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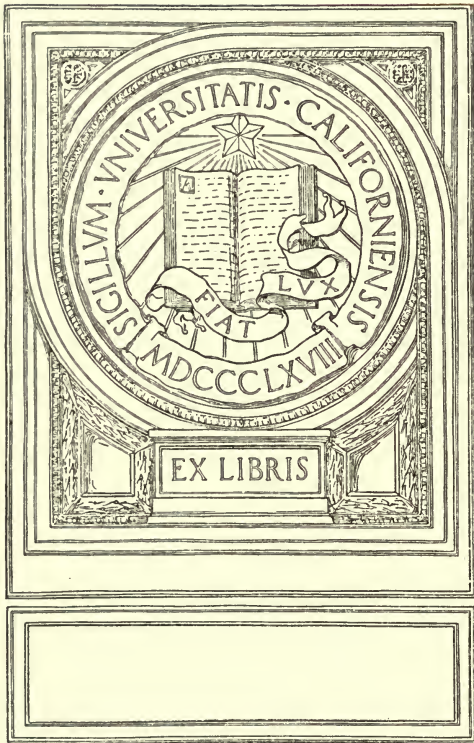


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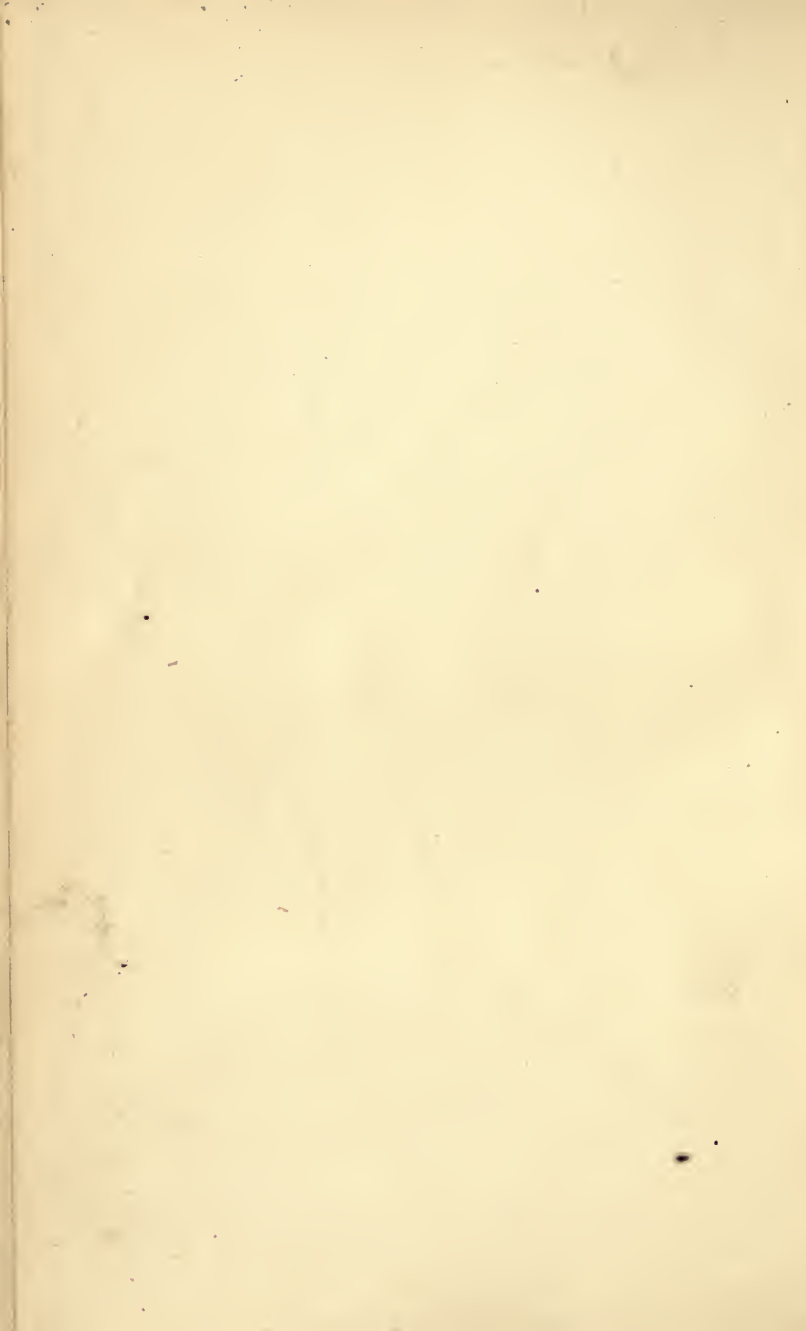
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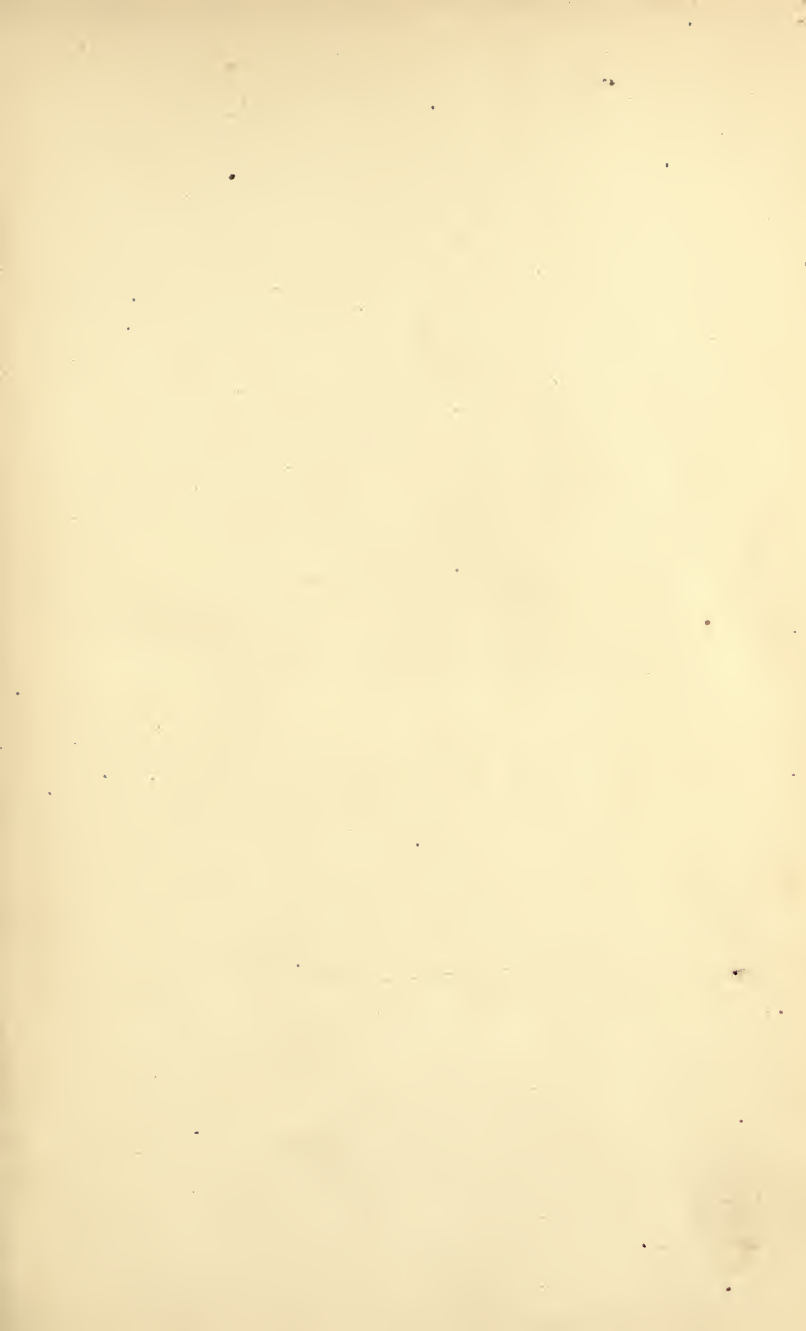
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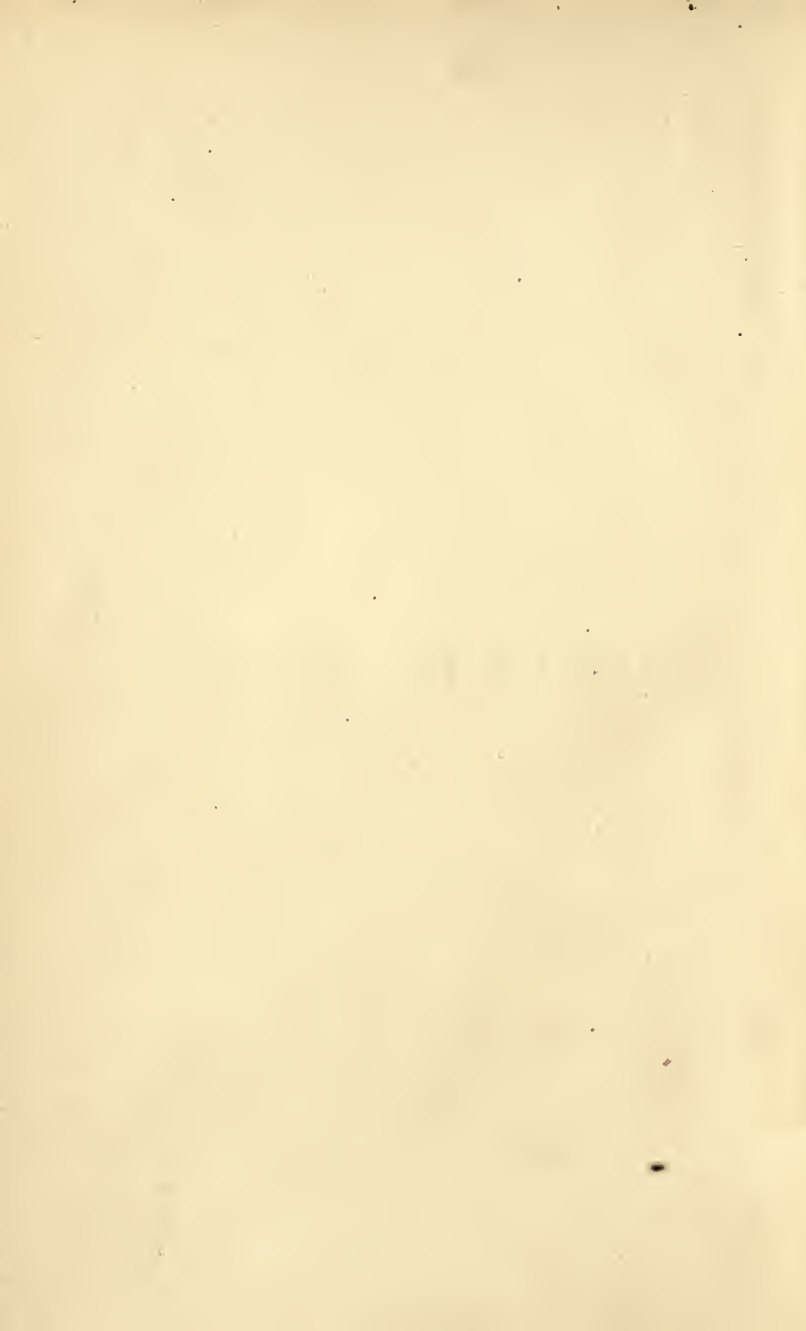
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FLOWER DE HUNDRED.



Harrison, Constance Cary "Mrs. Burton"
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FLOWER DE HUNDRED

The Story of a Virginia Plantation

BY

MRS. BURTON HARRISON,

AUTHOR OF "THE ANGLOMANIACS," ETC., ETC., ETC.



NEW YORK

CASSELL PUBLISHING COMPANY

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TO ALL
READERS

THE MERSON CO. PRESS,
RAHWAY, N. J.

TO THE MEMORY OF

My Mother.

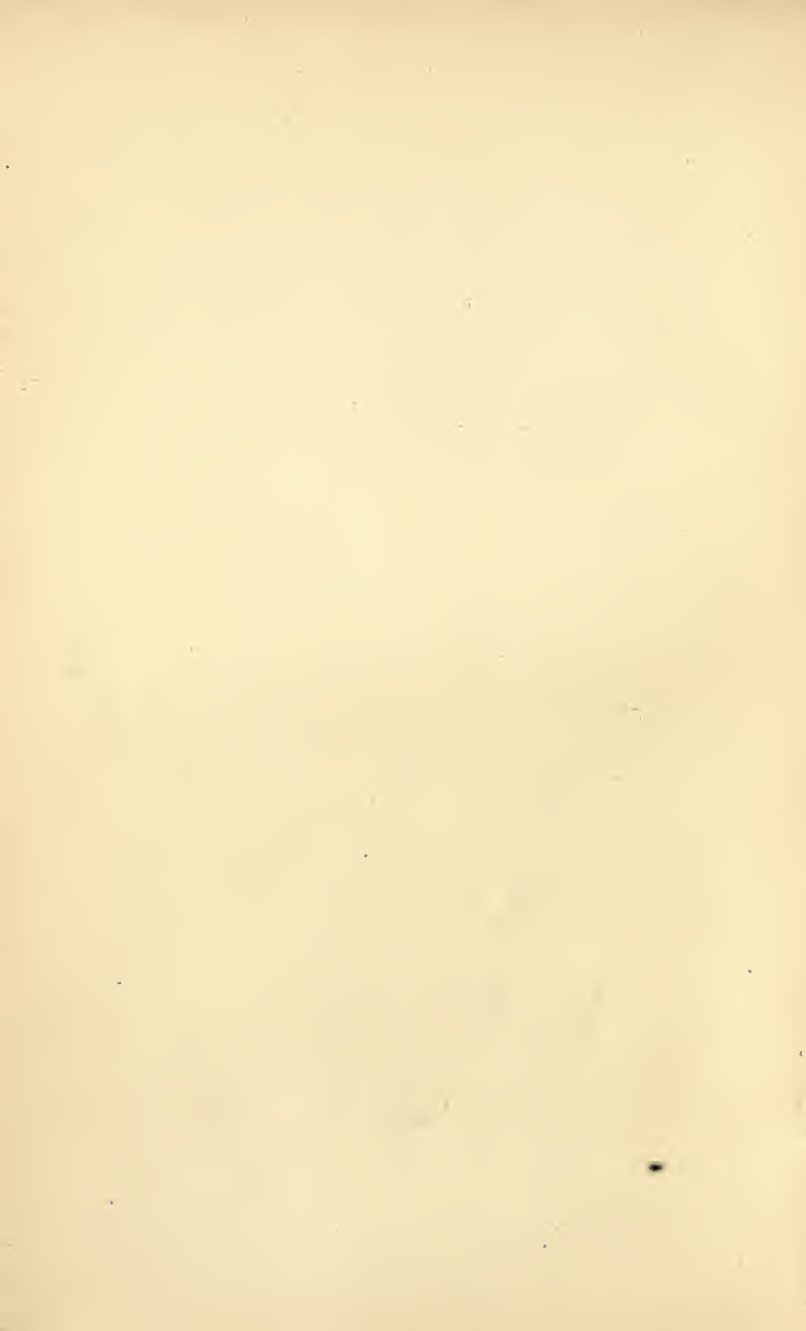
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PREFATORY NOTE.

The author, who has written what here follows that to her readers of the generation of to-day some of the social aspects it portrays may be better understood, desires to say that, while the main incidents of the story are based upon facts more or less known in the Southern country, she has in no case fitted them to actual personalities or localities.

THE SEA URCHINS, BAR HARBOR,
October, 1890.





FLOWER DE HUNDRED.

The Story of a Virginia Plantation.

CHAPTER I.

