a good humored way of casting off care and at the same time resisting imposition which his brother had not. And then, he was proud to have a brother in the Southern army; everybody was in those days. Still, all through the temporary privation of companionship, sorer than anybody dreamed, Ide had comforted himself by looking forward to a future when either he would be old enough to join Paul in the army, or, the war being over, his brother should return, if not covered with the glory of personal achievement, at least wearing the common laurels of victory. Then they would have a little farm and home of their own.

This that he saw—this dead, white face—had never once entered into his calculations, and it left his life an utter blank.

As Ide sat thus beside the still form, roused ever and anon from his gloomy reflections by the pathetic cry, "Water! water!" listening in a dumb, uncaring way to the hisses of the shells passing at intervals over them, he saw one of these shells strike an ambulance which had been driven aside into the woods, and either intentionally or unintentionally allowed itself to be left behind. Ide's keen eyes, unhampered by his gloomy thoughts, had noted it and supposed it had been abandoned for some reason, though in better condition than some which had gone on. As the shell struck and burst, both horses plunged and

fell, dead. The wagon cover caught fire and a woman's agonized shriek rang out upon the air.

Paul shivered and opened his eyes. Recognizing Ide, he gripped his hand feverishly and exclaimed:

"Go, Ide! Go to her,—she's a woman, in trouble —hurt—never mind me; I'm all right!" and shut his eyes again.

The joy of knowing his brother was not dead after all nerved Ide to do his bidding. Hastening toward the ambulance whence the cry had come, he saw emerging from the now blazing concern a young girl striving to sustain the insensible form of her mother.

Ide quickly relieved her of her burden, and, carrying it to a safe distance from the burning wreck, laid it on a bed of soft pine tags at a place where it would be sheltered to some extent by a beetling rock. Here, after showing the young girl the way to the spring and promising to return, he went back to his brother.

Ide saw the bright eyes shining at him yards away, but there was a silent "hush-h-h!" on the lips which kept him from yielding to the glad outcry he felt. He quietly picked up his second gourd lying on the ground beside his brother and went down the hill, wondering gladly. When he came back this time Paul motioned to him to pretend to give it to the dead man next him, and while doing so, said to him in low tones:

"Tell me, was she hurt, or only scared by the fire and shell?"

Ide told him.

Then Paul said, with eyes closed and lips scarce moving at all:

'I believe I am all right now, was only stunned and smothered. But I will not be taken prisoner,

and if I mistake not the surgeon's ambulance is already here. Be cautious! Do not let him see you talking to me. I am going to crawl round through the dead until I get over yonder behind the hill out of this mess. Let me know where the surgeon fastens his horse?"

While Ide held the attention of the only live Yankee anywhere near them, Paul crawled over behind a pile of dead men and horses, then for a little while pretended to be as dead as the rest.

When Ide passed nearer for further orders, Paul whispered:

"Go, offer to help the surgeon, and if you can, bring me a little brandy."

Ide gave him a little parting push with his foot, as if to see if he were entirely dead, then, with his gourd of water, made his way to the surgeon, who was already at work among his own men.

"How about your rebel men?" the surgeon asked, having tacitly accepted Ide's offer of assistance by giving him something to do.

"Most of them dead, I fear," Ide replied, with a rather woebegone face.

"You are not much accustomed to this sort of thing, I guess," the doctor said, looking at Ide half amusedly.

"Not much," Ide acknowledged.

For some time they were too busy to talk. On his first trip to the spring Ide carried a little whiskey to his brother. For awhile he could not find him. Then he heard the low "Whist!"

As Ide passed him slowly, holding his head high, as if trying not to see the mutilated dead, he heard:

"If you will keep him busy with his head the other way for fifteen minutes now, I will be out of sight."

When Ide made his next trip, he saw Paul on the surgeon's horse with a woman in front of him and one behind, scudding up the hill toward his Uncle Tom's.

CHAPTER VII.

ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF ARMIES.

It was but a pathetic quota of Ewell's gallant corps which reached the rendezvous designated by Gen. Lee at Rice's.

Hundreds lay resting on the ground along Sayler's creek,—their fighting all done; thousands were prisoners, having yielded because so overwhelmingly outnumbered and at such disadvantage in position there was no room even to die fighting.

In the midst of the fiercest mélée at the twin bridges when the heroic remnant was contesting every inch of its way to reunion with the main army, Col. Weith heard and recognized his daughter's cry, knew it must be some unusual terror or distress which wrung it from her, yet, at that moment he dared not leave his post to fly to her help. To do so would mean demoralization if not utter destruction to his whole command.

As soon as they had driven back the pestilent foe, and, their near proximity to the main army gave some assurance of temporary exemption from annoyance, he rode quickly back in the direction from which the cry had come. He was fortunate in stumbling upon Ide at the spring who gave him all the information he wanted.

It was toward noon when he reached Mr. Woodson's. Excited faces peered at him from the doors of the cabins he passed and from every window of the house he was approaching. The door was tardily opened, as it seemed to his impatience, by the

old gentleman who speedily made him welcome when he enquired for his wife and daughter that had found refuge there.

At the sound of her father's voice Hyla sprang to her feet with a glad cry, all the horror and chill of the war slipping from her shoulders like a monstrous cloak. She was only a child again now with his big broad shoulders to bear everything for her.

Mrs. Weith had been delicate for a long while. In consequence, much care had devolved upon Hyla, their only child. But as long as her father was within reach to share the burdens and give needed encouragement, the responsibility had only seemed to make her more winsomely womanly. As he sat beside his wife with Hyla on his lap, they told him all they had passed through since he had put them into the ambulance at Richmond, charging the driver to keep with the Confederate train at all hazards.

Some commotion at the front door startles the group into thoughts for the soldier's safety. But it is only another batch of Confederate soldiers in search of something to eat. Poor, famished fellows, the rations which were to have met them at Amelia C. H., had, by some mistake gone to Burkville. Hence they had had almost nothing since leaving Richmond three days before. It was certainly a fortunate forethought of Mrs. Woodson's to make such ample provision, for they came thick and fast all that afternoon and she was able to supply a goodly number with bread and meat.

When that threatened to give out she had fires kindled in every fireplace in the house, and the ashes filled with potatoes to roast and hand out with salt. Thus many more went gratefully on their way.

The day was far spent. The firing continued

spasmodically on the opposite hill and Confederates continued to come and be fed. Towards evening a company of cavalry were proposing to camp in the yard. The family were inclined to congratulate themselves over the prospect of having this protection during the night, but Col. Weith shook his head dubiously. Asking for a field glass, he took a rapid survey of the enemy's camp.

"Look for yourself," he said to the Captain. "They are already turning the cannon on the house. For you to remain here means destruction for yourself and the good people of the house." Mrs. Woodson now joined him in urging the Captain to move off immediately, which he did.

A few moments later a squad of Yankees came riding up in tipsy bravado threatening to shoot Mr. Woodson. But the twilight was falling and though they had no doubt been sent expressly to find out if there were any Confederates about, they did not venture into the house.

After this Col. Weith began to grow restless. He questioned Mr. Woodson closely as to the river fords and the different roads through the country.

"Paul Carrington is here, if you and he can go together, he knows all the ins and outs of this part of the country far better than I," Mr. Woodson added to the information he had to give.

Paul was about to be off, but promptly signified his readiness to wait.

Hyla and her mother had followed anxiously to the porch. They clung to their loved one as if they could not let him go. While Paul with one, hungry look turned the angle of the porch out of sight, and, gripping the railing with a fierce tension compressed his lips and strove to banish from his mind a persistent picture.

The picture was of a young Confederate soldier trudging along the highway to Richmond with his permit in his pocket,—a veritable knighterrant on foot in search of adventure. The time was the early spring before Madam Nature had placed her new spring suits on display. Everything wore a sombre hue,—gray skies, gray jackets, gray houses, ladies' dresses, even the spirits and the countenances and the heads of all he met seemed to partake of the same dismal color. This young soldier was not given to low spirits, nevertheless, he too felt something of the general depression even with a day before him of relief from the mud and slosh and drizzle of the camp.

"If I ever again, by any good fortune, catch sight of a girl with a bit of bright coloring about her, I will follow her to the world's end and marry her, when the war is over if——"

The picture upon which Paul was mentally gazing showed the young soldier with an astonished stare as at a sudden apparition more startling and unusual than the bursting of a shell. That treacherous music was the only excitement of the camp, those dull days. As if the fates had taken him at his word, there before him was a truly knot of pink ribbon nestling under a soft round chin as cosily as if it had never known other neighborhood and did not care to. The gray dress and jaunty jacket seemed to brighten under it as the earth does when the sun comes out after a seven days' rain.

"So this is the girl I am to marry!" the young adventurer murmured, nothing loth. And, in a freak of soldier's fun and romance, he had dogged the unconscious steps of the pink ribboned maiden to a fine, old fashioned house on Leigh Street.

Not even content with this impertinence he barely

waited until she had closed the door behind her when with the assured confidence of a welcome for a Confederate soldier in any house in Richmond, he knocked and asked for a drink of water as seriously as if there were none to be had without the asking.

Ah, those merciless brown eyes with the incisive laugh in them! However, the laugh which with pretty archness pierced his shallow pretences, did not hurt. It only seemed to say:

"You did not need any excuse for coming" and to inspire him with the daring, before he left to ask: "Will you promise to wear a pink ribbon under your chin until—I see you again, after the war is over?"

The tinting of her cheeks had rivalled the pink under her chin, but she promised. And as the picture showed her in her beauty and bloom Paul's own swarthy cheeks crimsoned. He turned on his heel again in restless rebellion against the conditions which forbade him to look at or speak to her now.

Camp fires were glimmering among the enemy's tents on the far off hill and another squad of blue-coated cavalry were coming down toward Sayler's creek. He promptly gave warning to his fellow soldier. But, before Col. Weith could tear himself from the tearful embrace of his dear ones the enemy were at the front door. In a trice he and Paul had vaulted over the banisters, climbed down the pillar like boys, mounted their horses and galloped down the hill at the back of the house and on through the grove to the river a little below the regular ford.

Meanwhile the bluecoats at the front door had demanded the Confederate officer who had been seen to come to the house.

"He is gone," said Mr. Woodson coolly.

In drunken fury they placed pistols at his head and demanded which way he had gone. This Mr.

Woodson positively declined to tell, to the great horror of his family.

The soldiers did not carry out their threat probably because they were not in a condition to remember their own intentions long enough to fulfill them. Nevertheless, guessing only too well for themselves they dashed off toward the river.

Col. Weith and Paul had not gotten on the other side of the river before they became conscious of being pursued.

Their fuller acquaintance with the paths and by-paths might easily have enabled them to elude their pursuers, but they did not propose to go far with an enemy at their heels.

Beating about cautiously among the undergrowth on the Cumberland side, repeating at short intervals a well-known Confederate countersign, they trumped up half a dozen stragglers and readily induced them to help give those Yankees a scare.

Back they dashed, yelling like mad and brandishing their swords.

The squad of bluecoats had swelled to quite a numerous force galloping down the road while others could be seen scouring the woods on either side lest the Confederate officer should be therein concealed. When they heard the roisterous rebel yell they imagined the whole of Gen. Lee's army was upon them and turning their backs the whole party fled ignominiously up the hill towards the house.

"God grant they may not wreak their vengeance on the defenceless women and children there!" groaned Col. Weith, as he with the other Confeds recrossed the river and galloped off to rejoin their several commands.

They need not have feared. The Yankees were too badly frightened to stop short of their own camp.

The clouds drooping low seemed to rest upon the woods, the hills, the river. The roads could be seen only for a short distance. There were now twelve women and children in the house in addition to the regular family. As night darkened Mr. Woodson collected them all into one back room around which he kept up a ceaseless patrol—through the hall, out into the back veranda, which extended nearly around the two sides of the house to the sitting-room door, through that room and into the hall again—the whole night through. There was but little rest for any one for the enemy were encamped in the oat field in front of the house by this time as well as on the hill across the creek. But none came into the house that night.

When everything seemed to have quieted down and Aunt Suky was closing up the kitchen to go to her cabin, there was a sudden flash of torches in the yard. In a few moments it became evident there was a raid on the poultry yard. They shot the sleeping fowls on roost and nest, chased them dazed and wild about the yard by the flaring light of the torches filled their pockets with eggs, even those from under the setting hens with the natural result, and made the night so hideous with coarse laughter, jests and oaths that for a little while Mrs. Woodson's strong grasp of common sense and self-possession escaped her.

Putting little Eddie into Suky's arms and scarce conscious of her own actions, charging her to keep the child out of danger, she went off and took a good cry all to herself.

This also had an end, and at length the silence of the night again brooded restfully.

About twelve o'clock the atmosphere of the room in which they were crowded became so stiffling Mrs.

Woodson raised a window, inhaled a few breaths of grateful air, then stepped over the low sill into the cool, fresh stillness. It was misting and gruesomely dark. Nevertheless she could discern moving figures in the direction of the cabins. Presently a young girl broke from the grip of two men and ran screaming to the house.

Mrs. Woodson, hushing her in a low tone of command, quietly opened the door at the head of the little dark porch stairway and the girl rushed panting through, not stopping until she had hidden herself under Mrs. Weith's lounge in the room where the family were congregated.

Her pursuers had evidently lost track of her, and, puzzled and discomfited, laughed and swore over their failure and went off. But not before Mrs. Woodson had again recognized the voice, figure and movements of the man who so officiously concerned himself for the preservation of her silver.

It may as well be added here, he and his followers, as was discovered afterwards, dug up thoroughly the spot he had mentioned in the vain hope, no doubt, that she had followed his advice.

CHAPTER VIII.

CLEAN SWEPT.

How those bluecoats swarmed and swore! Swore chiefly because Mr. Woodson had wasted the apple brandy and because they had found too much of it elsewhere; and swarmed over the house and outhouses like colonizing bees hoping that the destruction of one barrel was a mere feint to save the larger quantity. They found neither brandy, Confederate soldiers nor arms though they searched diligently, even among the homespun garments of "meh lady's wardrobe." Be it remembered this was on the straggling edge of the main army.

From early in the morning the omnipresent bluecoats came in a deluge. Aunt Suky had gotten up long before day in order to get some breakfast cooked for "de white folks fore dem sojers commence ter cum." But as fast as she could get anything ready they were there to snap it up leaving not a crust of bread for the hungry children. For the older ones there was scarcely leisure of thought to remember they had had no breakfast. Here was one party threatening to burn the house; another coming down from upstairs loaded with plunder; one making as if he were going to shoot Mr. Woodson and others peering curiously into the only occupied room in the house, though as only one could enter it at a time they rather hesitated to venture.

The earliest visitors had not had time to sober much, or else they had already found a fresh supply

elsewhere. They were almost without exception disagreeably under the influence of intoxicants, even those who proclaimed themselves preachers of the Gospel, or "noted for piety at home." This latter was the one who promised the fence around the yard should not be disturbed if the woodhouse was opened for them. His men quickly disposed of the whole supply of wood and every vestige of the fence as well.

Mrs. Woodson sometimes said she believed it would have been better for them and not much the worse for the soldiers if Mr. Woodson had left the half barrel of brandy to fall into their hands. But he stoutly maintained he would rather have the clear conscience whatever had to come of it.

As the day waned the Woodsons knew from various little things they overheard that the armies had passed on to Farmville and beyond. The latest dregs were loading themselves and hurrying on, not daring to be left in small parties in the enemy's country. They left the land pretty clean behind them of anything living or eatable. As Mrs. Woodson stood at the window and watched her cows driven off; each soldier leading an extra horse or mule as long as there were any in the stable; turkeys, ducks and chickens by the dozen slung over the saddles; their own farm wagons loaded with hams, barrels of flour and bags of corn meal; the garden trampled until not a seedling was left to forgive them, and the few jars of preserves she had made with sorghum carried out into the road covered with coal oil and left burning, the prospect of keeping life in the body for these twenty people was gloomy indeed.

Like a rear guard of villainy, their first acquaintance among the Union soldiers was the last to leave.

He was seen late in the day in intimate converse with Lige and Uncle Ott.

As soon as the last of the bluecoats had disappeared in the woods Mrs. Woodson, with a great sigh of relief, threw open windows and doors to let in a sweet, clean breath of God's fresh air, and called Patsy to help her get rid of some of the mud.

The girls scattered to their rooms to look after their possessions and their varied exclamations of distress, disgust and indignation betrayed the condition in which they found them.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Woodson went to the kitchen to hold consultation with Suky over the prospect of some supper, for, breakfastless and dinnerless, they were hungry enough.

It developed that Suky had contrived to hide a bucket of corn meal. Scott, her husband, brought in a ham one of the soldiers had given him.

"So we will not starve yet awhile," Mrs. Woodson said with a tired smile that was yet full of grateful affection for her sable helpers.

CHAPTER IX.

WHAT WAS LEFT.

In the midst of the intense and pricking anxieties for themselves of that week-long day, there had also been a dead weight of foreboding for the fate of General Lee's army and the dear ones in it. With the exception of Mr. Woodson himself, no one doubted as yet the final success of the Southern army.

Still, now that they knew what Grant's army was they realized as they had not before, that success could only be bought at an immense sacrifice.

Notwithstanding, tired nature is somewhat exacting. They all slept the night through undisturbed by fears or realities.

As soon as there were any signs of life about the house the servants came back to their places except Turner.

As an orphan boy Mr. Woodson had brought him from the South when he came, lest the boy should not be well cared for in his absence. He had grown up under his master's eye, had been taught to read, and, being unusually quick, had been allowed to learn whatever he would that might serve to make him more self helpful, for it had always been Mr. Woodson's intention to set him free at his own death.

From a child Turner had read the Bible at his master's side and had it explained to him exactly as the children of the family did with their mother. This was the man who had been so easily enticed to go off with a Colonel in the Northern army.

Mr. Woodson was deeply attached to Turner and more hurt by his ingratitude than he cared to show.

He had often said to Turner, confidentially:

"I will hardly live to see my only son grow to any helpful age, hence, most likely when the end comes we will have to depend on you for those attentions which are beyond the strength of womankind."

And though the reward was to be his freedom he could not wait, the old gentleman said to himself over and over. And it cut him to the heart.

Mrs. Woodson was in the kitchen early the next morning talking to Suky when Ottawa came in.

"Thar's some o' them taters in the cellar yit, Mis' Sue. Arter you gimme yo' silver spoons to tek keer ov fer yer dem sojers kep a axin' wat I got in my han'! So I tole 'em twarn' nuthin' cep'n a dus' rag. En I flung hit down in de corner 'mong de taters en kicked, keerless like, some bags up to kiver 'em. En dar dey is."

"You don't mean to say you saved my silver spoons! Well, I hardly expected it, though I knew if you couldn't nobody could."

It was found on examination that his "keerless-like kick" had saved quite a goodly quantity of potatoes in addition to the silver.

About this time a jubilant excitement among the children upstairs drew them to the door.

There was Dave, a half-grown negro lad, driving home two of the cows. When Dave found himself greeted by such an ovation of cheers and hurrahs from the "white folks" he began to strut and swagger with as much pride as if he were General Grant himself at the head of his tens of thousands.

There always was a mystery lurking around the recovery of those cows. Perhaps suspicion was only natural as we all knew Dave's weakness for butter-

milk. One peculiar feature of the affair was that these were the two best cows of the lot and nobody knew it any better than Dave. His own account of it was as follows:

"Dese here cows got los' fum de sojers wat was a driven' ov em, en dun started to'rds home when I foun' 'em en jes' help 'em erlong a little."

Whatever the agency, we felt it to be a special Providence in the scarcity of everything, especially for the children.

If it had not been so serious a matter it would have been supremely absurd, the way in which whatever was proposed or needed to be done ran full against a blank wall of limitation.

For instance:

"Ottawa, to be on the safe side, you had better carry some corn to the mill—"

The old gentleman stopped abruptly with a recollective pause, and, looking helplessly at the tall, slender negro standing respectfully before him—"but there's no horse?"

"Naw, sir, nor mule nor nuthin', sir," with a show of dignified resentment.

"Well, then, there is nothing I can do except to say: 'there's the corn, each one must manage for himself. But, *you* had better keep the key and see it is not wasted."

"Did the Yanks carry off your wheelbarrows, too, Uncle Tom?" queried Ide, suggestively, appearing on the scene for the first time since the morning of the battle.

Of course Ide had been most anxious to learn whether Paul had gotten off or been caught, and whether he was really all right as he said he was, after looking so like one dead. But he knew it would not be safe for rebels, young or old, to be

prowling round while the country was so infested with enemies.

Besides, his very anxiety kept him away, lest in some way he should compromise his brother.

"The surgeon is a right nice old fellow if he is a Yankee," said Ide in recounting the happenings of the battlefield.

"He attended to our men as carefully as his own, only they naturally came last, and those who live are to be prisoners of war. But I tell you he was hopping when he discovered his beautiful nag was gone. He thinks some negro took it, and I gave him leave. I wasn't going to tell him what I knew until I knew a little more."

"No doubt he stole it from some Southerner, anyway," commented one of the girls.

"I don't know about that," Ide hesitated judicially, "he doesn't act or talk like that kind. But then, there's no telling."

When Hyla Weith joined the group she had a most cordial greeting for Ide, told him with zestful enjoyment of Paul's going off with her father, and of their last escapade as far as she could watch and guess it from the porch. And as she talked Ide took a good look at her.

The long, dark eyes that opened so slowly and looked so straight through you when they did open, and the dimpled mouth so ready to laugh if it could, the hair in large, loose ripples of chestnut brown, and the round cheek of a child with the bright, dainty bow of pink ribbon under her chin. Ide's conclusion was that he couldn't blame Paul. But—where could he ever have known her?

"You should just see how things look along the roads," went on Ide. "There'll be no wheat growing in Overton's fields this side of the millenium."

"How about your own?" asked Mr. Woodson.

"Ours is bad enough. That many men with a proportionate number of wagons and horses could not go through a country and leave it as they found it no matter how hard they tried, to quote from the surgeon. But the Madam got round some of the officers who stayed at the house and they would not allow any except their superior officers to come on the place. So I suppose we might have fared pretty well if it had not been for father. It made him perfectly furious to see Madam thick as fleas on a hog with the enemies of the country. He simply couldn't hold his tongue. Though, as I was mean enough to whisper in his ear, he ought not to blame her for being glad to see people from her own land. Anyway, he made one of the men mad and he went out on the spot and distributed the horses among a squad of soldiers. And chickens! Yankees surely do love fried chicken! There wouldn't have been a frying size left on the place if they had stayed a day longer!"

"That's nothing," said Mrs. Woodson spitefully, "they took my old setting hens and had Suky cook them and ate them with the eggs from under them."

"Yes," said Miss Phenie, "and I saw one of the men hugging a bottle of elderberry ink and smacking his lips over every sip as if he thought it the best of wine."

"If we had only known they would take to the bait so readily, we might have had a lot of it in store for them," laughed Abby.

Ide's presence was always provocative of fun. And in thus recalling the events of the past two days for his benefit many little humorous touches came to light which had been unnoticed in the general gloom and depression and it was quite refresh-

ing to hear an occasional little outburst of mirth, notwithstanding Mr. Woodson's presence. But he did not appear to be noticing.

"We'll have no wheat, either," he said presently, as if his thoughts were still on that part of the conversation, "possibly a little corn and oats. The roads are in a wretched condition. If we had anything to sell we could not get it to market."

As Ide was about to leave, he told, soberly enough, the news he had heard since leaving home: The armies had reached Appomatox Courthouse and there would probably be a decisive battle before many suns went down.

CHAPTER X.

SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY.

After two nights of undisturbed sleep and a day's freedom from the horde of unwelcome visitors we awoke on the morning of the Sabbath, April 9, with a feeling of relief and hope.

The rain had ceased and the sun actually came up clear, shining upon the moist and muddy world with a glimmer of encouragement. True, the leaden hue of the western sky was rapidly taking shape in a cloud which would envelop the sun.

But the spirits of the young naturally spring up to meet brightness even if it is to be transient. In the calm peace of this fair, sweet Sabbath morn they could easily imagine the Confederacy had swung back to where it had been a month ago, and, while the sun was decking the shrubs and trees with glittering jewels they would not look at clouds, nor wasted wheat fields nor empty chicken coops nor trampled flowers.

They presently came en masse to ask their mother if she thought, as there was to be no church service anyway, it would be any harm for them to go down to the mill and have Pansy meet them there, or go all the way up to Mr. Lockett's to find out how the family up there had fared.

"No harm,—no,—but——"

Mrs. Woodson looked very undecided and said she would ask Mr. Woodson. She came back to say he could not by any means give his consent to their

going anywhere beyond the limits of the yard at present. However, he was going over himself and would carry their messages and bring them news of their neighbors.

The girls followed him to the gate and watched him regretfully down the hill and up again. They felt prisoners of war themselves in not being able to go ad libitum, though all visible pressure was removed.

While waiting with the best patience they could find they gathered in the front porch—a rare chance for getting better acquainted. Everything had been in such a stir since Hyla, her mother and the others had come uninvited guests to Elmwood.

Cast ashore here by the waves of war, there had been thus far small opportunity for a quiet look into each other's eyes, a tentative stroke across the strings of character and temperament, to try how nearly they were in harmonious accord.

It had not taken long for the strangers to find out they had fallen among the kindest, most considerate and unselfish people in the world, with an innate refinement which defied all thought of obligation.

"I believe this is the first time I have looked up that hill since we came down it in such a hurry," Hyla said, laughing softly yet with a little shudder of uncomfortable remembrance.

"Weren't you awfully frightened," asked Miss Phenie, "when you found yourself in the midst of shot and shell?"

"Not for myself. I was so intensely eager to see our men triumph it hardly occurred to me we were in danger. And then, after mother fainted, of course I could think of nothing else."

"Please tell me how Paul Carrington got hold of you?" asked Abby.

Hyla laughed again with the sweet readiness of girlhood.

"Well, I'll tell you the whole story. Father had always declared nothing would induce him to leave mother and me outside the Confederate lines. He had brought us up to Richmond when there was a probability that Norfolk would be in the enemy's hands. There we had a great many friends, and father could see us frequently and have a care over us. Then came this sudden, inexplicable move and poor father didn't know what to do with us. The family with whom we were boarding hinted they would be more than glad to have us take their horses if we could get a vehicle of some kind, as otherwise they would only swell the plunder of the enemy.

"Mr. B—— was paralyzed, so of course they would have to stay and take whatever came. So father got an ambulance and we hastily gathered up everything valuable, our solid silverware, etc., in a white counterpane from the bed, with a few clothes, for there was no time to pack a trunk. Father got a supply of bread and our friend gave us a ham."

She dropped into a thoughtful pause. "I am not sure but Mr. Carrington is right. It would have been better if we had remained at home after all. And yet,—certainly we have fared well, both here and in Richmond," and she turned a bright, grateful smile to the Woodson girls. "Except for the additional trouble we have to make wherever we go."

Abby and Hazel hastened to assure her there was no trouble about it, and Mrs. Woodson, who just then came out, added her assurance to the same purport.

"Don't talk about trouble! You have no idea what a real help it was to us all simply to have your and Miss Phenie's bright faces to look at amidst the

universal gloom." She laid an affectionate hand on each, "while anything I could do for your mother was only so much relief from the tension and strain of other things."

"You have not yet told us how Paul found you," persisted Abby.

"I could not tell you how he happened to find us, because I do not know. His brother, Ide I believe you call him, had come to us in the nick of time and carried mother to a safe distance from the burning ambulance and showed me where to find the spring. Then he went over to the soldiers again. So many of them were calling piteously for water.

"Presently I saw one of the graycoats, lying flat on the ground like dead, begin to move in our direction, slowly like a great anaconda. As soon as he got over the brow of the hill he sprang up behind a tree close to us and said in a hurried whisper:

"Miss Weith, I know you though you do not remember me, but I live in this part of the country and am thoroughly familiar with it. I am going to press the surgeon's horse into service and I can get you to a house where you will be kindly cared for if you can ride behind and if you think your mother can stand a little jolting for a mile across the fields." He hardly waited for my assent before he had brought the horse to a convenient slope, picked mother up in his arms, leaped on and held out his hand to help me climb up behind. Thus off we started in high style."

A suspicion of color crept timidly into Hyla's face.

"No, I had no idea who he was, though there was something familiar in his face and bearing. We saw so many soldiers,—father used frequently to bring them to the house. And, so long as he was a good Confederate I had no fear. Besides, I was bound to go with mother," she ended, laughing.

The Woodsons thought of the first men who had come to them in Confederate uniform, but they said nothing of that, only:

"It was just like Paul, and anybody would know Paul was true."

By the time they had expatiated at some length on the charms and virtues of Paul, they saw Mr. Woodson coming down the hill and with him another man. With no small surprise, as they came nearer, the Yankee uniform was recognized.

For a moment Mrs. Woodson's face burned with indignant repudiation of such familiarity with an enemy of the country.

However, she quickly recovered her equanimity, concluding there must be some good reason for it. As for the girls, they had all scampered and left her to do the honors alone.

At the dinner table they must perforce treat him as a guest, much disgusted as they were with the necessity, though, by furtive glances they arrived at the conclusion he would not be a bad looking fellow if he were only on the other side.

The newcomer's face was strong and kind, with keen, steel-blue eyes which skirmished around among the fresh young girl faces as opportunity offered, as if he found the change of scene decidedly enjoyable. He left almost immediately after dinner and then Mr. Woodson explained how it happened and what he wanted.

The home of Mr. Lockett having been necessarily appropriated as a hospital there was very little space for the family.

Still, though rather uncomfortably situated, they were well and received daily rations from the surgeon in compensation for the use of the house. They had one and all freely commended this young sur-

geon as a christian and a gentleman. "Thus," continued Mr. Woodson, "when the man approached me and asked if I could tell him of any family who would be willing to take him as a day boarder for a little while, I told him our house was pretty full, but if he would walk over with me he could talk to my old lady about it. And now, I want to say this much to you young people. I know you don't want him. Neither do I. But we are in the enemy's lines now and there is no telling how long we will be. A few silver dollars may not be amiss before we get through with it."

When he came over again that evening to tea, the girls did try their very best not to be uncivil to him.

CHAPTER XI.

NEWS FROM APPOMATTOX.

At supper the new boarder was assigned a seat next his host and confined his conversation entirely to him. It was for the most part question and answer with regard to the natural resources of the country, the habits of life of the inhabitants and, comparing the information received in an impartial, intelligent way with things as they were in his part of the world,—the State of New York.

"I have never been farther south than Baltimore until the war," he said pleasantly, as he rose to go, "and," looking toward the ladies, "I find it quite an interesting study."

His mouth was concealed by a sandy moustache. It was hard to tell whether it covered a bit of sarcastic rebuke, or mere genuine pleasantry. But it was quite evident his eyes were making inquiries in some directions where his lips hesitated.

Ralph Conner says in one of his books: "It is the mark of a gentleman to know his kind." Dr. Miller certainly recognized the fact that he was among gentle-folk.

Such hot rebels as they all were, they were loth to make any concessions in that line towards him, but they were forced to admit he was not exactly their preconceived idea of a Yankee and not of the type they had seen most of lately.

The next morning as soon as he entered the room they perceived that something of moment had hap-

pened since he left the evening before, though they could not decide in their own minds whether it was agreeable or otherwise. They puzzled over it during the whole meal, while he sat silent and abstracted, with every now and then a searchlight glance from one face to another around the table. When he had finished he pushed plate and chair back with the same movement and sat a moment gazing steadily in front of him. Another swift glance around the circle of faces and he got up to go. With his hand upon the door he paused and looked back, and, addressing himself as before directly to Mr. Woodson, who had also risen, he said:

"I am sorry so soon to be the bearer of bad news,—would greatly prefer you should hear it from someone else,—but—" clearing his throat, "General Lee and his army surrendered—yesterday. Message came to that effect from Farmville this morning."

He let his eyes fall to his boots and paused a moment for exclamations and questions, but none came. When he looked up every head had dropped upon the table in dumb sorrow, some quivering with suppressed sobs.

Dr. Miller looked at them in surprise. He had expected them to be excited,—angry, for such grief as this he was not prepared. He silently withdrew, closing the door softly behind him as one would upon the family of mourning friends in the room with the body of their dead.

The first stunning effect of the shock seemed to pass with the dying echoes of the cavalry boots, and exclamations broke forth thick and fast.

"I don't believe a word of it!"

"I just know they have trumped it up to frighten us!"

"Lee surrendered, indeed! as if they *could* whip General Lee!"

"No indeed! the last man of his army will fight to the death, first!"

"And when the men are all gone the women will take the guns!"

Mr. Woodson walked the floor in grim, hopeless silence.

He could appreciate far better than the rest the probability of the rumor's truth. He had been to the battlefield where the dead lay by hundreds still unburied, where Confederate guns and stores which had been greatly needed had been thrown away from stress of pursuit. Yet, even to him the blow was none the less severe. And Mrs. Woodson, accepting with her husband and her own common sense the dreadful certainty was thereby saved none of the poignancy of disappointed hope. She could sympathize with all the exaggerated outcries of youth and with the utter abandon of age as well. It was terrible, indeed, to hear the news first from an enemy. It made it so much harder to believe. The thought would come that the rumor had been sent abroad for some purpose of their own. Even the clamorous bell ringing which had been heard from Farmville the day before only convinced the more that it was some cruel joke.

At noon Dr. Miller came in looking awkward and embarrassed as if he knew all the spiteful things we had been saying about him and his friends. He was more silent than he had been in the morning and no wonder, truly. For whenever his keen glance flashed around the faces encircling the table, he encountered nothing but scowls of malignant resentment as if he were entirely responsible. At supper it was the same or worse. For the news had by that time

reached us from several different sources through the negroes who were already showing their faith in it by declining to work.

As Dr. Miller left the table this time he handed Mr. Woodson a Washington paper giving full account of the surrender in all its rasping details and jubilant congratulations to Gen. Grant and his army.

"If the people who get out that paper," said Ide, who had come in while they were reading it, "had only seen the two armies pass by one following the other, as I did from our upstairs window—General Lee's pitiful little thin column of starving, fagged men and jaded horses hardly filling the road, and General Grant's army spreading over the whole face of the earth as far as you could see in every direction, with fresh, fat horses and everything they could want, they would not be congratulating Grant that he has caught Lee, at last, but hiding their faces in shame and confusion for any general in his place who had not caught him before."

This view of the matter flattered Southern pride and gave a slightly humorous tinge to the train of thought, but the truth remained. We were conquered.

This was the first paper which had come to the house since the evacuation of Richmond. Who could help reading it every word? Yet, O how it did rub in the bitterness of defeat—of the lost cause—of the precious blood shed for naught,—of the dread and horror remaining in the fact of our powerlessness under the heel of our foes.

Dr. Miller no doubt thought in giving this paper to allay the first fever of vindictive excitement with a dose of uncontrovertible facts. Perhaps he was right. The truth had to come home some time, and

it would have been long before simple hearsay could have been fully accredited.

The dreary days dawned and darkened again—one gloomy blank of hours. If the sun shone again after that Sabbath morning it brought no brightness with it.

At the first news of the surrender every negro on the place threw down his work, whatever it was, and went to his cabin.

And nobody dared to object, even Aunt Suky, who had been so faithful in all the confusion. Dave's appetite for milk was fortunately too much for him though he attended to the cows, and did the milking in a sneaking way, constantly reiterating:

"Don' none o' yer tell dad on me, 'cause he done tole me we warn' gwine ter do nuthin' fer no white folks never no more."

"And why not?" Mr. Woodson asked him once, wondering how the poor foolish creatures had so soon gotten these mischevious notions instilled into their minds.