FAR down the winding river named in honor of King James by the navigators Newport and Smith, who wrested from the dusky dwellers on its banks an earlier right to call it for their sovereign King Powhatan, stands an old brick house. With spreading wings and airy colonnades it is a type of the stately by-gones of Virginia's ancient aristocracy now crumbling to sure decay. Surrounding its lawns and rose-gardens are marshes full of game, wheat fields and tobacco fields still ready to answer to a fructifying touch, tall forests of unbroken shade. Wars, more than one, and Indian massacres and forays, have swept over it to leave no enduring trace. What damage the centuries could do, Nature, with gentle diligence, has overlaid with moss, with grass, with bracken, and with innumerable flowers.

Happier in fortune than most of their contemporaries, the family still controlling the numerous acres of the estate is by direct descent the same which in the

person of a cadet of an English house established itself here shortly after King Charles was beheaded.

Originally a separate district or Hundred, the place retained the name bestowed on it in early colonial days, which has been successively written "Flower dieu," "Fleur de," and "Flower de" Hundred. The Throckmortons, who have been in every generation conservative folk, tenacious of keeping things as their fathers left them, and disinclined to idle changes, would as soon think of selling the silver chalice presented by Queen Anne to their parish church, as of attempting to improve on the quaint name of their ancient home.

To make clear the position of affairs at the beginning of my story, which, if you please, being a loyal Virginian, I date from "before the war," we may glance at the antecedents of Richard Throckmorton, Esq., commonly known as "the Colonel," who, at that time, was the widowed owner of the mansion-house. Without calling upon the antiquarian aid of the family genealogy,—a roll of parchment pigeon-holed in the Colonel's study, and revered next to the Bible,—I may succeed in outlining, briefly yet comprehensively, the successive proprietors of the estate. Yonder portrait, above the decanters on the sideboard in the dining-room, is that of the founder of the colonial line, Guy, the Cavalier, who died exalting King Charles as "a thing enskied," and hating Cromwell as the fiend

hates holy water. Needless to say hē was of the party who tried to get the second Charles to come over from Breda and be King of fair Virginia. Under glass in the library has always been kept, when the family has been at home, one of the famous Carolorum medals. No one knows what became of it during the war between the States, but the Colonel is suspected to have worn it around his neck as an amulet in battle, and for safe keeping.

It is a significant fact that, in these latter days of unbelief, certain young Throckmortons have sprung up to say, while fingering the token old Guy held dearer than aught save honor, "I think England was well rid of both son and father of the royal house of Stuart." But then, Cousin Polly always hushes them!

On the table by the medal lies a tome bound in vellum, showing the autograph and book-plate of Guy the first settler. It is "A Chronicle of the Kings of England from the time of the Romans Government unto the Raigne of our Sovereigne Lord King Charles, containing all passages of State and Church, with all other observations proper for a Chronicle, etc., by Sir Richard Baker, Knight. The second Edition." It was "Printed" in London "by J. Flesher and E. Cotes," and "fold by Laurence Sadler at the signe of the Gilded Lyon, and by Thomas Williams at the signe of the Bible, in Little Britaine. 1653." In the dedication "To the High and Mighty Prince Charles, Prince

of VVales and Duke of Cornwall, Eldest Sonne to our Sovereigne Lord, Charles, King of Great Britaine, France and Ireland," occurs this sentiment: "For myself I should account it happineffe enough that I have lived to see the days of your illustrious Father, if it were not a great unhappineffe to see them over cast with cloudf; and yet when these cloudf shall be dispel'd, will it not make him shine with the greater splendour? And this, as old as I am, I doubt not to live myself, to see, and having once seen it, shall then willingly say my *Nunc Dimittis*, and leave the joy of your glorious times for Another Age." Outlining this passage is a mark in faded ink, and written against it the words, "Eheu! Eheu!" signed "G. T., 1665." For, one thing and another preventing, the self-exiled Cavalier never returned to England. He contented himself with experiments in silk-culture—planted the mulberry trees, one of whose descendants drops purple fruit into the quarter well—and imported Armenians to sustain his industry. He was active in bringing to punishment the captain of the ship in which he and his dame embarked from England, who had allowed his sailors to condemn and hang a poor emigrant woman, forced by torture to confess herself a witch, "because of the ship's miscarriage near the Western Isles, which had been like to consign all soules on board to the bosom of the deep." He devised the scheme for civilizing the Indians by which

“for every eight wolves’ heads delivered by an Indian to the authorities, the head man should receive a cow as a step toward making him a Christian.” And he was hand in glove with the rulers of the Colony for the furtherance of all pacific and public spirited enterprises. Honored, prosperous and happy he passed away; but to the last his heart turned in longing to the Mother Land.

The wife of Guy Throckmorton came of a noble Scottish family. Try as they may to invest this progenitress with the charms of old romance, her followers are obliged to hope that the Lady Mary was better than she looked. She it is whose frame hangs next to Guy’s. With a stiff busk and low-cut gown, two awkward arms encircling a lute, her hair in spirals under a *ferronière*, she is like a lay figure beside the graceful ladies of a later day. The Squire, himself, in a full-bottomed pelisse, with his pointed mustache and imperial, and ink-black locks, is depicted with a savage scowl that ill assorts with the character he bore.

Lady Mary’s ancestor, who for refusing to adopt the faith of King James II., perished in the grim embrace of the “Maiden,” is next—that melancholy Jacques, whose portrait must have been taken on his way to meet the caresses of the bloodthirsty spinster. At Christmas time, the young people give him a double allowance of evergreens, “to cheer the poor thing up,” says little Ursula.

“Ye Honorable Guy Throckmorton, Esquire,” and “Ye Dame Mary, his noble spouse,” lie in the graveyard of the church just mentioned, where, on alternate Sundays, sharing as they do a rector with the adjoining parish, the family attend service. On the other days, the tutor, who is an ordained priest, reads Morning Prayer at home. The stone over Lady Mary, riven asunder by the fall of an oak tree struck by lightning, has, growing between the pieces of the broken slab, a stalwart little oak; and the crest on Guy’s tomb displays a huge rosette of lichen blurring the wyvern’s beak, and recalling the crow in the fable that held on to a piece of cheese.

Better a resting-place like this, on the banks of the placid river, than an ancestral vault with the tattered palls that deride its proud epitaphs! For here, in Virginia, the sun almost always shines, and the squirrels meet to chatter about the abundant nuts, while in branches overhead the birds sing roundelay the long bright summer through. Most years, the star-of-Bethlehem blossoms so thickly around the two graves as to look like a bridal wreath above the sleeping pair.

It was their grandson, Miles, who rode with Spotswood, among the Knights of the Golden Horseshoe. Educated in England, as a youngster he had flourished at the Court of Queen Anne, knew all the fine and clever people of the period, and brought back to Virginia more luxurious ways and belongings than had

been seen there until then. The ebon cabinet inlaid with ivory, once owned by Anne Boleyn, and most of the books and pictures, with the "deer-foot" and "drop-and-garland" silver, came over in Miles's time. His portrait, by Kneller, has languishing dark eyes, and lips formed for kissing and for epigram. His smart attire, carried so jauntily, causes the girls to sigh beneath his gay presentment, and twit to distraction their cousins and other beaux who are condemned to wear modern unbecoming garb. The bundles of old letters kept in Anne Boleyn's cabinet, but, by the Colonel's orders, under lock and key, show that Miles had his successes with the fair.

After all his frolicking in England, he settled down as a Burgess in Virginia, and then won a high place in the Council of the Colony. He married a belle, who was also an heiress and brought him a large estate in another county—Miss Lydia Ludwell, daughter of a gentleman who had fought at Blenheim and ended his days in the old country. Lydia's portrait, made in London when she went over with her husband for a visit to her papa, is the pride of the Flower de Hundred collection; an exquisite creature—her hair looped with pearls, and wearing a court costume of satin with pearl embroidery over a hooped petticoat. In her slim rosy-tinted hand she carries an ostrich plume; her eyes smile with conscious triumph; her head sits proudly upon sloping shoulders. Near Mis-

tress Miles is her daughter Ursula; at seventeen she died, crossed in love for Sir Ralph Verney, who, on arriving in the Colony, was discovered to have left so many ugly tales behind him in England, that her father interfered, and broke off the match. The young lady, dressed as a shepherdess, holds a crook in her hand, and behind her are pastured some painfully forshortened sheep. She is a lovely little maid, not brilliant like her mother, but with a wild-rose freshness and appealing grace of her own that capture all observers. Ursula of the nineteenth century, though for the world she would not confess it, has cried over the sorrows of her namesake as often as over the endings of Miss Porter's novels. From the flat slab ascribing to the deceased the charms and virtues of a legion of heroines she trains away the myrtles that would cover it; and, among the earliest flowers of spring, is always promptly on hand to find a certain variety of sweet-smelling white violets, with purple hearts, that grow from the dust of "Ursula, mort. 1729."

Next in the family line, comes Guy the second, the oldest son of Miles and Lydia. He may be seen in the chief wall space of the hall, wearing his British uniform—was a volunteer on Washington's staff in the French and Indian war, and afterwards, as a Burgess, met together with his neighbors and kinsmen from the James. and voted to throw off the yoke of George III.

When the great struggle came, Guy Throckmorton's purse was opened with a willing hand for the equipment of Virginia troops, and his oldest son, Miles, went to the war, in the personal charge of his father's early friend, the Commander-in-Chief of the Revolutionary armies. Miles won distinction and lost a leg in the service of the new States. His son, again, was a modest country squire, a mighty fox-hunter, and a connoisseur in horses, for which, like old Randolph of Tuckahoe, he had stalls fit for a prince (so the country people said), especial grooms, mahogany mangers, and other extravagant luxuries.

The younger scions of this line, after the fashion of other Virginians of their class, married and intermarried till their genealogies are a mere maze of kinsfolk; spread over the State; emigrated to distant States; and in every generation spent their money instead of saving it.

Just before the war of secession, Richard Throckmorton, then a man of sixty-odd years of age, was, as I have said, in possession of the place. Ostensibly the head of the family, he was in reality at the beck and call of a parcel of women and lads. The household, though all coming from a common stock, knew no relationship as near as that of the Colonel to his mother, a venerable lady who was at once the charm and consecration of their home.

Twenty years or so before this time, had occurred

in the Colonel's peaceful life an episode that, however odd and in some respects improbable, was one of those actual romances that to certain families long rooted in our Southern soil are as much a part of family life as the ivy on their walls. Losing his older son and heir, Richard Throckmorton had concentrated all the devotion of a somewhat arbitrary and exacting nature upon his only other child, Philip, a winning, handsome fellow, flaxen-haired like his dead mother, blue-eyed, and fragile in his build, but possessed of a will as indomitable as his father's. While absent at a Northern watering place, the young Virginian had met and loved and become engaged to a Cuban beauty. Far back in the annals of the house of Throckmorton, there had been a wild, black story of a young Virginia volunteer in the English wars against the Spanish, a great-grand-uncle of our Colonel Richard, betrayed through treachery, and coming to a dog's death at the hands of a ship's load of dagoes, who had captured him at sea. Hatred of everything Spanish was drunk in with mother's milk thenceforth by Throckmortons. That Philip, the sole hope of his house, should deliberately cast this drop of poison into the Colonel's cup was unforgivable. There were stormy scenes, dark days at Flower de Hundred, ending in the defiant son's departure from home. A year or two later came tidings fraught with bitter sorrow. Philip, himself hardly out of boyhood, had died of yellow fever in

Jamaica, following his wife, a victim of the same disease, and leaving to his father's care an infant son. To receive the little one, dispatched on a trading schooner to a port on the Carolina coast, Colonel Throckmorton journeyed southward. The letters from an American Consul in Jamaica, informing him of his son's death, had also prepared him for the arrival by the same opportunity, and under charge of the English nurse provided for his grandson, of the orphan child of another Throckmorton—Tom, the rolling stone of the family, a cousin who had been Philip's playmate long ago, and had drifted to the West Indies never to return—Tom, who, leaving his wife and child in generous Philip's home, had set off on a voyage to Texas in a ship which foundered at sea, and whose widow was soon swept away by the resistless fever, having lived only long enough to commend her boy to Philip's guardianship. The circumstances of the Colonel's expedition to the coast; the story of a shipwreck occurring before his anguished eyes, and of the two babies, sole survivors of that night of horror, found drifting in an open boat, alone, unharmed, next day; the fate of the English nurse, cast drowned upon the shore; the loss of certain valuable jewels, a miniature, and a letter written by Philip to his father, which the Colonel had anxiously hoped to find upon the person of the nurse—all this was whispered after nightfall in the chimney-corner of the mansion-house at Flower

de Hundred, and formed the chief burden of plantation gossip in the negroes' huts for years to come.

But the Colonel, who had been accompanied on his journey by only a young man-servant, allowed no allusion to the circumstances of the affair to be addressed to him. He had arrived at the plantation, bringing the two boys, to whom had been apportioned equal privileges—Philip's son, Dick, the heir, a blond, clear-cut beauty like his father,—and Tom's son Miles, the waif, dark-browed and passionate,—what the negroes called the "spit en image uv his daddy." The children had grown up in health and vigor undisturbed; it would have been hard to tell which of them was nearer the Colonel's heart; Miles, like his comrade Dick, had called the master "gran'fizzer" as soon as he could lisp. The years that had elapsed since his fateful journey had left their mark upon Richard Throckmorton in other ways than by merely ageing him. One would, indeed, have hardly given him his years. Tall, erect, muscular, he was still the marked figure in any assemblage. His towering head, his eye bright and searching, suggested the haughty Dick Throckmorton as remembered by his friends. But there was an almost pathetic appeal in the lines around his mouth. The expression of his face, now habitually gentle, was beautiful when lighted by a smile. The tones of his voice, always courtly, became tender when addressed to women,

children, and things helpless, or in pain. The old intolerance of contradiction, obstinacy of prejudice, had gone out of him as the evil spirits of Holy Writ fled at the coming of the Lord. It was not certain whether he was most beloved by his little mother, by the younger women in her train, by the boys, or by his black people. He was an indulgent master. Sampson, the faithful New England overseer, did not consider the Colonel's lenient methods in dealing with his large, clamorous, and unreasoning train of dependents, wise; he knew it was not profitable to the estate. The only point in which he might justly be called exacting, was as to the care of horses. Brown Bess, whom he bestrode every day upon his rounds to see the farms, had a coat of chestnut satin, polished hoofs, and equipments of spotless nicety; and no stable boy was found who presumed to back her, saddled or otherwise; nor indeed would anybody else. That madcap Miles had ridden her up the front steps, once, and into the big hall, where my Lady stood on a square of Turkey carpet, arching her neck, nibbling sugar, and looking around for admiration from the ancestors in their frames, and the contemporaries in the flesh who scolded and applauded in a breath. Miles had been impelled to this exploit by hearing from Cousin Polly how Miles of Queen Anne's day, on completing the building of the hall, after the old one was burnt out, and before the furniture was

replaced, had, for a wager, driven his chariot and four in at the front door, and safely turned them to go out! The Colonel, who found all the women around this pair of trespassers, started to bestow a scolding on the lad. But there was something in the fearless gaze that met his own, the gallant poise of the sixteen-year-old upon the saddle, the flush of beautiful youth in the rascal's merry face, that disarmed him. The lecture stuck in his throat, and Miles got off, scot free.

"I wonder why the deuce Dick never thought of doing that," the master murmured unconsciously to himself, as he went into the study, and sat down to his pipe.

There was no doubt that, of the two, Miles was the more dashing, aggressive, and troublesome to manage. He had been in and out of scrapes from the moment he could toddle away from Mammy Judy's apron-string. He had learned to handle a rod, to swim, to shoot, to wrestle, to climb trees after mistletoe and hawks' nests, to row, to sail a cat-boat, by the time the Reverend Taliaferro Crabtree—a parchment-faced clergyman with a weak chest, engaged by Colonel Throckmorton to take charge of the lads' education—had arrived upon the departure of their nursery governess. This tutor was a relic of the sport-loving clergy of older times. Educated at Oxford, a series of reverses had robbed him of his fortune, and his health did not permit taking charge of a parish. So, in his

middle age, he had drifted into the snug harbor of Flower de Hundred, where it seemed likely he would pass the afternoon of life. His quarters were in an outbuilding over the school-room, whence on summer evenings might be heard to issue the doleful tootings of a flute. His possessions were limited to a case of books, a few suits of rusty black clothes, a couple of beautiful greyhounds styled Romeo and Juliet, and a brace of hawks, named Death and the Devil. For the parson's mania was hawking, and he soon had his two pupils indoctrinated with the mysteries of that ancient craft. Their talk, out of school hours, was all of jesses and bewets, howet, howet and retrieve, mew and mewtings, creancing and so on—to the distraction of the puzzled family. To gratify the old boy, Colonel Throckmorton gave him for his exclusive use a hunter which he proceeded to call Orthodoxy, and on which, with black coat-tails flapping, he would stoutly follow the hounds. Another sport introduced by him was archery—Mr. Crabtree's father having in his youth twice won a silver arrow from the Hainault foresters at Fairlop Oak. He was kind-hearted but irascible, and, a fine scholar, easily lost patience with the inefficient dawdling of beginners who failed to "see an inch beyond their noses, sir." Their school-room was in "the office," a gray, stucco-faced building where greenish light strained through lilacs gone to wood in their old age around the windows, and overhead towered

the shafts of great magnolias and pecan trees; a still place, where no sounds came but those made by the bees and nesting birds, to whom Mr. Crabtree's jurisdiction did not reach. Once, a fox ventured to the stone door-step of "the office," and the lads held their breath in the hope of decoying her within,—but, one quick, intelligent glance at the situation, and she was off. Dick was for tracking her that day, and loosing the hounds after her on the morrow. But Miles, the truest lover of the hunt except the Colonel in their neighborhood, protested. "It'd be like riding after a man that had been to visit you, and robbing him," he said, and Dick, on second thoughts, agreed.

Miles' accomplishments in the athletic and sporting line were at once the admiration and misery of Mr. Crabtree. The fellow had an audacious way of vaulting out of the window when the tutor's back was turned, and disappearing for the day. And, as the walls of "the office" were lined with old volumes bearing London imprint, and Mr. Crabtree, a genuine lover of by-gone literature, was no mean antiquarian on his own account, Miles found easy opportunities to make his exodus. Upon one of these occasions, when about thirteen years of age, he had gone tramping alone with his dogs over leagues of wood and marsh, carrying a heavy gun, and turning up at night with a bag of game that well-nigh won his pardon from the Colonel. But the offended Crabtree demanded and secured

atonement in the shape of an afternoon spent by the truant indoors, next day, engaged in memorizing two lines of Virgil for each mile he had traversed during his escapade. Another time, when a young mare had just come home to the stables, and the Colonel had given orders that no one should back her until he himself should have tested her notoriously bad temper, Miles effected one of his vanishing acts, and ere long were heard from the home paddock sounds that moved Dick, and his tutor too, irresistibly in that direction. Led out of her stall into the inclosure by a couple of negro boys running, dodging, dangling by her head, was seen the beautiful Haidée (those were still days when the cult of Byron flourished in the land). Watching his opportunity to spring upon her back, Miles, bareheaded, spurred, and jacketless, indulged in a hot struggle for mastery, during which he alternately lay with his cheek near the wilful creature's ear as she reared, or sat her, like falcon upon wrist, in her mad gallop about the field. The conflict over, Haidée, quivering and sweating, resigned herself. Dick, the darkies, and Parson Crabtree cheered lustily as Miles rode the noble creature, splashed with foam, fretting on the curb, but submissive, up and down till her lesson was complete. From that day forth she loved him, and, to him only, was like a lamb. Poor Haidée! She was shot under Miles at the battle of Seven Pines, and the young captain kissed her be-

tween the eyes, as they turned on him glazed in death. In '62, she was well advanced in years, but had kept her spirit to the last.

People often said the Colonel might have done better with Miles by exacting stricter obedience from his reckless youth. It is doubtful whether the result of his education would in that case have been more satisfactory. For love of his benefactor the boy would have submitted to any punishment. But spite of self-reproach and genuine penitence, there was that in his hot blood that must needs work out or choke him. At a kind word or a caress from one he held dear he would melt like wax; but there were moments when a demon of obstinacy, of rebellion against authority and conventionalities, of desperate longing to be free from rules of all kinds, clutched and clung to him like the old man of the sea. The wild untrammelled ways of the Virginia plantation suited him, in that he could always put spurs to horse and ride off into the country, or, loosing the sail of his boat, could court the capricious winds of the lower James until his mood was past. Thanks to his outdoor life, his physical development kept pace with the Throckmorton stature early attained by Miles, who at twenty stood six-feet two in his stockings, and was broad of shoulder and free of superfluous flesh as an athlete trained in our modern colleges for champion's work. It was a saying among visitors and servants of the house that Miles

had grown up to resemble his namesake the Knight of the Golden Horseshoe. He was wonderfully good to look at, his complexion a clear olive mantling with rich crimson upon the cheeks, a little brown mustache upon his short upper lip, his eyes dark and lustrous under long lashes, his features strong and shapely. But the Colonel and others of the household—Ursula, certainly—thought their Miles had the advantage in manliness of bearing over that fainéant with the velvet coat and Mechlin steinkirk, as Kneller painted him.

Dick's love for Miles was a proverb in the household. Since, in their beds, still standing side by side in the nursery on the ground floor, Mammy Judy had coaxed them to keep still by stories of Tarlton's horses stabled in this very room and leaving their hoof marks on the wainscoting, the boys had shared everything in common. Dick had a gentle nature, and a deprecating, almost timid appeal in his manner for the good-will of his friends. He was slower of speech, and more cautious in action than his cousin. A trifle undersized, his looks did not quite realize the waxen-tinted promise of his beautiful babyhood; but he was well-made, active, and vigorous, with an air of distinction and scholarly refinement. It had been something of an effort for him to keep up with Miles in athletic exercise; but Miles would never let him stay behind, and so, as best he could, Dick scrambled after. From Parson Crabtree he had imbibed an

excellent taste in literature, and as a classic had realized his tutor's fondest hopes. Sampson, the overseer, indorsed him as having "the makings in him of a first-class farmer, sir," and high and low about the plantation had a kind word for Dick.

One person, and she the true power behind the throne, thought the fulfillment of Dick's early manhood left nothing to be desired. This was his little great-grandmother. A pet surprise for strangers arriving at the house was the appearance on the threshold, key-basket on arm and a smile of sweetest welcome in her forget-me-not blue eyes, of the fairy *chatelaine*, the master's mother, scarce sixteen years his senior.

All of "Madam" Throckmorton's (as the Colonel chose to call her) lovely life after the first fifteen years, had been passed at Flower de Hundred. When she came there as a school-girl wife, and was left in charge of the great establishment while her burly lord rode away around his farms, or followed the hounds or haunted his famous stables, the old servants did not allow her much care about the housekeeping. So, varied with her visits and ministrations in the quarter, her Sunday-schools and church work, she took up the ornamental gardening of the place. Her hand had planted the shrubs and flowering trees that in the spring made of Flower de Hundred a double garden—half hanging in the air, half under foot. Scattered in clumps about the lawns, between long-lived forest

trees, and skyward reaching magnolias wrapped trunks and boughs in ivy, and in season unfolding hundreds of cream-petaled censers, she had set out a wide variety of shrubbery that a few years of such sun and air nurture to fullest bloom.

Locusts, horse-chestnuts, paulonias, fringe and smoke trees, crape-myrtles, pomegranates, lilacs, dogwood and snowball, syringa and calycanthus bushes, were linked to one another by garlands of honeysuckle, cream and coral, running roses, wistaria, clematis, and jasmine. In the borders on either side of box-hedges cut into queer shapes and arches, were blossoms for every month—from February's snow-drop to April's tulip "robed in the purple of the Cæsars"; wall-flowers, orange and jet, streaked, luscious and splendid, with lilies of the valley into whose green sheaths how many a slim white hand, now dust, has plunged to find the first bells of the year; and so to the roses of June—and on, still, until late December's chrysanthemums. In the garden proper, the prim design for which, with an Englishman to lay it out, had been brought over in one of the Throckmorton ships, A.D. 1760, grew a riot of the old-fashioned self-sowing flowers, the delight of artists and novel-writers, but the torment of a horticulturist of earnest purpose. The English primroses, for instance, spread so that there was no keeping them in bounds, and poppies were a weed. To look on them was a feast of color, but they

cost the little Madam many a sigh. To keep down such interlopers, to train, to graft, to make experiments with newer seeds and cuttings, would furnish the dear lady sufficient pastime for the remainder of her days. Excepting for the annual journey to the "Springs," undertaken in her own equipage and more by way of keeping up the tradition of the family than for love of it, her days had been spent amid the simple occupations of Flower de Hundred. Her tiny figure, clad in mild weather always in white, might still be seen flitting about the box-walks like a familiar sprite, sometimes carrying a lap-full of rose-leaves plucked to make scent bags for the household linen or to flavor a confection of which she kept the sugared secret; or again, her arms full of long flowering sprays of which her eye alone had caught the matin loveliness.

A daily task at Flower de Hundred was the arrangement by the ladies of the family of cut flowers, in trays and baskets, more or less profuse according to the season, sent in by the gardener directly after breakfast. No hour in summer days was pleasanter among the twenty-four,—so thought idle males and staying company,—than that lounged away in the entry, leading from the main building to the visitors' wing, watching white fingers at this fragrant task. Through many open doors and windows floated into the matted corridor—with its cane-seat chairs and chintz lounges, the covers laundered to smell of grass

and clover, its racks of guns and rods, and its Bartolozzi prints—the softened sounds of distant farm activity, on the languid breath of a summer air borne down by a weight of sweets. Madam Throckmorton, the head of a bevy of volunteers, sat at a table piled high with blossoms, her own hands busied, directing here, suggesting there, bestowing a smile of approval on completed work. Little Ursula was there, her chestnut mane knotted up, her brown face moist and flushed from frequent dives into the sunshine to dispute with the butterflies some flower left on its stalk, that seemed to her the one thing needful to complete the filling of her India bowl,—Mademoiselle, Ursula's fat French governess, an exquisite adept in floral combinations,—Dick, at grandmamma's side, talking with her about a successful graft long desired by both enthusiasts,—the usual array of pretty cousins in white muslin, and cavaliers in snowy jeans,—Miles, in his disreputable velveteens, standing gun in hand, his dogs impatient at his knees, in the doorway against a background of ivied wall in an angle of the wing,—and Cousin Polly—and lastly, Bonnibel!

Yes, Dick was grandmamma's pet, and no wonder. More than any other member of the household he shared her tastes. As soon as he was strong enough to stray after the little lady in her horticultural pursuits, he became her shadow, while poor Miles, save on one occasion when he worked havoc with a row of

Dutch bulbs, imported at great expense, kept a respectful distance from trowels, water-pots, and weed-baskets. Miles would supply little Madam with partridges and ducks, and did not always forget to bring home strange orchids from the marsh, or fungi from the woods. And it was his boast, that grandmamma, ever timid on the water, would sometimes trust herself to his boat for a row at sunset on the crimsoned river near the wharf, or threading the silver inlets where the tide rose in the marsh. But Dick never forgot her, or let her want for anything he could supply. He would go with her among the negro-cabins, was her almoner, helped in her Sunday classes, and, during her hour for repose in the daytime, would sit beside her couch and read aloud—oftenest from her favorite “Keble’s Christian Year.” After the old lady became a little fearful of the spirited horses Colonel Throckmorton invariably drove, and in fact wearied of any expedition far from the mansion-house, Dick rigged up for her a donkey-chair, and trained for it a comical little brute, who kept demurely on the walk, well aware what was in store for him if he set a hoof upon the borders. Of her equipage the attendant was a small darkey known as Puck, chubby and round-eyed and portentously solemn, who walked beside the donkey’s head with a distinct recognition of the fact that Destiny had singled him out thus early in life for the bestowal of her richest guerdon. Grandmamma never tired of

extolling Dick's thoughtfulness in devising this addition to her comfort, or of declaring her own renewed enjoyment therefrom of the blessings of her life.

Whoever lay a-bed at Flower de Hundred in the morning, the Colonel was always up and in the saddle, and "ole Miss"—as the servants invariably call the *doyenne* of a Virginia family—was in the dining-room waiting for her congregation to assemble for morning prayers. Generally speaking, it was the honest aim of the household to forsake delicious turning on downy pillows, under counterpanes of Madam's handiwork, and to rally around the sweet-voiced bit of Dresden china, who, in her crisp gown and cap and kerchief, sat and knelt in the shade of the bowed shutters to read a chapter and a collect. Sometimes, human nature—really entitled to special dispensation in the snare of a Flower de Hundred bed—proved recalcitrant, and the worshipers, if they did not sneak in barely in time to drop on their knees for the last amen, and then rise up looking virtuous—only succeeded in getting downstairs for the second round of breakfast batter-cakes. Once, it is chronicled, failing all other disciples, "ole Miss" read prayers for an audience consisting of Dick, Phœbe (the coal black shepherdess, a mountain of fat wearing a sunbonnet), a pet lamb who followed Phœbe everywhere, two hounds, a collie, and an Angora cat. An oddly assorted gathering in the morning sunshine of that stately room, its paneled

walls hung with triple rows of ancient portraits, the buffet piled with ancestral silver, the green dragon jars on the mantel stuffed with lavender and satin-leafed honesty,—and over them the convex mirror, with brass chains and eagles, to peep into which Colonial Miss Bettys and Miss Babs had so often stood on tiptoe!

CHAPTER II.

GROWING up in the peaceful atmosphere of the home one day to be his own, it did not occur to young Richard Throckmorton that a change of any sort could be desirable. But when he and Miles were about nineteen, there came, without warning, into their lives an element as indispensable to the period of hope and illusion, as balmy spring to early buds that shake out from their woolly covers into leaves having form and substance.

Once or twice during their childhood had arrived for a visit to the plantation a certain "Cousin Julia Leigh," of Maryland, born a Throckmorton, bringing with her a slim, pale little person with reddish hair, whom the boys endured politely but failed to find attractive. Later, when their orphan cousin Ursula was taken by the good Colonel into his fold to live, the doubters consented—first through pity for the lonely little brown-eyed stranger, and then because of her willingness to serve as chorus, retriever, and general utility woman—to believe that a girl may have her values. Ursula, dubbed "Nutty" from the Colonel's declaration that she was a veritable "Nut-brown Mayde," felt convinced that the companionship of the boys, next to

that of Cousin Richard, was the greatest privilege of life. She was fond of both of them, but Miles, having once rescued her from an alarming peril when she was seven, he fourteen, had won her enthusiastic devotion. Nutty had been leaning out of one of the upper windows looking into a bird's nest in the vines on the house wall underneath, when she lost her balance and fell out, her frock catching on a projecting bough of robust growth that held her there till Miles, with a gardener's ladder, could come to her relief. It was Miles, also, who, finding her with a squirrel's brush pinned in her cap, perched on one of the bareback horses led by a negro boy to water, took Nutty forthwith to the home paddock, and gave her a first lesson in riding on a saddle. How often, after that, had she enjoyed a gallop at his side over the sandy roads of the pine-woods, fast as thoroughbreds could carry them, manes flying, her hair flying, their horses, neck-to-neck, straining through the resin-scented air, their heart-beats answering to the panting of their steeds!