"'Cause Marse Gineral Grant, he say so," the boy replied confidently.

"How do you know what General Grant says?"

"Some o' his sojers done tole my daddy so."

Mr. Woodson sighed. He knew this was but the beginning. What would be the end only God could know. Hundreds of these people who had been taken care of like children all their lives turned adrift to shift for themselves, told they were not to work, and encouraged to consider as enemies their only friends, who dared calculate what would be the outcome? "Except the Lord be with us, none other can pilot us through the years before us!"

CHAPTER XII.

THE CARRINGTONS AT HOME.

Ide was one of those boys who when his spirit was hot within him over some real or fancied grievance whistled to get himself cooled down or to keep a grip upon himself; or, if he were happy, he whistled because nothing else could so well express an exuberance of good spirits; or, if neither of these emergencies was making its demand upon his self-control he whistled from mere force of habit.

After listening to the reading of the Washington paper he started home whistling a low, sweet strain of "Rock Me to Sleep, Mother," with improvised variations. This clearly indicated the inward temperature to be near boiling point.

Many things went into the medley of irritation. In addition to the universal distress and chagrin, there was the disappointment of his plans of joining his brother in the army in another year and having a hand in the founding of the Confederacy.

Besides, he did not even know as yet, whether his brother had survived it, whether his strength had not evaporated with the stimulant of excitement and he been captured or killed before the surrender.

The whistling sank to the faintest sound as he faced for the second time life without his brother Paul. Then—it stopped altogether, his alert young eyes and thoughts coming abruptly back to the present. A sound of subdued voices had stolen into his ear.

He was not on the road but in a well beaten footpath through the woods. Failing to locate the voices or even to hear them again, he was about to climb a fence and go on his way concluding his imagination had misled him when he heard them again,—so close it would have startled him out of his boots if he had happened to have them on. They were behind or in a clump of elderberry bushes growing tall and thick on both sides of the fence. Ide's bare feet made no noise as he stepped down again, dropped to the ground and crawled, snake-fashion,—it was an old trick of his and Paul's,—under the bushes until his head touched the bottom rail of the fence and his large cupped ear was turned up to catch the slightest sound.

He easily recognized the sharp tones of a Yankee soldier.

"You niggers been working for these rebels all your life," it said, "the land ought to belong to you, Uncle Sam's going to give it to you, too, every man his share, if you have to kill every rebel in the South to get it. You trust me for it.

"All you've got to do is to mind what I tell you and wait.

"I'm coming back here to live and I'll bring some soldiers with me to protect you. So you needn't be afraid to tell any last one of them you don't intend to do another lick of work."

This language was heavily interlarded with oaths and encouragingly encored by the intermittent chuckling of the negro.

"Don't forget about the meeting Wednesday night. I want to see a good crowd of you there," were his parting words.

The soldier, Ide was convinced, was the same who had come first to his Uncle Tom's in Confederate

uniform and afterward in his natural colors made headquarters under his stepmother's hospitable wing. The negro was none other than his Uncle Tom's Lige—the most ready tool he could have found in the whole neighborhood.

Ide lay still for some little while after he heard their footsteps departing in opposite directions, brooding gloomily over this new phase of affairs and longing to circumvent their machinations. Yet, what could he do save grind his teeth in helpless indignation.

"They are having everything their own way now, but just wait till our soldiers come home!" he muttered with a boy's fine scorn of possibilities.

He was whistling again by the time he started for home, and, strangely enough, a somewhat livelier tune.

As he approached the house his father came out looking much excited. He strode up and down the walk from the house to the gate, gesticulating and mumbling like one bereft of reason.

Ide only too easily guessed the matter and asked no questions. He only seized his arm with the grip of youth grown familiar from years of sympathy and close companionship and exclaimed:

"Father, do you know Uncle Tom has a Washington paper giving an account of Lee's surrender? I'm afraid it's true, and you never heard such goings on over a man in your life as they are having over old Grant! I haven't a doubt we will pretty soon be all summoned to Washington to worship a golden image of him."

Ide had gained his point. His father forgot his personal grievances in those of the country. As soon as he was perfectly quiet the two walked into the house together. It was just as he expected. The

Yankee, Danklin, was there making a grand jubilee over the disaster to Lee and his army. Mrs. Carrington smiling most graciously the while.

Her strong, white, regular teeth made her mouth quite pretty though her stepson knew it could shut with a clamp anything but attractive and speak words both cruel and coarse. Her round black eyes were bright enough, but shallow and uncertain, and her forehead was low and narrow with a profusion of black curls freshly released from curl papers. The rest of the heavy suit of hair was gathered in a low, untidy coil back of a heavy chin and jaw. Withal her skin was fair and her cheeks were rosy. Many thought her still a pretty woman though ill-temper and self-indulgence had wrought many an uncanny wrinkle and telltale line.

She abated nothing of her simpering deference to Lieut. Danklin on the entrance of her husband, listening with apparent zest to his account of how General Lee had to "own up to General Grant that the rebellion was about on its last legs, anyhow; his soldiers couldn't fight when they had nothing to eat. Then, how all the rebel soldiers, looking like sheep-killing dogs, walked up and stacked their arms, etc." Though it was a question whether he had been there to see.

Ide didn't wonder his father couldn't stand it.

The man was a good looking fellow. The military carriage and pose which he had no doubt put on with his uniform is becoming to most men.

"What are Grant and his army going to do with themselves now since they have no more Confederates to fight?" Ide asked in the hope of diverting him into a side track a trifle less rasping.

"Oh!" he said with an added swagger. "They've got to trap Joe Johnston and dig Jeff Davis out of

his hole before they can be sure the job is done up brown. Then, I suppose they will go back to Washington and talk it over with President Lincoln and see what they are going to do with the rebels and the South."

"I thought you said they had paroled our soldiers? In that case they cannot do anything more with them."

"They can't, can't they? Well, you just wait till Grant and Lincoln get their heads together and you'll see what they can do with them!"

Ide was only a boy, and there was nobody to tell him, for his father was as simple-hearted as himself, that the man was simply rubbing it in because he could, and because he delighted to torture a victim and see it writhe.

"I suppose might is right now, and what he says may all come true," he thought anxiously.

Before they went to bed, Lieut. Dankin turned to Mr. Carrington with the most insufferable insolence and said:

"Well, old man, get us a sip of your best rebel brandy and we'll go to bed."

Ide saw his father's eye flash and his fist clinch. He laid a soothing hand on him and said quietly:

"I know where it is, father. I'll get it."

CHAPTER XIII.

OLD TIES.

"Hello there, boy! *you*—redhead! Here, take my boots and black them. And see you make them shine!"

This was Ide's first greeting from their self-imposed guest at a rather late hour next morning.

The man waited expecting a reply, and ready to give insolence for insolence. But Ide only said, with steady manfulness:

"All right," and quickly began to whistle.

Disarmed and perhaps disappointed that he had missed an opportunity to down a rebel, the man took his head back into his room and closed the door noisily.

Ide swallowed his indignation with a gulp and went down stairs whistling for dear life, to find Dan, the house boy.

"Dan," he remarked nonchalantly, "I think Lieut. Danklin wants his boots blacked. You will find them at the door." He then went on out to feed his chickens. For, thanks to the Lieutenant's fondness for chicken meat, the Carrington poultry yard had not been entirely denuded as most others had.

As the lad came in again, past the kitchen window he overheard Dan confiding to the cook:

"Thar's somethin' uncommon 'bout des here Union sojers. Dey talks powerful fine en does er lot o' promisin', but dis here's de fust gemmen I uvver blacked eny boots fer 'thout 'im givin' me somethin'."

As Ide came into the dining-room seeking his father, Lieut. Danklin was saying to his stepmother:

"Ide's a lazy chap—he needs somebody to take down a peg or two of his Southern high and mightiness."

And the Madam replied, for neither had seen him as yet:

"You've made a fine beginning if you got him to black your boots as meekly as that." Both laughed heartily. And Ide also had a little inward chuckle all to himself. He would have a good laugh over it and somebody to laugh with him when he went to Elmwood. But at home he had determinedly set himself to a discipline of the strictest self-control for his father's sake.

Immediately after breakfast Lieut. Danklin departed to be gone for several days, he announced. And Ide, leaving his father to take life easy in his favorite seat out under the big apple tree with his pipe and book, went down to his Uncle Tom's to let off a little steam. He wanted particularly to tell Mr. Woodson of the interview he had happened upon the night before.

"When two heads of that stripe get together you may be sure some devilment is brewing," Mrs. Woodson exclaimed indignantly.

"I'll tell you one thing," added Ide, "I'm going to keep my eyes open Wednesday and find out what kind of meeting they are going to have that night."

"I wish you could let me know," said Mr. Woodson.

"If I can find out in time I will," replied Ide promptly. "Of course it would do no good to tell father, and if I go to it I would certainly like to have you along, as Paul isn't at home yet," he finished with a lonesome ring in his voice.

Yet, a few moments later he might have been heard joking Hyla on being such a splendid rider-on-behind, or Abby about the sweetheart that's gone to the war, or chasing Hazel with an early caterpillar, or tucking himself down beside Miss Phenie with a rigmarole of nonsense beginning with "when you and I were gals together."

Monday and Tuesday, with all her big family, Mrs. Woodson had just let things go any way they would. Nobody felt like eating. By that time she felt the imperative necessity for coming to some understanding. Suky had not come to the kitchen at all. So she persuaded Mr. Woodson to go to the cabin and send Suky and Scott up that she might have a talk with them.

When Mrs. Woodson had come home as a bride, she had taken Suky, a slip of a girl, into the kitchen and taught and trained her under her own eye. There was no better cook in the county. And when the girl had married the family carriage driver it was with the fullest encouragement of the whole family. There never had been two servants on the place in whom both master and mistress had more implicit faith. She felt the utmost confidence that, to whatever extent they had been tampered with, a plain, sensible talk would bring them to their senses.

They came, though somewhat reluctantly, as Mr. Woodson afterwards reported, and possibly only because they had not yet learned flatly to refuse to do what "Marse Tom and Mis' Sue" asked of them.

"Suky," Mrs. Woodson commenced, "we have all been a good deal upset these last few days. I haven't a word to say about yesterday and today, but I must know what you are going to do tomorrow and the days to come."

Suky jerked up her apron and snickered behind it.

"I done tole Suky"—

"Never mind, Scott, I want to hear from you presently—but I must first find out what Suky intends to do." Then turning back to the woman, she continued:

"Things are bound to be different from what they were before. We all understand that. And, if all we hear is true, you are not obliged to work for me any longer unless you want to."

Here Suky snickered more loudly.

"On the other hand," Mrs. Woodson went on calmly, "you will be obliged to work for somebody, or you will have nothing to live on, for it isn't likely anybody is going to undertake to support the thousands of negroes all through the South in idleness."

"Dat's so, Mis' Sue," again interrupted Scott soberly, "I done tole Suky so."

"Of course," continued Mrs. Woodson, without noticing him save by an appreciative smile, "it is easier to work for people when you know them and their ways than when you do not know them. And if you will come back and cook for me again, while I cannot promise to pay you in money at present, because as you know, we have no money, it is all gone, you shall have food and clothes as long as we have it for ourselves. If you get sick I will doctor and care for you as I always have done. And just as soon as everything gets straightened out and there is money to do it with, I will pay you regular wages.

"You might think you would rather go up North and get a place where they can pay you right away. But then, you see you have to get there, which means either money to travel or a pretty long tramp. And when you reach the place you decide to settle you have no home, no place to stay, nobody to take care of you while you are hunting for work. When you

succeed in finding some one willing to try you there is no assurance you will suit them. I don't hesitate to say I would rather have you than anybody, and I believe it will be best for you just to go right on with the work here in the kitchen for awhile at least, until you find out how things are going to turn out.

"And Scott, I would like you to take charge of the garden. Mr. Woodson says we will have to depend largely on the garden this summer, perhaps longer. I will have to say the same to you I did to Suky as to pay. We will all have to be satisfied with food and clothes until things get straightened out. Now, you and Suky go back to the cabin and talk it over and let me know what you decide to do."

By noon Suky was in her place to cook dinner and Scott in waiting for orders about the garden. That settled the matter for the time, except, on Mr. Woodson's suggestion, it was arranged that Scott should be paid for his work in a share of the produce of the garden. It may be added, the garden did its best the ensuing summer both for house and cabin.

This much of faithfulness and good sense was an immense relief to Mr. and Mrs. Woodson. It somewhat balanced Turner's dastardly desertion.

Several times during the following day, Wednesday, Mr. and Mrs. Woodson spoke together anxiously of the meeting of which Ide had informed them. It boded no good, of that they felt sure.

"If they would only let the negroes alone," bemoaned Mrs. Woodson, "I do not believe there would be any serious trouble. The state of uncertainty would soon blow over and they would settle down and behave themselves as well as before."

"Too late to talk of that now," replied her husband, "there's no telling what seeds of disaffection and antagonism have already been sown. And when

such men as Danklin remain in the neighborhood for the express purpose, as it would appear, it is hard to tell what we are coming to."

These good people were not doing Lieut. Danklin the injustice to take it for granted he was a villain simply because he was a Yankee. They understood perfectly that, he being innately a villain was only recognizing his opportunity and taking advantage of this period of misrule and disorder to carry out his own selfish schemes.

All day long, the heads of the household had kept an observant eye wide open, but had not been able to catch a single suspicious clue. Late in the afternoon Mr. Woodson went over to notify Mr. Lockett of the mysterious meeting, and he promised to be on the alert and if anything suspicious came to light to come over.

The surgeon was a little late for supper that afternoon, so Miss Phenie helped Abby and Hazel to wash the dishes and straighten up the dining-room. Mrs. Woodson put the little children to bed as usual, Hyla went to their room with her mother and the other ladies soon after. Thus the house was soon wrapped in the silence of sleep. Yet, Mr. and Mrs. Woodson were loth to go to bed not knowing what might be going on in the very shadow of their home. At last Mrs. Woodson's practical mind came to the rescue.

"There is no good in our wearing ourselves out in this way," she said, "as there seems to be nothing we can do. We might as well take our rest and leave it in the hands of Providence. We know they cannot do one thing without His permission.

On that same Wednesday Ide stayed at home all day. After supper he lingered at the table and said

to Dan, who through the intervention of Lieut. Danklin, continued to be houseboy:

"Dan, do you reckon you darkies will ever have another real old-time hoe-down dance again?"

"Dunno, suh," Dan snickered.

"Well, if you do, be sure to let me know. I'd give anything in reason to see it. Dan, let's get Jake and Sam and have one to-night?" he added like an eager thought of the moment.

Dan was a boy of his own age, rather good looking and nimble as a squirrel. He had never been known before to decline a suggestion to get up a dance. This time he was evidently confused by it, and slipped out like the eel he was. Thus Ide knew he had a previous engagement. Ide had never been able to get any further enlightenment on the night meeting which was to take place that night. And as Lieut. Danklin had eluded him by absenting himself, he determined in some way to make Dan pilot him.

In order to detain him as long as possible he told long-winded tales of treeing opossum and hunting coon, showed Dan slight-of-hand tricks he had learned and insisted upon the now very impatient darky showing him just one thing about the shuffle which of course Ide was slow to learn.

At last the moment came when Ide knew he could hold the boy no longer. Yet he felt the greatest reluctance to see him go.

The somewhat inimical motive he had at first was lost in a great yearning over his dark-skinned companion and a flood of kindly memories swept over him.

"Dan," he said, as Dan had his hand on the door, "when you and I were boys together we had as good a time as any boys that ever lived, didn't we?"

"Yes, suh, we did!" quite heartily.

"Don't you remember the time mother whipped me and we ran off and hid in the pines all day? and at dinner time you stole up to the house and mammy gave us a whole pie apiece for lunch?"

Dan chuckled and rubbed his hands with gusto.

"Dan," Ide continued, his voice husky with feeling, "you *knew* I loved you then, you know it now. Whatever people may tell you—you know perfectly well there never will be anybody who will do as much for you or think as well of you as your own old white folks who have known and cared for you all your life."

Dan looked up at Ide with a half scared expression, as he went on:

"Don't forget it, Dan"—with an added emphasis —"no matter what happens, don't let anybody make you believe otherwise."

With that he let him go, and Dan with a confused "Yas, suh! Naw, suh!" slipped through the door closing it softly behind him.

He had forgotten to fasten the windows down, but, then, they had never been over careful about that until these last few days, and Ide was fully conscious he was to blame for it to-night.

As he was latching the last one himself he saw Dan come out of the cabin with his own last summer's best hat on his head—Dan always fell heir to Ide's hats when he had finished with them—and dart off in a long lope towards the woods.

It did not take many minutes for Ide to be close upon his heels.

CHAPTER XIV.

UNDER THE PINES.

Dan had taken neither the road nor the beaten path, but a pig path through chinquapin bushes and dewberry vines to the thicket of pines, the very one where they two had played runaways for a day—on through to where the pines grew tall and more open. Here Ide, keeping well in the shadow of the large tree trunks, saw the soft brown carpet of dried pine tags closely studded with squatting negroes. A little apart a horseman was surrounded by a group of sable forms.

The place chosen for this secret meeting was about half way between Elmwood and their own place. Ide looked around several times thinking and hoping he heard his uncle Tom's quiet firm tread, but each time was obliged to conclude the wish had been father to the thought.

The half moon's light sifted through the roof of closely woven tree tops and illumed dimly, vaguely, the space beneath where the shadows thickened continuously. It was with great difficulty Ide could identify any except those he knew best.

Dan was not far ahead of him and, following him with his eye as he crept in and out among the huddled crowd Ide easily discovered his mammy near where he stopped. Big, rough, muscular Lige, and Ottawa, slender and dignified from the Elmwood plantation, and his father's headman, Joe, were among those nearest the horseman. Scott and Suky

from Uncle Tom's, and Mose and Si, who belonged to Paul, from their mother's estate were on the outer edge of the crowd. Not only the men and women, but the children who were old enough were there. A motley group of hundreds ready to imbibe with unsuspecting ears the poison prepared for them.

Miss Phenie was a good sleeper and did not often waken during the night. Nevertheless, on this particular night she suddenly awoke with a feeling that something was happening or about to happen. Not detecting any new or unusual sound within the house she got up and tiptoed noiselessly to the window, for Abby was sleeping with her at the time. The front yard was by no means heavily shaded, for the trees were rather small. Outside of where the yard fence had been and parallel with it was a road leading, on the left to the old mill on Sayler's Creek, on the right to the ford of the Appomattox River. Beyond that road was a large open field which had been planted in oats but would be in no condition to be replanted in anything for some time. Through this a road ran at right angles with the other to the distance of a mile or more, where it was lost in the forest of sweet gum, maple and oak.

There was a faint haze over the half moon, hence it was less bright than usual even when unobstructed by clouds. But what particularly attracted Miss Phenie's attention was the dark figures moving silently, single file from many different directions. No greetings passed between them as they met and mingled and passed on. Like veritable wraiths of the night they moved noiselessly on, forming mystical mathematical figures, changing each instant with kaleidoscopic unexpectedness and mystery.

It was difficult to detect any convergence or unity of motive or direction. An exclamation of puzzled

wonder at length escaped her. In a moment Abby was at her side.

"They are going to have a religious meeting of some kind," was Abby's first thought. The second, "I must go down and tell father."

"Do you think so?" questioned Miss Phenie, "nobody can do anything now, isn't it a pity to disturb him?"

"I somehow feel as if father ought to know," and not waiting for further argument she opened the door softly and went down.

Although her shoeless feet on the bare floor made no sound, her father heard the first cautious tap on the door and opened it instantly. He listened to what she had to tell without comment. Nor did he take time to explain. But she knew from his close attention that he did consider it a matter of importance and understood it better than she did. Hence, instinctively felt she had done well to report to him.

"Do you suppose they are all going away somewhere for good and all?" she murmured, mystified and regretful, as she stood again at the window beside Miss Phenie.

There were not nearly so many in sight now, and by the time Mr. Woodson was dressed, Mrs. Woodson reported from the windows in various directions that they must be nearly all there.

Mr. Woodson stood at the door until not one was to be seen. But as he stepped out ready to start, one more form appeared over the brow of the hill, coming up from the creek.

Moving back into the shadow of the doorway he waited, Mrs. Woodson watching through the shutters from the sitting-room.

Mr. Woodson's hearing had grown wonderfully keen as age dimmed the field of his vision and he

recognized the footsteps before his wife did the face and form of their neighbor, Mr. Lockett.

He agreed with them that it was important for some responsible residents to know what evil-minded men were saying to them, and they went off together, following the general direction as they could. Meanwhile, Mrs. Woodson went up stairs to explain to Abby and Miss Phenie what was the meaning of the unusual stir.

And there they sat, talking and watching in the dark, until the return of the two gentlemen.

This was their account of what they saw and heard:

They had not gone very far before they began to hear the loud ranting tones of the speaker's voice, and Mr. Woodson's keen ears easily located it in the pines. As they neared the spot they separated, after arranging to meet again at the same spot if they could without danger of detection. Otherwise, at Mr. Woodson's the next day. They had both chosen their costumes for the occasion, and with old slouch hats pulled low over their faces were not easily distinguishable from the rest of the dusky company on the outskirts of which they soon found themselves. But, as Mr. Woodson moved stealthily behind the last row trying to get as near as possible to the speaker towards whom every face was intently turned, some one touched him on the arm and turning he recognized Ide.

Ide had been there for some time and had been wishing most ardently every moment for his Uncle Tom. He silently piloted him to the best position, and there, half concealed behind trees, they listened.

"Nobody can blame the rebels," Lieut. Danklin was saying, in a loud, harsh voice, "for wanting to hold on to their slaves. They had a pretty good thing

of it, I should say." (A buzz of subdued applause.) "If I had a good horse or ox which was bringing me in hundreds of dollars every year, I guess I'd fight, too, if anybody tried to take it from me. But then you see people are different from horses. The Lord meant people to be free and do as they pleased. He did not make them to be slaves to each other. So you see, Mr. Lincoln and Gen. Grant have started out to make this country a free country for everybody. They have determined every man, woman and child shall be free and equal." (Renewed applause.) That's what we Union soldiers have been fighting for these four years.

"Well, we've beaten old Lee and the rebels at last, and we are going to let them know, and pretty quick, too, they can't be ordering the black man about as if he were a dog any longer." (Louder applause.) "Now, what you all have to do is to stand up for your rights and independence. Why, these rebels used actually to cowhide you sometimes, didn't they? and they had no more right to do it than they have to cowhide me—and I'd like to catch them at that!" (Applause.)

"I wish Paul could hear that," Ide thought.

"They'll keep on lording it over you if you let them, but you mustn't let them. You may think you can't say flat up and down, 'I won't do it,' to them you used to call your masters.

"You just try it once, and see how pat and jolly it comes. It will roll off your tongue like butter on a warm day.

"I guess you had better give up working for the rebels altogether for awhile, and let them have a little taste of work themselves and the hard times they have been giving you all these years of slavery. Don't you be uneasy about your living, either, Uncle

Sam's going to see after that if he has to give every acre of this land to you and turn the whole rebel gang into ——. (Loud applause from a few.)

"You have worked long enough to own it, any way. You just keep your foot right on it, where you are, and some of these days you will be living in the big house and the rebels in the cabins.

"Now, if any of you have anything to say, let him say on. I believe brother Lige Woodson has a word of exhortation for the brethren."

This was about the report of the speech which Mr. Woodson gave his wife. There were many parts of it he did not care to repeat even to her, and it was much interlarded with oaths, imprecations, etc.

After he sat down there were a few moments of shuffling of feet, changing positions, and a low, murmurous hum of voices, then Lige arose near the last speaker, and, after changing from one foot to another and swinging his body around a few times to limber up he began. He gave such a tirade against the owners of the land as was well calculated to arouse mob violence and every evil passion. He wrought himself up to such a pitch of excitement it was terrible to see and much he said was totally unintelligible to white ears. Those who were there caught the drift of it sufficiently to know there would be terrible times indeed if Lige and his black-hearted partner could persuade the rest to follow them.

There was some applause, though not as strong as it had been before. And when he sat down no one else seemed inclined to add anything. Several who were called on by name did not respond. Then Lige sprang to his feet in a sort of wild frenzy, and in a weird sing-song tone began to upbraid them, hoodoo fashion, for their slavish cowardice in not taking possession of their "land of promise." Under

this the squatting crowd grew somewhat uneasy and restless.

Presently Ottawa got up.

Ottawa and Lige were both preachers, but of very different stamp. Lige sought to gain an ascendency over his constituency and audiences by a kind of hoodooism,—through their superstitions. Ottawa had tried to make something higher of himself.

Often came to his master to get help in the interpretation of his Bible text, for he had learned to read after he was grown, and had openly envied Turner's privileges.

His tall, slender figure was as great a contrast to that of Lige as his quiet dignity of manner. For Ottawa had always patterned his manners after his master's.

He merely said in a tone which in itself served somewhat to soothe the excitement:

"I hope de brethren will carry dese noble sentiments home wid 'em en give 'em de mos' serous desideration. And now, bredren, let us sing a hymn befo' we part."

The three outsiders took this opportunity to make a hasty exit, and never knew whether they finished up the meeting with a season of shouting or whether there was more speaking.

But it was well on toward morning before the last stragglers came creeping into their cabins.

CHAPTER XV.

DISTRUST.

Suky and Scott came up to their work next morning at a very late hour it is true, but it was such an infinite relief that they came at all, knowing what infamous advice they had received the night before nobody felt inclined to complain.

Many eyes searched Dr. Miller's face diligently when he came to breakfast. If his ears burned hotly more than once it was no wonder. He had been uniformly considerate thus far, and in many little ways where it was in his power had shown a kindly spirit. But then he was a Yankee; how could they tell how deep this pleasantness of manner extended or what it covered.

It was only natural that people so freshly under the heel of the conquering host should be suspicious of everything wearing the blue. Yet, if he knew aught of the proceedings of the previous night he did not betray it by word or look.

He was a cultured man, an uncommonly fine conversationalist. He had succeeded in a few days by tactful dignity and forbearing reserve in overcoming to some extent the dislike with which he was at first regarded. On this Thursday morning, those who watched most closely with a newly aroused distrust could detect no change in the quiet, gentlemanly demeanor.

Miss Phenie and Hyla had taken the lead in letting down the bars of social intercourse. Not that they

of it, I should say." (A buzz of subdued applause.) "If I had a good horse or ox which was bringing me in hundreds of dollars every year, I guess I'd fight, too, if anybody tried to take it from me. But then you see people are different from horses. The Lord meant people to be free and do as they pleased. He did not make them to be slaves to each other. So you see, Mr. Lincoln and Gen. Grant have started out to make this country a free country for everybody. They have determined every man, woman and child shall be free and equal." (Renewed applause.) That's what we Union soldiers have been fighting for these four years.

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Miss Phenie and Hyla had taken the lead in letting down the bars of social intercourse. Not that they

felt the condition of things less, but felt them differently. They had both been more or less nomads for the four years of the war. Hyla, naturally shy, had thus learned from meeting many people of vastly different fibre to mix readily. With Miss Phenie it was a natural disposition. As they had not hesitated to listen interestedly to his conversation and to respond when occasion called for it, he naturally turned to them as to a magnet when the subject admitted any appeal to "the young ladies."

Abby, on the other hand, through excess of patriotism, had been exceedingly chary of any show of interest and chided the others for acting otherwise. On this occasion, however, she shyly joined them.

He was asking a number of questions as to the manner of dealing with the negroes in the olden time, methods of control, division of labor, etc., with every appearance of candid inquiry.

Of all the information obtained he seemed to be making mental notes.

"And was it true," he turned to the girls in smiling inquiry, "as novels of Southern life depict, that each young lady had her own little maid, who was called from the cornfield, if need be, to tie her mistress's shoestring or bring her a glass of water?"

They could not help laughing at the absurdity of his idea and hastened to explain. "In the first place, the little maids did not go to the fields, and, furthermore, any young darky esteemed it the greatest honor and privilege to be chosen as little missy's maid. Moreover, she usually stuck so close to the little mistress there was small need of calling for any service."

"I see," he smiled appreciatively.

Then each of the five soldiers' wives refugeeing from home had some little reminiscence, humorous

or pathetic, to retail of a special little maid and what she had done or said before the war. When he looked up and caught Hyla's eye she laughed, though the long dark lashes were heavy with moisture.

With a queer little grimace she said: "I wish I could see Mammy and Desia this very minute. We left them to take care of the house and the dear only knows what has become of them now!"

It suddenly occurred to Abby that Patsy had not yet made her appearance, and she glanced up anxiously at her mother.

At that moment Mrs. Woodson was adding: "You see, doctor, we were not quite so bad as we were painted,—neither so lazy nor so cruel."

"I see," he replied meditatively, as he got up to go, "slavery does not seem such a terrible thing as I see it here."

"Terrible! why it was the happiest life possible for them!" replied Mrs. Woodson. "They had not a care in the world, sick or well, not a thing to trouble them as long as they behaved themselves. Of course, I mean where they had good masters."

The whole family had left the dining room together. Most of them had gone on out to the front porch. The early air was freshly cool and the surgeon stood a few moments longer chatting. Truth to tell, Abby was a little provoked because on this particular morning when she—and she was confident her father and mother likewise—was so anxious to measure his complicity in the last night's doings, they should have permitted him to draw them out to do the talking instead of leaving the burden on him as heretofore. As he stood silent a moment, looking down, she ventured; she did not herself know what a pathetic earnestness was in her face:

"Dr. Miller, now that you Yankees have taken

the darkies away from us, their only guardians, what are you going to do with them—really?"

He shook his head and answered with a clear candor:

"Indeed, I do not know, Miss Abby. I greatly fear they are going to prove the proverbial 'white elephant' to the government. And," still more seriously, "if the government has acted without due deliberation in this matter, without considering it in every phase and in all its future outcome, they have made a stupendous mistake, for they have taken upon themselves the biggest responsibility any government has ever assumed before." With that remark he left, walking thoughtfully down the hill to the creek.

"I don't believe he does know about last night, do you?" Abby asked in an aside of Miss Phenie. "And yet,—he is a Yankee, how can we tell? He may be as bad as Danklin only more deceitful, better able to conceal his real self."

"No, I am convinced he is perfectly ignorant of those dastardly schemes. It cannot but be there are a few among the thousands who, like this surgeon, are gentlemen."

"Heigh-ho! I wish I knew about Patsy!" sighed Abby, anxiously.

"I fear we will see nothing of Patsy or her daddy to-day," deprecated Mr. Woodson with his accustomed moody forebodings.

"Well, I wish the Yankees had attended to their own business and left us to attend to ours!" Abby muttered as she and Hazel went off to do Patsy's work.

Abby was deeply attached to Patsy. She had begged for her to be allowed to sleep in the house after the night she fled thither for protection. But her mother, fearing it might exasperate the enemy and

make it worse for her as well as themselves had called for her father the next morning and given her up into his own hands, offering to take her in for protection whenever he wished it.

Although so little work was going on, Mr. Woodson was making a strenuous effort to get a little corn into the ground. Among the fields which had been plowed before recent occurrences there were one or two not trampled beyond reclaim, where the hoe could be made to answer for corn planting. Fortunately, too, there was still seed corn left. Whatever work was being done, Ottawa, being still headman, was expected to be there. But the day following that night meeting his place was vacant.

This was a sore disappointment to his master. If Ottawa had been led astray what could be expected of the rest!

"The most dangerous feature of the whole affair to me," said Mr. Woodson in a conference with Mr. Lockett during the day, "is that the villainous mischief maker has shown such sagacity in the choice of his tools. He might have searched the state of Virginia and not found a man more ready for any devilment than Lige. And the danger is aggravated by his connection with the tribe across the river. We all know what a bad lot they are. I have always strictly forbidden any boats to be kept on the river or footbridges to be thrown across on purpose to hinder intercourse as far as possible, and flatly refused my consent to intermarriages whenever proposed. Unfortunately, Lige did it without asking, and, as I expected, has given double trouble ever since. I tried to buy his wife to break up the occasion for his going over, but it was after her old master's death and she could not be sold at the time. Several of the most notorious of those negroes were there last

night, and now, if he has roped in Ottawa also——"

About dark, however, there was a knock at the back stairway door and Ottawa presented himself with Patsy.

"Mis' Sue, I dunno what Marse Tom gwine ter say 'bout my not comin' ter wuk terday, but I couldn't git dis here fool nigger ter come ter de house all I could do, en I warn gwine ter lef' her dar all by herse'f wid Lige's boy Jake palavering round her en trying ter git her to go ober de river wid him. She done promis me ter be a good gal now, en yer shan't have no trubble wid her. If yer does, yer jes' have ter lemme know." And he looked threateningly at Patsy. "I want yer jes' ter tek her in de house wid you alls, Mis' Sue, fer awhile, anyhow, en jes' keep her dar wid yer."

Abby was very happy to get Patsy back again, and Patsy showed no unwillingness or unbiddableness. And yet Abby instinctively felt her little maid could never be quite the same to her again, nor she to the maid.

CHAPTER XVI.

PRICKING THORNS

The days dragged heavily. The five soldiers' wives who had escaped from the battlefield of Sayler's Creek and found refuge in the kindly shelter of Elmwood were growing exceedingly impatient of the suspense. They were nearly all young, with the exception of Mrs. Weith, married either shortly before or since the breaking out of the war. The greater part of a week had passed since news had come through the enemy and the negroes of the surrender of Lee and his army. There was still no other authority for it, and more than one of the ladies began openly to avow doubt of its truth. It was a mere hoax, they maintained, to scare and discourage and deceive the South.

With this suggestion a sudden, terrifying thought came simultaneously to Mr. and Mrs. Woodson, as they glanced up at each other. "Suppose it should be only a hoax which they were keeping up until they could mature plans for turning the negroes loose on the whites?" Under this solution of the delay, everything took on an alarming hue. The continued absence of Lige across the river among that reckless set, who, no doubt, since their old master's death, with no restraining influences, were quite ripe for deeds of violence for the sake of plunder. And Ottawa, a born leader, as well as Lige, and with just the "devil sense" which made him capable of the deepest duplicity if he thought it worth his while!

What if by their own simplicity in receiving his daughter as an inmate of the house they had provided for him, and whomsoever he might choose to bring, free entrance to the house for murder, rapine, what not!

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson spent an anxious day,—a more anxious night. They seriously discussed the advisability of sending Patsy back to her father's cabin. Only hesitated lest it should precipitate what might otherwise be in some way averted.

Nothing of this was said to Abby. "Let's leave our doors open to-night," Mrs. Woodson said, as they were separating for bed. And the night through, at short intervals, her bare feet patrolled the upper part of the house from window to window, from front to back, her husband keeping as close a watch on the openings below. But those who slept, slept their time out unalarmed. When morning came at last they drew a long breath.

"I almost wish we had not known of that negro meeting the other night," Mrs. Woodson said, as they were dressing for breakfast, with the uncomfortable feeling of having wasted very needful bodily strength on a miscalculation.

"Why?" Mr. Woodson turned in his abrupt, curt way.

"Because," she said wearily, "it keeps a constant strain of anxious expectancy on our nerves, and,—if anything should happen, what could we do at best?"

"I wish I could save you from it all," he said, looking at her with the tenderest solicitude.

"Oh, Mr. Woodson, I didn't mean it that way—I wasn't thinking of myself any more than of you." She spoke up in hasty, hurt tone.

"I know well enough you were not looking at it

that way," he replied kindly, "all the same, men are stronger to bear this kind of burden and I would carry them all if I could."

"That you never should," she emphasized lovingly. "What am I your wife for if not to share everything with you!"

The rest of the household continued to wonder why the Southern soldiers were not allowed to come home.