Dick was always ready to help Ursula out with the mathematics and Latin acquired from Mr. Crabtree, while her governess, in return, gave lessons in French to the young gentlemen. Nutty was grateful to Dick for invariable kindness, but would have gone through fire and water to be snubbed by Miles. She was a loving, jealous, passionate little creature, like a prickly pear to the people who did not understand her, prefer-

ring boys' sports to those suitable to her sex and condition; and, having made up her mind she could not be a beauty, she cared nothing for the accomplishments and graces poor Mademoiselle discoursed upon from morning until night. Indeed, it was only through invoking the aid of the Colonel, or, indirectly, of Monsieur Miles, that the governess induced her even to attempt certain necessary tasks. The little great-grand-mamma looked upon Ursula as an astonishing freak in the family annals, a poor, dear, undisciplined child, whom God in his good time would fashion anew into resemblance of other people. The Reverend Taliaferro Crabtree, whom she had baited and worried and defied during the lessons he was unfortunate enough to have to bestow on her—well, it might be too much to say that he hated Ursula, but that would be very near the truth!

At thirteen, to the relief of all implicated, Miss Nutty showed symptoms of reform in some trying peculiarities. From the doubling of her plait of chestnut hair under a bow of ribbon, and the overhearing by her of somebody's casual remark that Ursula's skin was beginning to clear up, dated her visible attempt to enroll herself among the members of society who confess to a regard for conventionalities.

And, at this epoch, Dick and Miles being at home for the summer vacation, the elastic walls of Flower de Hundred stretched for another inmate.

Nutty thought it a sad but rather agreeable story she had been told, of the death, in a steeple-chase for gentlemen riders, of Cousin Julia Leigh's good-for-nothing husband so soon after Cousin Julia herself had laid down a weary life, begun under the brightest auspices of health and wealth—and how it had all been owing to poor Beverley Leigh's inability to keep from drinking.

And now here was another solitary maiden to be provided with a home and protectors, although, said Cousin Polly, "Bev Leigh had had the grace to leave her enough to live upon." The boys, remembering little Amabel's pasty complexion and lank red hair, exchanged secret expressions of dread lest grandfather should consider himself obliged to ask her to the plantation for a visit. They were filled with alarm, when, after reading a second time the letter that brought him this woeful news, and sighing deeply thrice, the Colonel announced to his little mother that he reckoned he'd take the boat to Richmond on the morrow, and run over to Baltimore and look the poor child up. A few days later, the same boat, touching at Flower de Hundred wharf, deposited the returning master, and, clinging to his arm, was—Bonnibel!

Bell, or Bonnibel, always—her baptismal name was never heard.

Dick, who was in waiting to receive the party, caught one glimpse of her, as with a little petulant

movement she threw aside her mourning veil—and succumbed upon the spot. “Radiant” was the first word that occurred to one on looking upon her beauty. Hers was the perfection of blond prettiness, with a mouth like Cupid’s bow, a tiny tip-tilted nose, eyes gold-brown to match her hair, a color like crushed roses on her cheeks. She was, at nineteen, slender yet fully developed, and her walk and carriage suggested the women of tropic countries trained to carry baskets of fruit upon their heads—a bearing more according to the ideal of the word queenly than that of any actual royalty we have seen in modern times.

This young lady was under no illusions as to the impression she was making upon her relatives, when, assembled around the bounteous luncheon-table, they took her measure with the eye. So accustomed was she to unconditional surrender, that victory did not elate unduly. In those days, a Southern beauty tripped through life on a path strewn with roses, hearts, and darts. All men became Sir Calidores in her behalf. Since her mother’s death a year before, Bell had been obliged to take the head of her father’s table, and, spite of the cloud of sadness veiling it, her manner was charmingly easy and cordial. Dick could not understand why, though feeling awkward and dull before she spoke to him, afterwards he was conscious of being at his best. The courtly old Colonel declared it renewed his youth, egad, to have such a

stunning young woman in the house. Grandmamma cooed over her like a wood-pigeon to its young. Nutty, who had had her breath taken away by this brilliant vision, struck colors on the spot, and worshiped Bell with the ardor that characterized all of the poor child's likes and dislikes. And Miles—

He had been shooting, and returned late in the afternoon when the slanting sun lit up the western windows of the wing. Ursula ran to meet him, and chattered of this wondrous visitor that had dawned upon their home. Miles, discrediting her as a romancer, was turning up the box-walk that led to the back door, when Nutty made a sign, and whispered: "Hush! She doesn't see us. Look at the Red Room window. She is there."

A house-wall thick with layers of glossy leaves, up which a banksia rose had clambered, throwing out long shoots, each bearing a multitude of tiny yellow florets, and these branches tangled with honeysuckle in full bloom. A girl leans out of a casement to taste the fragrance of the air. She is robed in some half-transparent white stuff, and her hair, loosed from the comb, falls in a glittering stream over one shoulder. She succeeds in breaking a stubborn branch of the baby roses, and at the movement some ruby-throated humming birds are dislodged from their honeysuckle, and, like flying jewels, scatter in search of safety. "Heavens! how lovely it all is!" speaks the sweetest voice

Miles ever heard. And then the vision disappears, and for him the world is left in darkness.

"Yes, that is Bonnibel," Nutty said, with proprietary pride; "I knew you'd be surprised."

"Surprised is no word for it," cried Miles. "She is an angel. I'll be hanged, Nutty, if I know where I stand. I'm struck all of a heap."

"Boys are so foolish," answered Nutty sapiently. "Now there is Dick, who is just as bad."

"Dick!—" said Miles, then stopped, and for want of a better method of expressing himself, repeated "Dick!"

"Yes, indeed. When she spoke to Dick at luncheon, it was too ridiculous to see how pleased he looked. He simpered. Cousin Richard, too, seemed when he took her into the dining-room as if he were going to dance in a minuet. Perhaps we'll all settle down by to-morrow, but to-day we're really absurd."

"Dick!—" said Miles, once more; then, shouldering his gun and tossing his bag to Nutty, he stalked away.

To introduce you in due chronological order to the household at Flower de Hundred, I should certainly not have left Cousin Polly to the last of the family. She was a small, bright-eyed lady of indefatigable activity in sacrificing herself for the good of others; merry, witty, tender; a niece of the little grandmother, who, in the

old lady's advancing years, had come to live altogether at the plantation. In her trig person she embodied the several functions of housekeeper, nurse, confidante, missionary, parish-clerk, queen of the poultry-yard, and genealogist. She was the repertory of the legends of the house; could tell to a scalp the settlers killed here, in the Indian massacre of 1622; and Miles, having once found an arrow-head, oddly stained, asked her with a grave face to name the particular F. F. V. whose blood had left that mark! Standing, for she had rarely time to sit, in the best spare bedroom, she would, while straightening a curtain or patting a pillow, narrate how my Lord Cornwallis, crossing the river hereabout with his army on the march to Yorktown, snatched a night's rest in this mahogany four-poster—which later was slept in, during his visit to Flower de Hundred, by the gallant Marquis de Chastellux. "The old place was raided, my dears," she would go on to say, "by Major-General Phillips, whose men destroyed crops, killed cows, stole horses, and even broke furniture and china; the British seemed to feel peculiar virulence against your great-great-grandfather, Richard, because, I suppose, they expected to find him a Tory. But brothers mustn't bear malice, must they, when their fight is done? Tarlton's troopers were the worst. So great was the dread of them in the country, old Mrs. Throckmorton decided to fly to Richmond for protection, and, to

avoid pursuit, had her four coach-horses shod with the shoes reversed, so their tracks might point the other way. Tarlton's men came like a whirlwind, devoured her provisions, killed her stock, and sacked the wine-cellar. Why, they tied the bottles of old Madeira in festoons around their horses' necks, and rode off singing! Pretty, this knot-work, isn't it! Dear 'ole Miss' made it with her blessed little hands. It was after that, Major Miles Throckmorton built the stone chamber underground, communicating by the secret passage with the well. He'd be bound, I've heard he said, another Revolution wouldn't find him unprepared with a place to hide valuables in, and people too, in case of a surprise."

The boys and Nutty knew the stone chamber as a famous play-room, having descended to it many a time by way of the old dry well in an outbuilding, sliding on ropes, and fortifying themselves in imagination against Indians and bloody Britons.

"Take care, Dick, how you handle that cup and saucer on the mantel-piece. Not only because it's Spode, which they do say people are beginning to set store by, nowadays; but it was a present to Mrs. Miles Throckmorton from Mrs. General Washington, whose first husband was a connection of the family. Old Lady Miles would have her say about everything, and she affronted Mrs. Washington by giving some plain advice as to the management of young Mr.

Jacky Custis. There was quite a tiff between the ladies, I am told, and this was a token of forgiveness when they made it up. Dear knows Mrs. Washington was strict enough with her grandchildren, whatever she may have been with her own children. The tales Cousin Clarissa Dandridge used to tell about the way Nelly Custis was made to practice, and work on her sampler! Cousin Clarissa staid a great deal at Mount Vernon."

"'Who's that old codger on pink paper,' did you say, Miles?" the good lady would resume. "Fie, child, that's a St. Mémin of your great-granduncle Bland Willoughby, one of the foremost gentlemen of his day. He married three times,—his first was Abigail Carter, of Rose Hill, his second Lucy Carrington of the Perch—no, Lucy must have been his third—surely Edmonia Christian was the mother of Randolph and Tarmesia—well, well, I wonder I've forgotten a thing like that—I must be in my second childhood, I declare."

"I know," said Nutty, "we've been in the graveyard, scraping the lichens off his tomb; Abigail lies on his right, Lucy on his left, and I suppose they didn't know exactly what to do with Edmonia, so she's across his feet. Dick translated his inscription, and it says, 'In all he had three and twenty children, on whose education he expended liberal sums of money.' In qua—erudienda—vim—maximam—"

“Good for Nutty!” cried out Miles. “But, I say, what a lot of young ’uns to buy Latin grammars for.”

“What bothers me,” went on Nutty, with a thoughtful air, “is what he will do about his wives on the Resurrection morn—I mean the one that’s got to go behind the others—I should think her feelings would be hurt to have to tag like that.”

“Children!” said Cousin Polly, with a shocked face. She scarcely knew whether she disapproved the more of a light speech on the subject of man’s last arising, or of levity about the family in the past. The latter offense was at Flower de Hundred quite on a par with the depravity of Sydney Smith’s man who spoke disrespectfully of the equator.

“Indeed, indeed, I wasn’t making fun,” pleaded Nutty, in distress. To her this cult of ancestors was intensely real and absorbing. But the boys, during a discussion of its tenets, were apt to be as restless as young colts.

A member of the family in all but ties of blood was Saul the butler, of a type once everywhere found in our Southern homes. He was a lean old darkey, with white hair fringing a bald head like a polished coconut. His wrinkled face could beam with good nature, but when on duty wore an expression of determined dignity. His bow and greeting were those of the ideal aristocrat. He was self-willed, humble, kindly, iras-

cible, tenacious of the honor of the house to an extraordinary degree. "Roi ne puis—Prince je daigne—Throckmorton suis," was his version of an ancient motto. Born and bred on this plantation, as his father had been before him, he had no ambition beyond its limits; and to train up his descendants in the second and third generation to adopt his methods and no others, closed the perspective of his life.

Saul, in a spotless jacket of white linen, a long white apron, and a silver salver in his hand, standing behind his mistress's chair at table, was as much a part of Flower de Hundred as the lintels of the door. Thus posted, he kept watch over the movements of two younger men, and of the several little myrmidons always in training at the "gret Hus." The old man's way of cleaning silver—of folding napkins—of carving bouquets from turnips, beets, and carrots—of imparting polish to his glass and mahogany—of compounding juleps, egg-nogs, and sangaree—were models to the county. No hand but his touched the keys of sideboard or wine-cellar. No hand but his presumed to draw out the chair for "Mistis" to be seated. There was never unseemly haste about his movements. Watching him prepare the table for a meal by polishing the already speckless top, one felt vaguely that Time might as well stand still until Uncle Saul felt disposed to lay the cloth. The Colonel's playmate in childhood, he had some inclination to tyrannize over

his master in minor things. But for his tiny mistress, his veneration knew no bounds.

Saul's daughter, Phyllis, Madam's own maid, was a portly, comfortable body, always seen dressed in pink or blue prints, while the others were content with domestic cottons manufactured on the quarter looms. Phyllis tied her head handkerchief in a huge butterfly bow, and wore around her neck a string of real gold beads, which, with the distinction of having buried four husbands, won her the leading place in plantation upper circles. A bed-room "made up" by Phyllis was a bower of bliss and cleanliness. Three or four times a day she would come in to see that hot water, cold water, fresh logs of wood, clean-swept hearths, window-shades at the right angle proper ventilation, abundant towels, and flowers newly picked for the vases, were not lacking to one's needs. Service like hers was the only approximation ever known in America to the consideration for the comfort of the guest seen in English houses. The maids trained by Phyllis are, to-day, the mothers of self-assertive freedmen, who jostle white people out of place, wear *pincenez* in the cornfields, and travel with "gripsacks" and high hats, demanding for themselves in our Southern States far more of social consideration than the peasant classes of any other nation upon earth either receive or expect,

The *chef* was Duke, whose father had let his Elijah's mantle fall upon his shoulders. For thirty years before the war broke out, Duke had lived among the saucepans at Flower de Hundred coveting no change. He was fat and timid, and having once made up his mind to the great enterprise of going down in the boat to visit the quiet burgh of Norfolk, had spent the night there, returning next day in unrestrained disgust of the manners and customs of the outer world, and had never gone away again. He was an artist of the class that has given the stamp of excellence to Southern cookery. Under him worked bread-cooks, vegetable-cooks, pastry-cooks; and the materials upon which his skill was exerted were principally supplied by Nature's bounty to the estate. Home-bred hams and mutton were supplemented by fish from the neighboring waters, which furnished also oysters, crabs, and terrapin—while poultry and game were equally abundant. People who gathered around the Flower de Hundred board for dinner resigned themselves to temptations of the palate that pleased none more than the servitors in ceaseless progress around it with their offerings.

The dinner over, it was the custom to remove the cloth and place on the mahogany a fresh and bewildering array of sweets served in dishes of silver, porcelain or cut glass, with decanters in silver coasters that in the circuit of the table were pushed from guest to

guest. To enumerate the creams, sherbets, conserves, jellies in tall glasses such as the Stork put before the Fox, "quiere-of-paper pancakes," "marguerites," what not?—the names elude me—one must refer to some old-time book of cookery; for during the century neither recipes nor methods in service have known change at Flower de Hundred.

At breakfast, the guest not to the manner born was most apt to be astonished by the variety of hot breads (again, for nomenclature, the reader is referred to higher authorities). "Cole bread?" said the colored folks. "Wha' anybody wan' cole bread fur? On'y po' white trash eat sich stuff."