There was one of them who had very little to say. She had fallen into a peculiar fainting spell as soon as she reached Elmwood, after which a complete change had come over her. She had been chatty enough when they fled across the fields from shot and shell like a covey of partridges, the others of the party privately confided. None of them knew aught of her. It was not time to find out even names, though the name she had given of her husband hadn't sounded like "Link," but they could not be sure of anything. They only knew she had been in an ambulance entirely alone except the driver, who had been killed.

All through the friendly intimacy called for by the circumstances and fellow feeling, she had moodily discouraged any approach to overt interest, though civil enough and not ungrateful otherwise. Now, there was plainly more in the dull, heavy eyes than mere impatience and anxiety. In fact, whenever the coming home was mentioned she got into such a flutter of nervousness Mrs. Woodson could not help wondering if her trouble was not incipient epilepsy, and cautioned the family about exciting her. Yet, with such a conglomerate household it was inevitable that someone should forget or be careless. She unfortunately came in on them in the midst of an animated discussion of some news item about

the home-coming brought over by Surgeon Miller, and the result verified Mrs. Woodson's fears.

Mrs. Woodson knew how to do all that could be done for her, as she had had a case among their negroes, and she was generally able to keep a cool head. But on this particular morning, when the song of the katydid was an intolerable torture, this new call upon her nerve force brought an appalling sinking of heart.

As she knelt beside her on the floor watching to see that she did not bite her tongue or bruise her head, a shot suddenly rang out on the air. A moment later Lucy came flying into the house to say somebody had shot Eddie.

The wildest excitement prevailed for a few moments. Mrs. Woodson dropped her face in her hands and burst into uncontrollable sobs, the limit of her powers of endurance had been reached, and, for once in her life she was utterly incapacitated from giving any help. It was only for a moment, however. Meantime, Hyla took her place by the sick woman, anl Miss Phenie ran out to bring Eddie in. Seeing Ide hastily approaching, she called to him to go post haste for the surgeon, then noticed that Mr. Woodson was close behind, for both had heard the shot.

Mr. Woodson was surgeon enough himself to discern that the wound was not a deep one and sent Miss Phenie in with the comforting assurance for his wife while he took charge of the child.

Mrs. Woodson had completely recovered herself by the time she had her child in her arms, and then Mr. Woodson went back out doors to make some effort, with Ide's help, to ferret out the source and significance of the shot.

When the surgeon arrived he dressed the wound, which, though slight, was made by a minnie ball,

and directly across the top of the head as he stood in the yard. A very little bit lower and it would most likely have proved fatal. When Dr. Miller had given the mother cheerful encouragement and left the little patient comfortable, he rejoined Mr. Woodson and Ide in the search for the individual who had fired the gun. His earnest gravity showed how fully he appreciated the occasion.

Mr. Woodson's keen hearing had traced the sound to Scott's cabin, and Ide was sent on ahead to see who was there. He met them at the door with a puzzled face. "There isn't a living soul in the cabin nor sign of a gun, and the doors all closed," he said.

It was true Scott himself had been working with the rest all morning, under Mr. Woodson's eye. While Tom, the eldest son, had been sent to the garden in his daddy's place. They sent to the kitchen for Suky to ask who had been left in the cabin?

"Nary soul, Marse Tom, 'fore de Lord, cep'in' little Sam."

"Sam! Sam! whar is you, boy? Don' yer be a-hidie nowhars,—kase when Marse Tom wants yer, yer knows yer got ter come! Come 'long out here, Sam! don' yer hear me!"

All the while she was shuffling around the room in aimless excitement, looking into all manner of possible and impossible places, evidently beginning to get a little "flustrated" herself, to use her own word, lest the boy should have shot himself.

Dr. Miller watched her curiously; Ide aided in the search, while Mr. Woodson stepped outside again to see if he could find the exit of the ball.

The house was a curiously constructed one, weatherboarded, with a huge brick chimney in the center giving a large corner fireplace in each of the four rooms, but there was no communication between

the rooms. In Suky's room was a good sized closet which was but little used except as a catchall for cast-offs.

The small hole Mr. Woodson found in the outer wall of the house was from this closet.

They all thought Suky looked a little sheepish when his discovery was announced. And in connection with the fact that she had not looked in the closet herself, it looked very much as if she had connived at the deed. Ide started for it at once, but Mr. Woodson waived him aside and went himself, fully expecting somebody, Lige perhaps, to bolt out as he opened the door.

Instead, they saw only a poor little dazed, terror-stricken child, cowering back into the darkest shadows, the gun on the floor as far from him as possible.

Aunt Suky sank to the floor and covered her head with her apron, while little Sam plead:

"Don' beat me no more, Marse Tom! De Lord done beat me twell I done most daede. Don' beat me no more, I ain' nuver gwine ter tech no guns no more!"

They gradually got him quieted, and, little by little, got from him the story which was about this:

His brother Tom had brought several minnie rifles from the battlefield and told Sam with great exultation, that just as soon as he got a chance he was going hunting and be like white folks. This talk had inspired in little Sam the most intense desire to fire off one of those guns. He listened eagerly as Tom and his daddy took them out at night and discussed how they were to be loaded and how fired and reloaded. He secretly put a mark of his own on the one his daddy said was loaded.

Every chance he got he went into the closet to

gaze at it and rub his hand up and down the barrel or to pick it up carefully in his hands and put it on his shoulder as he had seen them do.

When he found himself left alone in the cabin that morning he could no longer resist the temptation. Into the closet he went, closing the door behind him and shutting himself up in the pitchy darkness "so as nobody woulden' know," and putting the barrel against the outer wall, "so's nobody couldn't hear" he pulled the trigger. That minute "de han' o' de Lord" hit him so hard it like to have killed him.

"Daddy done tole me not to tech dem tings," he repeated in superstitious agitation.

And no one tried to disabuse his mind of the superstition, thinking it might prove a wholesome warning when there was no other restraint.

CHAPTER XVII.

RECORDS TWO DEATHS.

The encouraging news which Surgeon Miller had brought Friday morning was that nearly all of Lee's army had received their parole and might be expected home any day.

So much excitement had followed in close connection with it, there had hardly been opportunity to take in the joy of it.

Mrs. Weith's quiet, patient face showed a new light, and Hyla's was ablaze with it. The dimples laughed, the eyes shone, the mouth rippled with anticipative smiles, just as if the war had not ended the wrong way.

Yes, although we often gave loose rein to the wild hopes centered in Joe Johnston and his faithful little remnant and claimed that the Confederacy still lived in him, yet in our sober moments clearer-eyed reason pelted us with the improbability of his being able to cope with the whole of Grant's army when he had failed, with his inefficient force, to make any stand against Sherman alone.

Abby was much concerned to see that her mother got a good rest and that nothing was neglected in consequence, but in her bright blue eyes might have been discovered an uncertain gleam of veiled expectancy. Snatches of the song, " Douglass, Tender and True," floated involuntarily across her lips. But she went about her duties with nothing to say on the subject. She had neither father, brother nor

husband among the soldiers, what right had she to be glad!

Miss Phenie had a brother with Johnston. Hence the relief of its being all over was not yet for her. But all had many friends with Lee and might hope to see some of them.

The jubilance among the refugeeing soldiers' wives was unmixed.

A feeling of "times can't be worse and might be better" prevailed.

Mrs. Link was still acting queerly. After she recovered from her spell she expressed no pleasure and but small gratitude.

Moreover, she suffered herself to get into the greatest state of excitement over the problem of getting home. So much so, they feared she would bring on another attack. Her husband, she said, knew nothing of her leaving, and would naturally seek her where he had left her. And he ***must not find her absent.***

She emphasized this point with increasing anxiety. She beset Mr. Woodson every time she caught sight of him to tell her of some way she could get to Richmond at once.

The difficulty was, she had no money, for Confederate notes were nothing more than paper any longer, and he had nothing else to give or lend her. If he had known who she really was it would have been no less of a care, but of a very different character.

We went to bed that Friday night in a sort of reactionary calm after an exciting day. With many of us exhausted nature was demanding rest.

"I think we have made a mistake," Mrs. Woodson said to her husband that night before retiring, "in permitting ourselves to become so anxious and worried when, now of all the periods of our lives, we

should be simply doing the best we can each moment and leaving the rest trustfully in God's hands, knowing he holds the reins of every event and will never let them go, nor forget."

"You are right, Sue, as you generally are," he replied heartily. And on that pillow of faith they slept soundly that night.

Alas, each moment we allowed ourselves to drop into temporary ease or comparative relief seemed to prove itself but the lull before the storm, or the precursor of a volcanic eruption.

By noon on Saturday news had reached us of the assassination of Lincoln.

It caused among us, for the moment, the wildest exuberance of delight. We imagined that in some mysterious way the result of his death would be another revolution of fortune's wheel which would bring the Confederacy right side up again. It may seem a childishly blind unreason, looking back at it from now, for I suppose the dullest and most hot headed of Southerners has long ago realized that the deed of the assassin was the worst thing which could have happened to us, bringing forth the most poignant peril of the hour. But then, as Lincoln was regarded all through the North as the type and promise of successful Abolitionism,—the man who was by his personal influence to carry to a finish the war against slavery,—in like manner to the South he was the embodied cause of all the disasters the war had brought on us,—a type of tyranny and oppression.

Dr. Miller looked as glum as possible when he told it. I am afraid we were not as considerate of him as he had uniformly been of us. The truth is we had been in such a state of repression for two weeks that even with a deceptive uplift we were like a bottle of champagne with the cork taken out.

However, second thoughts came. We remembered we were already conquered; we had no soldiers save the little squad with Johnston. And Mr. Woodson, even before he had talked the matter over dispassionately with Dr. Miller, realized the damage it might do the South in the minds of her enemies.

It was positively absurd to see how the negroes subsided for a spell. They evidently thought the jig was up with them, and expected to go right back into slavery. A few who had been uncommonly high-headed and impertinent ran off, making for the border line by way of ensuring their own liberty. They soon found, no doubt, it was liberty to work or starve, as it would have been anywhere else. The rest stuck to the land which had been promised them as compensation for their former slavery.

Whether that alone was the secret of their loyalty, who could tell?

One pitiful incident which occurred about this time really saddened us all. "Granny Meg," who for fifteen years or more had been "retired from work," been allowed the whole time of her granddaughter to wait on her and do her bidding, and had had her dinner sent from the house every day, had mysteriously disappeared.

She had been particularly "poorly" of late, subject to violent attacks of cramp colic. Many a half night Mr. and Mrs. Woodson had spent working over her until she was relieved. And this was the poor old creature who had, as it appeared, betaken herself off.

Maria at first persistently declared she knew not what had become of her. That granny had sent her out for something and when she came back granny was gone. But by patient perseverance with the child they finally got an inkling of the truth. Though not until the dead body of the wretched creature had

been washed ashore from the river some distance below the ford.

Maria was only a child. And yet it had been so strongly impressed upon her to keep her tongue with regard to that night meeting, that, with the vivid imagination of her race, she told the story something after this wise.

Granny had heard an angel calling her and had gone out in the pines to meet him. There she had been told, she could never be "free sure 'nough lek de whet folks, twell she got clean shet ov her ole whet folks. En ef she'd ax de government dey'd giv 'er a lot o' money en a fin' house en all. So she ax me, was I gwine wid 'er? En I say, yas, ef she 'low me ter liv' in her fin' house, too? So she say, yas. Den I holps her along.

"Den we gits to de river. En de river, hit so high en so deep, I gits skeert. I say, les' go back to de cabin. But granny say, 'naw, you fool nigger, look en see ef dey ain' no boat a-comin?' I say, 'naw, dey ain' no boat nowhars.

"Den granny lif up her han's and cry out loud, 'De Lord will sen' His angels ter deliver me!' en wid dat she walk right in de river a-callin' to me to come wid her. But I skeert o' it. Ain' no angel talk ter me, en I fear'd ter go in de deep water. En when I see de water a-comin' up clean up ober her head en hear her a-holerin' lek she was skeert, too, I ses to mysef', 'De angel carn' carry two en us, en ef I go, he mout drap granny,' so I runs back ter de cabin hard es ever I kin run, so ez granny won't feel sorry fer me."

This was her story. And nobody chided the child, what was the use? She could not have done any more for her granny when the old woman was intent

upon risking her life for freedom and superstition. Moreover, the child was perfectly unconscious of any lack of truth in her narrative. And that was the pathetic end of poor old Granny Meg.

CHAPTER XVIII.

COMING HOME.

The happy day came at last when we saw the dear old gray coats emerging from the woods where the big gate had once been.

Fortunately Mrs. Link had gotten off the day before. Mr. Woodson having learned that Mr. Lockett was going to drive Dr. Miller down to Richmond, asked permission for her to go with them, which was readily granted. There was no baggage to encumber the arrangement, and as she seemed so intent upon going they were glad to see her start under such propitious circumstances.

Doubly rejoiced when they found how nearly she had missed the home-coming soldiers.

Miss Phenie, Abby, Hazel and Hyla were sitting in Miss Phenie's front room upstairs chatting and wondering over her strange character and reticence when Abby, whose face was toward the window, suddenly started, gazed, clapped her hands and sprang to her feet, with a joyful exclamation.

Yes, there they were,—two of them, and the news was soon ringing through the house: "The Confederates are coming!"

Hyla kept her post long enough to be sure one of them was her father, and then went to tell her mother.

Dear little Mrs. Weith. One never suspected how much she was suffering or enduring until the cause was removed. In the first place she was very deaf.

All general conversation was lost to her. Often when all around her would be absorbed in some interesting bit of news, she would sit with quietly folded hands looking from one to the other with the pathetic, wistful smile of one trying to resign herself to being outside of everything, until Hyla bethought herself, which she was never long in doing, to explain what the conversation was about. She often bemoaned the burden her deafness and ill health laid upon Hyla's young shoulders. Yet, with all her helplessness and dependence, none other could have gently influenced and molded Hyla into the beautiful, unselfish character she was.

Number two of the Confederate soldiers was Mr. Hodgens. The last he had seen of his wife had been awhile before the battle of Sayler's Creek. Hence he was retracing his steps to that point to see if he could learn anything of her whereabouts when he ran across Col. Weith, who thought from his descriptions he could help him find her.

Mrs. Hodgens' parents lived in Charlotte county, so, after taking a day to rest and talk it over, they concluded the best thing they could do was to get on his horse, double, and try to get to them where she could be left until he should go to their home in Portsmouth and see what was left of it and what he could get to do for a living. Thus another vacancy was left in the full household. Each day had its own exciting interest now, somebody's husband or father coming or being heard from, making first one then another glad until all of the Sayler's Creek refugees had gone their several ways except Mrs. Weith and Hyla.

Col. Weith, seeing the condition of things left by Grant's army, was considerably worried to be obliged to trespass still a little longer on such generous hos-

pitality. He was but little accustomed to incurring obligations which he could not see his way clearly to cancelling. But, as Mr. and Mrs. Woodson told him, "They were all together in that box." Besides, the services he had rendered their mutual country cancelled all obligations like this. And Mrs. Woodson added with her kindly smile, "Hyla's bright face and the soothing comfort of the mother's gentle ways and counsels would pay their way anywhere."

Hence it was decided, considering the uncertainty of what he should find at the old home, and the impossibility of his carrying both with him, that they should remain where they were for the present.

All this time not one word had been heard from a single one of the Louisiana soldiers. Abby began to feel great sympathy for Pansy. People in general had so little faith in soldiers' love-making a girl would hesitate to confide her anxieties and racking suspense even to her own mother, though she might between girl and girl. "Poor child, I wish I could see her!"

Abby sighed out of a full heart. I believe I will get papa to take me over there this afternoon."

But all the day her father was unusually busy. There seemed not the remotest prospect of being able to accomplish her desire.

About five o'clock they heard the old signal call from Pansy, and, rushing to the window, saw her coming down the hill with a gray-coated soldier. They knew it could be none other than Mr. Monnot, and feeling sure now of news from the rest, got permission to meet them at the accustomed trysting place.

Permission was given with some reluctance, however, and only on condition that Mr. Monnot would watch them to the brow of the home hill, back. Even

then, their mother kept a sharp lookout in that direction until their return.

One would only need to look in Pansy's blushing, happy face to know who was beside her. Mr. Monnot had only arrived that morning and was to leave for his home in the South the next, but could not go without giving them what news he could of their friends. He had calculated with certainty on having at least two of the boys to accompany him, but supposed they had not received sufficient encouragement. And he looked pointedly at Abby and Miss Phenie. Lieut. Molère and Mr. Breau might have come anyway except for the horses allotted them being so fearfully fagged it was doubtful if they would carry their riders within reach of the train for home. They had charged him with many messages of love, again he looked laughingly at Miss Phenie, and kind remembrance.

"We should not be too quick to judge others by ourselves," she retorted, mischievously. "But what of Sergeant Demesmé? Did he go home too, and send us no message either?"

It was Miss Phenie who asked the question, yet Mr. Monnot looked at Abby as he answered, unconsciously dropping his voice until it was scarcely audible save to her: "He sent his horse to you, Miss Abby,—the one you rode. He was in my tent the night before the skirmish and told me of your fearlessness when no woman had ever mounted it before. He said he wanted you to have it if——" then speaking a little louder and looking away from her, as if his heart failed him,—"I am sorry to bring such unsatisfactory tidings of our friend. Sergeant Demesmé went with us into a skirmish this side of Appomattox Courthouse on April 9, and we never saw him again."

"Killed!" breathed Abby, in horror.

"Not necessarily,' he replied, in as light a tone as he could assume, "for we could not find his body. He may have been wounded and taken prisoner, or that vicious little Mexican pony may have run off and thrown him near some farmhouse, or, as some of the boys think most likely, he may have gotten wind of the surrender and sneaked out of it. There are a great many such contingencies in war, all of which are covered by the missing list."

"Then you think he will most likely come back later?" said Miss Phenie, a little doubtfully.

"Yes, I believe he will. You have no idea of the confusion which prevailed from the time we left Farmville. The rain and slush,—it was almost more than the starving horses could do to pull the guns through it,—for neither men nor horses received rations after leaving Farmville, and the enemy would strike in on us at the most unexpected times and places. The wonder is not that some are missing, but that many more are not."

Abby sat on a rock nearest the creek, her fingers dabbling idly in the water and her eyes following her fingers. The firm pressure of the lips could not conceal the girl's wounded heart. Though in truth she knew not the half contained in the little word "missing." Hope that struggles with undefined fears —love beaten down by suspense—days, months, years flowing into each other until nothing is left save one great unsatisfied longing. She could learn it all only through days that lead to despair.

There was nothing sadder during the war than to have hopes and fears answered with an item of the missing list.

Mr. Monnot had turned back to Abby, when he paused as if there were something else he wanted to

tell to her alone. But again his courage failed him. He only said:

"I am going to ride your horse to the train tomorrow and then Mr. Lockett will bring it over to you."

"My horse!" she repeated, with a sweet, misleading smile.

As they ran back to the house with Mr. Monnot and Pansy watching them from the creek and Mrs. Woodson from the porch, Abby was strangely silent. She who had been so full of the joy of the homecomings had so little to say, her mother and Miss Phenie sometimes looked at her wonderingly.

When the horse came her mood changed again.

She had been a dear lover of horses from a child, and it had been a good while since she had had one of her very own.

Her greatest delight was to feed it with her own hands every day. She would suffer no one else to curry or do anything for it. Occasionally when her father was sitting on the front porch she would mount and ride it back and forth as far as she could without going out of sight.

But nothing more was ever heard of Sergeant Demesmé.

CHAPTER XIX.

PAUL AT LAST.

To Ide's very great relief, Lieut. Danklin found some necessity for taking a trip north about the time of the home-coming of the Southern soldiers.

"Gone to Washington on business," the "madam" said.

Ide did not question nor care what the business was. He was only too glad to get rid of him, so that Paul would not need to come home and find him there, occupying his old room. He expected an angry protest from "the madam" when he began to straighten it up for Paul. But she only tossed her head and made a contemptuous face, as much as to say, "You are only wasting your time."

However, this did not worry Ide one whit. He felt certain if Paul could only get there and be safely installed in his old familiar quarters during the absense of the intruder, they could snap their fingers at him and all would be well.

He enlisted the assistance of Mose by the gift of some of Paul's old clothes and got him to bring his mammy up to see about the bed. They hunted up all of Paul's belongings, which had been wofully scattered during his four years of absence, and reinstated them, as far as they could.

Mr. Carrington was enjoying this brief respite fully as much as Ide, and looking on with as much zeal as Mose and Ide were working. As the preparations progressed, his face really seemed to regain somewhat of its former easy content.

Ide was mindful, in order to give no cause for trouble, to fit up the guest chamber for Lieut. Danklin with only a little less care than was expended on Paul's. Busy as he was over all these preparations, Ide did not begin to realize, until all was done, that Paul was very slow in coming to enjoy them.

All the other soldiers of the neighborhood had returned,—every other home which had any soldier to expect had been gladdened, and still no word had come from Paul, not a line to say whether he had survived the peril of those last dreadful days. And now that everything was ready, even to a clean towel on the washstand, and there was leisure of eye and ear for outside happenings, Ide began to wonder at the delay, to fret considerably under the suspense, to grow more and more anxious as day after day passed. The whistling which had almost ceased for awhile those few days when things were so topsy-turvy and contrarywise, had greeted his father's ears again with the old gladsome ring all through the season of bustling expectancy. But now there began to be a strain of sadness in it—the echo, as it were, of hope deferred. Ide concluded, at last, he would go down to his Uncle Tom's, where he generally found encouragement in some shape or form. It was just barely possible they had heard news of Paul through some returning soldier, and, as opportunities of communication were limited, might be waiting for him to come for it. Freighted with this thought, the whistling dropped into a low, happy monotone. As he neared the house it stopped with a start.

On the side porch a Confederate soldier stood, leaning against the pillar. The height was Paul's, the square, straight shoulders, and there,—that toss of the forelock like a mettled thoroughbred,—the

bending of the head forward and a little to one side, —surely it could be none other.

The soldier was talking to Abby and Hyla and Miss Phenie.

Ide gave a little sigh for himself and stopped to watch them a moment. He was near enough now to notice how Hyla looked up at him, laughing and bright as was her nature, and how winsomely affectionate Abby was, and with what flattering deference Miss Phenie listened to whatever he had to say. Though, strangely enough, he was saying but little. Looking away from them all, he was gazing moodily off toward the river. Presently the girls began to laugh, and then they went into the house. Thereupon Ide, with another sigh, began to whistle.

"You're a great one, now, aren't you?" Ide exclaimed, clapping him on the shoulder and gazing hungrily into his eyes. "Here I've been looking for you and fixing up for you all this time, and you having a good time with the girls and forgetting all about your lonesome little brother."

A dark red flushed the brown of Paul's face as he laughingly defended himself:

"I've just this minute arrived, laddy, and was coming straight home. Being an honest man, I was obliged to come by the old place and return the surgeon's horse, which, you remember, I borrowed rather unceremoniously. Then, I thought I would be just as likely to find you here as anywhere, eh, little brother?"

"That's a fact. But, you see, this time I had to be at home getting ready for you."

"You surely did not need to do any getting ready for me," said Paul, rather puzzling over the idea.

"Didn't I, though? Wait and see. But don't ex-

pect too much. You might find it only middling and greens after all."

"Well, you are both going to take middling and greens with me," interposed Mrs. Woodson hospitably, "and I can give you in addition some good buttermilk and butter, which few others can boast. There were very few cows left in the neighborhood, Paul. You did keep yours, I believe, Ide, though I expect your mother knows little about butter making."

"That's right. At least, if she knows, she doesn't let on."

They stayed—there was nothing to hinder particularly,—until the day began to wane, and the Woodsons had told all their experiences during the passing of the Northern army. Then Ide began to fear his father would worry. "He forgets to be impatient," Ide told his brother, "as long as he can sit out under the trees and read, but when the light fails him and he has to go in with nothing to do, then he will get to thinking about his boys and wonder why you do not come."

"Nobody knows how I dread to go back. Is the old dragoness as hateful as ever?"

Paul spoke with the same boyish intolerance which had made him so quick to seize the relief of volunteering. Yet now it was only a passing wrinkle. The closing of the war, to most of the soldiers, meant the beginning of life all over again. And it was doubly hard because in such new and unfamiliar conditions.

Paul's question had intensified the debate which had been going on as an undercurrent in Ide's mind ever since they started from Elmwood. Should he tell Paul how things had been going at home these latter days, or leave him to find out for himself, lit-

tle by little? The question virtually decided the matter, even though the questioner did not appear particularly exacting as to the answer.

" 'The madam' is only half the plague now," Idè said, with a grunt.

"What do you mean?" Paul asked, his indignation firing at the very suggestion in Ide's tone.

"I mean, we have the honor of having as an inmate of our house, and the friend of the madam, the very same Yankee lieutenant who gave Aunt Sue such good advice concerning her silver, as they have just been telling you."

"What's he doing at our house?"

Ide's whole face became one big, sarcastic interrogation point.

"Ask the madam. They are birds of a feather, and from the same state."

Paul laughed, but almost immediately subsided into a "what does it matter" listlessness. Presently he roused himself and asked: "How does father like it?"

"Poor father!—Paul, I am afraid you will find father much older since you saw him."

"No doubt." And Paul looked at his sturdy, manly young brother with a strong feeling of self-reproach. But Ide went on unnoting:

"I'm glad the old Yank had occasion to take a trip at this time. I have been dreadfully uneasy lest he should get back before you came. But I am thankful to say he hasn't."

"There is no need to tell him," Ide's thoughts went on, "about the villain's taking possession of his room and the madam's letting him do it. We have got to stand things and there is no good in making them harder."

Paul's thoughts had also traveled on. But they

only seemed to lose themselves in a quagmire of impossibilities.

"Little brother," he spoke with the tenderest affection, yet with a very evident embarrassment. They had stopped at the foot of the steps, Ide to look with anxious concern toward the stable where his quick ear detected the sound of more stamping feet than ought to be there; and Paul to ease his mind of some burdensome secret or confession.

Paul, preoccupied with this, did not notice Ide's interrupted attention. As soon as he could control himself, he went on:

"Little brother, I have something to tell you, also. And I had better do it here and now. I am married."

If Paul had struck Ide in the face with his fist he would not have surprised or hurt him more.

"Miss Hyla?" The question came impromptu from the boy's lips, yet he ended in a deprecating tone for he realized that Paul was not speaking like a very happy bridegroom, and was now shaking his head in embarrassed negative.

"It's all right, anyhow, whoever it is," the boy added, making a vigorous effort to speak with his old cheeriness, "and tonight, or some time you'll tell me all about it?"

"Yes,—I'll tell you all about it,—some time." Paul echoed dejectedly. "But don't mention it to any one else,—yet."

If Ide had been any other than the boy he was he could not so lightly have thrown aside the blow, to spring up the steps with apparent lightheartedness calling on Paul to follow.

As they entered the door, an unaccountable confusion and bustle about the house made the lad's heart sink within him. His father's crestfallen countenance and the smirk of the madam confirmed his

utmost fears. It was quite evident Lieut. Danklin had returned. Yet his worst apprehensions did not reach the whole truth. The man had coolly re-established himself in Paul's room, ousting Paul's possessions as far as suited him, leaving them piled in confusion in the hall, and put a friend of his who had returned with him into the guest chamber.

CHAPTER XX.

"THE BEST LAID PLANS."

Ide was an uncommonly good natured lad, but this was a little too much for him. After all the trouble he had taken—to have Paul come home and find it thus.

The last straw was to hear Dan snickering as he dodged into Paul's room to carry something to the interloper.

For a few moments the boy stood there in the throes of such a tempest of passion as he did not know he was capable of. He vowed he would burn the house down rather than it should shelter such a demon incarnate. However, it did not take long for his wrath to boil over and cool down. When Paul came and stood beside him and laid his hand lovingly on him, saying:

"What does it matter, little brother? We must not let these things trouble us." For a moment or two Ide swallowed desperately, unable to control the desire to put his head down on Paul's shoulder and cry out all his troubles as he had used to do when his mother's empty place was new and strange. But Paul went on:

"We can just go into your room and stay together and see all the more of each other,—for the little while I am here."

This gave Ide two nuts to bite on which effectually banished all other thoughts. In the first place, what was Paul going to do with his wife if they were to

share the same room? and then, quickly following, the hint that his home-coming was only temporary after all. Nevertheless, he could whistle right cheerily while removing the furniture and small articles belonging to Paul from the hall into his own room. There were still some things remaining in the disputed apartment, perhaps purposely retained for personal use. Now, Ide did not propose for a moment, to sustain that proposition. He tried to induce Dan to bring them out to him right under the Lieutenant's nose. But Dan positively refused, temporizing adroitly:

"Don' ax me, Marse Ide; I darsn't, not fer nuttin in de worl'. I skeert o' dat man, Marse Ide. He dun say, ef we alls don' min' 'im, he'll brung some sojers down here en kill us. Dat wat he say, Marse Ide, en I darsen' mek 'im mad."

"And they pretend to have come down here to free the slaves," exclaimed Ide in unmixed contempt. "You never feared us that way!"

But the point of this contrast was lost on Dan, who only said, "Naw, sir!" and slipped out of sight, leaving Ide to reflect at his leisure on the unreasonableness of the present state of affairs.

"It's none of our business, anyway," Paul smoothed him down. "They have conquered us, we can't gainsay it, and we must e'en submit as best we can to their ways of doing things."

Ide was still determined to have what was their very own.

So the first time the Lieutenant left his room, Ide walked in and, with his own hands, carried out every article which belonged either to Paul or himself.

Among other things, there was a set of books—some half a dozen large volumes on ornithology, by Wilson, with illustrations of the birds, their eggs

and their nests, all in the natural size and coloring. This had been greatly prized by the boys, not only for its intrinsic value and interest, but because it had belonged to their mother's father, who had been a personal friend of the author of the work.

This was one of the articles either intentionally or otherwise retained by the Lieutenant, and the one which Ide was most intent upon recovering. Ide did not really think the man would make any objections, for the Northern soldiery of whom they had had experience in that part of the country had not seemed to have much respect for books, nor any covetous desire for them.

Anyway, loving them as Ide did, it gave him immense satisfaction to pile them up in one corner of his own room.

It was touching to see Paul and his father together. As Ide had feared, it had been a great shock to the older brother to find how childish the old gentleman had grown. It had been coming on gradually for several years, and very much more rapidly in the last few weeks. Ide, being with him constantly, did not realize it to its full extent. If the wife did, she did not say so. Hence Paul was not at all prepared for the change and it affected him deeply.

The three remained together in the dining room until the father's bed time which was early. Paul answered with patient gentleness all the eager, child-like questionings of the old man, telling him such bits of narrative and adventure as he thought would interest him. All the while, Paul was conscious of low droning voices out in the porch. One he knew was his stepmother's, the other he easily surmised was Danklin's. Once while Ide and his father were giving a partnership account of some of their recent

experiences, Paul couldn't help hearing a few sentences of their conversation.

"How'd a pretty gal like you ever chance to marry an old fool like that?"

"I don't know," she simpered. "I guess I was young and silly. And he wasn't old like he is now."

"It's pretty hard on you, bedad if it's not. But you'll not have to wait long for your freedom."

"What do you mean?" in a startled tone, "don't you go to meddling."

Here some appeal from Ide or his father recalled his attention and he lost the rest. What he had heard was enough to fill him with disgust, indignation and anxiety.

The idea of being in the same room with Paul had gained in attractiveness to Ide every hour since it had been proposed. He counted on hearing all about the mysterious wife of whom he was already so madly jealous and yet in whom he seemed to have a sort of proprietary share, inasmuch as nobody was to know of her except themselves.

"He'll tell me this very night as soon as we are alone together," the boy promised himself.

To his great disappointment, Paul slipped out of his clothes, stretched himself out full length on the bed, and, without a word, only a weary sigh, closed his eyes and apparently went to sleep.

There was nothing for Ide to do except to lie down beside him and do likewise.

"Poor fellow, no wonder he is tired!" thought Ide, dropping off to sleep in very deed, for truly his own brave young spirit needed the rest.

Paul, however, was only simulating the unconsciousness which proved slow in coming to him. As soon as he knew from the regular breathing that Ide was lost in the land of dreams he got up and went to

the window. Here he sat and whiled away an hour or two with his eyes wandering over the familiar scenes of his boyhood. He remembered his mother quite well, and what a dear little brother Ide was, and had been ever since. He remembered the promise he had made to his mother to take good care of this dear little brother. Ah, it was Ide, not he, the eldest, who had borne the heat and burden of the day. And recalling the unguarded words he had already heard hinting of shame and dread and danger, it seemed absolutely imperative he should remain at home now and put his shoulder to the wheel and give the support of his manual labor and his personal presence when it was so much needed by his father and Ide. Alas, other responsibilities and dependencies made his duty as absolutely plain to go elsewhere. How utterly selfish his marrying must appear! And the worst of it was there could be no explanation nor self defence without throwing discredit upon one he had promised to honor.

In the midst of these gloomy meditations something attracted or distracted his attention.

A lilac hedge divided the front yard from the kitchen premises.

A slight rustling sound drew his eye, as it were, along this hedge. Where it ended he presently saw a low, stooping figure scarcely distinguishable from a four-footed animal, skit across the road and climb the fence into the orchard.

"Uncle Tom's Lige," he muttered under his breath as the dark form poised for a moment in full light on the top of the fence. The moon was shining so brightly he felt he could not be mistaken. At the same instant the latch of his old room clicked through the midnight stillness of the house.

Like the snap of a camera, the click of that latch

recalled to his mind his one "'possum hunt," when tempted by the enthusiastic narratives of the negroes, he had begged to be allowed to go, and had at length obtained permission for the once, provided he could get back into the house without awaking any one. They had a grand hunt and Uncle Abe promised to save him a piece of the opossum to taste. He had climbed through the kitchen window left open on purpose, and slipped through the house barefoot, confident of having fulfilled his part of the contract when, in closing his own door behind him the provoking old latch had clicked just as now.

It wasn't likely Lieut. Danklin had been enticed into a "'possum hunt." And, if he had been, there were experts in plenty in their own cabins without going after Lige. Besides, Lige never was much of a hunter. The darkies always said he was too mean tempered to handle dogs. Evidently the man was after other game than opossum. What?

CHAPTER XXI.

HOLOCAUST OF BIRD-BOOKS.

When Ide awoke next morning his first thought was one of infinite gladness that Paul was lying asleep by his side. All the time that Paul had been away in the army the "little brother" at home had braced himself for every trial with the hopes of his return; had performed every duty and done everything looking forward to that event. "When Paul comes home!" was to him the imaginary bourne where all troubles and perplexities and cares would drop from him like a discarded garment. Alas! what earthly bliss ever yet came to us in perfect shape?

There is sure to be a nip out of it somewhere, or a worm-eaten core, or a clog limiting the flight Edenwards. So now with Ide, a chill followed the first thrill of exultation. Although so close together,—closer in many ways than ever before, all the same, something had come between them,—a divided individual interest,—which had never been there before.

Ide knew perfectly well it was the wife. Yet it seemed incomprehensible it should be so, when hitherto he had thought of Paul's possible wife only as a sacred, sweet and beautiful idea, which when realized, would bring to the "little brother" only a little less of happiness than to Paul himself.

"Ah, if only I were certain it was making Paul perfectly happy!" mused the lad perplexedly.