And now, from a picture that seeks truthfully to reproduce the days that are no more, I must not omit a glance at the general relation, to the families of their owners, of the negroes of old Virginia homes. From even the most thoroughly trained among them, it was useless to expect an absence of visible interest in the affairs of the Great House. At table, the honest Diggorys were apt to enjoy unrebuked not only "Old Grouse in the gun room," but all its congeners. At the first ripple of merriment among the guests, there would be a sympathetic flash of ivories and of eyeballs from behind their chairs. The negroes dearly loved "company," and worked better when houses were full to overflowing. "Allers glad to see quality

a-comin', and de jelly-bag a hangin' on de nail," was an oft-repeated saying. When one visited the quarter, it was to find the same welcome, infused with the same sense of ownership in the arrival. It was always expected that visitors would take an early opportunity to make the rounds of the cabins, neatly swept and garnished, and divided by a path of sun-baked earth. Here would be found the women, the weaker ones serving as nurses to the old crones and babies, the stronger engaged in spinning, carding, weaving, knitting garments for the rest. Under foot rolled bright-eyed pickaninnies; in the doorways, patient patriarchs sat with heads like bolls of ripe cotton, sunning themselves, leaning upon their staffs, and waiting for the summons of old Time. Nowhere was withheld the smile, the bow, the curtsy, the cheerful "Howdye Marse," or "Howdye Mistis," in answer to the greeting of the guest. If this was the smooth side of slavery, it was a common sight. The seamy side showed occasional abuses, but most of all the woeful wrong to the masters themselves of the slave-holding habit. Here, taking what I have portrayed as an example, was a race of conscientious men full of a high sense of personal honor and responsibility to God; here were unselfish and helpful women; a minority of intelligence and capacity, surrounded and isolated by masses of ignorant peasants. The blacks, whatever their external polish, were ready at

a hint to relapse into the barbarous habits and beliefs of their African ancestors, some of the most decent and pious among them stealing off after nightfall for weird dance and heathenish incantation. Too many of them were so characterized by sensuality, so habituated to the vices of the untruthful, so steeped in the cunning with which the servile class everywhere contends against its rulers, so shut off from the sense of accountability and duty, that many results a stranger and a philanthropist considered reasonably to be hoped for in controlling such a force were by their masters unattainable and had ceased to be attempted. As for the matter of personal cruelty, rarely heard of in such a home as I describe, it was the habit of a tyrant born, not made by circumstance. And with this picture of life, as life was on the Throckmorton plantation, it must be owned that these black-skinned peasants, laughing, singing, dancing Obi dances when their work was done on the grassy slopes of a fertile land of which each had his little share, were better off than the teeming throngs of whites in the London slums, or of abject Orientals under European heels. Certainly their condition was far in advance of that of African negroes anywhere else in subjugation; and there was rarely among them any personal sense of wrong.

Nevertheless, and although the slave of America, liable to an involuntary change of master, was under

the protection of law, and entitled to all the rights of the person consistent with subjection to direction and control in daily toil, the system was altogether wretched. It hampered the development of the South, as if society were wrapped in an anaconda's folds. And a crying shame it was that so rich and generous a portion of the American continent should be thus withheld from the progress with which the modern world was advancing to general enlightenment. The highest civilization is reached only where there is absolute equality before the law of rights of every kind, and possibility of equal actual attainment.

The summer that Bonnibel came, Dick and Miles and Parson Crabtree were sent off by the liberal Colonel to make the then unusual tour of Europe. On their return in the autumn to the University, Dick was surprised to find Miles throwing himself with zeal into studies hitherto neglected, and bending all his energies to secure the degree of Master of Arts, with which not more than one of a hundred students leaves the institution founded by Jefferson and sustaining worthily the high standard of scholarship it from the first assumed. Theretofore one of the wild blades of the University, Miles had settled down to be a scholar, accomplishing by his marvelous quickness of mind and a retentive memory what the plodders had been working up to since the day of entrance. Dick did not

know of a conversation between Miles and Bonnibel, when she, without thought of consequences, had said she might fancy, but would never choose for a comrade in life, a mere idler and ignorant roisterer like too many of the youths of their acquaintance. And, when the two young men came home for the Christmas holidays, Miles astonished the household as much as he had Dick. He was quiet, reserved, withdrawing himself from the family gatherings, and given to consulting Mr. Crabtree about books over which he wasted midnight oil. When he refused to head a coon hunt, "Yaller Jock," the huntsman, was greatly taken aback. And when he declined to taste Uncle Saul's apple-toddy, that functionary went out affronted, and told the tale to old nurse Judy, who, too obese to leave the chimney corner of her cabin, shook her head, and "spicioned" Marse Miles had got religion, bless his heart.

We come now to the summer of 1859, when, at the old homestead, all thoughts were centered upon the approaching graduation of the lads, and the probabilities that Miles would—Dick being certain of his share—bring home college honors. It was the week of the final exercises at the University, and the Colonel, detained at Flower de Hundred by a slight touch of his enemy, the gout, sat in his chair wondering why he had not received the usual weekly letter from his boys. However, they were due at home that day by the

down boat, and soon the old house that missed them sorely, would be full of them; a month or so of holiday, and they would begin to think of life in earnest. Dick would take hold of the old place, of course; there was care enough for him in its broad acres, and already the youngster had begun to plan costly improvements, with Sampson to back him up. Miles talked of reading law with Lawyer Willis, their neighbor at Werowocomico, but, all the same, he could live at home and begin farming Timberneck, an estate some eight miles distant devised to his adopted grandson by Richard Throckmorton's will, and possessing a deserted manor-house which was some day to be put in order for its future master.

Indoors at Flower de Hundred, the busy women-folk had set the house in festal array for the homecoming of the heroes. Floors shone with dry rubbing, furniture glowed darkly under skilful hands with cork and wax. "Be sure you stick the sockets full of laurel," the order given by the entertainer in Vanbrugh's "Relapse" in 1697, was still followed in old Virginia homes. Candle frames set over doors were hidden by classic garlands of magnolia leaves. Vases, jugs, bowls, fireplaces, corners, every niche and nook, were filled with flowers. The store-room shelves creaked under the old-fashioned dainties prepared before a feast; in and out of doors passed willing house-servants; around the verandas prowled dark little fig-

ures whose mammies in the quarter had not been able to exclude them from taking a sniff in advance at the general good cheer. The study, the only spot about the house held sacred from intrusion, was a small high-ceiled room, the walls having shelves filled with books on angling, agriculture, farriery, and forestry. There were also sundry bound volumes of proceedings of the State Senate, of which august body the Colonel had had the honor to be during two terms a member—after a time of service as aide to the Governor, a position designated by the honorary military title his countrymen were prompt to confirm to him for the remainder of his days. Over the mantelpiece of this room was a portrait of Mildred, Richard Throckmorton's wife, who had had no rival in his faithful heart—a high-bred face, expressing mingled sweetness and reserve, with soft blue eyes, and sunny hair wrapped with a string of pearls that crossed one shoulder to the bosom of her gown. Beneath it hung a cabinet picture of their son Philip. In pigeonholes of the battered old desk near at hand were Phil's compositions tied with blue ribbon, Phil's diploma from the University, with other sad relics and bundles of letters assorted according to their dates. Along the wall base were ranged the Colonel's boots and shoes, and the old slippers he liked to put on when returned from his early ride with a glow on his dark face that was born of the dew-washed morning, of his scrutiny

of field and barn, bird on the wing and creeping thing as well—for he was a rare lover of Nature and espied much the young people overlooked.

Above Mildred's picture, the Colonel had hung a sword. Starting life a younger son, he had been a midshipman during the war of 1812, was with Hull in the *Constitution* when he captured the *Guerrière*, and had left the navy only when recalled to Flower de Hundred at the death of his older brother. Of this period of his life Richard Throckmorton retained two things very precious to him; a deep love and reverence for the flag of the United States—and this sword presented to him for gallantry in action under Decatur, in the fight with the *Macedonia*.

To-day, as the old man sat thinking of his boys, he felt his heart throb with young interest and emotion, and was grateful to God for the late flowering blossoms in his chequered life. Their hopes and the prospects of their manhood were as absorbing to him as his own had been. For Dick, the way seemed clear enough. He was a good boy, a true Throckmorton, and would sit worthily in the seat of his fathers, and do his duty like a man. Besides—and then, certain ideas entered into the brain of this innocent old schemer that made him smile and almost blush. Well, well, time enough for that! About Miles, now, he was not entirely at rest. Things had come to his knowledge—young follies rather than wrong-doings—

that cut the deeper because he had been left to find them out from others. He had tried so hard to teach Miles not to fear him. This must be his share of the inevitable disappointment of old folks who trust too much in their hold upon young hearts. To labor, pray, hope, be patient—forgive and begin afresh—that is the part of a watcher and guardian over undeveloped souls.

So deep was the Colonel's reverie, he failed to notice that the boat had touched at the wharf and passed into the stretches of river beyond, seen from his study window. He heard a commotion of voices in the hall—a barking of dogs—and then rapid footsteps; and, with a light preliminary tap, Dick and Miles burst in, followed by such of their dogs as were quick to writhe inside before the shutting of the door.

"Why, Dick! Why, Miles! you young rascals; you've caught me napping," he cried out cheerily, veering around in his chair to give a hand to each.

"Here's my degree of A.B., grandfather," said Dick eagerly; "I wouldn't tell any of 'em I had it, till you should hear first."

"And here is mine, sir," said Miles, after a moment's hesitation. He was very pale, and had kept a little in the background.

"Boys, boys—" exclaimed the delighted Colonel. He could say no more. A rush of pride and exultation swelled his throat.

"And Miles got his A.M. at a jump, sir," went on

Dick, "while we slow fellows were creeping up the hill. Everybody says his examinations were the most—"

"Stop, Dick—not a word more," interrupted Miles. "I'd feel like a coward if I let my grandfather think me better than I am. I've been in disgrace, sir, with the Faculty, for going on a spree in College bounds. . . . And I came awfully near not getting this at all. . . . Till yesterday, I thought I'd lost it, and would have to come home to you here, like a whipped cur."

His voice shook. The vein between his eyes was swollen, and his breath came short.

"Grandfather, hear *me*," cried Dick. "I'll tell you the whole story from the first. Poor Miles has been under such a strain, he's all used up. You know how hard he's been at work—everybody knows that; giving up all the fun for weeks. Well, we were cock sure of his degree; and two or three nights before the finals, he went out with some fellows and they had something to drink and made a row in bounds. When the authorities got after them, the others got away, but Miles walked back and gave himself up, and owned to the whole thing. Of course they made him keep his room, 'awaiting sentence.' The least they *could* do was to refuse him his degree, 'twas said. Do you know, that not only the University but the whole town was in an uproar over it. Everything was at fever-heat. The Faculty were besieged by notes

and petitions to let Miles off, and all the girls went for the Professors wherever they could catch one. But not a word *pro* or *con* was spoken by the Profs. Yesterday was the greatest day in my life. There was an immense crowd in the hall for the final exercises, and there was I, taking my A.B. with a heart heavy as lead, thinking of poor old Miles, who wouldn't even see me when I went to him before going to the hall. All the business, all the speech-making, was disposed of, all the other honors awarded, and not a word of Miles. At the very last, when murmurs of sympathy were running through the crowd, a lot of pretty girls crying, and we fellows feeling like thunder, you'll believe—I just put my hand up to my face and wanted the floor to open and swallow me—when, suddenly, up got dear old Doctor Maupin upon his feet, and you might have heard a pin drop. After clearing a very big frog out of his throat, he said he'd ask to detain the audience but one moment longer, about a matter he'd been led to believe was one of general interest. He told Miles's story without mentioning his name, saying that in view of his high standing at the University, his previous good behavior, his excellent average in examinations, but 'especially because of the unanimous and gratifying request of his classmates and the community, the Faculty had consented that his offense be condoned.'

“At this there was one tremendous burst of cheers,

But, by Jove! grandfather, when the Doctor took up a paper from the table, and called out Miles by name to come forward and receive his degree as Master of Arts in the University of Virginia—well, you don't hear noise like that every day! There came old Miles, pushing his way from the very far end of the crowd, as pale and haggard—! I believe the fellows wanted to carry him up upon their shoulders—! When he took his paper and bowed and turned away, the audience broke out again, the men all cheering, the ladies waving handkerchiefs! I got at Miles, I don't know how! When the fellows let him off, we went into his rooms. He'd eaten nothing that day, and was half-starved and shaky. But all he said was, 'I'm glad—for grandfather.'

Dick broke down in a boyish fit of crying. Without a word the Colonel opened his arms to Miles—who went down upon his knees, and laid his head in his grandfather's lap.

"That isn't all, sir," he said, in broken accents; "there are other things. I've not been worthy of Dick and you."

"My son, my son," said the old man, stooping over and gathering him into a close embrace.

CHAPTER III.

LIFE was very beautiful to little Ursula. It was a cloudless summer day with enough air stirring, the dust was laid by recent rains, and they were going—Cousin Polly, Bonnibel and she, in the carriage, the boys on horseback,—for a round of neighborhood visits—a “broad,” the negroes called it,—the heat of the day to be spent at Honey Hall. Besides, she had on a new tea-colored jaconet with coral sprigs, and a Leghorn hat with an ostrich plume curling entirely around the crown and descending to the shoulder, lace mittens, and morocco slippers with black ribbons lacing them across stockings of white Lisle thread. To assume these glories she had gone to her room directly after breakfast, followed by her black familiar, Vic; and then, finding herself ready long before any one else, she had taken Vic out to sit on one of the haycocks on the lawn in the shade of a horse-chestnut tree and “listen to Miss Nutty read aloud.”

Vic—what is known as a “bacon-colored” young person, with rampant twigs of hair plaited and tied with white sewing-cotton—had been told off as Ursula’s especial maid. Nutty, fired with philanthropic zeal, and the inward conviction of her own superior clever-

ness, had begun Vic's education. The lessons went on in all sorts of odd places, a favorite one the elbow of an old tree upon the beach, where, while Nutty held the book, Vic sat at her feet in the warm sand, making gardens decked with shells and moss. When Vic proved unusually dull and the teacher forsook her over-tedious task for some book to which she had been itching to return, she would salve her conscience by reading aloud from it. This was really heroic when it might be a question of Madame d'Arblay, Miss Ferrier, Miss Austen, or Sir Walter Scott. With the latter author in particular, there were so many pages one needed to skip to get at the conversations or adventures! Nutty's library was the musty closet off the drawing-room, where the books discarded from the other shelves were left to the slow ravages of queer little bloodless creatures that ran away across the saffron page when their hermitage was opened. There was one small high window, and under it an old chest, whereon, nibbling at a green cucumber pickle, Ursula passed many hours in a dream world of delight. The boys laughed at her fondness for the broken-backed volumes in the parlor-closet. *They* read Sir Walter from the library edition, and pooh-poohed Miss Austen as rather a dull old thing, who wrote about people you could see by just driving around the county.

In this sequestered spot, Nutty first came upon the

Canterbury Tales, Milton's *L'Allegro*, *Penseroso*, and *Comus* (*Paradise Lost* did not attract her in the least), and Shenstone's *Schoolmistress*. Shakspeare was early her companion; and, tired of impressing dolls into service as puppets to enact his plays, of which she had committed scene after scene to memory, she once organized a troupe from the quarter, with Vic as Shylock, herself Portia, and, grouping the dramatis personæ, declaimed the casket scene with the other actors in dumb show.

Cœlebs in Search of a Wife, Mrs. Opie's *White Lying*, Burton's *Anatomy of Melancholy*, Plutarch's *Lives*, and the *Tatler* and *Spectator*, were other works rejected for their bindings' sake from good society, but precious in Nutty's sight.

An event of her explorations was the discovery of an old music-book called "*Clio and Euterpe*," once the property of an unfortunate Aunt Althea, who had been lost in the burning of the Richmond theater. Aunt Althea's portrait, with turret curls and a sky-blue scarf, hung in the sitting-room, over the ill-fated lady's harpsichord, an instrument resenting touch upon its keys by a peevish and leathery twang.

From cover to cover, this trouvaille was a mine of suggestions of dress, attitude, and sentiment in the eighteenth century. Searching through its embellished pages for a subject for experiment, Nutty, who had the hidden ambition to dawn on the startled

family as a songster, found "Ye Generous Distrefs'd," illustrated by a gentleman in full bottomed coat and periwig, kneeling without his hat upon a river's brink, amid a hurricane of wind and rain, beseeching the elements to consume his misery:

"Blow ye bleak winds around my head,
 And sooth my Heart's corroding care;
 Flash round my Brows, Ye Lightnings red,
 And blast the Laurels planted there.
 But may the Maid, where'er she be,
 Think not of my Distress nor me,
 But may the Maid, where'er she be,
 Think not of my Distress nor me.

May all the Traces of our Love
 Be ever blotted from her Mind.
 May from her Breast my Vows remove
 And no remembrance leave behind.
 But may the Maid, where'er she be,
 Think not of my Distress nor me.