As he thought on these things with a new trouble for his already well-loaded young heart, his wide-

awake eyes happened to light on the corner where he had with his own hands bestowed the precious "bird-books." The corner was empty. He sprang out of bed and looked around, thinking Molly, in cleaning, had possibly moved them to some other part of the room. He looked in every practicable nook. Could it be the Lieutenant had ordered them back to his own apartment? But what could he want with them? He was a man of very moderate intelligence, with no sort of interest in books of any kind. He had given no hint of a fancy for nature studies. If he had actually possessed himself of them again there was only one plausible motive to be attributed to him and that was pure, unadulterated meanness. Ide clenched his teeth on the word vindictively, and began dressing in nervous haste, though noiselessly, for fear of waking Paul, wondering at the same time how Paul happened to be making such a long night of it.

Nobody except his father would be about the house at this early hour, and he was glad of it. He spoke to him, then went on down to the stable to see after the horses.

Mose, the stable boy, had been Paul's particular chum as a boy, as Dan had been his. The two had always been sworn friends of their young masters and had helped them out of many a scrape with their stepmother. On the way to the stable, Ide was revolving in his mind the feasibility of getting Mose to help him recover their property, as Dan appeared to be going over to the enemy. But he soon discovered that Mose was in a very surly humor, something most unusual. Instead of responding to his pleasantries as always hitherto, he received them in glum silence and openly resented any suggestion or criticism about his work.

"And you too, Mose!" Ide murmured at length, with a sigh of as bitter hurt as Caesar felt.

By the time he got back to the house Paul was awake and ready to listen to his grievances. But he shook his head when Ide proposed, the first opportunity, to recapture the disputed property.

"He had no right to them!" averred the indignant lad repeatedly. "Except the right of the sword." Paul returned calmly. "We must not allow ourselves to forget, little brother, that we are a conquered people now, and, for the present have no power to resist even the impositions of irresponsible and unprincipled men." Seeing the fire in Ide's eyes was but burning the deeper, he added:

"Things cannot go on this way very long. I think they must of necessity swing round to a juster level, and all we can do is simply to wait with what patience we can, little brother."

His soothing tone and words had no effect whatever. Ide was in a strange mood, for him. His high-strung sense of justice was goading him to recklessness. He could not see the necessity for tamely yielding one's personal rights as between man and man.

"If this is the way they are going to use their victory, they will find we are not so thoroughly subdued as they think," retorted Ide, spunkily. "The Southern people are not going to allow themselves to be treated as dogs. They had better not be too brash. They have not caught Joe Johnston yet."

Paul said no more. He saw plainly that his little brother's views would have to be broadened by a wider contact with the world before he could comprehend the audacity and power of evil.

Ide was still determined to recover his property. However, there was no opportunity that day. Lieut.

Danklin had returned from Washington, empowered as agent of the Freedman's bureau stationed at Farmville to settle all the grievances of the negroes and to be the medium between them and the government for all that part of the county. On that particular day he, apparently, held open court for all the malcontents of the surrounding plantations, and for many who did not know they had cause for discontent until they lent him an unwary ear.

The next day was more propitious. The Lieutenant went to Farmville. "And now," thought Ide, "is my chance!"

So he walked into the room while Molly was cleaning, and carried the books back to his own room once more.

Molly had nothing to say on the subject. But she looked askance at him all the while and did not offer assistance as she once would have done.

With a feeling of some elation he locked the door of his room on them and put the key in his pocket, and, after seeing his father established in the yard with his book they went down to Elmwood for the day. Ide carried his feeling of elation with him and told with great glee of his circumventing the "serpent."

During the recital Paul was silent and anxiously watched the impression it was making upon Mr. and Mrs. Woodson.

Both were gravely shaking their heads, though the young people were applauding with great relish. At length Mr. Woodson said warningly: "If you do not take care you will get yourself into trouble, Ide."

But the boy only laughed, with the confidence of his sixteen years, and turned more exclusively to the younger members of the family whose flattering appreciation of his position was more congenial.

The good friends at Elmwood persuaded Paul to remain to tea, but Ide felt he must get back to look after his father. Besides, he was rather eager to enjoy his triumph.

His whistle had never been merrier than as he trudged along the footpath across the fields, familiar to him from boyhood.

When he reached home he talked a while to his father, then went up to his room for some purpose. As he came out and was about to close and lock the door again after him, Lieut. Danklin faced him with the imperious hauteur of a Turkish sultan, and ordered him to bring those books he had taken from his room and put them back where he got them.

"I'll not do it," Ide replied fearlessly, though the other had three soldiers at his back. "They are our books, not yours, it was you who stole them from our room."

"I'll teach you a lesson, you impertinent young puppy! On the witness of these soldiers of the United States of America, I charge and convict you of contempt of United States authority, with penalty of fine of fifty dollars in gold or confiscation of property to that amount."

Under this turn of affairs Ide wilted as completely and instantaneously as a vigorous young sapling under the stroke of lightning. He answered not a word. He saw as in a helpless trance the confiscation of his beloved "bird-books" for he had not a dollar to pay the charges so ruthlessly brought against him. He saw Mose and Dan and Molly ordered to come in and carry them out into the road, pour a can of coal oil over them and set fire to them. They did not hinder him from following to see what they were going to do. And felt no relenting nor pity when he sat down against a cabin chimney and covered his

face with his hands. His battle was fought and ended there. He thenceforth put himself on parole with the rest of the soldiers to submit to the inevitable as best he might.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE BEGINNING OF IDE'S FORTUNE.

When Paul came home at bedtime, the poignant sting of Ide's own sorrow was past, and he was ready to soften the details in rehearsing them to his brother. But, with his heart "at leisure from itself," he soon discovered from Paul's distrait manner that some greater burden was weighing upon him. When they went to their room that night it was divulged.

When the armies left Richmond his wife, whose only home was there, was so unwilling to remain that he had given her an extra horse he had captured to put into an ambulance and follow the army. By the time they reached Amelia C. H., Paul realized what severe hardships might be in store for her on this trip, and, as they took their last meal together there, he begged her to return to a farmhouse near Richmond, where she had been cordially invited and urged to remain. She agreed to do so, and Paul of course thought she had, and as soon as he could after the surrender he had gone back there expecting to find her, but was told she had left with the army and had not returned.

He then went to Richmond, to the house where she had formerly lived in hopes of learning something of her but, finding no trace, after knocking around the city all of two days, he had followed the next line of duty, which was to return the surgeon's horse and see his father and brother. During his

visit to Elmwood that day, some of the family had given a vivid description of "Mrs. Link," and he strongly suspected her to have been his wife. Though why she had given another name than her own, and why she had not made herself known to him when he was there, if she saw and recognized him, and why she had been in such a flurry to get back to Richmond before he came home, were things he could not at all understand. Nor could he imagine what had become of her. But the duty was still clear, he must return to the city and renew his search for her.

And *this* woman was Paul's wife! so queer and unattractive! ridiculed by all the others, and at least ten or twenty years older than he!

Ide was glad there was not a ray of light in the room to betray his utter consternation. It was a complete downfall of all the pretty romances he had built up around the idea of Paul's marrying.

"And now, 'little brother,'" Paul ended, "there is something you can do for me,—that I cannot very well do for myself under the circumstances. I want you to go over to Mr. Lockett's and find out either from him or Surgeon Miller, the number and street as nearly as they can remember, at which they left the so-called Mrs. Link."

He did not ask if Ide had seen her or what he thought of her. In fact he appeared but little concerned on that point. So Ide did not need to do more than simply to reply:

"Why, yes, Paul, I'll be glad to go over and find out for you."

"And without giving my secret away, yet awhile, you remember, little brother?"

"Yes, I'll remember," Ide replied, feeling the deepest sympathy in his brother's evident mortification.

Then another difficulty presented itself.

"But, Paul, even when you know, how will you get to Richmond with no money and no horse?"

"The soldiers walked from there, many of them, all the way to Appomattox, and what others have done I can do."

"And then, if you find your wife,—how will you live?" the boy asked anxiously.

"I must find something to do,—or bring her here," he replied, drearily.

Thus the conversation ended for the night.

Ide was awake and hustling around for some breakfast at an early hour next morning. He had large plans for the day. Large, at least, in the sense of vagueness or indefiniteness. The message scribbled on a scrap of brown paper and left where Paul's eye would be sure to see it, merely said he would be gone all day and would try to accomplish the little errand for him before returning. Naturally, Paul supposed he had betaken himself again to Elmwood, though he could not find any satisfactory reason for his going back so soon. Still, Paul had too much on his mind to waste much thought on the matter. Ide was all right wherever he might go or be. So he devoted himself to taking his place in the home, principally in looking after their father.

For the rest he left his thoughts to work perplexedly on the problems of his own life.

Meantime Ide's sturdy bare feet were trudging along the road to Rice's. He had before him one very clearly defined object, and it was to earn some silver or greenback money, or a horse, or both. He did not know how it was to be done. Only this was positively certain: It was the Yankees who had all the money there was in the country, and if any was to be gotten it would have to be gotten of them.

From daily, rasping contact with one specimen of the genus (or perhaps we should say two), an unsuspected rancor had been developed in his, for the most part, genial and sunny disposition.

But it had pretty well burnt itself out in the last mortal combat with Lieut. Danklin the day before. His merry, care-free whistle betokened a soul once more at peace with itself and with all the world, and ready to make the best of whatever came.

"Hello, Bub! going my way? jump up behind and I'll give you a lift."

There was no mistaking the nasal twang any more than the blue coat. But Ide stumbled at neither. He sprang up with the agility of a monkey and the conciliatory remark:

"This is a good horse you are riding."

"You bet!" Then after a moment: "I guess you're not one of the stuck up rebels that think they are too fine grain to hobnob with a Yank, hey? Just the good, sensible boy I took you for. You're right, sonny. I take it, there's no good in keeping up the quarrel when the fighting's all done. How far are you going?"

"To Rice's."

"So'm I. Take the train to Richmond?"

"No, I am going to the depot to see if I cannot earn some silver some way. You soldiers have left this part of the country pretty flat and bare. Everything gone and no money to pay for a fresh supply." Ide said this with easy good nature.

"That's a fact, Bub, ha! ha! ha! You're the right stuff, sure! And what do you think you are going to do?"

"Hold horses, black boots, cook the dinner,—I can do most anything anybody else can."

"By jolly, you are as plucky as a Yankee, and I'll help you all I can."

Ide had been to Rice's several times for news and had always found a good many of the Union soldiers there, some departing, some arriving, and some stationed there on guard. For that reason he thought it would be a good place to pick up a nest egg for the foundation of his fortune. Though in truth it was not for himself at all, but for Paul, he wanted money first.

To see him start off to Richmond on foot without a dime in his pocket to buy himself a lunch when he got there, was more than Ide could stand.

It was quite a joke to the Union soldiers to have a little rebel voluntarily working for them. Hence they made up a number of jobs and ordered him around promiscuously. As long as Ide was able to keep it on a joking level it did not touch the quick of his Southern pride. And, anyway, he had made up his mind to put pride in his pocket until he had accomplished his purpose. Besides, they paid him well for every turn he took in their service in genuine silver coins, and at his own prices, so he had no reason to resent their bossing. By noon he had a goodly little sum in his pocket, and sat down to eat the lunch he had brought in great good humor.

"Say, Buddy," called one of a group of soldiers around a fire. "Come here and learn us to make Johnny cakes!"

"I don't know about Johnny cakes, but I can show you how to make ash-cakes if you have any meal!"

They supplied him with meal, salt and water, and he mixed it and worked it well with his hands, then moulded and patted it into big flat cakes and covered it up in a bed of redhot ashes. The soldiers had

gathered around, watching the operation with incredulous criticisms. But when he took out the thoroughly baked bread, washed the ashes off and handed each a piece to taste, they vowed they had never eaten such corn bread before, did not know anything so good could be made out of corn meal.

So they had him make more, and each of the squad had to have a try at the expert little pats and rolling catches which Ide had learned by long watching and imitating of "Mammy Nora," Dan's mammy, who was their cook.

This was the beginning of quite a little trade for Ide. His reputation spread from one to another, so that whenever he went up to Rice's he could earn a nickel apiece for every ash cake he would bake.

CHAPTER XXIII.

EVIL COUNSEL.

From Rice's depot Ide went on over to Mr. Lockett's.

He was very fond of Pansy, as indeed everybody was, and curious like the rest of her friends to know whether she had heard from Mr. Monnot or whether the love affair between them had proved, as had so often been predicted, only a "romance of the war."

"O, yes, I have heard from him," she told Ide, blushing prettily, "but he reports a condition of dire confusion and poverty down there and he doesn't know when he will be able even to get to see me again." Her face was ashine with a woman's faith and loyalty. And Ide, boy that he was, wondered if a man would have the heart to disappoint her. The words he spoke in frivolous jest and teasing were the very language of these questionings, veiled under a laugh.

Ide did not forget the mission which had brought him over there, and he easily obtained the desired information for his brother.

He learned in addition that Surgeon Miller would be going to Richmond again within a day or two, and had been enquiring if there was any one in the neighborhood who would like to go with him, for the railroad had not yet been repaired. The invitation was extended to Ide, and it would indeed have been a grand treat to him, who had never been to Richmond in his life nor any other where more dis-

tant or important than Farmville. But Ide could not think of his own pleasure at that time.

He declined on the score of having "other fish to fry," and laughingly told the Locketts of his prospect of making a fortune out of the surplus nickels, dimes and quarters of the Yankee soldiers at Rice's, and of their absurd enthusiasm over his ash-cakes. He promised to let them know if he heard of any one desiring the jaunt to Richmond. Of course his delighted thought was of his brother,—how it would save him the long, hot, dusty walk. Fortunately he did not mention it, for, to his great disappointment Paul did not take to the idea at all. The truth is, the object of his own trip to Richmond made Paul so exceedingly sensitive as to prefer the long, lonely walk to a pleasant drive in company with the genial surgeon, including possible questions which he would not care to answer. Finding which, Ide was more glad than ever to slip into his hand at parting a crisp five dollar greenback into which he had that morning had his nickels and dimes changed.

"How teetotally different Paul is from the boy who went into the army four years ago!" Ide mused as he watched him start off at the slow, unenergetic gait of a man of years.

At seventeen he had been a twin in everything that meant enthusiasm, activity or fulness of life, of Ide himself. Was it the life of hardship, too much for a boy, that had sapped it all, or—his wife? The doubt right here was the heaviest burden Ide had to carry. A burden of work he could always get rid of in time by doing it; a burden of worry usually became so inflated by his merry whistling and his invincible good humor it ceased to be heavy. But this —whistling failed to lighten, and the worst of it was, there was no hope in sight of getting rid of it.

It seemed selfish even to forget. His only resource was "making his fortune" as he called it. Though even in this he was hampered by the increasing feebleness and childish dependence of his father. He tried to arrange to spend half of every day or at least a few hours, at Rice's, for he felt he must be laying up something to help Paul in case of need.

When he worked in the garden he would persuade his father to let him carry his chair into the grape arbor from whence he could watch the work go on and give the benefit of his advice.

Sometimes, by the payment of a mite of his treasured hoard, Ide could induce Dan or Mose to help him a little. But the idea the negroes had gotten into their noddles that they were in some way contravening their liberty in working for their old masters even when paid for it, made them exceedingly chary of doing it. Still, Ide had managed, by hook and by crook, to keep up the garden right nicely. He remembered what Mr. Woodson had said, that their gardens would most likely have to be their main dependence. It was quite evident that, with the Carringtons, it would be the sole dependence. And Lieut. Danklin who, with a word, could no doubt have greatly changed the aspect of affairs, not only did not say the word but he rather continually used his influence to the contrary.

The Carrington parlor had been turned into a sort of office where this Danklin held court, the negroes coming in by twos and threes and occasional groups of larger size. What they came for or what they got, nobody knew.

On the evening after Paul left there was a fuller gathering than usual. Ide was restless and uneasy, and determined he would not go to bed until everything was quiet. Putting his light out he sat near the

window, where he could hear each departing footstep. He was about concluding the last had gone when he heard voices pause immediately beneath the window, and the following conversation took place in very subdued tones:

"Ef 'Marse Sam' whomsoebber he mout be, is gwine ter do enyting fer de niggers, I woush ter goodness he'd mek has' en do hit. We gwine ter starve ef he don't. We ain't got no marsters ter gin us nuttin, en thar ain' nuttin' ter steal, 'cepin' it be fum de sojers, en we darsen' do dat."

"G'long way fum here, Mose, you better go en *giv* yersef back ter yer ole Marster lek yer was in slave times."

"Well, what we gwine ter do, den? I is hongry dis bery minit, en whar I gwine ter git eny braad?"

"Lemme tell yer, you fool nigger." He lowered his voice. Ide could only catch snatches of sentences.

"Marse Lieutenant say ———— thar'd be— farms fer de niggers ter plant fer deyselves,——"

"But how dey gwine ter git kilt off?"

"Hush, you black fool! listen ter me. ——— firen de guns erbout at ole hyars, yer know, he! he! —— niggers kyant mek de guns hit whar dey wants ter, —— it's er accidint. —— Don' you see? All de same, ders er farm ter 'vide up 'mong de niggers, he! he!"

Ide's blood ran cold. He had caught enough to formulate the cold-blooded plans which were being inaugurated under their very roof. He thought of his father, old and helpless, with no one to care or protect now that Paul was gone, save a boy, for the thoughtless young wife was allowing herself to be played upon by the wily serpent to such an extent that she was rather an increased menace than otherwise. He thought, too, of his Uncle Tom and

his defenceless family of women and little Eddie.

Never before had Ide so felt the need of his mother's God.

"As a hen gathereth her brood under her wings," he repeated softly. And falling on his knees, prayed:

"Even so, Heavenly Father, take us under thy protecting care, for we have no help save in Thee!"

His true, manly courage revived with the thought: "If God be for us, who can be against us." And tipping down to take one more look at his father, and finding him sleeping as sweetly and soundly as a little child, he went back and went to bed.

The next morning the part of the conversation which remained most vividly in mind was Mose's pathetic plea: "I'se hongry dis minit, en whar I gwine ter git eny braad?"

When Ide went down to the stable he put in his pocket three or four rolls he found in the bread box and handing them to Mose said, carelessly: "You used to be fond of light rolls, do you care for these now?" and laid them down near him, without heeding the surly answer:

"Light rolls ain' no gret things!"

Nevertheless they did not lie around long. It made Ide's heart ache to see how greedily Mose devoured them, howbeit surreptitiously. An idea came into the boy's head.

"Mose," he said, when they had about finished with the horses, "Mose, the plantation is not being cultivated this summer; suppose you take a good big patch besides what you had before and plant it in corn and potatoes and tobacco. You might as well get the good of it as nobody. You have got to take care of yourself now, you know; we cannot take care of you any longer. It would help you along until things get settled again."

Mose giggled and brightened, but still did not answer with any show of gratitude, but Ide did not bother about this. Nor did he consider it worth while to mention in the house the proposition he had made. He knew it would be all right with his father and Paul, and there was no one else whom it need concern.

CHAPTER XXIV.

ONE MORE BLOW TO THE CONFEDERACY.

Of course no one really believed Joe Johnston would be able to hold out against the combined forces of the North. And yet hope feeds and grows and thrives on such very scant diet of reason sometimes. "No news is good news," we kept repeating to ourselves, and the longer he held out the more confident we grew that the Confederacy was still alive in him and his little band.

"At any rate we cannot afford to take any longer holiday, and I expect we had better hunt up our books this morning," Miss Phenie said to her youngest pupils on the same Monday morning on which Paul started on his tramp back to Richmond.

She did not much count on the older girls, but they all came, and made a most determined effort to concentrate their attention on the subject before them.

Hyla, being left alone, lingered at the table with her mother, and Surgeon Miller also seemed to forget the imperative duties which usually called for his immediate presence at the hospital.

"How are your patients getting along doctor?" Mrs. Weith asked, graciously.

"Very well, thanks—almost too well. Some of them are becoming quite impatient to be released from the hospital. There will soon be no excuse for me to be lingering here."

Each listener looked up questioningly.

"No, I do not want to go away," he went on as if

in response to the mute inquiry. "I freely confess this has been the most pleasant interval of the whole war to me. I am glad to have had this little bit of experience; and I believe there are a great many people in the North who, if they could have spent one month such as this among the Southern people, would have been loth to fight against them."

Everything was so quiet at the moment even Mrs. Weith heard, and all felt a little glow of pleasure. He had his reward when Hyla beamed up at him for giving her mother cause to smile so brightly.

As they started up from the basement dining room, he stepped forward with a quick, "Let me!" assisting Mrs. Weith's feeble steps with his strong, steady arm.

"What do you hear from your husband?" he asked, still lingering.

"He has found something to do in Richmond, and we are hoping for him daily now."

"And you," he turned to Hyla, the semi-flicker of a smile breaking over the accustomed professional gravity, "I have candidly avowed my own change of sentiments toward the Southern people from better acquaintance, cannot you say as much?"

Hyla's face flushed so easily it were not safe to argue anything from that.

"If we could only judge them all by you." But she ended with a comical grimace, which disagreeably suggested the hordes which had been so different.

"Don't—don't!" he deprecated amusedly.

"Perhaps,' she condoned, "up there the best did not go into the army, as our best did."

"There, you are hard on me again," he laughed. "I see I will have to give it up and wait for a more conciliatory verdict. But I expect you are right in

the main," he added more seriously. "The lower class in the South were exempt from service. I hadn't thought of that phase in comparing the two armies.

On Thursday the news came of Gen. Joseph E. Johnston's surrender to Sherman at Greensboro, N. C.

Each one around the table gave a deep sigh, swallowing anew the bitter pill of defeat, and then they felt sorry for Dr. Miller, who always seemed so sorry to have to bring bad news to them.

That was all it meant to most of them,—an after-act with "finale" written at the end of it. They grieved afresh over the precious blood shed in vain, but it had no personal significance.

For Miss Phenie it was different. For her it brought a throbbing up-leap of hope versus fear. The long suspense *must* end now—how?

With white face and quivering lips she slipped out and went to her room. She had not heard from her only brother for four long weeks.

By tea time the subject had passed. Dr. Miller was discussing with Mr. and Mrs. Woodson the feasibility of transferring to their charge some of his convalescent Confederate soldiers. Two cases, he said, were puzzling him a little, and he thought perhaps change was the tonic they needed.

"I am glad to share what I have left with any of the soldiers who did what they could to defend it for me," Mr. Woodson replied, and it was arranged they should be brought over at once.

He left the family in the dining room discussing the prospect. But Miss Phenie met him at the head of the stairs.

"Will you tell me something more of Johnston's surrender?" she asked. "Just when did it occur?

and how long would it be before a soldier could come from Greensboro here? He would have to walk, I suppose, of course?"

"Unless he is in the cavalry and has been fortunate enough to retain his horse."

"It is my brother,——" There was a slight tremor in the voice, but the face wore almost its usual smile.

"Oh!" said Dr. Miller, sympathetically, "and you have not heard from him?" It was hardly a question, for he knew she could not have heard. And if it had required an answer, it is doubtful whether she could have given it at that instant.

"Give me his full name, title, if any, company, regiment, etc."

He took it all down in full.

"If I can hear anything of him, I will let you know."

The whole touching pathos of the war was in the quivering lips, as she realized that there was not much encouragement in his tone. Still, she smiled her thanks as best she could, and tried to make herself content, as she always did when she had done what she could. "There is no use fretting over what one cannot help," was one of her favorite mottoes. And, as Mrs. Woodson would hear her filling the house with the sweetest music, or dropping absent-mindedly into the old rondelay, "O, dear, what can the matter be? Johnny's so long at the fair," there was an uplift of her own heart in the cheerfulness and trust of another's.

All the same, the brown eyes gazed often, most wistfully up the road for the sight of one more gray coat coming home.

Meanwhile, Dr. Miller brought the two Confederate prisoners over from the hospital. Only too glad, he said, to be rid of two such obstreperous

rebels. Perhaps the ladies, or their own people could do more with them. And having done everything he could for their comfort, he laughingly departed.

Longing for activity and diversion, Miss Phenie promptly offered her services as head nurse.

"No, that's my place," returned Mrs. Woodson, appreciatively. "But if you will be entertainer-in-chief for the afternoons, with Abby and Hazel to relieve you whenever you wish, that will be more in your line and really more of a help to me.

Mr. Cabell, the fever patient, had lost a finger, a comparatively slight affair if he had not at the same time developed a stubborn malarial fever, which refused to yield to any remedies at the surgeon's command. The other had lost a leg. This had already healed sufficiently for him to go home, and he had been given permission to do so, but he showed a strange indisposition even to discuss the matter.

Mr. Cabell looked ten per cent. better in a day, Dr. Miller announced, when he came up to see him, lying, so clean and comfortable in a cool, sweet room, with the delicate fragrance of fresh flowers about him. The one-legged Texan was out on the porch talking to Mr. Woodson, Mrs. Weith, Hyla and Abby.

"A good place to be sick," thought the surgeon. "If they can't get well here they may as well die."

It was Abby who found out the Texan's trouble, at last.

The moist encouragement of her eye soon broke down his reserve, and he told her of the sweetheart at home who had promised to marry him as soon as the war was over. "But as things have turned out, ——" and he looked down disconsolately at his bereft limb,—"I could never be willing to burden her life with the care of half a man, and my courage fails me to go back there and face life without her."

"Do you know what I would do, if I were you?" Abby answered him with the directness of her womanly sympathy, "I would write and tell her all about it, and, if you will frankly offer to release her, I can easily guess what her reply will be if she has anything of a true woman in her. And if not——"

She left him to fill out the ellipsis as he would. And, after the letter was written and gone, she further encouraged him with the hint that his life need not be a burden any way, as there were surely many things he could still do.

An answering letter came as soon as the condition of the mails would admit, and it was as Abby had prophesied. His true love had no desire to be released, rather thought he needed her now more than ever, etc., etc. Hence the Texan's recovery was as rapid as circumstances permitted, and he was soon as impatient as he had before been indifferent to be off. Abby was delighted with the outcome of her advice, and was hoping soon to get a letter calling for further congratulations.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE OTHER SICK SOLDIER.

The fever patient was very still and quiet. His deep gray eyes followed intelligently and gratefully every movement of those who attended to his wants with only an occasional smile.

He rarely spoke. Seemed held in a vice of inertness or torpor out of which nothing could arouse him.

"Miss Phenie, I believe I will have to call on you this afternoon to sit with my other patient," Mrs. Woodson said one day. "I have been afraid of exciting him and have not ventured to leave any of you in the room. But I think maybe a little pleasurable excitement might do him good," she laughed, "and anyway, I must look after Mrs. Weith. She has been so sick all day, and Hyla needs to rest to be ready for the night. There is really nothing to do for Mr. Cabell except to sit there in case he should want a glass of water or something. Will you mind?"

"How good you are to everybody!" the girl said feelingly, putting her arms around Mrs. Woodson's neck and nestling against her cheek. "Mind? Of course not. What wouldn't I do to relieve you!"

Mrs. Woodson smiled responsively. "Goodness, as you call it, is easy doing when it is for people who help me as much as you and Hyla do with your bright, cheery ways."

Miss Phenie entered the room of the sick soldier, carrying in her hand a glass in which were two or

three stems, bloom and leaf, of lily-of-the-valley which had been brave enough to bloom under all the uninviting conditions of the times. Just to look at it gave one a feeling of relief and joy that anything so pure and beautiful could still survive.

The deep gray eyes of the sick man looked at them with a grateful pleasure, slowly lifting to her face a long, lingering gaze which presently fell again to the flowers, and again went back to her face, as if drawing comparisons or contrasts.

Already the brown eyes began to twinkle. The hair on the small, shapely head gleamed a rich golden brown in the western sun that came in through the window.

When the gray eyes came back to her face again, lingeringly, satisfiedly, restfully, the brown eyes met them with a little flash of sudden laughter as merry as a child's, but instantly suppressed.

"Do it again," he smiled gravely.

This time it broke loose from her control and rippled through the room with a contagious mirthfulness. Two long tapering fingers went up to her lips with a hushing motion, as she murmured in abashed penitence:

"Oh, this will never do in the world! Mrs. Woodson won't ever let me help her again!"

"Yes, she will—it does me good,—thank you."

As she tried the lilies, first on the table, then on the mantel where he could see them without getting too strong a whiff of the fragrance, her motions were quick, rhythmical, as natural as a bird's, with a like unexpectedness of interest.

He was rather sorry when she sat down at last, near him, as if to talk or to make him talk, and he closed his eyes to show his disinclination therefor. But she had no intention of doing either. She was

going to be the most quiet, demure of little nurses now. She sat looking at the lilies with her profile turned to him.

It was a very good profile, he noticed. Not perfect,—the chin was slightly recedent and nose rather small, but the hair, though not curly, gave such pretty curves and shadowings to the brow and temple around the ear and on the neck. And the heavy coil—what was it like? Frank Cabell could think of nothing but the great ropes of brown sugar candy he had seen the girls making at home. Even while her face was quiet, as now, it seemed to flicker with an inward brightness.

The large fan of dark turkey feathers moving slowly in her hand created a drowsy breeze. Was she trying to put him to sleep as a baby one does not know how else to get rid of?

He was just noticing the round smoothness of the cheek when a soft rose tint came creeping into it. It startled him. Was she conscious of his steadfast gaze? How rude of him. He determinedly turned his eyes from her to the lilies on the mantel. She turning hers from the lilies to him at the same instant, they met and stopped. She laughed. Phenie usually laughed when another girl would blush, and nobody could tell for what.

He felt like laughing too, only it required too much exertion.

"Dear me, I am doing nothing in the world to entertain you," she deprecated. "Do you like to be read to when you cannot read for yourself?"

He nodded his head.

"And what shall I read? Do you like poetry? Yes? Well, let me see—Oh, I know; you haven't read 'Beechenbrook,' have you? They had only gotten one hundred copies off the press when the order

was issued for Richmond to be evacuated, so they bound those in paper and distributed them among the soldiers. One copy was left here; I will read that." Thus they finished out the afternoon.

When Mrs. Woodson came in at tea time to see how her patient was getting along without her, she saw at a glance what the experiment had done for him, and her smile of greeting grew significant.

"I don't know why I have not thought of it before," she said, smiling down at him.

The patient gave a low chuckle of enjoyment, a gleam of Irish fun in his deep gray eyes, and grunted:

"Do it again!"

Mrs. Woodson laughed heartily and agreed. Miss Phenie had already slipped out. The girls took the afternoons by turns regularly after that, and he improved rapidly under the new régime.

"I have been very uneasy about Mrs. Weith all day," Mrs. Woodson confessed to Abby as they stood on the porch together later. "I have never seen a more severe or prolonged attack of palpitation of the heart. I hope it is over for the present, but if there should be a return we will have to get hold of a physician some way. I would not be willing to take the responsibility. I really feel as if I ought not to leave Hyla alone with her to-night,—and yet, Mr. Woodson is not well, and never sleeps much when I am out of place——"

"Now, mamma," quickly interposed Abby, "you are not going to think of it. What's to hinder my staying with Hyla to-night? I am fresh, while you are perfectly tired out. Hazel can sleep with Miss Phenie, so it is all arranged, and I can call you if need be."

Mrs. Woodson finally agreed to this, for she really

was hardly equal to the loss of rest it would necessitate, even if it meant nothing more than being out of her own room.

Hyla acceded to the proposition without question, but gave no hint that she had overheard the conversation on the porch. Hence, while Abby soon fell asleep, Hyla was too anxious to be able to withdraw her attention from her mother more than a very few minutes at a time. Again and again she crept noiselessly to her mother's bedside to see if she were breathing naturally.

About twelve o'clock the invalid began to grow restless. Her eyes were closed. Hyla could not tell whether she was awake or not, and could not bear to disturb her so long as she could sleep. But in the course of an hour or two the fluttering of her night robe over the heart and the shortening of her breath became distinctly noticeable.

"I *must* get the doctor,—and there is only one way,—I must go for him myself!" the girl murmured in a tone of desperation.

Col. Weith had always called Hyla his brave girl and she had proved her courage under many and varied circumstances. Yet, it was rather the courage of a child who knows not what there is to fear. The darkness and utter loneliness of a country road at night would have held for her a new and undreamed of terror.

Still, it was not fear for herself over which she grew desperate, only the doubt of being able to get there and back on foot in time.

"You are going to do no such thing!" exclaimed Abby starting up out of a deep sleep at the sound of Hyla's voice. Then they sat down and gravely discussed the subject, though hurriedly, for there was no time to lose.

Abby knew much better what dangers there were in the country and how to avoid them. There were no imaginary terrors for her. If Hyla must go, of course she would go with her.

Fortunately, there was a horse in the stable—her own horse, "the Sergeant", and he knew her and she knew him thoroughly. Moreover, on a horse, Abby feared nothing in the world.

"Can you ride behind?" she asked of Hyla. Then answered herself with a faint smile, recollecting the famous ride about which they had teased her so much.

"O, yes, I could hold on to you," Hyla was saying, unthinkingly, "but, Abby, I would not dare to leave mother alone."

"I can saddle my horse and we can get over there in ten minutes or fifteen at most and back inside of half an hour; will that be too long for us to leave her?"

"O, Abby, I dare not leave her one moment," the girl cried in an agony of apprehension and perplexity.

"Then I will go myself," Abby announced with a positiveness which admitted of no gainsaying. She had rapidly been over the whole ground in her own mind. There really was no one else. She knew well enough if her father were awake he would insist it must be he. But, the girl argued, he would by reason of his age and failing sight make a much slower messenger, beside being more liable to accident. There seemed no question about the duty lying at her door, and she was not in the least afraid, had never been really frightened in her life.

"I don't know what I was thinking of, anyway," she said aloud, "to propose your going, for it would only cumber the horse to no purpose. You stay right

here beside your mother and I'll be off in a moment." And she began to dress rapidly.

"But you are not going alone?" protested Hyla.

"Why not? I know the way, you would never get there in the dark, I'm not one bit afraid, for on a horse, I would defy the witches to catch me!"

Hyla had no chance for further demurring, for her mother was even then needing her attention. At any rate she saw Abby had made up her mind and could not be moved.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A NIGHT RIDE.

It did not take Abby long to get into her clothes. That done she slipped through the open window onto the veranda, motioning to Hyla to fasten the shutters after her. She did not put on her shoes and stockings until she reached the lowest step of the back stairway. It was rather a surprise to her, nevertheless, that her father had not awakened, as he was such a light sleeper and his hearing so acute. But, thankful for her good fortune, she put on her footgear then and went on.

Everything was wonderfully still. The cabins closed and dark. She had thrown a little shawl over her head in order to make herself look as much as possible like one of the dark skinned, straggling prowlers so that in thinking her one of themselves they would not be likely to accost her. She also took their own long stride and swinging gait, instead of running as she felt inclined. She did not remember to get the key which always hung at the top of the back stairway just outside of her father's window until she got to the stable door and was greatly provoked at herself for this delay.

For a moment's anxious thought she leaned against the door. At her touch it yielded—opened without the key as if it had not been well closed.

There was no time to puzzle over how this could have happened when her father was so careful. Neither did the fact that the side-saddles were all

at the house stagger her for an instant. She was quite as much at home on the cavalry saddle she found there even with the womanly seating then altogether in vogue.

She was soon mounted. Leaning her head a moment on the horse's neck while adjusting her feet, she murmured tenderly:

"Dear, dear old Sergeant!" To which the animal responded with a low whinny of gratified affection. Then, grasping the bridle with a firm, confident hand, they were off like the wind.

A feeling of wild exhilaration raced through her veins as if she were tasting a stolen breath of old time freedom.

On the long slope of the hill she slowed a trifle and looked around cannily, and in crossing the creek she involuntarily glanced toward the old ruined mill. As she did so something heavier than the shadows of crumbling walls appeared to be moving within, and, as it were, to gaze out at her.

Abby had told only the truth when she said, "I am not afraid." It was a sensation she had never yet experienced in the face of man or beast. Notwithstanding, the thought of her father's displeasure when he should learn of this ride generated anxieties she might not otherwise have felt. He had always been very careful of his girls. On the spur of the moment's necessity she had easily convinced herself it would be all right with him when he saw her safe at home again and considered the demand for it. And yet—she knew the devilish advice which was being poured into the ears of the negroes —she knew what a woman had most to fear.

A cold, shivering horror flashed through her with these thoughts. Her fascinated gaze fastened itself

on the vague, creepy blackness among the shadows of the old familiar mill.

A large hickory tree grew in front near it. But the full moon was peeping above the pine woods. Perhaps after all there was nothing but shadows.

These emotions have taken longer to tell than the actual occurrence accounted for. The time was compassed by the second her horse was walking through the creek.

Beyond the creek after climbing a short steep hill, the road curved to the right around a dip in the field which had this summer, being uncultivated, grown up thickly in thistles and dewberries and was a dangerous resort of snakes, several poisonous ones having already been killed in its proximity. Otherwise Abby would have been disposed to cut across it and thus avoid the curve of the road around which thick clumps of chinquapin bushes grew close with a background of dense young pines, and beyond them the old mill race and pond.

Abby had taken the precaution to break from the hickory tree at the head of the creek slope a long, slender, tough switch. The moon was still playing bo-peep between the tops of the taller pines and a few summer clouds, giving her but charily its brightest light.

At the instant of reaching the bend of the road a breath of breeze wafted to Abby's sensitive nostrils a peculiar, disagreeable odor. She sniffed, startled —she knew it only too well. Giving the horse a touch of the switch he sprang forward responsively. As they swept round the curve, the great black skulking shadow which had been haunting her sprang out from the covert of the bushes in front and attempted to seize the bridle. Abby gave it a sudden wrench which threw the horse upon his haunches and at the

same time a cut of the switch impelled him forward. The noble animal threw up his head beyond reach of the treacherous hand and sprang forward with a swerving motion which was their best hope of escape.

It might have succeeded had not the negro grabbed the unused stirrup of the cavalry saddle which Abby had merely thrown over the pommel to keep it from worrying the horse. To this the wretch swung with a desperate grip, dragged off his feet at times by the leaping horse. It was a terrible moment. Abby threw herself over as far as possible to the other side with the deadly certainty before her that it could not be long before his weight against hers must of necessity unseat her and leave her in his power. With unflagging presence of mind she suddenly turned and with all her strength she lashed him across the hand with such stinging vim he was presently forced to let go his hold. He instantly seized the horse's tail with the other hand and the same determined grasp.

Here the horse was sufficient unto itself. It plunged and kicked furiously. And, its rider relaxing nothing of her requirements as to speed, they finally succeeded in shaking off the hideous appendage and dashed up the hill, Abby sending ahead of her the long distance signal which she knew would not fail to arouse Pansy if none else.

What wonder, as she entered the pines with its gruesome reminders of the battle, she glanced fearfully back. She knew the negro who had made the attack had been left at a safe distance,—but there might be others—confederates, hiding here.

However, a moment more and she had reached her destination, and there were Mr. Lockett and Pansy, Dr. Miller and one of the convalescent sol-

diers greeting her in surprise, not to say consternation.

"Yes, I have had a horrible fright," she admitted in short labored gasps. And they could see under the moon's pale light the ghastly pallor of her face. "But it's a blessed thing I came instead of Hyla. She would never have gotten here alive." This half to herself. Then turning to Dr. Miller: "There is no time to tell a long story now; it will keep. I came for you. Mrs. Weith is very ill."

"I will go at once but you must remain here for the rest of the night." For she was trembling like an aspen leaf.

"No, no," she answered, trying to speak steadily. "Papa and mamma will never believe I am all right unless they find me at home when they awake in the morning. I must go back with you."

She patted the still panting horse and leaned a moment wearily on his neck, but nothing would induce her even to get off. Surgeon Miller was soon in his saddle beside her, and, at her suggestion, they took another road going back, a little longer, but less liable to detention, she told him.

On the way Abby told Dr. Miller in reply to considerate and adroitly put questions, that a negro had sprung out at her from the bushes, but, by the mettled action of the horse, she had been enabled to escape him. She did not hint to him it was one of their own. There was still a lingering loyalty to those who had belonged to her father. Even to Lige, acknowledged the worst of the lot.

CHAPTER XXVII.

AN INTERRUPTED REVERY.

About one o'clock Mr. and Mrs. Woodson awoke simultaneously with the premonitory feeling that something was happening. None could know one hour what the next might bring forth.

Mrs. Woodson got up after a little and went to the window.

Everything was still and quiet and dark about the cabins, and no prowling shadows in sight, which was rather unusual. She went back to bed and she and her husband lay there talking for some time. Then they heard voices on the other side of the house, and, alarmed lest Mrs. Weith should be worse, got up and dressed quickly. When they came out Abby was opening the front door for Dr. Miller. Daylight was hours old before they were sufficiently relieved about Mrs. Weith to question or wonder how the message had been sent for the doctor. When the time did come,—when Abby told her parents of her terrible experience,—though for the girl much of its horror was forgotten while speaking of it in the broad daylight,—her father said:

"Abby, your recklessness will be your ruin yet! It was the rash freak of a child, not of the woman I thought you were!"

He had never in her life spoken to her so sternly. The harshness of his words and tone cut Mrs. Woodson to the heart. Motherlike, she felt that the child had been sufficiently punished. But Abby un-

derstood. To her the harshness only meant that the danger had been greater than she dreamed.

"I'll never do it again, papa, no matter what happens," she promised penitently.

He was somewhat mollified by her evident appreciation of his feelings, but, as the horror of it all came over him again he seized the girl by the shoulders almost roughly and gazing intently into her eyes asked:

"Did the man touch you with even so much as his little finger? For if he did he shall pay for it with his life whatever the cost!"

"No, papa, no! I would have split his dastardly face open with my switch before he should have touched me! Indeed, it was just as I have told you. And, I am much mistaken if, except for the fright, he was not more seriously worsted than I, for the horse did kick famously when he caught his tail, and I am sure he will not soon forget the sting of that hickory switch." She spoke with her accustomed spirit which her father had heretofore regarded with amused admiration. Now, it only caused him to tremble the more for her. "If she were more timid," he muttered to himself, "I would have less fear of a repetition of such rashness."

However, he had her promise and he knew he could rely on it. For days afterward, Mrs. Woodson could not look at Abby without exclaiming in a thrill of horror: "O, my child, to think of your taking that ride alone!"

And, bravely as Abby always spoke, belittling what she had done for the sake of others, especially in the presence of Hyla or her mother, it had nevertheless made an era in her life. It was a long time before she could control the consequent nervous timidity. Her father, if he could only have known it, need not

have feared a repetition. All danger of rashness was past. She was never inclined to be venturesome again under any circumstances.

Mr. Woodson and Ide Carrington between them afterward traced out the whole affair.

One of the soldiers belonging to Lieut. Danklin's squad had requested Lige to hunt him up a good horse, offering to purchase it from him at a moderate price. His time was about to expire and he wanted it to carry home with him. Lige had made all his arrangements to steal Abby's from the stable that very night and thus dispose of it. He had the promise of Lieut. Danklin's protection in whatever he did, hence he had no hesitation in following his native instincts.

Under strenuous threats from Lige, Scott had managed to leave the stable door unfastened under his master's very eye, and Lige was on his way to take advantage of this opportunity when he heard the light hoof beats of "the Sergeant" and hid in the old mill. He was so infuriated when he found it was his prize, about to escape him and by the agency of a woman, he was ready to balk at no deed of violence. Cutting the curve and creeping like a snake through the pines and bushes, he met them as previously recounted at the bend of the road.

He never appeared on the plantation by daylight afterwards. But Abby could never again trust anybody to lock the stable except herself, and keeping the key in her own hands, slept with it under her pillow.

The glimpse of Pansy's anxious face lingering in Abby's remembrance, along with less pleasant thoughts of that night, made Abby hungry for the old intimacy which had been so rudely broken up.

She and Pansy had been the greatest chums ever

since the two young mothers with their first baby girls had lived close together in the old safe, fearless days when any negro on the place was proud to be trusted with the protection of his "young mistis." Later, when the families moved farther apart and the children had grown older, the parents saw no danger in their meeting as often as they liked down by the creek, provided only they were at home before dark. Since the upheavals of recent weeks they had seen nothing of each other.

Evidently Pansy was missing it as well as Abby, for at noon she came over with Dr. Miller to see for herself if Abby "had not turned gray with the terror of that awful night."

Of course they would not hear of her going back with him as had been her first intention. Everybody had hosts of questions to ask and their own experience to tell, and really there was no need. What was to hinder her waiting until after the early tea and going home then, as she came, or else sending a message for her father to come for her during the afternoon? The visit was a great treat to the whole family and treats were none too many of any kind.

When the sun had dropped behind the western woods they gathered in the front porch to watch for Mr. Lockett or the surgeon, whichever should come first. Abby and Pansy sat together on the side facing toward the creek. On the other, Miss Phenie and Hazel. Mrs. Woodson had gone in to try and induce Hyla to join them.

"It seems a little like old times, Pansy, to have you here again." Abby put a hand each side of Pansy's face and looked into the shy, dark eyes until a great yearning came into her own.

"O, could you come back to me, Douglass!" she sang softly low, and archly until Pansy blushed crim-

son. "If we could only see some gray coats riding down from the gate——"

"Two of them," said Pansy picking up the memory threads wistfully, "one on a bay horse and one on a little black pony!"

"I would like to see them all,—every single one we knew, would not you?" Abby gave a little unconscious sigh.

Another long, covetous look into each other's eyes and then Abby dropped her hands and both pairs of eyes wandered dreamily, instinctively, up the road. No doubt the thoughts of each went farther,—a long, long distance farther, and, perhaps not a great way apart. Two hands clasped, linked their minds into a common rut and an occasional grip gave some kind of intelligible communion.

The atmosphere was drowsily still. The two cows came leisurely in from the pasture, Dave behind them, to the milking pen. No other living thing was to be seen or heard of beast or fowl save the birds. A mother sparrow was crooning her babies to sleep in the honeysuckle and a mocking bird was pouring forth exhaustless melody from the top twig of a small maple tree in the yard. Miss Phenie and Hazel had their heads together studying out a new stitch in knitting by the last rays of the daylight.

At the instant, "Whizz—zz—zz!" something whistled past, cutting through the fulness of Hazel's homespun dress and grazing the clasped hands of the other two girls.

All felt the breeze of its passing and sprang to their feet in lively excitement, only restrained by thought for Mrs. Weith. It was hard to believe somebody was not shot.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson were quickly upon the scene.

Surgeon Miller also, on his way over, had heard the shot. He had located the perpetrator in a clump of bushes near the mouth of the creek and hastened on to offer medical services in case any one should be hurt. Yet he only knew for certain what course the ball had taken when he reached the house.

By whom or for what cause it had been fired, it was impossible to tell. Possibly in revenge for the loss of the horse, was a first thought, yet, after much discussion it was finally concluded it had been done in mere recklessness or ignorance, just as had been the case with little Sam.

Even so, this reckless use of firearms in irresponsible hands made life a most precarious possession at the best, in those perilous days.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

"THINGS ARE BETTER THAN THEY SEEM."

After her first success Miss Phenie was often called upon to substitute in the sick man's room. It was not typhoid, but a slow malarial or bilious fever which drugged all the man's strength and vitality. He needed to have them lured back by some external beguilement. Sometimes when Mrs. Woodson would be starting in to relieve her young assistant she would hear a merry, contagious laugh and a low responsive chuckle.

"He seems to be getting along famously," she would say to herself, "I believe I won't disturb them," and pass on to some other duty. There were always plenty of these other duties awaiting her and she was glad enough of an hour saved anywhere.

The day came at last when Surgeon Miller had news for Miss Phenie. She knew it by the glance of his eye in her direction as about to leave the dinner table. In a moment, with quickening pulses, she was at his side.

"Miss Barnett, I believe I can give you reliable information of your brother."

After verifying name and description from a letter he held in his hand, he went on to read:

"The above-mentioned was wounded in the last skirmish, at first we thought seriously, but it has proved not so bad as anticipated. He is recuperating now, wonderfully, and it is hoped——"

"Please do not be afraid to tell me the worst?"

Miss Phenie interrupted with a pleading little catch in her breath, imagining he was skipping something.

"I am giving you the surgeon's own account," he replied, looking down kindly into her truth demanding eyes.

"It may be hoped," he read on, "he will soon be able to travel by slow stages in an ambulance. I will, as requested, have him transferred to your charge as soon as it is prudent."

"He did not lose a limb?" she asked, shrinkingly.

"No, the wound was near the hip, a critical point, but in probing for the ball they found it had taken a less dangerous course than at first apprehended. Of course he is not yet out of danger, but the surgeon in charge is one of the best and a personal friend of mine."

Thus the long tension of suspense was to some extent eased.

Miss Phenie's happy heart, in consequence of the relief, went singing through the house as merrily as if the war had never been:

"Tell me not in mournful numbers,
Life is but an empty dream;
For the soul is dull that grumbles,
Things are better than they seem."

"Bless the child!" exclaimed Mrs. Woodson, brightening over her work.

"The child" was still trilling the same in merry snatches when she entered the sick man's room.

"Who wrote the words of that song?" he asked gravely. And she did not at first notice the Irish twinkle in the deep, gray eyes. She almost forgot to disguise her surprise at the question from a college bred man as she knew him to be.

"Longfellow, don't you remember?"

"I thought I had read everything Longfellow ever wrote!" with a make-believe, puzzled expression.

"Oh!" she laughed, comprehendingly. "You think I am taking liberties with my betters? Well, so I am, but you will not tell on me so he'll never know. I was obliged to find something to fit my music and my gay spirits."

"I see. And what, may I ask, has made you so happy to-day?"

"Why, don't you know? I have heard from my brother." And she began singing again with the irresistible impulse of a bird. At the end of the first couplet she stopped blushingly.

"Go on," he begged, his eyes twinkling again. "That poem will have a new meaning for me hereafter."

But she shook her head and sealed her lips with a pretty little positive way she had.

"Then tell me what you have heard from your brother?" So she told him.

"Do you mean to say Harry Barnett is your brother?" the sick soldier exclaimed in more animation than he had yet shown.

"He verily is, and the dearest old brother in the world. Why, do you know him?"

"We graduated in the same class at College."

"Then you are the '*Frank* Cabell' who carried off the honor poor Harry had worked so hard for?" a trifle resentfully.

"He ought to have had it by rights, and would have but for a mischievous prank of the town boys in which I would most certainly have joined if I had not been boarding in the country."

"Harry did not care in the least after the matter was once decided, but I did. I was dreadfully disap-

pointed. I had such grand ambitions for my only brother."

"I am sorry." And he really looked as if he were.

"You need not be, it is all a thing of the past now. And I have learned long ago to think of it as Harry did. He always said he hoped he had the knowledge it represented, which was the best part of it."

"So Harry Barnett is your brother!" Mr. Cabell mused, watching her happy face with a very sympathetic one. "How strangely the pawns of this life get mixed up sometimes!"

Harry Barnett arrived to speak for himself within a week. The meeting between the old comrades was only less affectionate than that between brother and sister.

Before the week was half over Col. Weith had come to carry off his wife and daughter.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE LAST ACT.

The last act of the four years' drama of the Confederacy began with the capture of Jefferson Davis, its first and only President, at Irvinsville, Ga., one month almost to a day after the surrender of Gen. Lee.

While this act was moving on through dreary days of a two years' imprisonment, pending his trial before his peers, and through much suffering and not a few indignities for the fault of being the choice of his people, Gen. Lee was teaching patient lessons of magnanimity from his professor's chair in Lexington, Va., and the inhabitants of one obscure corner of Prince Edward county were working out their own problems of reconstruction as best they might.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson exercised so much good common sense, patience and sympathy toward their former dependents, it could not have failed of its effect had not there been other influences at work in the dark which appealed to weaker, baser natures.

Even then it did not fail entirely. There were some few who had sense enough to understand that those who had known them from childhood, to whom they were "Scott and Suky, Ottawa and Dave," would naturally be more really concerned for their best interests than these strangers of a day to whom they were as alike as so many tobacco plants.

On Mr. Carrington's farm the evil worked most malignantly.

And there was naught to hinder. Mr. Carrington himself was becoming more and more helpless and imbecile. He had almost ceased to resist anything, and no longer possessed the least authority in his own house. Mrs. Carrington's coarse, selfish nature had never given any response to the uncritical kindness of the people among whom she had lived all these years. She could not conceal the fact that she found Lieut. Danklin and his associates more congenial company. The negroes on the place were completely demoralized. As for Danklin himself, he was fully aware that his position, though profitable, was temporary, and was intent upon making the best of it without a thought of the future prospects of the negro or his own reputation among the natives. Much less did he concern himself about the good of the country, either North or South. He simply used the power entrusted to him for his own ends and benefit as many others did in similar positions.

Numbers of the lazy, trifling negroes from each plantation throughout the county, who cared for naught but to be fed without having to work, accepted the premium put upon indolence and flocked to Farmville and Burkville to live on cod fish and hard tack indiscriminatingly distributed by the "Freedman's Bureau."

Living in crowded tenements and sheds was not so bad in summer when they could spend their days in the open air and clothing was but a matter of decency. When winter came they died by the scores for want of the provident care which had been theirs as a matter of course all their lives before.

Ide continued to go up to Rice's as often as he could. And all the money he could make went to Richmond to Paul until his brother wrote he had

gotten something to do and Ide must keep his earnings for his own use. It was very true Ide was beginning to be considerably out at the elbows and knees and could easily have found use for it. But, shortly after this his opportunities gradually grew less and finally ceased altogether, owing to an increasing, perhaps morbid, anxiety for his father.

The conversation he had heard under his own window relative to firing at old hares after having passed completely out of mind had of late been recalled by the sight of strange negroes prowling around the house without visible object. The time came when he could scarcely get his own consent to leave his father at all, though chiding himself all the while for groundless nervousness.

One afternoon as he sat in the yard reading to his father a message was brought that Mr. Woodson was sick and wouldn't Mr. Ide come right down to see him.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson had been too much to him, all these years since his mother died, and especially since Paul had been away, to admit of any hesitation on Ide's part when they needed him.

He thought it likely, and his father agreed with him, that his Uncle Tom, not feeling very well, wished him to do some little errand for him which would only require a short absence.

Hence, as the errand might require haste, he did not notify any one of his absence, but hurried off so as to get back before his father should want to go into the house.

Lieut. Danklin had gone to Washington City and would not return until morning or later, which somehow made him feel a little easier about leaving his father. Thus he sped across the woodland path whistling some light-hearted roundelay.

He had gone little over half way when he saw sitting by the roadside under the shade of a tree an old, wretchedly thin and miserable looking negro woman.

Ide did not know her face at all, but he was always a kind-hearted lad, and he knew there was a great deal of real want which the Freedman's Bureau would never reach with agents ever so honest and faithful. When the old crone looked up at him with her pinched pathetic face he stopped and spoke to her, gave her a dime he happened to have in his pocket, and advised her to try to make her way to town in some way and get provisions from those whose business it was to provide for her.

This little incident delayed him only briefly. But, though he left her hurriedly, his buoyant footsteps were clogged with heavy, helpless thoughts of the future of the ignorant, simple-hearted race who had been thrown so unprepared on their own resources.

To his utter surprise, when he reached the Elmwood fields Ide found his Uncle Tom out with the hands,—those he could still induce to work. He met the boy with his usual cordiality, but said nothing of having sent for him. On the contrary, after a few moments of ordinary conversation, he suggested he should go on to the house where Mrs. Woodson and the girls would be glad to see him. Evidently, there was some mistake. But Ide immediately concluded it had been Mrs. Woodson who had sent the message. Finding he was as little expected there he asked the point blank question: "Who was it then who sent for me?"

When the matter was fully explained, she was seriously alarmed. And, though she tried to conceal it from him, she agreed with his own judgment it was wisest for him to return at once to his father, strongly advising his telling his Uncle Tom the whole

thing before he left. Her solicitude was more for himself.

She feared the inventor of the message might be calculating on his lingering as he usually did, and purpose to waylay him on his way home, hoping to find about him the money he was known to have been earning on ash-cakes. Hence, as she knew Ide would not remain away from his father all night, she hurried him off to make sure of his getting home before dark, and too promptly to fall into the trap.

Mr. Woodson also took the narrative seriously. The same suspicion probably occurred to him. Nor did he disguise his anxieties, insisted upon walking back with Ide past the most secluded and dangerous part of the way. Only left him when within full sight of the house.

Naturally, Ide himself had gotten a little nervous over the occurrence. He still had to skirt the pine woods and to cross the creek with its thicket of bushes on either side. But his young shoulders had broadened out under too long and heavy a burden of duty for him to lose his manly courage in the face of imaginary dangers. He whistled softly, keeping eyes and ears more than usually alert, and trudging bravely along reached home in safety.

CHAPTER XXX.

SEQUEL TO THE MESSAGE.

It was quite dark when Ide got home. The big chestnut oak threw a long, lonesome shadow across the yard, deepening the dusk under the dogwood tree under whose umbrella-like shelter he had left his father. He glanced toward the spot anxiously, and then involuntarily at his stepmother, who sat in the front porch idly fanning herself with a large feather fan.

"I suppose father has come in?" he questioned of her, as he stepped briskly across the porch.

"I suppose so, I don't know," she drawled with a lazy indifference which fairly infuriated the boy.

He went on into his father's room, a horrible dread besetting him. He was not there. He went into the dining-room, the kitchen, the parlor. Plainly, he was not in the house.

He went back to the porch.

"Mother, where *is* father?" he asked, sternly. "You *must* know?"

"Indeed I do not know, then," her tone said, "nor care," as she gave him a supercilious stare.

Ide was glad to remember all these little things afterward, though they made him perfectly furious at the time.

"He must have wandered off into the garden or somewhere," with a feeling of self-reproach for allowing anything to tempt him to leave him which helped him to keep from telling her what he thought

of a wife who didn't know where her helpless husband was. Then, too, he remembered how entirely he had taken upon himself the care of his father of late, and that he had notified nobody of this unexpected absence.

"Did he come in to supper?" he asked more quietly and recalling the uncleared table he had noticed in the dining-room.

"No,—. I believe some of them said he did not care for any——" with a faint note of self-reproach at last.

More and more anxious, the boy strode across the porch and down the steps in leaps, and off to the garden—the stable—the pasture lot, calling distractedly for his father, while his mother roused herself to look more thoroughly through the house.

The thickening darkness was oppressive. The stars struggling through the clouds made it ghostly. Ide could not think. He felt as if his mind was slipping away from him,—drowning in a sea of horror. His mother's scream suddenly recalled him, as if some one had shaken him. He knew his father had been found, and gathering himself together as best he could he hastened back.

She was standing by the chair under the dogwood tree, wringing her hands wildly. There was no one in the chair. Molly and Belinda stood near in awed silence. There was something,—a heap of shadows at the chair's foot. He sprang toward it, terror clutching at his heart. Yes, his father was found.

Ide carried the body into the house, Belinda and Molly helping all they could, while Mrs. Carrington walked behind as chief mourner. For a moment Ide could not think what to do, and nobody else tried to. The body was perfectly limp and unconscious, and yet Ide could not believe he was dead.

Molly brought Lieut. Danklin's lamp, the only one in the house. Then they saw that the face was black, and there were red marks on the throat.

"Molly,—Mammy 'Lind, won't you go and see if you can get Mose or Dan to go over to the hospital and bring the surgeon?"

There was a moment's hesitation which maddened Ide.

"O, Mammy 'Lind, go! this is no time for foolish notions. It is a matter of life and death, and it is your old master, who never did you anything but kindness in your life! and he'll die! O, Mammy 'Lind, go! or it will be too late!"

The boy broke down in a helpless sob of agony.

Belinda and Molly went out together and soon their voices were heard calling vociferously for Mose and Dan all round the house and among the cabins.

Each time the call came to his ears, Ide winced as under a lash. Every sound of their voices betrayed a lack of the old time respect and affection that cut deeply at this time. The circumstances which made him absolutely dependent upon their good offices would have recalled it if anything could. It was only too evident they had all been completely alienated. There was not one on whom he could rely for the slightest favor. It was a deep, unboyish sigh with which he recognized the fact. He was still working over his father, his mother waiting on him, though neither knew any more what to do than babies.

A cold claminess was creeping over the body; the limbs were becoming rigid; was it death?

Ide got up with a groan and looked with a pitiful appeal to his stepmother. But there was no help in her face. She was merely doing mechanically whatever he suggested. No hope of inspiration there.

He went to the window. Belinda and Molly were just coming in.

"Mose en Dan bof done gone to town," they reported, and went out immediately as if afraid he would ask something else of them. One more look at his father, which made him think of an empty casket which was being locked, and he turned once more to his stepmother. The touching misery of his face might have moved a heart of stone.

"Mother, I *must* go, there is no one else!"

She burst into fresh tears, then sobbing: "Don't leave me, Ide!" with a look of terror toward the still form on the bed.

Ide mistook her distress for genuine appreciation of her loss, and merely adding, "We must have a doctor," he went out quickly without waiting for a reply.

The surgeon's practiced eye knew on a very casual examination there never had been anything to be done. The deed was thoroughly done. "And it was a dastardly deed!" he muttered under his breath. Ide did not hear him. He only heard the verdict that his father was dead. And kneeling beside the bed, he leaned his head on the quiet breast of him who would never grow weary, never worry or be sick any more, and cried his sorrow out like a little child. He had no thought of any one else. He had lived so exclusively for his father of late, he felt as if now the last tie was broken. He had nothing to live for,—no one to make life worth while. Paul? Yes, and the farm. But Paul had given him and the farm up for a wife. What were they to him now?"

One faint little hope beguiled him for a moment. Perhaps, after this, Paul would bring his wife and live here, or send for him to come and live with them. But even as he grasped it he knew it was elusive and sank back into his grief.

Dr. Miller and Mr. Woodson made all the arrangements for the funeral. Dr. Miller had brought the plain pine coffin painted black and Mr. Woodson got Ottawa and Scott to dig the grave in the family graveyard, and there were men enough among his neighbors to carry the body the short distance necessary.

Ide and his stepmother walked together. Some neighbor had hunted up a rusty crape veil and black dress for her to wear on the occasion, and she seemed really distressed, wept noisily. Ide was stolidly calm. He was conscious of but two feelings: A great longing for Paul; and a sense of infinite relief in the absence of Lieut. Danklin.

The Lieutenant returned the day after the interment.

He expressed the greatest surprise and indignation when told the news tearfully by Mrs. Carrington. He berated them all soundly for not keeping the body until he got there that he might be able to get some clue as to the perpetrator, and insisted upon making a thorough search for the missing Mose and Dan, officiously fastening the murder upon them from the circumstantial evidence of their escape, and fiercely announcing his intention of having them hung on sight. He tortured Ide persistently with his noisy threats and questions, his evident purpose being to inveigle the lad into incriminating the two negroes.

But Ide as persistently asserted his belief in their innocence.

"No proof, except their own confession, if that, could convince me that either Mose or Dan could have done it," he repeatedly declared, and answered all his pricking questions with the greatest precaution.

CHAPTER XXXI.

DEPARTURES WITH AND WITHOUT GOODBYES.

"Well, Mrs. Woodson, I expect you are thinking I have played opossum long enough for the loss of a finger? And, no doubt I have had more than my share of the health-giving air and exceptionally good nursing of Elmwood. It is high time I was taking up my parole and going about my business to find something to do." And he gave a half-smothered sigh of regret.

"We shall be very sorry to miss you," said Mrs. Woodson cordially, including Miss Phenie by a mischievous little side glance, at which he laughed responsively.

But, seeing Miss Phenie was giving all her attention to the black and white kitten which was playing with her ball, they drifted into graver converse concerning his plans and prospects, hopes and fears.

After Mr. Cabell's departure, Surgeon Miller, with many misgivings, proposed that Mrs. Woodson should accommodate as boarders the remaining two wounded Yankees, thus releasing him from duty at that point and restoring Mr. Lockett's house to the use of his own family. He was evidently anxious to get to regular work again.

The girls were bitterly opposed to the plan. But Mrs. Woodson knew the board money, which Dr. Miller volunteered to pay in advance, would be a great help in tiding through the coming months.

If Ide had been on hand when the arrangement

was being proposed he would, no doubt, have given pretty strong warning from his own unfortunate experience. Still, these were regulars, not volunteers, and would be obliged to report to their command as soon as well. All this had been fully explained by Dr. Miller. Besides, Surgeon Miller had proved himself so uniformly considerate of them, they could not believe he would get them into trouble in any way. When Ide did come down, a day or two after they had been installed, he admitted the men did not look particularly dangerous. Seemed to be dull, heavy fellows with no idea beyond the life of a soldier.

The girls were still disposed to be antagonistic, hence Mrs. Woodson excused them from giving her any assistance. This only necessitated her giving them the more attention herself. Whatever help she needed devolved upon Patsy, Suky or Scott.

Patsy was a good looking girl, with her dead mother's big soft black eyes and her father's quickness and dignity of movement and keen intelligence, and, as was usually the case, with manners carefully patterned after those of her young mistress.

"I wish I was white lek you, Miss Abby," Patsy sighed, one evening as she combed out the long straight fair hair.

"Why, what for, Patsy?"

The dusky maid blushed, as Abby in her surprise threw back her head and looked up at her.

"I sure does wush it! I karn' see why God couldn' a made me white. He done made too many niggers enny how. Twarn gwine ter hut 'im ter mek one more gal white."

There was a querrulous touch of discontent in the girl's tone which had never been there before, and Abby was at a loss how to combat it. It did no good

to make light of her mood, she only said, more passionately than ever:

"Tain' no joke, Miss Abby. I'd poultice dis here ole black skin fer a whole year twell I bun it all off, ef it jes' would come back white. En I'd pull evy hayar out'er me haad ef 'twould jes' come in agen straight en purty lek yourn."

Abby felt that it was a real distress to her little maid, and a hopeless one. And she lay awake long after the lights were out, and Patsy was snoring on her pallet, trying to think of something which might help to reconcile her to her lot, if the subject should be broached again. It did not once occur to Abby that she had gotten these notions from their latest boarders. Nor had she thought to mention the subject to her mother. In fact, most of the following week both Patsy and Mrs. Woodson were unusually occupied with the soldiers, helping them to get ready to be off. The change of quarters had done a good deal to speed their recovery. They were now about ready for duty again and had been ordered to report at Norfolk.

Readily surmising that Patsy was well paid for her services, no one was surprised at her obsequious attentions. And Abby was only too glad to do her work, thus leaving her free to make all the money she could out of them.

The last of the goodbyes had been said, Mr. and Mrs. Woodson showing to the very last the sincere interest and kindness they would have felt in any one who had been sick under their roof, and Abby and Miss Phenie making faithful effort not to look too glad. They were still discussing them variously, later in the afternoon, when Ide came in.

Hazel's big brown eyes fastened upon his face in a dreamy search after cause and effect, the moment

he came within her line of vision. She was younger, hence less keenly alive to the issues of the war than those who had suffered through lovers, brothers, or property losses, or who, like her parents, felt the throes of the captive South as if they had been their own.

She was too young even to remember the good old times before the war when sugar was bought by the barrel and her father never came back from town without a bundle of candy in his pocket.

The departure of the last Yankee soldier meant very little to her. But it meant a great deal that Ide was looking so troubled. The recent death of his father under such harrowing circumstances was certainly enough to give cause for sadness but Hazel, with her sensitive sympathy, felt quite positive the disturbance which was rankling now, driving all the merry music out of his whistle-pipe, was of later date. Perhaps he saw the questioning sympathy in her yellow-brown eyes. But he only gave her red curls an affectionate tweak, when she came and stood beside him. It was not until the rest had all gathered and sat around him ready for a counsel of war that he told his story, or rather, permitted it to be drawn from him by a system of circulating questions common in large families.

After all, there was nothing particularly new. Only it was developed how quickly his stepmother had recovered from the shock of her husband's death; how openly loverlike the attentions she accepted from the Lieutenant in this so short time; how they made bare-faced fun of Ide on all occasions and tried to aggravate him in every possible way; and he had reason to believe it was by secret encouragement from them the negroes were led to treat him with such marked indignity.

Mr. Woodson's face darkened with pain and displeasure during this recital. Nevertheless, when Ide ended, laughingly:

"Uncle Tom, don't you want to hire me for my board and clothes? I do not believe I can stand it at home much longer," Mr. Woodson shook his head gloomily:

"It is pretty hard on you, Ide, my boy, I know it. But,—I'm afraid you ought to stay where you are—for the sake of your mother's good name—she still bears your father's, you know,—besides, your complete withdrawal at this time might invalidate your own and Paul's lien on the property,——"

"Mamma, do you know where Patsy is? I can't find her anywhere in the house," Abby interrupted, excitedly. She had withdrawn from the room unobserved, but now her voice was unsteady and her face showed great alarm or anxiety.

"I expect she has just gone down to the cabin to see her daddy, you know she often does about this time." Mrs. Woodson calmed her. All the same, she got up and went out with Abby. It was about time for the men to come in from the field.

Mrs. Woodson called to Ottawa from the end of the porch as he passed to see if Patsy was at the cabin and let her know. Then they waited until he had put his hoe in the shed by the door and disappeared in his part of the cabin.

"I don't know why," Abby was saying, "but somehow I suddenly thought of Patsy and felt anxious and went upstairs for no other reason than to see if she was there. When I did not find her——"

Here Ottawa came out of his door and towards the house with hurried steps:

"Mis' Sue, my gal ain't nowhar 'bout de cabin, she mus' be summers up ter de house."

His face and voice showed an anxiety kindred to Abby's.

"Abby could not find her, but she may be asleep in some corner." Mrs. Woodson tried to reassure him. They took another look throughout the entire house, and when they told Ottawa of their failure to find her he was desperately uneasy, as well he might be, and spent the night going from cabin to cabin, even crossing the river and nearly getting a quarrel on his hands among Lige's connections at "Morton Grange."

The last trace of her was when she took a bucket and went to the spring to bring fresh water for the departing soldiers.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PAUL'S HOME.

Paul had written to Ide that he had found work. He did not say what. Ide little dreamed it was the position of a day laborer—to do the outside work, caring for the yard and horses of a government official stationed in Richmond. It was the only job available at the time, and he was under necessity to do something for the support of his wife. His own clothes were the coarsest homespun and he still wore his old Confederate slouch hat. He preferred these to the Yankee shoddy which was beginning to be brought in by Jewish merchants. Anyway, it's more in keeping, and,—it helps me to remember I *was* a Southern gentleman. In accordance with this memory, he kept himself under all circumstances, respectably clean, and never went on the street or into the presence of ladies without a white collar and a tidy looking cravat.

Yet, it was not so much because he was ashamed of his work that he wore his hat low over his face and sought the streets where he would be least likely to meet any one he knew. Ah, there are some things in life more helplessly degrading than any honest labor could ever be. Paul was finding it increasingly difficult not only to remember he was a gentleman, but to hold fast to his manfulness, his integrity of honor.

He winced perceptibly one day under an order from his employer's wife. Not from the peremptori-

ness of her tone, he had fully schooled himself to accept that. The pricking thorn in the errand was the necessity it involved of his passing through one of the popular residence streets. Yet, who would recognize in him, now, the debonair, merry-hearted soldier of two years ago? At any rate, there was no choice. He had undertaken the job and he did not know how to go back on an engagement.