O! may I ne'er behold her more,
 For she has rob'd my Soul of rest.
 Wisdom's assistance is too poor
 To calm the tempest in my Breast.
 But may the Maid, where'er she be,
 Think not of my Distress nor me.

Come Death, O! Come, thou friendly Sleep,
 And with my Sorrows lay me low,
 And should the gentle Virgin weep,
 Nor sharp nor lasting be her woe.
 But may she think, where'er she be,
 No more of my Distress nor me."

This "favorite Air, set to Musick by Doctor Arne, to be sung briskly," proved to be a warbling old ditty

embroidered with appoggiature and trills, and full of alarming intervals, like "running high jumps" of an athlete on the course. Nutty, thinking better of the race of men after imbibing the self-sacrificing spirit of the words, and believing herself to be alone with Vic bobbing her woolly head in approbation, essayed the song on Aunt Althea's harpsichord. With strained fervor, real tears in her eyes, and flushed cheeks, she rendered it, dealing with a trill toward the end by the purely mechanical method of shaking her head from side to side while holding to the note. To her dismay, the finale was attended by shouts of derisive laughter! There were the boys, hidden behind the open door! Nutty jumped up in a rage, slammed "Clio and Euterpe" on the floor, and, bursting into bitter tears, ran off and hid herself for half the day.

To-day Ursula had brought out upon the lawn several books. Chief of these was a pamphlet written by the rector—who, on the occasion of his last parochial call, had presented a copy to each young person of the family. It was a profound and rather unrelenting tract, decrying the sin of dancing. Bonnibel had received hers with the sweetest smile and put it away in her small "serious" library, the gifts of anxious clergymen, female relatives who feared the snare of beauty for her soul, sponsors in baptism, and young divinity students. Nutty, whose feet had a natural

inclination to tread in measures, and who could waltz around the floor with a saucer of water on her head without spilling it, disliked the doctrine, but was flattered by the hard words. She had decided to read it, "every bit," and perhaps give a critical opinion to the author of its style. She had a deep respect for theological literature; in her eyes no writer who had achieved the dignity of print was to be lightly esteemed; what deference then was not due to an author who produced page after page of doctrine put into type and conveying not a glimmer of meaning to *her* intelligence?

Somehow, the rector's diatribe seemed out of tune with the languorous air, the lazy sails upon the river, the hum of insect life, the sound of the scythes mowing a field spangled with flowers, the scent of vanilla grass, the excitement of her heart over a projected day from home. The pamphlet slipped away down the haycock and was hopped upon by a toad—a fate quite as inglorious as that of the sermons of the Reverend Mr. Chapin of Westover Church, which, Bishop Meade records, served the young ladies for paper in which to roll up their hair at night.

Besides, Nutty fully meant to tackle the dance question on the first convenient opportunity.

"I can't help loving to dance, Vic," she said to her confidante. "It's the only thing—except riding—I really do well. I shall never be beautiful like Miss

Bonnibel—what I'd have wished would have been to be lovely and intellectual both, like Corinne of Italy (I haven't told you about Corinne yet, but I will); but—"heaving a sigh—"I suppose I've got to be satisfied with storing my mind and impressing all hearers when I begin to speak. Vic, when I come out, I mean to have a dress of black tulle with fifty flounces."

"De laws, Miss Nutty!" interpolated Vic.

"Yes, a vaporous mass of tulle, and a corsage bouquet and wreath of deep red roses, with a diamond trembling in the heart of each."

"Dat suttently would be scrumptious," admitted Vic.

"Say beautiful, Vic; I don't allow you to use vulgar words. I wish I could ever hope to wear my hair Pompadour. Miss Bonnibel's is too lovely over that cushion. But my forehead's too high. I tried it, and looked a fright. Now give me that fat book, with the stitches showing at the back, and the mildewed cover—yes, that's Froissart."

"Froissart, Vic," she went on, when she had found the place—Vic and the toad both staring with bead-like eyes at vacancy—"was a person who wrote a long time ago about Knights and fighting. I will begin at a place where—oh! never mind—it was a battle called Cressy," she said, her attention caught by something in a paragraph ahead. "The valyant Kyng of Behaygne called Charles of Luzenbourge, sonne to the noble

Emperour Henry of Luzenbounge, for all that he was nyghe blynde'—what is nig blind, I wonder?"

"He war des an ole blin' nigger, reckon, Miss," said Vic scornfully. "Don't see no call for Miss Nutty wastin' time a-readin' bout dat ar trash."

"Oh! I see—nearly blind—," resumed Ursula, "'when he understood the order of the batayle, he sayd to them about him where is the lord Charles my Son, his men sayde, sir we cannot tell, we thynke he be fightinge—'"

Nutty read on, forgetful of all beside. As the old tale of heroic valor sank into her sympathetic soul, her face grew hot, her eye shot gleams upon the page; when the climax was attained, she cried out, with a thrill in her young voice, "Oh, Vic, how beautiful! What a grand old fellow that blind king was! I believe Cousin Richard would act like that, and Miles too. How I *love* soldiers when they are fierce in battle and faithful unto death!"

Alas, for the young Professor! Vic had done her best to keep awake; but what with the compelling rays of the sun rising to the zenith, the boom of bees, and the occasional mispronouncing of the text, the little darkey had gone peacefully to sleep.

"Nutty! O—h Nutty!" sounded Cousin Polly's voice from the back door of the hall.

And now the party, on pleasure bent, was ready to take the road. Bonnibel, in a frock of white mull

belted around her slender waist, with bishop sleeves, a ruffled black silk mantilla, and a scoop straw bonnet with a ruche inside, wore at her breast the bunch of moss-rosebuds Dick had plucked before setting out. She occupied the seat beside Cousin Polly; and Nutty, both for the pleasure of occasionally handling the ribbons behind a pair of spirited grays and for enjoyment of the open, sat next the coachman, an old negro in tarnished but decent livery.

When the ladies drove out alone they were usually attended by a black boy, who preferred to perch on the trunk rack at the back, whistling, dangling his legs, and dropping down when they stopped before a gate. As there were a dozen gates to open ere leaving the limits of the estate, not to speak of those appertaining to their neighbors, this functionary was of the first importance on a drive. Now, the carriage was escorted by a pair of dashing cavaliers, cheerfully resigned to conform to the neighborhood expectation that they would celebrate each return to the plantation by calls at the different houses.

Shortly after leaving the main avenue their road ran beside the river bank and at one point disappeared entirely from view on a strip of beach, the wheels, at high tide, under water to the hubs—a state of things accepted serenely as an accustomed feature of Virginia life. Their way lay for the most part through deep woods under an arch of forest boughs, and at the end

of an hour came to a dilapidated gate, held to its post by a loop of grape vine, and resisting stout efforts to induce it to fly back. "This old gate was broken summer before last," groaned Miles, as at length it yielded, to the resentment of Haidée.

"Now for Windygates and poor Sabina Ackley," said Cousin Polly. "It's a trial, I confess, but we can't well pass her by."

"I can't abide your by-gone belles," said Miles; "Mrs. Ackley is a regular old cat."

"Miles, my dear boy!" cried Cousin Polly. But the young men were off at a gallop along an ill-mended road, leading between cornfields to a gray house set on the bleak summit of a hill. There were few signs of life about the neglected grounds, except for some loutish negroes at their lounging work; three or four heifers and a leggy colt had come in through a gap in the picket fence around the house yard, and were cropping the rank grass; a sow, lying vast and placid in the sunshine, let herself be nosed over by a voracious young family, pink-eyed and curly-tailed, and there were the usual bands of predatory chickens. Close to the house, and showing no attempt to screen them, were the stables and cow-yards. Under a dead tree, that at dusk offered a refuge to turkeys who, roosting in its branches, would present the appearance of strange exotic fruit, was a hen-house, the unpainted shingles of the roof crumbling in dry-rot.

There were no vines, no flower-beds. The decrepid apple-trees in an adjoining orchard had long since ceased to bear. A pathetic rose, taking heart of grace to bloom on a branch fallen over a flight of precarious wooden steps to the porch, showed Nature's only effort to beautify the scene.

To the pull at what proved to be a broken bell there was no response. After a knock from Miles that set the wild echoes flying through the silent house, the door was opened by a barefoot black girl, in tatters, carrying under one arm a wooden bowl containing a brood of fluffy chicks that lifted their yellow bills to "piep" a welcome.

"How dye do, Peggy; is your Miss Sabina at home?" asked Cousin Polly from the carriage.

"You Peggy," came in a stern voice from the rear, "what business you got carryin' dem chickens to de fron' do'; git out wid you, chile, and tell Miss Biney de Flower de Hunderd folks is come. Ya-as, marm, Miss Polly, Miss Biney's in, but she's got a headache, an' gone to lay down. Please walk in, ladies"; and Lindy, a slovenly woman of mature years, ushered the callers into the parlor. In the twilight of shutters excluding light and air, were seen gentlemen in queues and ladies in toupets hung high upon moldering walls. Ranged beneath these disconsolate gentry were horse-hair sofas gone to seed, uncertain chairs, Pembroke tables containing shells, annuals, and fly-blown puzzle-

cards. Upon a torn curtain, hung across one of the windows, a bright-eyed mouse disported in full view of the company.

There was ample time to enjoy the treasures of art at Windygates before their mistress made her appearance. The voices of the guests, raised at intervals in a faint attempt at exchange of cheerful commonplace, died in their throats of very inanition.

Not so the vocal organs of the unseen powers. Heralded by the flop upon the stairs of slippers down-at-heel, the visitors distinctly heard a strained whisper in Mrs. Ackley's tones:

"Lindy! what have you got to give 'em for refreshments?"

"Laws, Miss Biney, you know dey aint a smitchin' o' sponge cake in de box. Pears like dem chilluns—"

"For goodness sake, don't speak of the children now. Judy can make some paste cakes, and there's bounce a plenty, if it isn't as good as— Lindy—just you send that Peggy right straight down to the barn to tell your master he's not to put his foot into the parlor till he gets on his black coat. Hurry, Lindy, hurry."

"I'se a hurryin', Miss Biney," came in a tranquil drawl. Nutty suppressed a giggle, and Miles walked to the window in despair.

A moment later, wreathed in affected smiles, Mrs. Septimius Ackley, her body inclined in the Grecian

bend that came in about the time of Washington's administration, glided seductively into the room.

This lady had in youth had the misfortune to be styled the beauty of her county, and was what Virginians indulgently speak of as a "torn-down little flirt." The consciousness of these distinctions had clung to her long after Time's effacing finger had destroyed all claim to freshness. She possessed, with a sad deficiency of teeth, small features, wisps of yellow curls, and a manner of talking as if her every utterance were a concession to admirers. Her dress, a faded *barège* with flounces, was worn with a wide embroidered collar and a brooch containing the portrait, abnormally staring, of her Septimius in Sunday clothes. Everywhere that a ring, pin, chain, or bracelet could be added, she had assumed these ornaments; and in her hand a large turkey-tail fan was continually brandished to point her observations.

"So kind of you, dear Miss Lightfoot," she addressed herself to Cousin Polly; "and Miss Leigh, and Ursula. Miles, you have positively grown out of the knowledge of poor little me—and Dick, too—if I had known I was to have a visit from such stylish young gentlemen—You must excuse my keeping you a little, till I beautified; but that's a lady's privilege, I believe. Mr. Ackley? Yes, very well, thank you, and the children, too. They have such rude health. Since I was married I have never

known what it is to feel really well. I s'pose it's livin' in this quiet way—no neighbors nearer than Helen Willis (who hardly counts, poor soul), and Honey Hall, and you. If I want to go visitin' I can hardly ever get a pair. Twenty horses in barn and pasture, and me kept mewed up here at Windygates. I declare, if my mamma had known when she gave Mr. Ackley leave—so wrapped up in his farming—we haven't been to the White Sulphur in three years—Yes, that was taken for me, Miss Leigh. A little flattered, I'm afraid. No? Really, you are too kind. Some people think the nose a little—the hair, I don't deny, is—and perhaps the turn of the head—but the expression—I've never been quite certain of the expression."

After a pause to be reassured as to the fidelity to life of the smirk upon her portrait, the lady went on in a steady stream, nobody venturing to interrupt until Dick, in a weary moment turning over a pile of songs, rashly inquired if she still kept up her music. Charmed with an opportunity for a further display of graces, the fair Sabina at once transferred herself to the piano-stool and, handing her smelling-bottle to Miles, her turkey-tail to Dick, ran her fingers over the keys of a tuneless instrument.

"I'm afraid I'm a *little* out of practice," she said coquettishly. "What encouragement is there to keep up accomplishments in a place like this? Mr. Ackley,

now, don't know one tune from another. All he likes is some odious thing like the 'Arkansas Traveler.' The idea of my playing vulgar jig music—Do you prefer selections from the operas, or a ballad? I have been considered equally at home in both."

Preference having been announced in favor of the simpler song, Mrs. Ackley obliged the company with "Ever of thee I'm fondly dreaming," followed by "Bird of Beauty." At the moment when the unfortunate bird had begun to be apostrophized with a second stanza—the refrain in a high thin voice supposed to simulate his own wood notes wild—deliverance, in the shape of Mr. Ackley, came into the room, who, ignoring his wife's performance, strode from one guest to the other, shaking hands and bestowing boisterous welcome. He was a burly, sunburned man, with a stain in the corners of his mouth betraying acquaintance with the Virginia weed, and butternut trousers tucked into cowhide boots. *The* coat, hastily pulled on over a colored shirt, proved that he had taken heed to Lindy's warning, but did not banish the odor of the stables distributed in his bustling movements. "Miss Lightfoot, Miss Leigh, Miss Nutty, I'm glad to see you. Welcome to Windygates. The old place isn't what it was in my father's day—but we're always glad to see our friends. 'Tisn't often we've a chance to entertain so many charming ladies at one time. Well, Miles, you don't grow shorter as the years go on.

Never saw such a Throckmorton as you are. Dick now, don't look like anybody—has struck out for himself. Come down to the barn, boys, and take a look at the stock."

"Mercy, Mr. Ackley!" gasped his wife hysterically; "do pray, for once—don't bring your stock into the parlor. You see how it is—" she added, turning to the audience. "Actually he hadn't the least idea that music was going on."

"No more had any of us," whispered Miles to Ursula.

"Well, got nothing to give these good people after their long drive, hey?" said the cheerful Septimius. "Not a bone in the cupboard says old Mother Hubbard, I'll go bail."

"Lindy has my orders, Mr. Ackley," answered his wife with a freezing air; and at this juncture the door was kicked open by Lindy's stalwart foot, to admit that nymph bearing a tray with cherry bounce, glasses, plates—and a dish of paste cakes, hastily, but, to do the cook justice, skilfully compounded.

"What's that? Bounce?" cried their host scornfully. "If the gentlemen will step into the next room, I'll engage to give 'em something better worth their while."

This inevitable scene of old time hospitality—an inheritance from English ancestry Virginia would have done well to put earlier away—was by Septimius habitually performed with what he considered a deli-

cate regard for the feelings of his guests. Two or three decanters, produced from the cellaret, were set with glasses on the sideboard, and the company moved forward to the charge,—the host turning his back upon them but rallying presently to fill his own glass and drink to the good health of the rest.

“What, neither of you, lads,” he said, in a disappointed tone. “Well if you wont, and Mrs. Ackley thinks we best not mention pigs and sheep, perhaps she’ll let you have a look at my ‘Blue Bonnets.’ It’s a fact, by jingo, I’ve the finest lot of cocks this year I ever had. I’ll back my beauties to win, sir, against any in the Old Dominion.”