He had always been a remarkably rapid walker, but the steps once so full of spring and life now made haste by long, heavy strides. The head, formerly thrown back in buoyant joy, now dropped in proud self-abasement. Nevertheless, he went on his way with a determined conscientiousness that stood him in the stead of energy.

As he turned the dreaded corner, he gave a violent start and wheeled face about as if for ignominious retreat,—paused,—turned back again and faced his duty with the same resolute grip upon himself with which he had many a time faced shot and shell. There was nothing more alarming in sight than a bow of pink ribbon nestling cosily under a round, soft chin, but Paul's head hung heavily as he crossed the street pretending not to see.

Hyla Weith could not for a moment imagine herself intentionally avoided by one who had once conferred a favor, and she would not suffer herself to be thus evaded. She crossed the street also and stood directly in front of him with outstretched, eager hand and merry, laughing face exclaiming:

"Why, Mr. Carrington don't you know me?"

He did not touch the extended hand. He put his own behind him and murmured determinedly:

"I *must* not know you, nor you me——"

"And pray why should I not know you?" she interrupted, trying to laugh his coldness away, yet

showing an undercurrent of hurt feeling, "I do not so readily forget—a Confederate soldier—especially one who has done me great personal kindness—even if it be but a bare acquaintance."

He winced painfully under the cutting words notwithstanding she was still smiling. But he shook his head with a sorrowful inexorableness:

"Nor do I. And yet, we must live as if we did."

"We will do no such thing,——" she began impulsively, then stopped. Something in his face silenced her.

"The glamor of the war is a thing of the past, Miss Weith, I am only a *common day laborer* now, working to support my—wife, and—we are no fit acquaintances for you." His tones had grown tense and bitter, and he glanced significantly from his own coarse habiliments to her simple, dainty outfit crowned by the bow of pink ribbon upon which his eyes lingered and feasted for one hungry moment as might a drowning man's upon a slender strip of solid ground.

She gazed at him a moment in mute surprise. She really had not noticed his clothing at all before. For the first time in her life Hyla Weith had been effectually bluffed. She searched his face in vain for some sign of other meaning than the words indicated. The man was evidently dead in earnest in desiring her, for some reason, not to recognize him as friend or acquaintance. She had then no alternative. She was cut to the quick. Her manner showed it through the haughty coldness he had inspired as she replied briefly:

"It shall certainly be so if you wish." Yet, she could not forbear one last glance of pity for the wretchedness he could not conceal as they turned in opposite directions.

Paul accomplished his errand as quickly as possible, and, cutting through an alley, hastened home, for this ended his day's work for his employer.

Did we say home? The place he called home was a parody on the word. It was a basement room, the bareness of which was a forceful impression even in the vague twilight. The dark outlines of a woman's figure nodding in a rocking chair roused a little as he struck a match, and asked querulously:

"Did you bring any medicine?"

There was a start of regretful penitence and a worried frown: "No, I forgot it," he said. "Cannot you do without it this one night?"

"Do without?" she whimpered, pitifully, "you don't know how I have suffered for want of it already to-day. I have had three spells and once came near breaking my neck over the arm of the chair," and she began to sob weakly.

A quick glance assured him her statement must be exaggerated and a feeling of revulsion came over him, whipped out instantly by the truest compassion as he got up, somewhat wearily, to go and get the opium for her.

In the short time which had elapsed since the day she had departed so hastily from Elmwood, leaving behind her the unenviable memory of "that peculiar Mrs. Link," she had changed greatly and for the worse. It was easy to see from the ghastly pallor of her face and the heavy stupor of the eyes that both the disease and the remedy had made rapid strides. She fell into a dull sleep as soon as he left the room, for she had already taken on a reckless quantity of the drug. Thus Paul found her when he returned. He left her to sleep on, while he lighted a fire in the tiny cooking stove and put on the dinner, then tidied up the room some and washed the

dishes she had left at noon. When the last plate had been put in place and the dinner looked after, he took down a book from a tall shelf and tried to study a bit of law while she still slept.

He had hardly gotten himself thoroughly absorbed in the pages before him, when he noticed the warning change in his wife's breathing. He laid down his book at once and went to her.

Misled by her pleading for more, he had not dreamed she had already taken too much. Now he saw at a glance the case was altogether beyond anything he could do, and promptly went for a doctor. The two worked over her far into the night. As the patient began at length to yield to the heroic measures to which they had been obliged to resort, the physician's experienced eye, with unnoticed glances, began to take in something of the situation. To test the conclusions of his judgment he said in a strictly professional tone:

"She ought to be in a sanitarium."

"I know it," Paul answered, flinching as from the prick of a pin.

"Or——" the physician went on probingly, "have some one to watch her constantly——"

"There is nobody except myself," Paul looked up at him in helpless distress, "and I must be out to make a living,—it is but a poor one at the best, as you see."

"I understand," he said, kindly. "Have you ever tried to break her of the habit?"

Paul shook his head despondingly. "As she says, it is only a question of epilepsy and—this."

"Ah, I see."

The doctor looked at the young man before him, the gentlest pity softening his face. The only question in his mind now was, "what in the world in-

duced you to marry her?" and naturally it was left unspoken.

"Better see that she does not get any more before noon to-morrow," he said briefly, as he went out.

Whether, or how, this injunction could be carried out, Paul did not know. There was the bundle he had just gotten. He could not afford to destroy it, for he knew more would have to be bought to ward off the horrible spasms. He had often tried hiding it so as to give it to her himself in small quantities, not only for her own sake, but in order to economize the money expended, and spare his own humiliation in having to go to the druggist's for it. But she never failed to find it and to reproach him for treating her like a child and trying to deceive her.

It was a pitiful wreck of womanhood he looked down upon out of tired, hopeless eyes, the next morning. As he stood beside her she awoke, and he saw she was more herself than she had been for a long time. Alas! the very sight of him,—the source of her supply,—excited anew the fearful craving.

"The doctor said you must not have it," he said firmly. "You have been so near death you *must* be careful."

"The doctor's a brute!" she cried with as much vehemence as her small stock of strength admitted, "and you are no better. You know what I have to endure and you have no mercy. I wish you could have it yourself—you great strong monster—then you might have some pity for me!"

She had wrought herself up to such a pitch of excitement and indignation one of her attacks seemed inevitable. He threw himself on his knees beside the bed and took her hands in his. He looked into her eyes with a strong, compelling will-power, for

the man had grown desperate. As she gradually grew more quiet under the steady force of his stronger nature, he said:

"Della, you told me once your love for me was so great you could not stop short of anything—even deception—that was necessary to win. Do you still love me so much?"

"Yes," she answered with the pitiful, appealing affection of a sick animal.

"Then, for my sake, let the nasty stuff alone for one day!"

He saw the look of dread on the poor, shriveled face. It must be terrible to be alone all day with those horrors hanging over her, he thought compassionately. Yet, to stay with her himself, or to hire any one to stay with her was equally impossible.

"Della, cannot you try to control yourself? If you will try I will come home at noon and give you some myself. Will you master yourself this once? Surely you can. You did it before we were married, you did not even let me find out you had epilepsy——"

"Don't, Paul!"

"Well, I will not mention it again if you will only make a brave effort to break loose from this terrible slavery. You must take care of yourself until I can get something to do that will enable me to stay at home more."

"Now, won't you be good to-day,—for my sake!" he faltered. She promised, and in a little while, to his great relief, she fell into an exhausted sleep. Thus he left her.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

FIRST DRIVE TO TOWN.

Abby had had a regular siege of toothache. One of her largest molars had been allowed to decay from the difficulty of getting to Farmville to a dentist. As is usually the case, the pain was most severe at night. Hazel had wondered at her restlessness, for she was, by habit, a quiet sleeper. But, each morning the pain would be gone, and if questioned, Abby would invariably say, "O, I am all right now," once or twice admitting her tooth had given her a little trouble the night before. This sort of thing continuing for a week was rather wearing on the nerves.

One evening Ide had been telling them of the conversation he had overheard between Lige and Mose previous to his father's death and it brought back vividly her own fearful encounter with the man on that never-to-be-forgotten night ride.

After spending half the night wrestling with the toothache, Abby fell into a troubled sleep. From this she awoke under the terrorful impression that Lige was in the room. She listened breathlessly for a sound, quaking in a moist chill. A creaking plank climaxed her fears. Clutching at Hazel convulsively she called her name and whispered:

"There's somebody in the room!"

On the instant a big, bushy head emerged slowly from the darkness, enveloping everything and deliberately, as it appeared, silhouetted itself against the background of the window's dim gray light.

"Where! what! who?" questioned Hazel, startled and mystified.

"There! don't you see!" Abby cried in terror-stricken voice.

As she threw out an indicating hand, she found her fingers tangled in the soft, matted fluff of Hazel's own curly head, and fell back on her pillow with a foolish, hysterical sob.

Neither of them slept any more that night. For Hazel herself this kind of morbid, imaginary fearsomeness would have been nothing new. Never having been very well or strong, she had been its long-suffering victim from a child. But Abby had always been wholesome, practical, as her father said, with no nonsense about her. It was altogether unheard of in her experience.

Hazel knew something must be amiss.

"It's nothing except this old tooth," Abby answered her queries, half laughing, half crying. "It tackles me unmercifully every night and then in the morning makes me believe it's going to behave itself. Father will have to get me to Farmville some way if I have to ride behind him or Ide!"

This dictum was not questioned by anybody when Hazel told of their nervous fright the night before, and Abby owned up to her long siege of suffering.

The wagon and mules could not possibly be spared at that juncture of farm work. Scott must try the horses and carriage. They had made no attempt to use the carriage since the passing of the armies on account of the roads. But Scott could get it there if anybody could. He was exceptionally capable and careful as a driver and had been trusted with the family carriage from a boy.

"It looks something like old times to see the carriage at the gate and Scott up there in his place,"

Mrs. Woodson said. And Suky chuckled and ducked her head under her apron.

Sergeant Demesmè's horse was one of the two, and Abby gave it an affectionate little pat as she passed it to get into the carriage. The roads were unspeakably bad. Or rather, there was no road at all. Whole fields, guiltless of fence or any landmark of green, had to be painstakingly picked over for a solid space wide enough to bear the wheels. The remainder was cut and crossed and cris-crossed with great deep ruts and gullies deep enough to hide a wheel. It was really difficult to keep the direction. In some places Uncle Scott had to get out and lift the wheels, one after the other, over a gully. The bridges, too, were all down, and though the streams were low the fords had been as badly worsted as the roads.

However, they reached Farmville safely and started for the long drive home just as soon as the errand which had brought them could be accomplished, Abby feeling much relieved to be rid of her quondam tormentor.

She still looked badly, Hazel thought, and reproached herself for having been so blind to her suffering. Moreover, there was a dreamy sadness in the clear, sweet eyes and deep shadows under them. How could it have been she had not noticed before! and was there other cause than toothache? Hazel wondered. Had she, as the eldest child, entered too deeply into the anxious counsels of her parents, and thus lost the elasticity of her girlhood? or was it but the natural result of that dreadful night ride followed by this little spell of sickness?

As for Abby this ride in some way recalled others when their friends of the battery had been their gay outriders. And this naturally led her thoughts to the

story, old as human nature, which had come to her in the fervid Southern tones of one brief parting moment. She had listened to it pleased and proud, but only answered with happy, girlish levity. If there had been any lovelight in her eyes she could not tell if he had seen it. And that was all she had given him to gladden his heart to Appomattox. His confession had been so unexpected, and then he had asked for nothing in return. Notwithstanding, after letting him go she had watched and waited with womanly relenting for the time when they could have a more perfect understanding. Then Mr. Monnot brought the first news of their Louisiana friends, and, for her, but the one word, "missing" which sank like a dead weight upon her heart. Her one comfort all these weeks while hope was dying its slow, tortuous death, was that his last thoughts had been of her.

That very morning Pansy had sent her a letter from Mr. Monnot. She had it with her now, had read it over so often the words came readily back to her. He wrote: "Demesmè came to our tent the night before and we had a long talk, just ourselves. He seemed to have a premonition of what actually happened and said beautiful things about you. I wish I could remember them all. He said he could talk to me because he knew I would be going back some day. At times he looked almost sad, but whenever he mentioned your name his face fairly beamed. 'She reminds me,' he said, 'of a lovely flower, radiant with soul beauty and giving out to all around her the perfume of love and good will. I did not intend ever to tell her of my love because I imagined she and Molère were made for each other.

"'But when I discovered she did not care for him, I could not help it. . . . I hope I have not

blighted her life. I want her to be happy,—as happy as she makes every one else.'"

There was a sudden break in the meditations of the occupants of the carriage.

At one point the road crossed the railroad within fifty yards of an abrupt turn, and approached it from the Farmville side by a short steep incline. As they neared the brow of this hill, they heard the whistle of a train. Simultaneously they called out to Uncle Scott lest he should not have heard, and looked out to see how near and in what direction it was.

Still, with the utmost confidence in Uncle Scott's caution, they felt no special anxiety until—in some amaze they felt themselves speeding down the hill and across the track full in the face of the puffing, panting engine, heaving into sight around the curve and blowing frantic signals of warning.

As it rushed past them barely missing the hind wheels of the carriage and nearly smothering them with smoke and steam, the terrified girls with clasped hands gazed into each other's eyes hardly able to realize themselves still in the land of the living. There was a calm, sweet brightness on Abby's face which Hazel never forgot, but its palor was frightful. And when they reached home she was so weak Ide had almost to carry her into the house.

When Mr. and Mrs. Woodson heard a full account of the affair the old suspicions, begotten by the knowledge of evil influences constantly bearing upon the colored people, came trooping back irresistibly. Might not this be part of the scheme which had been proposed of wiping out the Southern whites from the face of the earth and possessing the land?

"Truly we walk on quaking earth!" Mr. Woodson muttered gloomily, "for if we cannot trust Scott—"

He would have gone out at once and called to ac-

count the man who had thus put to reckless risk the life of his children, but Mrs. Woodson persuaded him to wait until morning when he would have better control of himself and could listen to reason and excuse if there should be any.

After all, the explanation Scott gave of what he had done was plausible, and Mr. Woodson was more than glad he had given the man opportunity to exonerate himself before speaking with the harshness he had at first felt. Scott's account of it was that he was not thoroughly acquainted with one of his horses.

He knew he would stand the train behind him because he had tried him so, and he was sure they could get across barring accident or breakage which he always guarded against before leaving home. On the other hand he did not know how the horse would stand facing the engine at such close quarters. And for either of them to become unmanageable on the brow of that hill would have meant inevitable destruction to horses, carriage and people.

"I believe you are right, Scott," Mr. Woodson held out his hand to him frankly, "and I am glad to be able to trust you as implicitly as before."

Next morning Abby pleaded fatigue and weakness as a reason for remaining in bed and "leaving all the work for some one else to do." This fact alone alarmed her father and mother, for such a thing had hardly ever happened before in her life.

They immediately sent for the doctor. He found no cause for serious apprehension though he suggested it might be well if she could have a little change of some sort.

This was such a sheer impossibility they could only sigh over it. The way opened sooner than they had

any reason to expect. But for the present there was nothing to do except to keep her in bed and divert her mind as much as possible that she might reap full benefit from the rest.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

FOLLOWING AN IMPULSE.

Although Hyla Weith had learned at the feet of Mother Necessity to exercise a self-control really remarkable in one of her age, yet she was by nature a creature of impulse.

As she turned away from Paul Carrington in apparent acquiescence her whole being was fiercely contesting his fiat of burying their friendship in a hopeless oblivion. If he thought his being married was a sufficient reason, he did not know her. She was not that kind of a friend, especially when the obligation was all on her side. As far as he was concerned, she would certainly avoid him as carefully as possible, if such was his wish. But why should this embargo include the wife? or debar her from seeking to repay her own debts of kindness in that direction? Hyla determined to seek her out and see if there was anything she could do for her. They might be in uncomfortable circumstances which she could in some measure relieve, she thought, remembering his own uncouth garb to which he had called her attention. As Hyla looked back Paul was just leaving the house to which he had carried his message. Deliberately turning her steps, Hyla walked slowly towards him, intending to pass unconcernedly on the side and thus get behind and follow.

She did not need so much precaution. For, this time he did not once raise his head, and quickly disappeared into an alley which opened between them.

She quickened her own footsteps now and followed him. His steps had grown slow and heavy-laden, under the fancied security of the alley route. It needed no effort to keep in sight.

When he came out on the next street there was such an anxious glance up and down, she hastily sought the shelter of the nearest shadow, though not in the least deterred from her purpose.

He pretty soon led the way into an uninviting quarter of the city as totally unknown to her as the Ghetto of Constantinople, and stopped at a basement door.

She only waited to see him enter, then taking note of her whereabouts and how to get there, she retraced her way homewards as rapidly as possible, intent upon getting in early, for she did not care to be questioned even by her father, as yet, though sufficiently sure of her own motives and intentions and of her father's eventual concurrence, not to fear to go ahead.

Another day, soon after, she started out to make a little visit to Paul's wife. She sincerely hoped he would not be there.

Nevertheless, she had prepared herself for the contingency and had her little speech of apology and explanation ready. Hyla easily perceived, on her nearer approach, that the house her memory had marked was a tenement habitation. And from each window protruded a curious head. But neither did this daunt her. She knocked at the door, two or three times at short intervals. There was no response.

She paused,—puzzled. Could it be the "wife" was a mere dodge? Curiosity added its spur. She had a good deal of tenacity in her make up. She opened the door, and, receiving neither protest nor welcome,

naturally concluded the room was unoccupied and stepped within and, thinking of those disagreeable protruding heads, closed the door behind her.

When her eyes became accustomed to the dimmer light she perceived a motionless figure reclining in the only comfortable chair. "Sick and sleeping," she concluded.

A casual glance around the room deepened the first impression of poverty and discomfort and before she had gone near the invalid her fertile energy had begun to discover and plan many small alleviations easily within her own resources.

With the quiet, soothing movements she had learned in her daily ministries upon her mother, Hyla approached Paul's wife. At first she did not recognize the pallid face with its limp, de-humanized features. When she did it was a severe shock.

"To think of such a noble, gallant young soldier being married to that 'queer Mrs. Link' with her terrible malady. Surely it was enough to take the spring out of his steps and to dumbweight the once high poised head. But pity for the woman followed quickly. She seemed to Hyla to be in a most alarming condition.

Yet, before flying out to seek a physician, she paused to remember Mrs. Woodson's verdict in the case; that the only remedy or preventive for these spasms was opium, and the remedy was worse than the disease, since the relief was only temporary, and the result almost inevitable, viz., the fastening upon the patient of the opium habit.

Hyla had never before seen any one under the influence of the drug. On the other hand, she had seen this very individual in the fearful throes of epilepsy —nothing at all like this dull stupor. She could not but suspect the other horn of the dilemma, even be-

fore she found the emptied paper on the floor beside the chair about which still lingered a peculiar, pungent odor.

Hyla was not much given to imaginary fears and nervous tremors.

It did not once occur to her to wonder if the woman had taken too much and was going to die. Her natural good sense inferred from the size of the paper that it had been a single dose portioned out by some responsible person, most likely Paul or a physician. Hence the effect would wear off at some expected time. But, as she stood looking down at her, rubbing her hand gently, she thought, how perfectly dreadful it must be for Paul to come home from a day's toil and find her thus, day after day.

Hyla wondered if she might venture to wash her face and hands without too abruptly breaking the spell of the opiate. She would tidy up the room, and then she would try.

She made up the bed, found a place to put everything away, washed all the dishes she could find and set the table for two as neatly as was practicable. Then she did wash the face and hands which needed it so sorely, and brushed the short hair smoothly back from the face, the heavy eyes only opening wide enough to question indifferently, "Who are you?" and closing again immediately, apparently as deeply asleep as ever.

By this time Hyla was beginning to be a little nervous lest Paul should come home to an early dinner and find her there. If she could only render his life a little more tolerable, poor fellow, without his ever finding out who did it, she would be best satisfied.

If she had only known there was little danger of Paul's catching her. He was employed by the day and was expected to stay until five or six o'clock. If

Hyla could have witnessed Paul's pleased surprise when he entered the room, she would have been fully repaid for her efforts. His first glad thought was that some wonderful transformation had suddenly taken place in his wife and a thrill of exultant encouragement flashed through him, but before it could raise his head to its natural level, a single glance at the occupant of the chair disproved this explanation of the phenomena, and, overborne by shame and degradation that it had needed to be done by some one outside, his head sank lower than ever. Still, he could not but enjoy the comfort of it, and he resolved, as far as in him lay, to keep things up as this unknown fairy hand had left them. He did not for a moment suspect Hyla, confident she had no clue, and would not, at any rate, overstep the rudeness by which he had fenced her off.

He rather attributed the kindness to some of the charitable women of the city, who, in their visitations among the poor and needy, had stumbled upon the great need of a woman's ministry here.

It was not Hyla's last visit by a good many. When she went home that first day she told her father and mother the whole story, and what she had discovered relative to their friend, Paul Carrington. They did not discourage her going and doing what she could for the poor creature. "I only wish," her father said, "I could get hold of the young man myself. I might help him to get into some better line of work."

For some time Hyla invariably found Mrs. Carrington in the same comatose condition. One day, being prevented from getting there in the morning, Hyla ventured to go in the afternoon.

She opened the door quietly as she had been in the habit of doing, without knocking, and expecting

to find the room as much at her disposal as usual. What was her surprise to see Mrs. Carrington with a sharp, cunning expression of face searching in the closet for something,—and so intent upon her object she did not turn at the sound of the opening door nor notice the intruder until, failing to find what she wanted, she turned away in pitiful, puerile disappointment and wrath against her husband for hiding the money from her.

The woman's whole tone changed when she saw Hyla, whom she evidently had forgotten ever to have seen, into one of abject begging. Her husband, she said, had forgotten to leave her any money to get her dinner, and if the lady would only lend her a dime she would be sure to repay it the next time she came.

Her plea tallied plausibly with what had fallen under the girl's own observation. That is to say it seemed credible enough that he should forget, if he left her in one of those long stupors, or that she should have lost it if he gave it. Hence, Hyla gave her the dime and took the opportunity while she was out making her purchase to do a little brightening and freshening up of the room, howbeit her zeal was somewhat slack twisted, from the want of appreciation shown.

Hyla looked in vain for signs of the lunch. "I was so hungry," Mrs. Carrington said, meeting the questioning eyes, "I ate it all up on the way," and then rather flurriedly tucked out of sight the small package she had in her hand.

When Hyla told her father of this visit, he shook his head dubiously. "I am afraid it is a hopeless case, when the habit has gotten such a hold as to lead her to beg and lie for it. Though, even yet, it may be possible for you by patience and persevering

kindness to enlist her own will power in resisting the vile slavery, and, the power of God is infinite," he added encouragingly.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PAYING DEBTS.

Mr. and Mrs. Woodson did not allow Ide's request for a home with them to go without further consideration. They were greatly troubled about the boy. It was easy to see his present conditions of life were undermining all his courage, energy and manly independence.

"What in the world can that boy Paul be thinking of to go off like this and leave Ide to fight it out alone?" Mr. Woodson grumbled indignantly again and again. He several times attempted to question Ide as to his brother's whereabouts, with a view to writing him a piece of his mind and urging him to come back and look after the farm as it was his place to do.

But Ide was loyally non-committal on the subject He either did not know where his brother was or was determined not to give it away. He always made what excuses he could for Paul's absence and reticence and then promptly changed the subject so that his uncle got no satisfaction whatever.

It was finally arranged, however, among them that Ide should be in his Uncle Tom's employment as overseer, but should continue to stay at home at night. It was hoped that getting out of the antagonistic and uncongenial atmosphere of his home for this much of the twenty-four hours would be a sufficient stimulant and brace for the endurance of the remainder, especially if he had some regular employment. And it was.

He entered upon his new duties at once with his old boyish good nature and an enthusiasm in the work which older people had lost. He soon gained a surprising influence over the hands who had shown the good sense to keep at work and gradually won some of the others into the circle.

When it was publicly announced that Lige had given up his cabin on the Woodson plantation and taken himself off for good there was a general rejoicing. The fact, however, changed hue somewhat when it was learned he was to be in the employ of Lieut. Danklin and to occupy one of the Carrington cabins. Still there was no help for it, and, as Ide said, no use worrying about it.

Ide was making a brave effort to whistle himself back into his old merry, care-free mood. Ide was the life of the house when he came into dinner and supper carefully washed and brushed and never without coat and collar. He was the life of the field when he took his place at the end of the line of hands and challenged any one of them to get ahead of him.

Miss Phenie and her brother left early in July. He had gone to their old home in the valley to see if he could collect anything from some debts owing their father before the war. But his letter when it came was not very encouraging. Out of nine hundred dollars due he had gotten only nine.

As the time approached for the close of her school session, which was the last of June, Miss Phenie looked forward to that event with some embarrassment. She felt it would be an imposition on the hospitality so free and already so heavily taxed to remain where she was longer than her duties called for, and yet she had no money even for the short trip to her grandfather's at Hampden Sidney where a kindly home was always open to her.

Before she had with conscientious faithfulness made up the time lost during the confusion, as if with a premonition of her perplexity, Mr. Woodson sent for her one day.

"I have not forgotten," he said, "that I owe you half your salary for the past session. It has been a matter of no small dfficulty to decide what would be a fair equivalent for what I promised. Of course you understand as well as I the impossibility of my paying in greenbacks the full amount promised in Confederate notes, even if it were justly due.

"On the other hand I could still less in common honesty offer you the pittance which would be accounted the actual value of the amount."

By this time Miss Phenie had found her voice and, with eyes full of grateful tears exclaimed:

"O, Mr. Woodson, how can you talk of *owing* me anything when you have both been so good to me, giving me everything in the world I needed and treating me exactly as if I had been a member of your own family. Indeed, I am sure the *debt* is all on the other side."

"Well, I am glad you feel that way about it," he said with his own sober, gratified smile, "because it makes it easier for me to offer you so small an amount. It does not measure, I want you to understand, our appreciation of what you have done for our children, but it is all I have been able to raise."

He handed her sixteen dollars. It seemed quite a small fortune to the girl under the circumstances and her first impulse was to decline it outright. Only, how then should she get to her grandfather's or escape the necessity of trespassing on Elmwood hospitality for the summer, and how relieve Mr. Woodson himself of a feeling of obligation to renew

the engagement in the fall? Hence she accepted gratefully the proffered roll of greenbacks and soon after took her departure.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

POOR MANDY.

The months drifted toward autumn and Mother Nature had done what she could to repair the damages of the Spring. Where the land could be cultivated at all it had yielded bountifully, and, as the crops came in the farmers began to lift their heads a little. Still it was a hand to hand fight with difficulties which seemed to multiply in being vanquished.

For instance, in obtaining labor for the field work there was first to overcome the recently imbibed and diligently instilled prejudices against the native whites. And when secured by a by no means inviolate bargain, they had to be paid and fed when there was so little money and food.

This little corner of Prince Edward County was too far from its own courthouse to meddle much in politics; too busy keeping its own head above water to be able to concern itself to any considerable extent as to what the United States were going to do with the South. If they did not as yet feel any very strong interest in the payment of the national debt, or the harmony or want of harmony between Johnson and his Cabinet and Congress surely it was only natural.

As long as they were left to themselves there was no danger of their giving further trouble. Yet, they were not lacking in public spirit. The "High bridge" which had been built at great expense was

a personal care and responsibility. Coming home from the bridge one day, Ide Carrington reported he had seen a cross tire fall from it as the train went over and break to pieces like a piece of rotten wood.

The next morning Mr. Woodson went up himself to investigate. Some railroad hands were taking note of its condition at the same time, but in the careless fashion which infected all classes of men at the time. They had thrown down and replaced a few of the worst timbers, but left many that were far from safe, as was evident to Mr. Woodson looking up from below.

After the men left he went up and walked across, testing those immediately under the track. Not a few were so thoroughly decayed he could punch his walking stick into them as easily as a bank of sand. By what cohesive force they still clung together and kept their place it was hard to see, but not hard to predict a dire catastrophe to some train in a near future if something were not done to avert it.

In old times the neighbors would have turned out with their best hands to help the railroad get it in order, rather than risk the accident. Now, most of the men in that part of the county were past middle life and had no laborers at their command.

Nevertheless, Mr. Woodson got them together, and they determined to notify the Government as well as the railroad company, and to keep watch by turns every night to give warning if the danger became more imminent.

Mr. Woodson was the oldest and the others insisted he should excuse himself or send Ide in his place. He, however, would not agree to this. They had gotten a promise from the Government that it should be looked into and from the railroad officials that workmen should be there by a certain day to

begin work. Mr. Woodson's was to be the last watch.

"They will come none too soon," he muttered as he watched the swagging and trembling of its whole length for some minutes after the last train passed on. "I don't believe it would bear the weight of another car, and fortunately will not have to."

As he turned with a sigh of relief to go home, his keen ears detected stealthy footsteps lurking in the shadow of the last pier. He was not long in discovering they were fully intent upon avoiding him. But, poor as was his sight, his hearing had, from practice, acquired a quickness and precision that virtually did duty for both senses and was not easy to elude.

When he unexpectedly stepped out from the other side of the pier and, with a quick, peremptory movement, swung out his stick across the pathway of a dark figure which was about to spring into a run, it crouched at his feet instead with pitiful appealing hands raised above the bowed head.

"I nuvver done it, Mars' Tom, I nuvver done it!"

"I know you didn't, Mandy, or if you did there were others more to blame than you," he soothed the poor creature, with patient kindness.

"How are you geting along since you went to town?"

"Lawd a mussy, Mars' Tom!" She cowered lower and lower, as if she felt again her husband's blows.

"Hasn't Dick gotten any work yet?—or you?"

"I got one job o' washin' but when I tuk em home de sojer done gone away. Den Dick, he tuk de clo's en sell em fer whisky."

"But the Freedman's Bureau supplies you with food?"

"Dick, he gits er little, but mostly he goes en swops hit off fer whisky, en I so hongry all de

time, Mars' Tom, I 'low I gwine ter eat me own sef."

Mr. Woodson took a couple of rolls from his pocket which had been stowed there by his ever thoughtful wife for his own eating during the long tiresome night of watching, and gave them to Mandy. She devoured them greedily. Most likely could have done the same for several more. But she got up then from her crouching posture and stood respectfully before her former master.

"Mandy, what were you doing here?" he asked, kindly.

"I nuvver don' it!" she began again in the same tone of terrified cringing.

But Mr. Woodson stopped her with a soothing wave of his hand.

"I know you didn't Mandy, but what were you going to do? You know I never did you any harm in your life, and I could not now, if I wanted to. Tell me the simple truth. What did you intend to do?"

After some minutes of hesitation she commenced plaintively:

"Mars' Tom, I jes so hongry all de time, seem lek I ain' hed nuthin to eat sence Mis Sue gim'me dat buttermilk in de cabin. Den, tother night, Lige, he say ter Dick, kinder easy like, but I hearn 'em, ' 'ef somebody ud, careless like, lay somethin' on de track o' de bridge, dere'd be a lot o' plunder en vittals fer de fust as come along.' "

"O, Mandy!"

She did not notice the interruption and he was glad of it, for he was anxious to hear the rest of her story.

"I was awful skeert ter do hit, but I kep a thinkin' ov de vittals,—O, Mars' Tom, you dun no what 't is ter be so dreffful hongry! En I kep a thinkin', en a

thinkin'—en ter night I cum. En thar was you. En you kep a hangin' roun' lek yer knowd what I was gwine ter do." She sank down on her knees again as if awaiting judgment.

"And you were about to cause all that death and destruction," he said in stern grief.

"O, Mars' Tom, I was so hongry!" she cowered.

"Poor Mandy! I wish I could help you." He gave her a quarter he happened to have. "Better not let Dick know you have it," he said. "Buy a loaf of bread at a time for yourself and the children."

"De chillun's all done dead, Mars' Tom—evvy las' one o' 'em."

"You don't mean it! Well, I expect it's a good thing for them,—poor little nigs!"

The grave tenderness of his face was nothing new to Mandy. Full well she knew there was nobody who felt more for her.

After giving all the good advice he could he sent her home, promising to get to Farmville as soon as he could and see if something could not be done to get her out of the clutches of her cruel husband.

It was longer than he wished. When he went, he carried a good sized basket of provisions to be given the woman as soon as he could procure her release. But when he hunted up the place she had told him she lived, accompanied by an officer of the Bureau, they were told she had died a few days before.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

A STEP UP.

The Weiths were not the people to ever forget a favor. The Colonel had been greatly troubled by what Hyla told him of Paul Carrington. He fully appreciated all the young man had done for his wife and daughter and at what risk to himself. "I surely can afford to divide with him the prosperity which seems coming back to me," he said to himself, "for but for him, I might have had no incentive to work or to live." He quickly made up his mind what to do. On the way home one evening he directed his steps toward the part of the city Hyla had described as the place of Paul's residence. True to his calculations, he met the man just as he paused, with a heavy sigh, in front of his own door.

"Isn't this Mr. Carrington,—Paul Carrington,—Richmond Howitzers, C. S. A.?"

Involuntarily Paul's head went up. It was such a joy to be spoken to once more as a gentleman and a soldier. Then, remembrance of what he was, weighted it again lower than before. He was sorely tempted to disown his own identity. For, indeed, he was no longer himself.

There was no chance, however, for Colonel Weith went on immediately to say:

"I believe and hope you are the very man I am in search of. I want some bright young fellow in my office to help me, and at the same time study law, if he has a fancy in that direction."

He saw the downfall of the hope which had for a moment illumined the dulled face, and, guessing the cause, hastened to add:

"I am sorry to say, I cannot afford to pay at present more than five dollars a week of assured salary. But, then, when cases in which he helps me turn out successful, he shall certainly share to some extent in the profits. That's only fair, isn't it. Now, what say you? Are not you the man I am looking for?"

It would be hard to describe Paul's feelings. Except for the skeleton beyond that door it would have been like paradise opening before him. To be a lawyer some day was the one hope he had clung to when everything else had to go. He had bought a law book out of his first earnings and starved it out of himself afterwards. By the time he had fully mastered that he had managed to squeeze a second out of his weekly pittance. This study had been his only uplifting recreation, the only thing which kept him from sinking to the level of an animal, living but to eat, sleep and work. Here was double pay to begin with, and an open door to his highest ambition. He knew his ascent in any event must be by clogged wheels, but this should not hinder. He would carry and conceal his incubus in some way. He dare not let the opportunity slip. Paul held out his hand, forgetting how hard and labor-soiled it was. And Colonel Weith took it, too intently studying the face to notice hands.

"Then you will come and begin to-morrow?"

"No, Monday," Paul corrected, "if that will suit you as well?"

"Very well, Monday, then." He gave him a card with his office address and passed on.

Paul did not look at the name, nor had he recognized its owner. The short time they had been to-

gether had been too full of excitement for one soldier to make any lasting impression on another, and Paul was never looking for old comrades now except to avoid. Hence, he had no idea at the moment to whom he was indebted. It was God—his mother's God. No one else could have given him this great gift of hope. A new life was throbbing through his veins. That was enough for today.

He opened the door mechanically and went in. Everything was neat and orderly. Manifestly, the good fairy had been there again. He still had no suspicion who this good fairy might be.

Once, when he had found his wife sufficiently herself to be asked the question, she would only answer, with more fervor than she could get up on any but the one fatal subject:

"She's just an angel from heaven!"

He had not pushed the matter further,—had not, indeed, cared particularly to know. It was only one more sharp edge to his pride that such ministrations should be needed from outside, and it cut so deeply he was quite ready to change the subject of his own accord. This evening it was a passing thought.

He gave the edge no chance to cut anew. He strode across the room straight to his wife's chair and stood looking down at her with clinched teeth and grim, set face.

Whatever opportunity came to him to climb the world's ladder there would always be this deadweight to drag him back. There was an ugly gleam in his eyes and his lips pressed one upon another with a fierce intensity. Who may know what demon of temptation was nagging his soul as he wheeled from her and faced the growing darkness of the room with his hands tight clasped before him. His whole attitude was an appeal for strength where

his own strength failed. In time he grew calmer and came and stood beside her again.

A bar of faintly tinted twilight came in through part of a West window and fell across her face and hair. The hair was almost white. But the delicate rosiness of the sunset's forgotten glory gave her back a hint of youth and made one wonder if she were not pretty and girlish,—once. But Paul had never known her so. He did not dare to let himself remember the time when she first came into his life. If he would feel as was now his duty to do towards her, he must send his speculations far back of that period and imagine her a young girl with father, mother, friends, home. It was before the war, when, as he supposed all girls were happy and bright. One by one the lights had gone out of her life and left her alone,—so she had told him. His face had slowly softened to pity, and, he must stop right there, for she was already stirring, and get her supper ready.

She was unusually wide-awake that night after she had eaten her supper. Her eyes followed him with an unwonted wistfulness. So much so that he felt impelled to talk to her. He did not tell her what good fortune had opened before him. Alas, he knew only too well that an increase of income would only mean to her more money to buy opium. But he talked on all sorts of subjects as he had not had the spirit to do for many a day. And while she made little response, it did seem to divert her mind and to stave off for a little the evil hour when she began to beg with such shameless grovelling for her "medicine."

At last she was asleep in her bed and he knew by her slow, heavy breathing that she was mind-locked for the time. Then, with a lighter heart than he had known for long, he got out his coat and looked over

it carefully to see what he could do to make it look more respectable.

A few stitches, the changing of a button or two to more conspicuous vacancies and a good sponging and pressing did improve it considerably and encouraged him to go down to the nearest store and invest the most of his weekly savings in a pair of cheap pants, that so he might enter upon his new duties with some feeling of gentility.

All this time it had never occurred to him to look at the name on the card. When he had driven a special, new nail in an inconspicuous corner of the room to accommodate the suit in which he was once more to see how a gentleman felt, he bethought him to hunt up the card and put it into the coat pocket that there might be no danger of his failing to have the address with him. This time he did notice the name, and it came to him with a shock. He would greatly have preferred a stranger,—one who would not take any special interest in him or his private affairs. A deep red glow spread itself under the brown of his face as he thought of the possibility of meeting Hyla again, and of being indebted to her father for this new life.

"But I will not let pride beat me back!" he murmured. "If I cannot hide my skeleton without rudeness where I owe everything, it may at least be a stepping-stone to something else.

There had been a great deal of law business incident to the re-adjustment of affairs, social, religious and political at the close of the war. Col. Weith, having been a well known and successful attorney before the war, far beyond the limits of his own state, was falling heir to a goodly share of it.

He had sought Paul Carrington's assistance out of the purest generosity not knowing whether he

would have any turn that way whatever. He was to find himself the gainer by the efficient eager help of a bright, well-informed mind, peculiarly fitted for law and already turned in that direction and throwing into it the most strenuous ambitions of his life. Hence, as his employer, he had no need to claim gratitude for what he had done. Indeed, he never for a moment permitted him to conjure up an obligation which, if it existed, had been cancelled beforehand. Paul was received by big strides into the full confidence of the firm, soon after formed, of which he eventually became a member.

There was, however, one bourne beyond which he could not be tempted. Invitations to visit in the homes of those with whom he was associated in business were promptly, uncompromisingly, though gratefully declined.

Hyla continued her ministry in Paul's home in the guise of "good fairy" or "angel" and had begun to work, experimentally, on her father's suggestion in the line of reaching out toward the will power of the patient, if perchance there should be any of it left, where the disease and the remedy had preyed upon it alternately. She had discovered where the daily portion of the drug was kept, and ventured, on her own responsibility to lessen the quantity by imperceptible degrees, at the same time arranging her visits so as to be there during the intermissions and exerting herself to divert and amuse and thus lengthen them if possible. This took time. But Hyla had come to feel there was hardly anything more important than to help this poor creature to recover somewhat of a rational life which would be less of a burden to herself and to her husband.

Hyla often felt the limitations of her own knowledge as to how little of the stuff could be depended

on to serve its purpose of warding off the spasms and then what could she do if the patient should detect her scheme and resist?

Puzzling over these things one afternoon on her way home, whom should she meet just leaving her own door, but Surgeon Miller. Many pleasant and touching associations came flooding back with the sight of his kindly face, and she greeted him as an old friend.

"You are looking older," he said, a tinge of reproach in his genial voice. "What have you been doing to yourself?" And his eyes searched her as a doctor's may.

But the thought came to her in a moment, "Here is one who can tell me all I want to know, without betrayal of confidence."

He did not suspect in whose interest she desired the information she asked, he was only glad of any excuse to talk to her.

Before leaving he informed her he had been stationed in Richmond and hoped to see her often.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

A HAPPY RELEASE.

Hyla was too glad to get the explicit information she had so much wanted to quarrel with its source. She immediately went to work with renewed zeal and confidence on her private case. As she was able to lengthen the intervals, she found them also becoming more lucid, and, as Mrs. Carrington showed an inclination to talk, Hyla would entice her to talk of her husband and her own early life as subjects best calculated to enlist her will-power in this effort for her release from her opium slavery.

One morning when Hyla got there she found Mrs. Carrington wide awake.

"I thought I would surprise you," she laughed, a queer, unaccustomed sound. "What with Paul sneaking up on one dose and you on the other, it was about time for me to be doing something for myself, or else let you both know I had caught on to your tricks." There was no displeasure in her tone or smile, but she began to speak hurriedly, huskily, as if the horrible nightmare of dread were even then driving her against her will.

"Talk as fast as you can,—read me something exciting,—do all you can to help me get through the day, for I have thrown away my drug, and I'm in mortal terror—you all do not know what it is—or you would not blame me for taking anything——"

"'What time I am afraid I will trust in Thee!'" murmured Hyla soothingly. Then, in a bright, diverting way:

"I'll tell you what let's do, let's make the room spruce and fine before your husband comes home?"

Mrs. Carrington's doing was mostly a pretence, as her long unused muscles were incapable of much exertion. Still, the constant appeal to her as to how this or that should be done kept her mind on the alert and helped to ward off the imminent excitement. When all was finished Hyla persuaded her to lie down and rest while she prepared a little lunch, beguiling the moments while thus occupied with cheery chatter, or snatches of comforting hymns. After the lunch Hyla soothed her with mesmeric fingers while in a low, quieting monotone she repeated passages from the poets, texts from Scripture or hymns. In a little while the patient had fallen gently asleep as a baby might, and Hyla went home to her mother, who was not very well. Yet, feeling anxious over the issue of this effort at self-control in her patient, she went round again in the afternoon.

"I am so glad you came," Mrs. Carrington greeted her. "I want to talk to you. Come sit here beside me."

Hyla did as she desired, patting and smoothing the thin hand.

"I know you have often wondered," Mrs. Carrington commenced, how Paul happened to marry such a creature as I." She did not look up at Hyla to see if she had rightly guessed, but went on with closed eyes, as if she were speaking in a dream. "When you know I beguiled him into it with a lie,—and have never had the honesty or courage to tell him the truth to this day you will despise me more than ever, as you ought. Yet, if you could know how lonely and wretched I was, how utterly without

any one to care for me,—and how I loved him, you surely would pity me.

"I had my own home then, for father and mother had not been long dead. But what was the good of it to live in alone with my dreadful malady creeping on me. A wild scheme seized my brain. I went to the suitable authorities and obtained permission to take to my home, two or three at a time, soldiers from the hospital for their convalescing period. I had no thought of love. My plan went no deeper than to marry the first one who was willing to do so for the sake of the home. Alas! I fell madly in love with Paul as soon as I saw him. He was just getting over typhoid fever. Luck seemed to go my way, for he had a relapse immediately after he was settled in my back parlor, and I nursed him as a mother might a son, for I loved him. Occasionally in his delirium he would mention softly, a bow of pink ribbon, and I thought he wanted me to put one on. But when I did so he tore it off in a frenzy. This naturally led me to suspect his affections were already bestowed. But I was determined he should never marry any one else. When he came to himself, I made believe he had talked about me, had begged me to marry him—and given me no rest until I promised.

He spoke up quickly, earnestly assuring me I could not be held by a promise exacted in that way, and released me on the spot. But I had no mercy. I put on a shy and modest air and told him I did not wish to be released. I don't know how I stood the look of his eyes then, but I did, and boldly took everything for granted. As soon as he was well enough we went to a preacher and were married and the next day he went back to his command. I had made myself believe the pink ribbon girl was a mere

fancy of his sick brain; that, as he had such a good, kind heart, he could surely learn to love me by the slow degrees of short furloughs. At any rate he would be glad to have a home so that he need not go back to his stepmother when the war was over, for all that trouble had come out in his delirium also. But, O sweet angel! I was wicked when I let him marry me. He has been as true and loyal and kind as I knew he would be. Yet I cannot deceive myself. I know he does not love me, that he never can. Since I have known you, I have wondered if you were not his pink ribbon girl——"

Hyla did not suffer the slightest tremor to confirm this suspicion, and listened unflinchingly as she went on:

"If he had married you, what a different man he would have been! and bitterly indeed have I repented the wrong I have done you both. Hitherto I have only let it drive me more and more to the drug. Since you came to me like a ministering angel, I feel differently."

Here Hyla bowed her head on the pillow and sobbed softly.

"I have been thinking, it is as little as I can do in mere gratitude for his goodness to me, to hold on to the little sense disease has left me and make his life as comfortable as I can. I am not going to touch it again, cost what it may. I had one spell while you were out, but I didn't take anything. You will find it up there where Paul left it, and, if you will get it and throw it in the fire, it will be easier for me."

The early dusk had fallen over the room ere Hyla left.

"Don't ever tell Mr. Carrington who has been to see you," she whispered carelessly, "it's no matter to him, you know, and if he thinks of it at all, no

doubt he would rather believe it some one he has never heard of."

That night Mrs. Weith had another of her severe heart attacks. Hyla had no leisure of thought for any one else. In the afternoon, however, as her mother was sleeping and her father had come home early, she seized the opportunity to run round and tell Mrs. Carrington what had kept her away.

"I am glad you came to tell me, anyway," with a strange new effort to speak cheerily for the sake of another, "otherwise I might have feared you could not love me any more."

"You must never think that, no matter what happens," Hyla urged earnestly, and the other smiled her gratification.

"Go back now and take care of your mother, dear girl. I can take care of myself, and I'm going to be good, too, just the same," she added significantly.

These attacks always left Mrs. Weith very weak, and Col. Weith having been unexpectedly called off on a business trip, Hyla was kept closely at home for nearly a week. Col. Weith returned about noon and announced his intention of not reporting at the office until the next morning.

"All right!" said Hyla, "I will leave you two lovers to enjoy each other while I slip round to Mrs. Carrington's and see how she has been getting on."

It was in the heart of the winter season. The sun was shining gloriously, yet it was cold enough to make her cheeks tingle and glow and look like some velvety June rose petals. Her eyes were shining and her steps were light with thankfulness for her mother's recovery and her father's safe return, though anxiety for her other charge gave an eager haste to her steps. She wore a dress of soft Confed-

erate gray with a simple felt hat to match, relieved only by the shy knot of pink silk under her chin.

She had made up her mind after that last meeting with Paul to leave off the pink ribbon after the one then in use should be done with. But Mrs. Carrington, in one of her clearer moments, had expressed the same feeling with regard to it that Paul had, and "if it gives pleasure or cheer to anybody, why should not I wear it?" she thought.

Hyla's beauty was not of any stereotyped, perfect mould. Yet many an eye turned back for another look as she stepped briskly along the pavement, bent on her errand of kindness. There was a wonderful fascination about her whole personality. Nor does she leave it outside as she enters the door, beyond which has been so much of suffering and sorrow. The fullest sympathy did not dim the brightness of her presence as she stepped within.

The first glance informed her of a great change since her last visit. Mrs. Carrington had been thin before. Now she was the shadow of a skeleton. Her eyes were like stars, brought so near by a powerful instrument as to dazzle ordinary mortals.

"Have you been so very sick since I was here?" Hyla questioned, tenderly.

The patient gave a little affirmative movement of the head and smiled. "Perhaps I will soon be out of the way—and then poor, dear Paul can begin his life all over again. And,—after awhile he will hunt up his pink ribbon girl—and they will be so happy—I think one of my greatest joys in heaven will be to witness their happiness,—to see him forgetting all the months of sorrow I have caused him." She spoke with slow effort, her head back and chin up. Now she closed her eyes wearily. But she held fast to Hyla's hand, so that she could not release herself

even when she heard voices and footsteps at the door.

The face on the pillow was perfectly still. The breath came with feeble irregularity, but whenever Hyla tried ever so gently to withdraw her hand, the fleshless fingers would grip it with a clinging entreaty. Presently the door opened and Paul entered with Dr. Miller. A look of utter surprise flashed over each face. That was all. There was no opportunity for more. Dr. Miller's experienced eye recognized the need of prompt attention for the sick woman.

Until nearly dark the three worked together over her with no thought beyond. Then Hyla slipped out without so much as a "by your leave" and went home. She got her father to send to them a good colored nurse who had been a comfort to her once in her father's absence, and who could be of much more service than herself. By morning the old nurse came round to let her know all was over and to ask her assistance in preparing the body for burial as she could find no suitable dress.

Without thinking, Hyla walked in without knocking, as she had been accustomed to do, then stopped. Paul stood beside the bed, his arms folded across his chest like a stone image, looking down at his wife, and neither turned nor moved nor spoke. She went on then and stood beside him.

The face of the dead was indeed beautiful now. Every mark of sorrow, suffering and sin had been obliterated by the tender hand of death. And, though sadly emaciated, even that did not mar the delicate symmetry of the outlines.

Hyla glanced up at the husband, so stonily calm, her own eyes were swimmingly full of sensitive sympathy. She was thinking, "No wonder he grieves for her so mutely if he can remember her like that."

Only once Paul spoke all the while that Hyla was there superintending all the arrangements, making the poor, bare room look as well as she could, bringing flowers to give a thought of hope and brightness to the dead form, and unobtrusively looking after his comfort. He said not a word, took no more notice of her than if she had been a machine. When she was about to leave him alone in the empty room, she stood with her father, who touched him to say goodbye. Then he looked into her eyes with deep feeling and said: "God will reward you for your kindness."

After the interment, Paul sold what little furniture he had owned and gave up the room. Shortly after the firm made a proposition to him to go to Porto Rico to investigate some property belonging to one of their clients.

He was only too glad to accept it and sailed at an early date.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

GLIMPSES THROUGH THE MAILS.

Just before Paul took his departure from Richmond, he received the following letter from his brother Ide:

"DEAR PAUL:

"The announcement of your wife's death reached us yesterday. I do not know how you feel about it, but between such brothers as you and I there is no room for hypocrisy and I will not pretend to say I am very deeply grieved or shocked. I did not know her, you know. I have been praying all my life, as mother did before me, that you might be happy and blessed. So I am sure, whatever this may mean to you of sorrow and trouble now you will soon realize it is all for the best, that God has been good to you. Yet after all, I fear the prospect of our having a little home of our own together is as dimly distant as ever. Since the 'madam' has married her Lieutenant, things were too hot for me at the old home, and Uncle Tom said there was no longer any reason for my submitting to it, except the property, and he did not know that it would serve any purpose for that.

"So I have taken up my abode at Uncle Tom's as a regular overseer. Of course I don't intend to settle down at this sort of thing for life. But, being with them all at Elmwood is the best thing in sight just now. I am reading and studying at night, hop-

ing I, too, may be able to enter a profession in course of time.

"There is very little doubt the old Yank is selling off our land to the negroes and pocketing the proceeds. There won't be much of it left in any event when he is done with it. The worst of it is, those who buy are the meanest negroes to be found in all the country round. There is no use grumbling or fighting over it, either. The Yanks have the inside track on us at present. There is literally no redress.

"So you see, old fellow, sorry as I am to say it, and much as I want to see you, I cannot offer you a single inducement to come except the unchanged affection of all your old friends, especially the Woodsons, who send love and sympathy, and the devoted love of your 'little brother.'"

Somewhat later the mails carried another exchange of sentiments:

"NEW YORK, N. Y.

"DEAR ABBY:

"Are you surprised to hear of me half way up to the moon? For so verily it seems to me. Well, thereby hangs a tale, which must wait until I tell you how sorry I am to hear you have been sick. No wonder, after such experiences! I do hope you have entirely recovered ere this and will write and tell me so very soon, for I shall be miserably anxious till I know.

"Doesn't it seem incredible that but little over one year ago you and I had never heard of each other? Have you thought of its being just a year today since news came to us of the surrender? O, those terrible times! And yet, I am not sure whether I

would not, as far as I myself am personally concerned, be willing to go over it all again rather than miss the knowledge and friendship of you dear good people. But now for my story:

"I can hardly yet believe it is not one of my own romances:

"During the grinding times when papa's cases were few and not particularly remunerative, what there was of them, I secretly tried my hand at short story writing and actually mustered courage to send two or three to the New York magazines. To my delighted surprise the response was, in two cases out of three, a check and a request for more. That was the beginning. The end, thus far, is this trip to New York.

"Emboldened by my small successes, I wrote a book, which by some noteworthy accident fell into the hands of the publisher himself. This august individual, imagining he discerned symptoms of latent genius which only needed the touch of a master hand to fire the world, wrote a letter inviting me to come to New York as his guest in order to make some revisions he deemed expedient, with a view to publication. Thus, behold!

"My publisher (!!!) has played the host most charmingly. We spend the morning in the 'workshop' as he calls it, he dictating and I working out his suggestions to the best of my ability. In the afternoon he takes me sightseeing, or when he is busy or tired of the task (?) delegates it to some one else. The evenings are given up to entertainments of various kinds.

"The first regular function to which I was invited I felt painfully outrè. I thought my safest plan would be to make a joke of it. I told the young man provided for my escort that I was both green and

stupid, had never been out in society at all, and I was afraid if he did not watch me closely and tutor me at every turn I would inevitably disgrace him. He laughed incredulously, but took the hint nevertheless, and acted his part so charmingly I had no chance to feel mortified. When I went to the table I determined to get a little fun out of my *faux pas* anyway.

" 'Don't forget to tell me what to do with all these knives and forks and spoons?' I whispered, as we approached the table. Everybody heard, as I intended they should, and a ripple of amused contempt went the rounds of the circle to the great embarrassment of my luckless escort. But he stood his ground right manfully and quickly caught my cue. He helped me keep it up until all spectators were convinced it was all a joke and the richest of the season, whereas, it was only half a one.

"This lionizing is most pleasant, but must soon end, and I must drop back into my own place as a little nobody. I shall certainly feel much more at home there. As soon as my book is out I will do myself the pleasure of sending you a copy. Perhaps you may recognize a face or an incident here and there.

"Do let me hear from you soon.

"Yours devotedly,

"HYLA."

"DEAR HYLA:

"We were indeed surprised to hear of you so far away and soaring so high above us. Yet, we congratulate you with all our hearts. There are few to whom we would be gladder to see good fortune come than to you. You left a very warm place in our hearts, as you know, and we shall always be interested in whatever concerns you.

"Your description of yourself trying to play the little greeny was in reality a delicious bit of romance dashed into the dull humdrumness of our lives. We will watch eagerly for the forthcoming of that famous volume.

"You have no need to be uneasy about me. I am all right now. There was not much the matter any way, only papa and mamma got foolish because I have always been so well. We, too, Hazel and I, are going to branch out in a small way next Fall. Papa got a letter, not long ago, from an old friend who lives near Hampden Sidney, telling him he had secured Miss Phenie Barnett as governess in his family for the next year. And, as he has only one child, —a daughter,—he begged the loan of Hazel and myself to keep her company and make studying less irksome. Hazel and I feel dreadfully about leaving papa and mamma without anybody except the little children, but mamma says our opportunities to know the world will be few and we cannot afford to miss this chance peep outside of our own home. Hence we expect to go, d.v., next September. I don't believe papa would ever have gotten his own consent to our going except for the fact that we are to be under the trusted care of Miss Phenie and his old friend.

"The worst of it is Ide will be away also. You know he has been living with us altogether since his stepmother married the Yankee. He was dreadfully blue when he first came, and no wonder. He has had quite enough to make him so. But he is his old jolly self once more now, the life of the house. If only he were going to be here I would not so much mind our having to be absent so long. He has a position offered him in a school where he can study and pay his own way by taking care of the horses

and garden. He says if he can ever get the necessary education he would like to be a preacher. I don't know what papa is going to do without him, he has learned to lean on him so much since he has been here. I wish I had been a boy, then I might feel there was some use in my being at all.

"One thing I must not forget to tell you: Mr. Monnot,—Pansy's soldier sweetheart, you remember?—has written he is coming on this Summer. Pansy rather expects he will want her to marry and return home with him. The poor child is very happy over it, and I am hoping he will come before we leave.

"Well, good-bye, dear old girlie, may your highest ambitions be more than gratified. But don't forget your old friends at Elmwood. With warmest love and congratulations from us all,

"Yours as ever,

"ABBY."

Before Hyla went to New York Paul had departed for Porto Rico. He was only too glad to go. To get rid of everything. It was the old craving of weak-kneed, self-pitying human nature, to escape from what it has not the strength to endure. However, there were some things he could not escape—memory and thought.

CHAPTER XL.

REAPING THE WHIRLWIND.

The later part of the summer following those letters, brought forth three horrors which revived for awhile the unwholesome dread and uncertainty which had fallen like a blight over the land at the first.

On a small plot of ground touching triangularly the land belonging to Mr. Woodson, Mr. Lockett and the Carringtons, lived a lone woman. She was not exactly the ideal which comes before the mind's eye when repeating the words, nevertheless, such she was in literal truth. All the years she and her brother had lived there together she had been the man of the family. Her large, muscular frame embodied a spirit so strong, self-reliant and self-assertive that her brother, younger, smaller and a lover of peace more than of power, naturally yielded to her in all things. He would sit day in and day out at his bench of tools, repairing locks, sharpening knives and scissors, etc., to which small jobbery he was suspected of adding the illicit trade of duplicating pantry keys for the negroes, though nobody had ever proved it on him. Thus he plodded on, while his sister worked the garden, attended to the cows, chickens and pigs, and might often be seen with hammer and nails patching the fence or repairing the weather-boarded house. They rarely went beyond the fence which divided them from their neighbors, and the neighbors as rarely entered their doors. They rather boasted of this exclusiveness. When the brother died dur-

ing the war, the kind-hearted neighbors forgot everything except that she was in trouble and hastened to offer sympathy and services. Both were rather cavalierly declined. Miss Cornelia even insisted upon digging the grave with her own hands, in a corner of the garden.

As she seemed so to desire, people left her to herself as before. Thus she had lived on alone, with no change in her habits or doings perceptible to outsiders. Occasionally some one stopping at the door for butter, milk or eggs would ask if she were not afraid to stay there alone? But she hooted at the idea.

Passing by the place one day on his way home from an outlying cornfield, Mr. Woodson noticed the hogs in a state of unusual commotion. He stopped at the pen in some curiosity to see what could be the matter. He was not long in deciding that they had been left unfed for some considerable time. Something must surely be wrong at the house. There was no response to his knock, so he entered. The straight, stiff figure on the bed startled him, for it was too late or too early for her to be asleep. Soon, the blue-black splotches on her face made patent the fact that she had slept for more than a day and would never waken again. When he turned the bedclothes down from the chin, a sickening sight met his eye. There was a ghastly gash across her throat, and dried clots of blood fouled the bed and body, filling the room with a nauseous stench.

The neighbors quickly gathered, including Lieutenant Danklin, who rather loudly insisted his opinion that it was suicide, though there was no instrument near her with which she could have done the deed. Those who had known her longer decidedly inclined to the belief it was murder for the little

store of money the brother and sister were supposed to have amassed in slow quarters, dimes and pennies. Notice was sent to the government officials stationed at Farmville, and one was sent to act as coroner. But nothing could be made out of it. Hence, there being no will, no heir and but little money to be found, the land was sold at public auction and the whole affair dropped into a past mystery.

This had hardly ceased to be a common topic of neighborhood talk when the second horror occurred.

The family at Elmwood were seated around the supper table, one evening enjoying the rest earned by a day's faithful labor. They were taking their time, as Southerners dearly love to do, and as they could only do for this one of the three daily meals.

Ide was making them all merry, as usual, when the kitchen door opened, and two ashy faces with white, scared eyes intruded hastily. One was Ottawa, the other, panting and terrified, had run all the way from the old home, to tell Ide that Lige had killed Lieut. Danklin—and his stepmother begged he would come in all haste and protect her.

Mr. Woodson was getting his hat to accompany him, but Ide protested. "No, Uncle Tom, your place is here, and you may be needed. Mine is there. Thank you all the same for the wish."

And he picked up his own hat and darted out through the kitchen. Mr. Woodson questioned the messenger with a careful calmness, and when he had gotten the fullest understanding he could, he suggested to Ottawa that, as he knew pretty well how to keep a cool head when it was necessary, he should return with John and see if he could give any assistance to the young man or his mother.

It was a wild state of excitement into which Ide's

rapid steps brought him. Dusky, scowling faces, half scared, half defiant, crowded around the building called the office, in which the soldiers had promptly imprisoned Lige. The burly negro had made no effort to escape, claiming to have acted as the champion of his race.

"Jes' yer alls gin me fair play!" he said to the soldiers, "en 'cepin' yer bin a-lyin' ter me lek de debbil, I ain' a feard o' Mars' Uncle Sam not mekkin' hit all right fer me, when he comes ter see erbout hit. I don' ax nuttin' ov yer, 'cepin' yer keep yer han's offen me—en yer better had,——"

In the house, alone, with doors locked and barred, Mrs. Danklin crouched in abject terror. Nothing would induce her to admit a black face within the doors, and Ide was obliged to show himself to her at the window before she could feel certain she was not being deceived. Ide proposed she should go at once with him to his Uncle Tom's. But she could not be persuaded to brave the black terrors with which her imagination peopled the intervening patches of darkening woods. So there was nothing to do but to stay with her, to calm her by his sleepless, fearless guard. She told him by snatches that Lige had been getting rather obstreperous of late, but when she had expressed anxiety—she always had been afraid of the black demons, they were so exactly her idea of witches or devils—her husband had laughed at her and said he had too strong a hold upon Lige for him not to do whatever he wanted him in the end, however he might kick over it at the first. She did not know what the trouble had been on this occasion. Lige had been hanging round the house all day, had called the Lieutenant out two or three times.

Once when she peeped from the window, he looked so angry she begged her husband not to see him.

However, each time he had come back in the gayest humor, laughing, "I told you so," and she began to think he was right, that he had the negro too completely in his power to admit of danger, and the last time he went out had continued eating her supper quite unconcernedly.

When the sound of angry voices came to her across the intervening room and hall, she had rushed to the door just in time to hear her husabnd call for the guard and to see the flash of the gun almost touching his body.

After she had relieved her mind by retailing these minute circumstances to Ide, dwelling particularly on her own sensations at each critical moment, she grew more quiet and finally said if Ide would stay right there in the room and promise to keep the doors well fastened, she would try to take a little nap.

Thus, while she snored away, reimbursing her strength, Ide kept wakeful guard thinking of the work he had planned for the morrow and wondering mayhap a bit impatiently whether he would be able to do it. He could not conjure up any serious personal regret for the man whose mutilated body lay in the porch room awaiting burial with the honors of war. Ide could hear the ceaseless patrol of the soldiers around the small building wherein Lige was confined. If he looked from the windows he could see the creeping shadows among the surrounding trees and shrubbery.

That had been possible most any night since the surrender. But tonight there were so many, and they were so near, and always looking toward the house or Lige's prison. If they should choose to make a demonstration against the guard, they could hardly fail to overcome them. How did they regard him in the matter, he wondered, now that they had turned

against their recent chums, by whom they had been taught to look upon their former masters as enemies. Who among them would care what became of a Southern boy? Dan and Mose, all on whose fidelity he had felt he could count at any crucial moment, had been gotten rid of in one way and another, as Ide confidently believed, by the instrumentality of the man whose widow of a few hours he was there to protect. Many a time during the dreary night his brave young heart quailed in the face of frightful possibilities his imagination had begotten.

The night passed without further untoward event. By daylight the widow was induced to go to Mr. Woodson's, after having been cross-examined by the Court of Inquiry, and by her testimony, confused and conflicting through cowardliness, almost cleared her husband's murderer. She had but a single idea—to return at the earliest moment to her own country and people. She could hardly bring herself, for decency's sake, to remain long enough to see her husband buried by his comrades in arms.

Thus she left the country where she had lived eight or ten years and been twice married, without leaving a tie or a regret behind her.

When Lige came to be tried before the Freedman's Bureau his confident plea in self-defence was as follows:

"Mars' Lieutenant done tole all ov us fum de fust, he en Mars' Uncle Sam gwine ter gin us de lan'. Den, arter dat, he go en mek us pay fer hit. En when I ax him 'bout it, he say, 'Mars' Uncle Sam need de money jes' now, en he gwine ter gin it back to us arter while. Den arter while, I cum at 'im agin. En he say he nuvver tole me. I knowd all de time de money wer' gwine in his own chist. He tole me I mought shoot 'im ef he wer' lyin' ter me, en I

knowed he wer' so I done shoot 'im. En dat's all I got ter say. En all I ax o' yer gemmans is, warn't I right?"

Nevertheless it was deemed necessary for the moral effect, that Lige should be hung. There was some fear of a demonstration by the negroes on the occasion, and a full guard was secured. But they seemed stunned, as it were, hardly knowing who were friends or who foes.

There was no one to express pity for the condemned except his old master. Mr. Woodson asked permission to speak to him. Taking his rough, black hand in his, with scarce restrained tears, he said: "Lige, you have given me great trouble at times, but I never thought to see you come to this." Then kneeling beside him he offered a fervent prayer for his soul's salvation and committed him to the mercy of God, and all was soon over.

A new man was sent in Danklin's place and he continued to occupy the Carrington house as headquarters. Taking warning from his predecessor's fate, he abstained from intermeddling unnecessarily in the private affairs of the neighborhood, consequently found it extremely dull and in a short time begged to be removed. The next one became sick.

Finding the place so difficult to keep filled, it was finally abandoned and orders issued that all difficulties should be reported directly to the office at Burkville.

CHAPTER XLI.

C. M. MILLER, M.D.

Hyla had completed the business of revision which had brought her to New York in a very short time. But she was persuaded to prolong her visit that her new friends and admirers might see more of her, and that she might see something more of the city.

Her last letter from home had given favorable reports of her mother, and represented everything as going on comfortably there, hence she was quite ready to give herself up, in an artless way, to the enjoyment of being lionized.

Toward the latter part of a week she was dressing one evening for an entertainment when a card was handed her.

"C. M. Miller, M.D.," she read, with a little flush of eagerness to see one who had recently come from her home.

Hyla was one of those girls, who, if seen for the first time at the bedside of a sick mother, for instance, would, despite the most disparaging dishabille, instantly win the tribute "Beautiful!" And, seeing her thus, one might imagine the beauty lay largely in the sweet self-abnegation. Yet, seen as Dr. Miller saw her now, in full evening dress, of simple elegance and exquisite taste, her cheeks aflame and her eyes ashine with pleasurable excitement, and over all the self-possessing glow of consciously looking one's best,—well, no wonder Dr. Miller's heart gave a bound of delight.

She had only a few moments to give him, and he modestly disclaimed any higher expectation. Said he thought she might be glad to hear from home, and ventured to ask if there was any more propitious hour when he might call. Whatever the business which had taken him to New York, he found himself acquitted of it the day she was ready to start southward, and joined her on the train.

She was, naturally, much elated over the sweet odor of her visit. Everything had tended to flatter a girl of nineteen, and she was carrying it all home to multiply the triumphs a hundredfold in telling them over to father and mother, as one does the fair image of a lovely face in a triple mirror.

"Do you know," Dr. Miller said, watching the brilliant color coming and going with every thought, and the happy vivacity of speech and manner, "you remind me of a beautiful soap bubble sailing up, rainbow tinted, toward the sun."

"Do you then think me so very ephemeral and unsubstantial?"

Her tone was a wee bit hurt, as if he had told her she was childish. Nevertheless, she laughed merrily as if telling herself, "I know I am a child when I am happy, so why need I resent it?"

He laughed with her and then explained:

"Not you,—but all earthly happiness. When one has lived as long as I he cannot help knowing how charily we must needs handle it lest it break."

"O you old Cassandra!" she replied, playfully, "do let me enjoy life while I may, if it is a bubble!"

"Indeed I will!" he exclaimed in undisguised fervor. "I would like to blow bubbles for you all the rest of your life—keep you supplied with them—as beautiful as this trip to New York."

He left her at her own gate. At the door her

father met her with a hush over his joy, as he folded her silently in his arms. Thus Hyla knew that her bubble of joy had already burst.

Mrs. Weith was desperately ill, one of her sudden, sharp attacks of the heart. A second and third physician had been called in for consultation, for none before had ever lasted so long and the suffering was intense. When the severity of the pain passed, at last, it seemed impossible to rally her. One or another of the physicians was with her almost constantly and sometimes for hours they felt that each breath must be her last.

"I must keep cheery and bright for her, and I must help papa to bear it all I can," Hyla would preach to herself over and over again. Yet often she would be obliged to leave the room and go off to have a good cry. Then she would lave her face in cold water and laugh at herself in the glass until every trace of sadness was gone before returning to the sick room.

She had just been straightening herself out in this way one evening after tea, while her father sat by the bedside, and was about to go back to take his place, when a card was handed her, "C. M. Miller, M.D."

By a turn of memory's kaleidoscope she stood again before the mirror in New York arrayed for a gala evening, a duplicate of this card in her hand.

In all the pleasant intercourse with Dr. Miller since he had been stationed in Richmond she could not quite forget he was a surgeon in the Yankee army. Yet she had never known any man more noble and manly or more delicately courteous and considerate. Another turn of the kaleidoscope and she saw herself a bubble of silly, girlish pleasure, in-

toxicated with her first draft of social life. His prophecy had quickly proved true.

"But, surely he did not know of her mother's illness or he would not have called. I will not tell him the worst," she resolved, "he will be so worried over having come."

He knew something had gone contrary the moment he looked in her face. "Perhaps, after all, there has been some disappointment about her book," he thought, "or some other MS. has been returned to cool her hopes and she is not yet hardened to it."

He purposely avoided that subject although she had talked so freely to him. On this occasion he wished to make her forget everything except himself, for he had come with the definite purpose of declaring his love and asking her to be his wife, if he should find fitting opportunity. He could not have asked a more propitious time, he thought, no other visitors,—the only man he feared hundreds of miles away and the house as quiet as if they alone were in it.

He sought first to banish her evident depression by crowding out its cause, whatever it might be, with all manner of pleasing topics which love could suggest. He was a man of culture and travel and knew how to throw all into his conversation when he chose. He was gratified to find her brightening in some measure in her effort to respond. As she thus became more her normal self, he began warily to lead up to the desired haven. But, whether she guessed his object, or fenced with a woman's instinctive coquetry, he could not tell. Only this much he knew: his most distant approach to sentiment was relentlessly parried; his deepest, most sacred feelings treated as commonplaces. He felt himself baffled by a woman's more skilful finesse.