This allusion was too much for poor Sabina, who held her husband’s celebrity as a champion cocker to be an acknowledgment of fall from high estate. The old practice of cock-fighting had been decried by press and pulpit until few gentlemen dared confess even their presence at a main, and a professed breeder and owner of such combatants was tabooed in good society. Mrs. Ackley became white and red by turns, and seemed ready to burst into tears—at which Septimius, with a grin, put an arm within one of each male visitor, and led him unresisting from the room.

And now arose a clamor of youthful voices. A horde of children, black and white, ran upon the back porch—among them a little tow-headed girl in a check apron, howling dismally. “Oh, those children!

They will be the death of me!" exclaimed the hostess, hastening to the door to call out for the inevitable Lindy.

"What *is* the matter, Lindy?" she added, when the deliberate one hove into view.

"Laws, Miss Biney, what you frettin' fur? 'Taint nutin' but jes Miss Lizzie say she dun sot down in a yaller jacket nes'. But you kyant 'pend on dat are chile not to holler ebbery chance she git."

"I do think I must have the worst children in the world?" appealed Mrs. Ackley to her guests. "They run around so with the little darkeys you can't stand them when they come inside the house. Luckily, they hardly ever want to come into the house. Lindy, go this minute and tell Miss Lizzie to stop crying before I come there and whip her well."

"I reckon dis'll stop her," remarked Lindy placidly, gathering up the fragments of the feast. "'Pears like de mos' she cryin' fur's to git some o' de company's paste-cakes, anyhow."

The last view of the again smiling mistress of Windygates, revealed her standing on tiptoe on the desolate porch, kissing her hand with undiminished coquetry to Miles and Dick as they doffed their hats on riding away.

"If that woman had given a little less time to her so-called accomplishments, and a little more to house-keeping," said Cousin Polly, for once righteously

irate, "there wouldn't have been such a lamentable exposure of foolishness. Who would believe Septimius Ackley had been a handsome young fellow envied by all the beaux in the county, when he carried off Sabina Barton from her other suitors a dozen years ago? Dear me! dear me! And a nice little fortune he came into at his father's death! Shiftless, both of them, and their negroes not worth their salt. Well, if Helen's her usual self, our visit to her will take away the taste of this."

Lawyer Willis and his handsome wife Helen lived in an old-fashioned weather-boarded house, set back in a grove of locusts and surrounded by many acres of wheat, which lent the name of Greenfields to the place first known as Werowocomico in the neighborhood. As the carriage drove around the sweep, the front door was at once opened by a stately old "mammy" in head-handkerchief and apron, who, while her strong, intelligent face wore a look of grief, smiled and curtsied the customary welcome.

"Miss Helen will be glad to see you, marm," she said.

"And your master is at home?"

"No, madam, my marster left for Richmon' a yistiddy, on business," and a look of unmistakable anguish came over the face of the old woman who, seeing them seated, left the drawing-room,

"There's something wrong," said Cousin Polly, with a clouded brow.

Fifteen years before, when Peyton Willis had run away with and married Helen Blair against the will of her father, the old judge, who admired his clever law-student, but knew too well his overmastering tendency to drink, the country had rung with the Young Lochinvar achievement. Helen, a wilful beauty, was convinced of her own power to work any cure in the man who loved her and followed her as Peyton Willis did. When her father refused his consent, she quietly packed her clothes, mounted her saddle-horse, and, meeting Willis at a fork of the road near her home, rode to the house of his aunt, twenty miles away, where a clergyman was in waiting to make them one. Trifles turn the scale of public opinion oftentimes, and after it was ascertained that these lovers had been obliged to swim their horses over the boisterous ford of a swollen river in their flight, people were inclined to think old Judge Blair narrow-minded for holding out against them for several years after the event. But a day came when Helen, maddened by her husband's brutality when in a drunken fit, went home of her own accord, and besought her father to receive her, and the Judge tenderly and forgivingly gave his blessing, but sent her back to the husband of her choice. Peyton had, after that, to some extent reformed, and the years had lightened Helen's cross. But from a

gallant young lover he had become a moody, sarcastic husband. To the outer world he was ever the brilliant, fitful, but companionable man, and accomplished lawyer. All of his friends united to bolster Peyton Willis into his right place in the community. Even Richard Throckmorton, himself the most abstemious of mortals, was heard to gloss over Peyton's occasional lapses from the path of temperance. "It isn't a nice habit," he would say. "But, my dear sir, it's because Peyton can't take a glass of wine without feeling it. Remember his argument in the Carter case—when he spoke for three days and kept the Courthouse crowded till the last. Egad, sir, his powers are unsurpassed. This love of drink has played the deuce with many of our statesmen and lawyers; but it hasn't cramped their powers. Look at Webster—look at Harry Clay dancing a jig on the dinner-table among the broken glass and china, and going into Court next morning fresh as a buttercup."

All the same, the old gentleman would lead his grandsons into the study and adjure them in the name of Christianity and cleanliness to let liquor alone, seeing the grievous wreck it had made of so many lives that might else have been rounded to man's full sphere of usefulness.

Whatever Helen felt, she usually maintained an admirably calm exterior. She was still beautiful, with the grand lines of face and figure that change little and

the proud spirit that may bleed but gives no sign. To-day her guests were greeted courteously and made to feel the rare charm of her conversation; but as the young people went out to get into the carriage, Cousin Polly lingered.

"Come, dearie, what is it that's troubling you?" she asked, passing her arm around Helen's shoulders.

"Oh! dear Miss Polly," the poor woman said; "you will know how I feel. He has sold Stephen, old Judith's only son. Judith came to me from home. She was my Mammy, has been with me in joy and sorrow, and I love her dearly. Judith loves Stephen as I loved the baby I lost—that I can still feel nestling in my arms. The old woman's heart is broken. Mine would be, but that it broke long ago."

"Tell me, my dear," asked Miss Polly, "when does Stephen go away and where?"

"Next week to Alabama. And I—great Heavens!—am as helpless as if I too were a slave. Oh, the shame of it! None of us has ever parted a family. He said he has been losing money—and that money he must have. I'll declare, Mammy Judith is a saint. In this sorrow it is she who comforts me."

"I know the Colonel is opposed on principle to adding to his slaves. But in this case—I will tell him. He loves you, Helen, for yourself, and as the child of his old friend. For your sake, he has stood by Peyton. He will not see you suffer such a wrong."

"Then, oh, dear kind friend!" cried Helen, bursting into tears that loosed the flood-gates of her woe, "ask him, if he loves me, to buy Mammy, too. *He* has threatened me to part with her—when he was not himself—I live in terror—Mammy!—oh, the thought is torture!"

Cousin Polly left Helen on the sofa, and went out to the carriage. At the door she was met and saluted with the same quiet dignity by Mammy Judith.

"I've been hearing of your trouble, Judith," the kind lady said; "Miss Helen will tell you I'm going to speak to Colonel Throckmorton to see if he can't buy Stephen back. If it's possible, I think it will be done."

"*Mistis!*" cried the old woman, a pure ecstasy shining in her tear-worn face. And then, lifting her streaming eyes to Heaven, she meekly said, "I *knew* thou wouldst not fail thy sarvant, Lord."

Honey Hall! To one who has shared its bounties, the heart warms at mention of this "haunt of ancient peace." Many such generous old homes are remembered in Virginia, for methods of entertaining conducted on the broad and simple lines common to people who altered not their way of living for the stranger within their gates; they gave to the State its best name for hospitality.

Of outward show, and straining for effect in the

eyes of guests there was none; and the welcome flowed in a steady stream for all. Honey Hall, since time out of mind, had been owned by Hazletons. "Old Tom," the present master, had kept his paternal acres up to a high point of cultivation, his wheat crops excelling those of Flower de Hundred. A thin, swarthy old gentleman, with twinkling eyes set in a wrinkled visage, he presented a complete contrast to his spouse "Tabby," who was stout and blonde, with several chins and abundant dimples. She was a notable housewife, spending her days at the heels of a horde of fat, lazy house servants, whose duties were subdivided to allot to each the minimum of labor. After the war two of the Honey Hall negroes, girls of sixteen and eighteen, drifted to the North and applied for places at an intelligence office. On being asked "Can you cook?" their answer was, "No, marm, we ain' never bin cookin' none; Aunt Peg, she allus cook." "Can you wash?" "No, marm, Aunt Sally she dun de quality's washin'." "Then for gracious sake, what *can* you do?" said the employer. "Well, marm, Jinny most in general she hunt for ole Marster's specs; en I kep de flies off him wid de turkey-tail."

Mrs. Hazleton's temper was fortunately proof against any test of idle inconsequence on the part of her dependents. She spoiled them and everybody who came within reach of her large-hearted nature

overflowing with the milk of human kindness. She was always in a hurry, with cap-strings flying; and she talked in a breathless fashion which permitted few of her sentences to reach a legitimate ending.

Tom, fierce in politics, unsparing in the denunciation of opponents who chanced to differ with him, and fancying himself a domestic tyrant, was, with his wife, under the thumb of old Vashti, a mulatto woman who acted as deputy to Mrs. Hazleton. Volunteering for the Mexican war, he had brought back a flesh wound, establishing him in Vashti's eyes as a confirmed invalid, requiring coddling and supervision for the remainder of his life. There is nothing more easy than to convince a robust man, with a good appetite and digestion, that he has the monopoly of some hidden infirmity exceptional in symptoms, and necessitating constant care. Playing upon this string of human nature, Vashti had established herself in the clover of an opiated woman's imagination—the right to dictate, to hector, to dose, *ad libitum*, a resentful but secretly flattered patient of the stronger sex. She was a sour-looking yellow woman, scrupulously neat in person and accomplished in her domestic functions. Everything “laughed” at Honey Hall, but Vashti, as everything “waxed fat,” but Vashti's master.

Old Tom's happiness was in crowding his house with visitors, until the spare rooms, containing sometimes three double beds apiece, were full and guests

were obliged to put up with cots in the billiard room and mattresses in the bowling-alley. At a summer ball young men had been known to camp out in the hay-loft at the barn, and to proceed in relays for breakfast at the house.

Before his visitors were stirring in the morning, Tom would leave the connubial "chamber" on the ground floor, to brew two jorums, differing in size, of the beverage blending Bourbon whisky and shivered ice with the plant that flourisheth best on the grave of a good Virginian. His mint-juleps, tinkling and fragrant, were then sent around to the several apartments with "Marster's compliments." To refuse this loving-cup would have been a breach of duty to one's host. Therefore—tradition tells not what befell that dispatched to the bedsides of male slumberers,—there might have been seen rosy half-awakened maidens, leaning on rounded elbows in bowers of tumbled hair to sip like humming-birds of the sugared chalice held by an ebon Hebe.

"Horrid! So dreadfully strong," they called it, and sipped again.

"It's good for you, young ladies," would say old Tom at breakfast, on hearing these complaints. "A little something for the stomach's sake, you know! Keeps off chills and fever too—not that there ever was a chill at Honey Hall in my time—well, Tabby, my dear, and what have you got for us this morning?"

As the callers from Flower de Hundred, turning in at a linden avenue caught their first sight of the house, they were in turn descried by the sole waking occupant of what Cupid, the being in question, was wont to speak of as "de front pōche." In a splint-bottomed chair, under the shadow cast by a multiflora rose that running up one side of the portal crossed it and fell in a blossoming cascade upon the other, old Tom was napping. Dressed from top to toe in white linen, he wore a broad Panama hat, and across his knees lay a week-old copy of the Richmond Whig. In Tom's opinion one might always sleep and let the Richmond Whig sustain one's principles. Not far off, there was a shelf with a bucket of spring water and a gourd; but the empty glass on a light stand at his elbow revealed suggestive particles of nutmeg clinging to its sides. Mounted on a stool behind his master, Cupid, a solemn urchin of ten, was, with a branch of lilac-leaves, describing circles in the air around the sleeper's head. Occasionally miscalculating, he would dip, graze the old gentleman's ear and elicit a whistling snort causing the offender to assume an instant expression of fidelity to duty that could on no terms be moved to deviate.

When Cupid spied the carriage the whites of his eyes enlarged and his excitement transgressed all bounds of ordinary decorum. "Wake up, Ole Marse!"

he cried, smartly sweeping the lilac bough downward to touch his master's cheek.

"What! What! D—n these flies!" said old Tom, drowsily, settling for a deeper sleep.

Cupid's feelings overcame him. Dropping the bough, he fled into the house to encounter the-meteor-ic Tabby coming across the hall.

"Ole Miss, dar's company," he exclaimed convulsively.

"Well, Cupid, rouse your master up. Hurry, and don't stand staring there."

"But, Ole Miss, I dun tried; and he sa-ade cuss words."

"Well, I should think somebody might be found to sâve me from having to do this," remarked Mrs. Hazleton, dashing outside to reclaim her lord from his lotus land of dreams.

"Run, Cupid, tell Aunt Vashti the Flower de Hundred carriage has turned down the avenue. Lucky I killed a pair of guinea hens, the ducklings mightn't have been enough. Soc-ra-tes! Aw! Soc-ra-tes! Call Job and Jingo to come here and take the horses. Now Tom dear, do be careful of what you eat at dinner; you know I don't like to make signs before—remember the crab salad the last time we'd company to—when you thought neither Vashti nor I was looking—Vashti, be sure Dido has a corn pudding—Master

Miles will have it there's no corn pudding like ours at Honey Hall—and be on the watch that Joe don't get hold of the floating island to hand around—he stares so, you can only trust him with solid dishes—put the cracked finger-bowls before me and your master—I declare I'd have to be made of finger bowls to please these servants—I hope Dido wont get in one of her tantrums and keep the dinner back till three—to be sure they'll have something when they come, poor things, and we'll cut a watermelon soon—Vashti—ah! she's gone; Cupid, you numbskull, run tell her not to forget iced tea with the lemonade and shrub when they first come. Polly Lightfoot's there, and so is Bonnibel—bless me, if there isn't a snag in my new lawn—I must ha' caught it on a barrel in the store-room—tut—tut—tut, but there's no time now to—here come the boys at a gallop—welcome to Honey Hall, young gentlemen, the sight of you is good for any eyes.”

Tabby could not deny herself the indulgence of a rousing kiss bestowed on each one of these handsome youths. The carriage followed, and old Tom stepped out briskly to the block. “Ladies, your most obedient—Welcome, welcome all—Miss Nutty, there's a bee-hive waiting for you to upset like you did when you were here before—well well, I'll not mention it—How are you, boys?—told we're to congratulate you on carrying off the honors—bless my soul, I reckon

old Dick Throckmorton's *that* puffed up with pride there'll be no enduring him—Miss Bonnibel, we didn't expect to see cheeks like yours till my peaches ripen, he, he, he! Miss Lightfoot, ma'am, I trust you're satisfied that it was my revoke, not yours—well, well, women will have their way, but, after dinner, you must give me my revenge."

"Howdye, howdye, come right in and rest," was heard in Tabby's breathless sentences. "Thank ye kindly, Dick, we're so so; Mr. Hazleton's most always a touch of his old enemy on hand—keeps Vashti busy, doesn't it, Tom dear? Been preserving quinces,—thankful it's so cool—sit down, take something, do—Vashti's own black cake—needn't be afraid when Vashti stones the raisins—Tea to Miss Lightfoot—sure none of you're overheated—give palm leaf fans to the ladies, Cupid, quick—such a sad thing about Mrs. Patsey Carmichael, of the Ridge—why, haven't you heard, iced tea when very hot and a rash that struck inside—fie Miles, I'll be boun' for you to laugh."

"Tol'able, thank you," Tom was saying to Miss Lightfoot. "These women'd be the death o' me with doctoring, if they could—Tabby now's a leetle poorly; caught cold a Monday, comin' home from old Parker's funeral, and up again a-Wednesday to go to Miss Dancer's weddin—he! he! he! Trust Tabby, when there's junketin' on hand."