The truth is, Hyla did suspect his intentions, and though her discovery was a great surprise, for he had always treated her as if she were a child to him, as she was, and she appreciated the compliment of a man's genuine declaration of love, still, she felt she could not listen patiently to it under the circumstances, and accustomed as she was to self-control, she resolved not to betray her consciousness of it and to exert all her gifts to keep the conversation on endurable lines. She was already dividing herself in two, as it were, her intellect fully engaged here,—her heart with her dying mother, who might at the very moment be drawing her last breath. Sometimes she could hardly keep from screaming out her agony and begging him to go.

At last the thought of each seemed for a moment to miss connection. He was doubtless devising a new plan of attack on the barricade she had raised. While she was making up her mind to the necessity of telling him of her mother's extreme illness, it was he who first broke the spell of silence, and he spoke with military positiveness as if it were not easy to divert him from a purpose once deliberately formed.

"Miss Hyla, I came this evening expressly to ask you a question."

"Dr. Miller, I do not believe I am capable of discussing any question with you to-night," she said with equal determination. "My mother is so very sick I can hardly think of anything else."

He sprang to his feet with a shocked face. "Your pardon—indeed, I did not know,—I will go at once." He took the hand she silently proffered him, and holding it a moment said:

"It is only right you should know I came with the intention of declaring my love and asking you to

be my wife. At a more convenient season I shall hope for your favorable consideration."

With a world of sympathy in his goodbye pressure he was bowing himself out when Hyla unexpectedly recalled him with a touch.

"Dr. Miller, I can answer that question now as well as any time. It could never be anything but 'No.'"

"But why?" he plead, his countenance darkening under her discouraging words, "is it because I am so unfortunate as to have been born north of Mason's and Dixon's line?"

She shook her head. "I do not know why. I only know——"

"Do not give your answer now,—wait. Surely you can outgrow this morbid prejudice."

She shook her head hopelessly.

"Is it that your heart is already bestowed?" bending and looking into her face intently.

A vivid flush crept into her cheeks and deepened as she dropped her eyes.

"Yes."

"Are you engaged?" A moment's pause.

"No," and the color fled and left her very pale.

He had not meant it so, but his questions had been inquisitorial torture. While for himself the momentary revulsion of feeling was overpowering, that this beautiful ideal of womanhood, whom he had set up on such a high pedestal of maidenly propriety should have given her love unsought——

At this point memory's finger instinctively pointed back to a scene he had witnessed without guessing its significance to himself. He looked at her downcast face, all his love and regret merged into tender reverence, and, seizing her hand again, exclaimed in low, admiring fervor:

"Hyla Weith, you are the noblest woman God ever made. I shall be honored to have you count me among your rejected suitors. You need not fear but this confidence will be sacred."

Thus he left her. And Hyla stood, her burning face buried in her hands, regardless of time, until she heard her father's footsteps and flew to her mother's room.

Her mother was conscious and asking for her, but she only lived through the night. With the glory of the rising sun her spirit departed to be with Christ.

CHAPTER XLII.

TIRED WAITING.

The condition of affairs in the South continued to be most aggravating and uncertain, even in this small corner of the world. This section of Virginia does not boast the capability of over-production or the recuperative powers of some other portions. Still, under careful cultivation it had yielded well and supported those who depended on it in abundant comfort until blasted by the passage of the armies. And, although the first summer's crops had been remarkable considering the limited labor obtainable, many parts of the country still presented an appearance of comparative desolation. If this condition of things had exempted them from the carpet-baggers and scalawags it would have been some compensation. But the mental and moral rubbish of the North came pouring down into the South in those days like a flood, and wherever there was a negro to use as a catspaw or anything to be gained thereby, there were these scheming, wireworking wretches trying to put the white Southerners under the blacks and by this infamous perversion of things to climb up to some sort of personal pre-eminence.

It was some satisfaction to Mr. and Mrs. Woodson in giving up their daughters to know they would be in a neighborhood where the vicinity of two educational institutions at least pre-supposed a predominance of white men, thus giving a feeling of greater safety.

Ide was the first to go. Abby and Hazel had the pleasure of attending the wedding of Pansy Lockett before they left home.

Yes, Pansy and Mr. Monnot were actually married the first of September. Abby was almost as eager and helpful in the preparations as Pansy. She said face to face to Mr. Monnot one day:

"You were such a quiet, reserved old fellow I did not know whether to believe you or not; I did not feel quite sure you were coming back except that Sergeant Demesmè said you were. I knew it would break Pansy's heart if you didn't."

The truth is, Pansy had had a right hard time with other people's skepticism. Somebody was always volunteering the pessimistic information that she would never see Mr. Monnot again. When her old sweetheart came back from the army he beset her continually with tales of the faithlessness of these far away lovers and the broken hearts they left behind them and besought her to let the other man go and engage herself to him, who had been her steadfast lover from a child. But Pansy kept her troth and was one happy bride to redeem the reputation of the soldiers.

It was a beautiful, bright, bracing September day when Abby and Hazel left home. There had been some detention on the railroad somewhere. The train was late and crowded. However, for our girls the trip was short and they made light of the annoyance. When they left the overheated car at Farmville to take a nine mile drive in Mr. Steptoe's carriage, the weather had changed. It was damp and raw. The mist of the early twilight caused Abby to shiver to the bone. She did not say anything, knowing there was no help for it, only her teeth were chattering so she was obliged to stop talking. She

went to bed as soon as she got there in a hard chill and Mr. Steptoe, though not seriously alarmed, deemed it wisest to send for a doctor. By morning a serious case of pneumonia had developed.

It was sad news for the first letter home, but her father and mother could not possibly leave the other children so contented themselves that with so many good nurses and a good physician near all was being done that could be.

Abby herself gave up from the first. She told Miss Phenie she was sure she would not get well. Yet she lay there, day after day, the sweetest picture of cheery passivity,—always more concerned over everybody else than herself. Doctor and nurses made a desperate fight for the precious young life, but she seemed to waste away under their eyes like a fair fleece of snow on a sunny hillside.

One day when Miss Phenie was alone with her and she was giving some little charges which Miss Phenie could not help understanding were to be carried out after her death, she said in a distressed tone:

"Abby, I don't believe you want to get well; why is it?"

Abby laid her thin, bloodless hand in the firm, warm clasp of the one beside her and smiled up into the tearful eyes of her friend:

"O, Miss Phenie, *he* has been missing so long, and I am so tired waiting for it all to be cleared up. He laughed when he said, 'We'll wait for each other,' but I looked into his eyes and I knew he was in earnest. Only I did not know at the time how much it meant to me. I am sure, now, he must be waiting for me up *there,* but this uncertainty takes all the heart out of me. If I should live I would soon be

nothing but a 'lone, lorn old cretur', no pleasure to anybody or to myself.

"I think God is good to let me go, don't you? It will be such a comfort to know—to understand all the things that puzzle us here."

"So many have waited and are waiting," Miss Phenie ventured.

"Yes, I know," Abby returned, her face full of the most expressive sympathy. "But, O, Miss Phenie! I would infinitely rather die believing him true, than live to know he could forget as some may do."

When Hazel realized her sister was slipping away from her, it nearly broke her heart. "O, Abby, what will I do without you?" she sobbed one day.

"You are going to be mamma's comfort,—and Ide's,—" Abby whispered tenderly, drawing her down close for a moment.

Thus the days passed, her spirit growing brighter as the flesh grew weaker, gradually disappearing in a halo of love and joy.

One evening as the pink glory of the setting sun streamed over her from the window she suddenly glanced from one to the other, and said in a hushed, ecstatic voice:

"He's calling me! Goodbye all——"

It was a terrible shock to her parents. She was their firstborn—the beginning of strength. Mr. Woodson had doted on her from the time she was three years old, able to toddle to meet him or to follow him around the farm on a gentle old horse. She had once laughingly said she had always tried to make herself as much of a boy as she could so her father might never wish she had been.

Yet, through all their deep sorrow there was no feeling of rebellion. People felt they dared not

grieve immoderately for their dead in those days, lest the time should come when the fervent language of their hearts should be: "How thankful I am God took her to himself before worse came."

CHAPTER XLIII.

A CHANCE TO THINK AND REMEMBER.

Paul had taken passage on a sailing vessel bound from Norfolk to the West Indies. There was no one on the boat he cared to know. In fact, he shunned without distinction.

If he could have turned away from his own selfish gloom he would have been surprised to find how much genuine, considerate kindness was being felt and shown towards him by the simple hearted ship's crew. They recognized and respected his trouble and his desire to be left to himself, and in many unobtrusive ways guarded his isolation. Thus there was literally nothing for him to do except to think and to remember.

He was even spared the distraction of seasickness.

The second Thursday out was his birthday. Twenty-three years old! Surely there must be some mistake somewhere! It was fifty, instead of twenty-three!

Whatever the number of years, they had made of his life nothing but a miserable misfit, from his present point of view. He could wish he might be en route to another planet to begin life all over again under new conditions, among a different race of beings. Certainly he would be no loss to this planet or among the race of beings where he belonged. Only Ide would regret him,—the dear little boy who had been so tenderly charged upon his care by their dying mother. How faithless he had been to the charge! Of late, the very thought of him had been

only a drag-weight upon his conscience because he could not render the love and help he had promised. Paul knew only too well what this dear, loving little brother must have borne so bravely, so uncomplainingly,—their father's long, pitiful sickness, the shock of his cruel death and the pricking aggravations and persecutions which followed. Then the mortification of the "madam's" second hasty marriage, with all its concomitant worries over the property, all these Ide had borne alone, with scarce a word of advice from himself. Paul had not yet heard of the grim finale—the swift, relentless Nemesis. That letter reached Richmond soon after he left. Perhaps if he had known of Ide's comfortable settlement at Elmwood he might have carried with him a little less burdened memory of his "little brother."

As for his life in Richmond, O what blackness of darkness it was! Col. Weith had given him a lift out of the mire, a new start in life,—was it at the instigation of his daughter?

How his face burned with the sharpest mortification to remember she had known all his shame and degradation,—of the mire that still clung—must of necessity cling though his wife no longer lived. Ah, how mean of him to allow such a thought to pass through his mind concerning his wife! Whatever her primary motive in effecting a marriage with him he could not doubt that she loved him—that for his sake she had suffered the untold agony of giving up the drug,—had died, rather than take it again.

Perhaps if he had taken up his burden more willingly and cheerily, more in the spirit of his "little brother," it might not have become so heavy. Yet, how could he! It had come with such a sudden, crushing shock. When his strength had all been sapped by sickness, he had no resisting power.

All the days and weeks of that dreary voyage were filled with meditations like these, unrelieved save by the daily routine of eating, sleeping, etc.

Porto Rico was not the well known, much talked of and frequently visited island then that it is now. Still, most people who made any pretence to keeping up with the map of the world knew its whereabouts. The very haziness of its acquaintanceship had tempted some schemer to organize a company to buy land cheap and start a huge coffee plantation on the island. Cheap labor, it was argued, would make the cultivation inexpensive and the profits commensurably large. It was a fine scheme, and beautifully worked out—on paper—otherwise it had not palmed out quite so well, thus far, the profits having all gone into the pockets of the agents. On one of Colonel Weith's trips to Washington City the shares of a wholesale grocer there had been put into his hands, provided he could find a reliable party to send to the spot for investigation and settlement. Hence Paul's trip.

It is not a part of our story to tell of his adventures and experiences while there. Suffice it to say, he had accomplished his errand and made a better job of it than either he or his employer had dared to hope. He had returned to San Juan at the end of two years to bide in patience a chance opportunity for getting home with a good cargo of the coffee.

The change of scene, interest and employment had been of great benefit to him, for from the moment of landing on the island he had given himself few idle moments for thinking or remembering. Where so much uncertainty was involved, it had not been possible to define accurately or positively the duties of his commission, consequently, he had put his hand to everything. He had investigated the

title, the character of the agent in charge, the customary prices of everything, including labor, ways and means and transportation. He had gone into the fields and worked with the hands that he might know what was to be expected of them, inspected all the accounts which had been kept, in short, posted himself thoroughly on every point and phase of the whole business, so that he might be able to answer any questions of the interested parties at home.

He was returning home with the confident assurance that he had satisfactorily accomplished the mission upon which he had been sent, and this consciousness had lifted him above the state of morbid self-depreciation and despondency in which he had started. There was actually some of the old youthful spring in his step, the old debonnaire poise of the head, the clear, unashamed light in the dark blue eyes.

Thus far his sightseeing on the island had been altogether in the line of his business, but work was done now and time was hanging heavy on his hands, for he would have to wait at least a week before his opportunity came.

Strolling around one day in search of diversion, he found himself on the shore, and, hardly conscious of the fact, following the slow course of a very diminutive boat whose motion was almost imperceptible. In the midst of this boat was a queer kind of shelter in shape like an umbrella, tilted over shorewards.

Except for the fact that what motion it had was against the tide it might have been passed, even by an idler like himself, as anchored, or drifting. Whoever, or whatever the occupant might be was entirely concealed under the strange, umbrella-like appendage. The mystery of the little craft's cautious

movements had caught Paul's untackled attention, and, having no special aim in view he continued to follow. As soon as it became apparent that he was so doing, the movement of the boat became more rapid and a little more out from shore. A short distance ahead now appeared a thick clump of coccolaba or seaside grape growing close down to the water's edge. The large, graceful leaves with their delicate tracery of red veins catching the sun's eye, offered a cool, alluring retreat. But Paul's curiosity had been fully aroused. From the higher vantage ground back of it he might the more readily keep track of the tantalizing little boat. Hence he chose that pathway first, but abruptly changing his mind, he turned a right angle into the deepest of the shade and made straight for the water's line.

About the same instant a black face peered out from its concealment to be certain that the pedestrian had not gotten in sight beyond the welcome shelter of the bushes, then dashed up to the beach, jumped out, and, giving the boat a kick up shore, dived into the thickest shade and met Paul face to face.

One moment they stood so, in wide-eyed amaze, then Paul grabbed the negro by the shoulders and held him trembling in his grip until his wildly staring gaze drooped, and, dropping on his knees, with clasped hands he muttered in awesome terror:

"De Lawd 'a mussy! de Lawd 'a mussy! It am none odder den Mars' Paul's sperrit! What dis here poor nigger done dat de sperrits done cum fer him? De Lawd 'a mussy!"

"Why, Mose, boy, how in the nation did you get here? and what mischief have you been after that your conscience is so ill at ease?"

"Is dat you, Mars' Paul?—sho nuff you, en not

er sperrit?" the boy ventured, slowly raising his head to take a timid look at the face of his old chum.

Paul laughed and laughed in pure joy at the sight of the old familiar face after all these months of strangeness in a strange land, and in keenest amusement at Mose's dumbfounded amazement he still held on to the negro, fearing if he let go he would dart off to the boat again. In truth, his own surprise was none the less, only dominated, for the time, by delight and amusement. The well remembered grip soon convinced the negro that he was in the hands of genuine flesh and blood, not a disembodied spirit, and, much relieved, his black face took on a look of the old time contented affection and they sat down to explain.

CHAPTER XLIV.

MOSE.

"I dunno huccum dey tole us we wus free en warn' gwine ter wuk fer nobody no mo' en tuk us fum our ole white folks en den sont us way down here to wuk fer dese cuyus kind o' folks dat cayant eben talk lek white folks," Mose began.

"Who sent you here? and who is 'us'?" Paul questioned lazily, sitting on the ground beside Mose and looking at him in an abstracted haze of reminiscent boyhood.

Was it all a dream—the four years' war, and the horrible nightmare following! And had he only just awakened to find himself a boy again, listening to Mose's yarns?

He glanced up at the strange, beautiful foliage above and around him and through it to the shimmering waters of the ocean reaching boundlessly beyond his eye's ken—then back again to the picturesquely attired negro before him. Mose, as well as himself had changed. Neither was any longer a boy.

"Mose, how did you ever get *here?*" Paul repeated, for whatever explanations Mose had already given had been lost on his auditor.

Paul turned and looked at Mose now with more intent curiosity.

"Huccum I here, Mars' Paul? well, I gwine ter tell yer. En I gwine ter tell yer de truf." His voice fell to a mournful cadence as he continued, "Mars'

Paul, yer know 'bout ole Marster bein' kilt?" Waiting for Paul's assent, he went on:

"Dat night, 'fore Mars' Ide cum back home,—some o' dem fool niggers done tole 'im Mars' Tom Woodson want 'im,—I dunno—but I bet'cher dey des mek hit up. Well, I cum in ter de kitchen, dar wus mammy wid her apon ober her head a moanin' en a groanin' 'bout de awful days a cummin'. Den I see Lige er creepin' roun' de house wid he mean face on 'im. Jes den yer maw cum ter de kitchen en 'lows how de Lieutenant done tole her to sen a bundle o' his'n to Farmville 'long o' Dan en me, en we better be in a hurry en not wait twell de day lessen we mout'en not kotch him. I kep' a thinkin' o' Lige a sneakin' to'ards de house, en I wonder what dat nigger up to. Well, Mars' Paul, me en Dan, we run mos' all de way to town, case we kinder fear'd o' de Lieutenant. He allers talk so big 'bout what he gwine ter do. When we gits dar, he open de bundle en tek out er note en read hit. En he look awful fierce at we alls en say: 'Did you kill yer ole marster?'

"En I say, 'Me kill ole marster?' En Dan say, 'Me Kill ole marster?' En he say, 'Yas, somebody done kill 'im, en I mightily 'feard 'tis you. So yer better jump on dese cars wid me les de sojers tek en hang yer.' Well, we alls was so skeert we did'n know what ter do. So we jest git on de cars wid de Lieutenant.*

"Fust thing we know we done loss 'im, en we nuvver know no mor'n a baby whar we wus nor

* Something like this was told by some young negroes who disappeared and some years after returned. Of course, everybody understands it was done by speculators, not by authority of government or army.

whar we gwine ter, twell we git ter Norfolk, I bleave dey calls hit. Den some sojers cum en driv us outer de cyars en penned us up same es ef we wus pigs. En arter while we got on er boat. Dan en me kep' togedder, en de fust pusson we cum'd a crost was Patsy,—yer Uncle Tom's Patsy.

"'Huccum you here?' we axed her. En she toss er head en say, 'I gwine ter a country whar de black folks is presidints en all dem tings, en whar I'll be one o' de ladies o' de lan' en mebbe marry de presidint some day.' Me en Dan did'n feel so fine, but presenly er man cum roun' en hang er ticket roun' our nakes en low es how we better tek good keer on em kase dey was ter gin us er good character. Me en Dan knowd we ain' nuvver done nuttin' ter mek em hang us, so we tuk keer o' our tickets en mek ourselves easy. I ain' see huccum Mars' Lieutenant say we kill ole marster no how. Mars' Paul, you know dat ain' so?"

"I am more than ready to believe it, Mose," Paul replied sadly.

"'Twar Lige kill old marster! I seed 'im sneakin' up toards de house wid dat cruel look in he eye, en ole marster a sittin' in he cheer, when yer maw cum'd in de kitchen en sont us off."

"Stop, Mose!" Paul suddenly cried, clutching the negro's arm. "You say your master was alive and sitting in his chair when you left—when the madam brought the bundle to you? Are you *sure* he was alive?"

"I dunno' nuttin' 'tall erbout hit!" Mose mumbled, thrown into a state of non-committal alarm by Paul's stern manner, "'cepin' he cheer wur er rockin' back en for'ard lek he allers wus."

"And when Lieutenant Danklin took the letter out of the bundle you had brought him to Farmville

and read it he told you your marster had been killed and accused you and Dan of having done it?" Paul questioned, with a lawyer's scent for a good case.

"I dunno erbout de hexcused," Mose muttered sullenly, "but hit wur des lek I done tole yer. En den he sont us off ter keep us fum gittin' hanged."

If Paul could only have known that Lieutenant Danklin and Lige had both already gone to give an account, each for his own share in the deed, he might have been saved the torture of helpless desire for justice by law; as it was, he heaved a deep sigh and sank back into a listening attitude.

"Well, go on with your story, Mose. What else happened to you and Dan and Patsy?" The old boyish affection was in his face again, and Mose continued his narrative.

"Well, me en Dan kep close ter Patsy, ter kinder tek care on her, yer know, kase Patsy wur er likely gal, but powerful giddy. She kep a tossin' her head en she hed er ribbon tied roun' her nake des like her young missy in ole times. Mos' o dem niggers on de boat was mighty low down en no 'count. En dat what mek us take keer o' Patsy, kase we knowd how keerful-like her daddy done bin wid her all her life. Well, when we gets here, a lot o' dese curyus men cum on de ship en teks us off ter dey plantations en say dey done pay fer we alls en we 'longs to 'em. I donno huccum dey done sont us down here ter wuk, when Mars' Lieutenant done tole us he sef, en he a sojer, too, dat Mars' Uncle Sam en Mars' Lincum en Mars' Gineral Grant done say we wuz free.

"I wish yer could a seed Patsy when dey sont her out ter de fiel's ter wuk in de sugar cane, stid o' mekkin er leddy o' her. Hit sure broke de gal's heart. Yer know she ain' nuvver bin no fiel' nigger,

no how, no more'n me en Dan. But she nuvver live long. En arter she die, Dan, he break his heart ober Patsy, en he done daed too." Mose stopped and sniffed, and looked at Paul with great black melancholy eyes.

Paul's own eyes were swimming responsively, though he put his hand over his mouth and stroked his moustache to hide an involuntary smile as Mose added, still more dolefully:

"En dey nuvver low us ter hev no fun'ral nuther, lek our ole white folks usen ter do."

"What were you doing out in a boat away from your work?" Paul questioned after a pause.

Mose hung his head sheepishly, glancing up at him sidewise with most pathetic appeal.

"Mose, you were running away, and I am afraid you stole the boat?"

In a moment the negro was on his knees in cringing terror and supplication.

"Now, Mose, I want you to tell me the whole truth about it. I will protect you as far as I can," he continued calmingly. And after repeating this assurance several times Mose was induced to give him the information he sought.

"I wuk fer de man jes es faithful es I allus wuk fer yer paw," Mose muttered defiantly, "en yer paw ain' nuvver hit me er lick in he life." He looked up expecting contradiction and hastened to add explanatorily, "kase when I was bad we wuz mos' ginerally bad togedder, en you hole on ter yer paw's arm en nuvver let 'im hit me." Mose chuckled deprecatingly, but Paul only smiled reminiscently, and Mose continued with an increasing sullenness of expression:

"I do my level bes' fer de man, en kase I dunno erbout dese here new crops down here he beat me

wid a stick es big es your laig. You know I ain' gwine stan' dat, Mars' Paul?"

"What were you planning to do?"

"I was a walkin' long de san' en I see dis here leetle boat er laying long de shore, look lek nobody warn' carin' erbout hit, so I low es how I mout borrer hit fer a night. Yer see, Mars Paul, on clear days we kin see de lan ober dyar towards home. I 'lowed to skim along en fish er little untwil night, den sail ober to de udder sho' en let de boat drif back. I 'lowed ter walk de res' ob de way."

Paul smiled, but did not tell him the futility of his plans.

"I'll tell you what I am going to do. You must go with me back to your master——"

"Please suh, Mars' Paul," the negro began to implore.

"Mose, listen! I am going to buy you from him if necessary, and take you home with me——"

"Tank de Lawd! I done say to some o' dem fool niggers, ef I could jes' b'long to meh ole white folks again I ud be es happy es er king!"

"But, Mose, you cannot belong to any of us any more. I am only going to take you home with me. When we get to Richmond you will be as free as I am——"

"But yer gwine ter tek keer o' me, Mars' Paul; yer gwine lemme live wid you?"

Paul, deeply touched by this humble devotion, caught the two work-rusted hands in his and said:

"Yes, Mose, you shall live with me just as long as you choose, and as long as I have a crust of bread for myself I will gladly share it with you."

CHAPTER XLV.

ONE MORE LETTER FROM IDE.

"DEAR OLD CHUM:

"We do not keep up a very brisk correspondence, do we? Fortunately we are not of the kind that have to measure affection by words and pages, we learned better than that when you and I were gals together. I am paying strict attention to my education these days, for it is about all we Southern boys have to count on.

"By the way, my feeling for General Lee has undergone a complete revolution. Do you remember when you and I used to sit under the shadow of the big, old mill wheel and hang our bare feet into the empty mill race puzzling over the name "J. Sayler" cut into one of the heavy spokes half way up the circumference? Wouldn't we have been surprised if that old wheel had under our eye sputtered itself loose from the mud and slime and by a sudden evolution whirled that mysterious name to the very top, clear out of sight? I thought I admired General Robert E. Lee as much as a fellow could when I saw him at the head of his little handful of jaded Confederates, so stately and grand a model for all admiring and aspiring soldiers, his noble face so full of care for the humblest man in the ranks and so weighted with anxiety for the country he loved. But the wheel of time and nearer acquaintance has carried him up—up!!! Language fails me. It is quoted from himself—'Washington was an exception to all rule, and there was none like him.' I am

sure there is not a student of Washington and Lee who will not affirm there is one other equally 'first in war, first in peace and first in the hearts of his countrymen.' We are only afraid some one will tempt him away from us, as constant efforts are being made to do so, some offering inducements of more money, some of higher honor. But General Lee says he thinks he is just where he ought to be and never was happier in his life.

"I thought before I came, what a pleasure it would be to obey him, no matter how dictatorial he might be, even as his old soldiers loved to do. I find he does not put it exactly that way. The respect he claims for himself along with the rest of his faculty is simply on the ground of superior age and experience. We boys throw into the scale an admiring love and reverence reaching almost the point of adoration and there is not one of us who would not feel himself a very dog, none of your noble species either, could he do the least thing to pain his brave, true heart, or be unwilling to forego any amount of fun rather than miss the benediction of his approving smile and confidence. Consequently the townspeople agree there has never been a finer set of students here (I make my bow). The old college did well for itself when it invited him to the Presidential chair. It has renewed its youth and given to another generation the wholesome influence of the grandest man the world ever saw. The young men of the South are swarming hither to take advantage of the opportunity. By the way, he has a most remarkable memory for names and faces. Did I ever tell you of my first personal acquaintance with him? I came to Lexington just before starting in at Mr. Morton's school to talk over the curriculum so that I could make all the extra time I had tell on it in

future. It so happened as I walked up to the door of General Lee's home, glad of any excuse to have speech with the great hero, several bundles of carpeting were also brought up on the porch from a dray. When the general himself came to the door he naturally supposed I had something to do with them and included me in the invitation to 'bring them in.' I accepted my part of the joke, though I remained after the drayman left, and actually had the honor of helping the Misses Lee to open the carpets. They had been packed in snuff ever since carried from Arlington and sent us all off into a sneezing frenzy that was perfectly absurd. General Lee soon discovered I had come on a different errand, and I had my talk, a much interrupted one, and left. When I came back this year I was greatly astonished, as you may well imagine, when he singled me out of a class of fifty, called my name and made some jocular reference to our 'sneezing party.' You may be surprised to hear it, but there is not a more loyal citizen in the country than Robert E. Lee, and he will not tolerate anything less in the students; all the same, we admire him most because he is the embodiment of Southern chivalry.

"However, I did not begin this letter to write a panegyric on our famous President. Out of the abundance of the heart'—you know. The primary instigation of it was the invitation to a wedding received this morning. Suppose, of course, you will be there? So will I, d.v. Will be glad of an opportunity to visit Hampden Sidney, where I hope to take my theological course, some day.

"It has been some time since I heard from Paul. Without meaning any disrespect to my departed sister-in-law, I hope the old fellow will keep himself out of all future entanglements with 'queer people,' don't you? "Yours as ever, "IDE."

CHAPTER XLVI.

MAYTIME AMONG THE BIRDS.

In the large parlor of one of the Seminary homes at Hampden Sidney, Virginia, a bridal party is gathering.

The dear, thoughtful old grandfather has insisted that they all shall meet in the parlor in time for the strangers to be introduced to each other before going over to the chapel. But Hazel and the bride are lingering upstairs. Hazel is making a pretence of giving a few last touches to the rich, golden-brown hair, and she does it with a clinging fondness as if it were for the last time. Presently, with an impulse of childlike devotion and throwing aside the filmy mist of bridal veil, she leans on Miss Phenie's lap as she used to do in the olden times and looks yearningly up into her face. The merry witching mouth was smiling as usual, but the soft, brown eyes which were such a power for good to all who knew them were misty now, with unshed tears, as were Hazel's also. Both were thinking of Abby, who had been so deeply interested in this love affair in its incipiency, and would so greatly have enjoyed taking part in its consummation.

Leaning her head down on Hazel's shoulder Miss Phenie whispered: "She knows—I am sure she knows."

In a little while Aunt Mary comes to the door to say there are two young men downstairs looking lost and disconsolate. Hazel went down with Aunt Mary and meeting Ide Carrington at the foot of the wind-

ing stairway, was turned over to him while Frank Cabell was piloted up to his bride.

Ide had grow slim and tall though sufficiently broad shouldered to redeem any impression of physical weakness which might have been given by the exceeding fairness of his skin.

"I have been studying and working pretty hard these two years," he said, as the gay procession made its way on foot in leisurely ease across the broad, clean, gravel walk which led from the house to the Seminary chapel on the next lot. "But I am ready for college now, and money enough laid up to take me through. There will be four years at college and three at the seminary. Do you think you can wait for me that long?"

Hyla was there, too, to "take Abby's place" as Phenie had sweetly worded the invitation, and she stood with Miss Phenie's brother as Abby should have done.

Mr. Cabell had graduated from the Seminary only the Spring before. Many of his old friends were still there and he was a prime favorite with them as well as with the professors and their families. The chapel had been recently renovated in pure white and the students having removed the central block of pews, the circle formed under the handsome old chandelier while the tall, venerable grandfather in silver-haired dignity and benignity performed the ceremony. After that, everybody seemed determined not to be serious, and the hilarity was kept up to a rather late hour, considering the staid, wholesome dignity of the place and company.

As there were no hotels within seven miles, the young men from a distance found lodgings in the Seminary dormitory, while the girls snuggled to-

gether like sweetpeas in a pod in the "big room" of the home.

The next morning they started early on their various homeward ways, all going to Farmville in a party in carriages.

Mr. and Mrs. Cabell and Mr. Barnett went on the first train. Ide and Hazel on the next. Soon all were gone and Hyla sighed a little, thinking of the lonesome hour she had still to wait for hers and the solitary trip of it afterward. Singularly enough, a thought came of Dr. Miller, of his unfailing courtesy, his alert kindness; of the trip from which he had banished all tedium and discomfort.

His attentions had been most delicately considerate and unvarying ever since, but not once had he renewed the subject of his rejection on the night of her mother's death. Why did that scene come so vividly before her now? What note of sadness had the happy wedding of the night before struck in her own heart?

In a second visit to New York she had been as flatteringly toasted as before, had met many fascinating men, as indeed at home also. But, as yet, not one whom she could like even as well as Dr. Miller. Then another name crept stealthily into her thoughts as if fully conscious it was on prohibited ground.

At that instant the distant sound of a whistle threw everything into a stir. By common consent two or three ladies got up and left the waiting room. Trucks were going back and forth with baggage, men running with mail bags or books and pencils. Then the train came steaming into sight.

Just ahead of this train a figure seemed to come into existence without preliminaries. It was somewhat taller and broader than Ide Carrington, head dropped a trifle from the glare of the sun, with a

gentle, masterful dignity, and a rather sad, make-the-best-of-the-inevitable expression of face.

Hyla was coolly taking note of all these things as if she did not know the man. Yet all the while the glow as of the morning sun which was dazzling his eyes past seeing was refracted into hers, throwing mellow, crimson rays over face, ears, throat as far as visible.

She stepped aside a little, as he seemed about to walk over her small person, and, with a start he recognized her.

"Oh!" he murmured, apologetically, "I—was looking for you." She laughed, but the retort she might have made was only in her eyes and brows. He smiled responsively and made some pretty speech about the sun's blinding him to anything so much like itself, and added:

"Your father kindly gave me permission to look you up on my way home from Lynchburg today, and see you home."

After the first gleaming smile of recognition, which had reminded her of the gay, boyish soldier she had first known as Paul Carrington, his countenance fell back into a look of disappointed self-repression which for a moment puzzled and disturbed her. Then she involuntarily put her hand up to where the bow of pink ribbon should have been. For the first time since she had know him it was missing.

Miss Phenie had written it was to be an "all white" wedding, and in the excitement of starting this morning she had forgotten.

Paul took her into the car, disposed of her traps and sat down beside her without further remark. The silence lasted long enough to embarrass her somewhat, until, realizing he might be waiting for her to break it, she did so.

"So you have come back at last. We began to think you were going to take up your abode there among the Spaniards, and,——"

The words she had meant to be lighthearted and cheering, broke into a half sigh, as she looked up into the mysteries of his dark blue eyes.

"Yes,—I've come back——"

The silence fell again, and this time the girl dared not trespass upon it. And he presently added gravely:

"Miss Hyla, I want to thank you, as I could not at the time, for all you have done—and been—to her and to me——"

He paused, looking down from behind his shading hand at the brightly tinted softness of her cheeks, the downcast eyes and the delicate lips just the color of pink coral, which in their gravest pose maintained the curves of a smile.

"There must have been much that was utterly inexplicable in what you saw and knew," he went on sadly. "The pity of it is, it must so remain—always." His voice was subdued and tense. "Of course—it could not be expected—you *could ever* learn to love—me—under the circumstances——"

"But I do!" came a low, emphatic murmur into the pause.

But he was so completely absorbed in the effort to command his emotions, and to say what he had to say calmly that the murmur entirely missed his auditory nerve, and he went on, unheeding:

"Still, it is your right to know—it is the only explanation or apology I can give for that first meeting—that I loved at first sight, the fair rosy-cheeked girl with the merry, laughing lips and a bow of pink ribbon——" A reminiscent smile loosened the ten-

sion of the face, for a moment, while her hand again went up regretfully to the vacuum.

"When this love, as innocent and elevating as ever ennobled a man's life—came to be a sin—for me,—I still felt there was no wrong in my accepting the uplift I had found in the sight of a bow of pink ribbon. And it became to me the emblem of hope and encouragement, it kept me in mind that life was a gift of God and I *must* make it worth living, as far as I could, my own and hers——"

His position had not changed one iota since he took his seat. His shielding hand was needless caution for the features of his face were as immobile as sculptured stone, only the eyes burned with an inexpressible yearning as they gazed down at her, and the hand on his knee was restless, sometimes drawing the fingers tightly into the palm under stress of feeling. Suddenly, he sat bolt upright, as if endurance had that moment snapped. Hyla, intensely sensitive to his slightest movement, without looking at him, felt his burning eyes on her face as his words sputtered through clenched teeth like repressed steam:

"If only it might have been! if only you could have loved me!——"

"I do," she repeated, a tremor of eagerness in her voice.

He started. "You cannot mean it! O, Miss Hyla, there would be no mercy in comforting me with false hopes. I was wrong to work on your tender heart that way, forgive me. I know, only too well, it is impossible you should love me as I love you——

"But I do!" This time she turned and looked him full in the eyes. A double thrill of electric joy passed in a flash, and trouble, intervening years, every obstacle rolled away like an avalanche of snow leaving

a smiling patch of spring growth and sunshine,—a brave, buoyant youth gazing his fill into the shy, shimmering brightness of a maiden's eyes. It was the old, old story, ever new.

When they reached Richmond, Paul, walking the earth like a prince just come to his crown, enticed the maiden into a store and purchased half a dozen bolts of pink ribbon, teasingly consulting her taste as to desirable widths and shades, and trying to match the varying hues of her cheeks. He handed the package to her as she entered the door of her home, and with it something else no money could buy, whose effects no dyer's pigments could imitate, whispering:

"We'll see the father, later."

[The End.]