They were shown through a matted hall—the walls

covered with guns, rods, whips, a museum of Tom's old hats, prints of race horses, and a map of the county, with the seat of Thomas Hazleton, Esq., outlined in red—into a pleasant room, the bare floor lustrous, the six windows hung with lambrequins of fringed netting over Venetian blinds.

In this room neatness reigned over a prim adjustment of old-fashioned furniture. In the fireplace, an ogre that in its day had devoured forests, the brass dogs gleamed through a green mist of fresh asparagus. On the high mantel-piece were silver candelabra, ostrich eggs, and Bow and Chelsea shepherdesses. The chairs and sofas covered with hair cloth and abundant in brass nails, stood in rigid ranks. Cupboards were filled with pretty old china, behind glass doors and under lock, or Tabby's servants would not have allowed it to remain. On the center table were "The Memoirs of an Elderly Gentleman," by Lady Blessington, the poems of Mrs. Hemans, of Nathaniel Parker Willis, and other specimens of politest literature in red morocco. Ursula, seated on an ottoman worked by Tom's mother to represent Melrose Abbey by moonlight, ate nibbles of cake and drank sips of raspberry vinegar, divided between a desire to plunge at once into the pages of Lady Blessington, and to run out into the orchard where the bees were hard at work. Etiquette entailed this brief preliminary concession to formality. People sat around, untied their bonnet

strings, fanned themselves, answered questions about each other's ailments, and then, after a decent interval, scattered to follow their own sweet wills. From the flower garden, where Tabby was greatly given to the culture of clove-pinks, were wafted through the chinks of the window shutters perfumes that might have come from Araby the blest. Vashti did not allow cut-flowers in the parlor, and thus nature took her odorous revenge.

When the season lent its aid, Tom always invited his guests to come out into the "back poche" and cut a watermelon; and the company proceeded with alacrity to follow him. Thither, little darkeys, staggering under the weight of melons coated with dew from the ice house, came in a procession to lay their tribute at the master's feet. Old Tom, with a critical eye, decided whether they were worthy to be broached. Half the pleasure of a watermelon is in the uncertainty whether its pink pulp will fulfill the promise of the richly green and mottled coat—for on this point there is no infallibility of judgment based on externals. Equally interested in the result were an assortment of young Africans hiding in a big bush of box that in its day had sheltered many chickens and children fleeing from wrath pursuing. They, and the bearers of the treasure, followed the movements of the master with a subtle relish almost as satisfying as the reality for which they hoped. It is not too much to say that

this feeling presently inspired the whole circle of lookers-on to realize they were brothers in the bonds of a mouth-watering anxiety. When Tom found a melon to his liking, it was set before him on a tray. With a long sharp knife poised over it, he stood, then the blade flashed through the air, and the great oval fell apart, revealing contents crisp, roseate of hue, set with rows of black-brown seeds. Uncertainty was at an end! The melon was ripe, full ripe, not over-ripe, luscious in quality, bursting with July's juices! Involuntarily the assembly broke into an "A-h-h-h" of relief and satisfaction!

Another polite form maintained at Honey Hall, was to ask visitors, confidentially, if they cared to "lie down a little while and take a nap." The young people, who knew where to find bowls and billiards, fruit and flowers, shaded arbors, and the streamlet, gliding across the orchard, generally preferred to keep awake; Tabby and Cousin Polly, resorting to rocking chairs in the "chamber," enjoyed a feminine symposium of gentle gossip. Tabby, outwardly serene, had always a perturbed center on the subject of Dido and the dinner-hour. The kitchen, in an outbuilding at the end of a colonnade, was Dido's fortress. Once Tabby had there administered a long-intended lecture on procrastination. "Ye call that scoldin', Miss," said the old cook, setting her arms a-kimbo; "why you can't scold worth a cent." And the dinner hour con-

tinued to adjust itself to Dido's notions, drifting until recalled, along the afternoon.

When the company reassembled to-day around a well-spread board, set with willow pattern china, old Tom, standing at the foot with his hand upon his chair, surveyed the table and uttered his usual pleasantry:

"Well, is this your little snack, Tabby?"

"Best we could do to-day, Tom dear, considerin'—" the hostess answered, with an indulgent smile.

"Humph! For what we are about to receive, may the Lord make us duly thankful—Amen. Miss Lightfoot, ma'am, I'm goin' to ask you to notice the flavor of this ham—a leetle slice—hum! hum! cooked to a T—the lean, pink as a lady's cheek—the fat, sweet as a nut—bless my soul, Tabby, my dear, if I haven't clean forgot whether we're eatin' Sis or Alick!"

"Alick, Tom dear. Sis wasn't killed, poor thing, till just before last Christmas."

"To be sure, Tabby, to be sure. I *ought* to have known Alick," said the master, holding his carver suspended with a pensive air. "He weighed all of a hundred and twenty-five, Miss Lightfoot, ma'am, and knew his name like any Christian. Billy, you rascal, hand Miss Lightfoot's plate."

Bonnibel's room was in the old wing at Flower de Hundred whose outer walls of brick, alternately black and cream, were coated with moss wherever English

ivy did not weave its stems to make a bower for the "Belle au Bois Dormant" here and there piercing the window frames with long pale shoots that unfolded leaves of ghostly green within. Her chamber adjoined that of Ursula, and to reach their quarters the girls had to mount narrow stairs with a balustrade carved like a Chinese ivory puzzle and continued around the entry above after the fashion of a musician's gallery. Naturally, Ursula's pleasure was to insinuate herself into Bell's room when the latter was brushing her hair for the night, and talk of her day's experience with unflagging tongue. It was their habit in summer to dispense with light as much as possible, and to undress by the glimmer of a taper set on the floor in the hall outside. Cousin Polly, from the room opposite, often called out to the pair to cease their chattering, and remember beauty sleep; but Bell would answer back that such nights were too heavenly to waste in slumber.

On the evening of their return from Honey Hall, Bonnibel had seated herself at her window, Ursula kneeling with both arms on the low sash. The light breeze was charged with odors of pine blowing past garden plots. In the sapphire vault above, stars of the Southern night burnt with surpassing brilliancy. In the swamp a persistent whip-poor-will kept calling, lamenting. From the dusky belt of woods hiding the quarter issued the twang of banjo-strings and soft

preliminary notes of song from revelers, for whom the night had just begun.

"What *do* you think, Bonnibel?" said Ursula, trembling with mystery. "If I tell, will you cross your heart and—deed and deed and double deed you'll never tell? I heard Mrs. Hazleton—say to Cousin Polly—now you'll jump—that it is plain to everybody that has eyes in her head, *who* is going to be the next mistress of Flower de Hundred—Miss A. L.!—There!"

"Nonsense, Nutty dear," the girl said, blushing hotly in the darkness.

"Ah! but she did," persisted Nutty. "And I expect she knows. She's been married herself, you see. I thought it would please you a good deal."

"Kiss me, you dear little gossip," whispered Bonnibel. "And promise you'll not repeat this to *anybody* else."

"Oh! but I haven't told you all. Cousin Polly said the Lord only knows how such things come out; but one thing she is certain of, the Colonel will like Dick's choice. Then the dinner bell rang—Oh! Bonnibel, it must be so grand to have a lover. Dick seems as if he envies the ground you tread upon. I saw him choosing the moss-rose buds for you. He threw away every one that wasn't perfect. Why, if you haven't saved the poor dead things, and put them in a glass of

water on the window-sill. Why, Bonnibel!—Hush—who's that?"

From behind the tall column of an Irish yew, a form came out into the moonlit path of turf beneath their window, and crossed rapidly in the direction of the main building.

"It's Miles!" cried the little girl. "He gave me quite a start. He's always had a way of prowling around the grounds at night to smoke his last cigar. Bonnibel! I'm sorry I talked so loud. He must have heard us! But, of course, he wont speak of it. And then he's so fond of Dick, he'll be sure to feel glad, too."

CHAPTER IV.

"HERE'S news for you, young people," said the Colonel, returning with animation from an interview on the veranda with Yellow Jock, the huntsman. "Jock says there's been a fox lying all day in the long grass near the pond, waving his saucy brush to attract the ducks; and they've tracked him to covert in Chinquapin Hollow."

"Hurrah!" cried Dick, Miles, and Nutty in a breath, and soon the contagion spread over the plantation. Messengers on horseback were dispatched to their nearest neighbors, and hasty arrangements made for an impromptu "first run" upon the morrow.

It was mid-October, and the wine of life seemed to be distilled into those long mellow autumn days, spent by the household chiefly out of doors. The woods, radiant in color, showed no deciduous foliage to compare in tone and depth with the mandarin yellows flecked with blood, the Tyrian crimsons and purples of the gums belted or grouped against the blue-green pines and relieved by shining hollies and masses of evergreen laurel. In these illuminated glades sounded the flute note of the robin, the fretful call of crows, the bark of acorn-gathering squirrels, the

whistle of "Bob White," the tap of woodpeckers, the patter of nuts falling, obedient to a gentle wind, upon the rustling carpet of last year's leaves so soon to be overlaid with a new one. In the trim parterres of the garden there was still a brave show of flowers. Japan lilies, tiger lilies, Annunciation lilies, perpetual roses, poppies, love-in-a-mist, and all the sweet wild tangle of hardier blossoms with homely cottage names; but the hollyhocks had begun to slant earthward under the weight of seed-pods, and yellowing leaves fluttering from the boughs hinted at the inevitable change to come. For, though we touch and taste in its perfection that season when "the air, the heavenly bodies, and the earth make a harmony as if Nature would indulge her offspring"; when "the day, immeasurably long, sleeps over the broad hills and warm wide fields," and "to have lived through its sunny hours seems longevity enough," there's no heart but gives a sigh to happy summer gone!

"What!" thundered Miles, in answer to a whispered communication brought to him in the harness room that afternoon by one of the negroes, while the young men were looking over their hunting gear—in company with the two girls who felt "so happy they could not stay sitting down," so averred Ursula.

"That confounded old black charlatan Daddy Jack, who does more harm on the place than he ever did work, has wreaked his vengeance on Yellow Jock for

some offense unknown, by 'tricking him,'" he explained to his curious companions.

"Which means unless we can persuade Daddy Jack to 'set him free' we'll lose Jock's services to-morrow with the hounds," said Dick, in huge disgust.

"Come on then, let's lose no time in seeing both of 'em," said Miles.

"*Please* let us go with you," plead Ursula. "I'm a favorite with Daddy Jack. That is, he don't scowl at me, and once gave me a tame garter-snake. Besides, Bonnibel has never seen his cabin. She's afraid to go with me."

"I don't blame her," said Miles as they set off. "I own to a cold creep down my own back when I come within sight of the old sorcerer's den. There isn't a negro on the plantation that could be got to go there after dark. They credit Jack with being in direct daily communication with the infernal regions."

"'Satan's limb,' Mammy Judy calls him," added Dick. "She is the only one brave enough to say as much. But she was scared out of her wits, when we were little shavers, when the old fellow took offense at Miles and threatened him."

"She tied a charm-bag around my neck," said Miles. "And I can remember curious whisperings near my mosquito net when I was tucked into my cot. The truth is that old fellow can hold a grudge longer than anything I ever heard of, but the Pope's mule that

kept a kick for seven long years and then sent his enemy to purgatory with his heels."

"How did you offend him?" asked Bonnibel.

"He had the most extraordinary passion for odds and ends of finery, and on holidays would always deck himself and strut out before the others as solemn as could be. Our nurse had taken us to visit the quarter when I suddenly caught sight of the little old man, dressed in a red plush waistcoat, knee breeches, a coat of my grandfather's with tails that trailed upon the ground, and a child's straw hat perched on the summit of a pyramid of frizzed wool. Of course I laughed at him, pointed him out with my imprudent baby finger, and mocked his gestures. He was furious. I can remember he was like an angry ape, dancing and gibbering and threatening me. The negroes picked up their children and ran inside their cabins, and Mammy Judy did likewise with Dick and me. Since then, I've been written in his black books."

"His father was a Congo chief sold for a string of beads, and Jack was thrown into the bargain for a looking-glass, he told me," observed Dick. "He has been here since my grandfather's early boyhood, and no one knows his real age. The extraordinary part of his romance is that he induced a nice, trig, pretty little maid of grandmamma's to marry him. She lived with him awhile, and then came running into the house one day and begged for protection, saying he'd given

her her 'death.' The poor distracted creature brought her child, a handsome little boy; and Daddy Jack came after them. But by that time matters were too far gone, and poor Kitty was actually dying. They could not find out that he had done her real violence. Mammy Judy always said the old wretch was jealous, and had punished Kitty by bringing the 'night doctor' who rides on a gale of wind after dark, to see her. Judy well remembers grandmamma's distress when Kitty died."

"And what became of her son?" inquired Bonnibel, for whom these tales of the plantation were full of interest.

Dick's voice dropped.

"He was Augustus—brought up to be the body-servant of my father. Daddy Jack cast him off, and my grandfather was only too glad to keep the boy away from such an influence. 'Gus,' as they called him, is a sore subject with the Colonel, though; and none of us ever mention him. He is the only slave of my grandfather's who ever ran away."

The conversation was here broken by their arrival at the door of Yellow Jock's cabin. The old negro lay on his bed, inside, groaning piteously, his badly frightened wife rocking her body back and forth and ejaculating prayers on a chair beside him. Around the room was seated a circle of sympathizers, swaying and singing. The girls caught one glimpse of Jock's con-

vulsed face, froth issuing from his lips, and retreated in horror from the scene.

"Two hours ago, the old fellow was as hale and hearty as you please," said Dick. "From what I can ascertain, Daddy Jack merely stepped behind and touched him with a goose-feather on the ear, and Jock fell down in a swoon. But all the King's horses and all the King's men couldn't set Yellow Jock on his feet again unless Daddy Jack gives him leave."

Miles, of whose boyhood Jock had been the humble benefactor, was boiling with indignation. This doorstep, with the stoncrop growing in tufts about it, had been always his resort when he wanted the goodnature'd old man to make him a whistle, a bow and arrow, or a "pop" whip from a peeled sapling. Here Dick and he had fashioned traps for Molly Cotton-tails, and in winter cooled in the snow the pigtails Jock had saved for them at hog-killing, and allowed them to roast on the embers of his hearth.

Jock had taught both boys to handle their guns, to train dogs, to tame animals, to set seines, and to construct blinds and make decoys for duck shooting; and in his care only had they been first allowed to go with their guns in boats up the creeks in the marsh. Miles, of the two Jock's pet, had been put forward by Dick to proffer requests. In return he saved for Jock a share of his good things to eat, and bestowed on him bits of silver and little trinkets. Jock's faith in him and

belief that he would make a "real fus-class" Throckmorton had induced him more than once to pause before and turn away from committing an unworthy action.

Going again inside the cabin, he laid his hand on the negro's clammy forehead.

"Come, cheer up, old man," he said. "You aren't dead yet by a long shot. I'm going to see what I can do for you by managing old Daddy Devil on my own account."

"Don't go, chile," moaned the sick man. "Fur God's sake don' go. He's on'y waitin' a chance to trick you too. Oh! Marse Miles, one on us is enough. His spite agin me begun long ago w'en I tuk your part agin him. Don' go, my honey. I'se an old man an' it's fitten I'se punished for my many sins. Lawd, hear de mo'ners!"

At this, begun anew the wailing chant, and in the hysterical confusion that ensued Miles made his escape.

"I'll swear I'll get my grandfather to order Jack into the lock-up," he exclaimed, on reaching the others who were waiting a little farther on. "It's infamous to let him work such a game on poor old Jock."

"Let me try persuasion, first," said Dick. "Take advice, Miles, and keep away from Daddy Jack. You'd be sure to excite him to some extra foolery."

The girls added their entreaties, and Miles in the

end succumbed. Instead of following them, he turned into the garden path before Mammy Judy's door, where he knew the old nurse would be overjoyed to receive a visit from her favorite charge.

This dignitary, who, in virtue of her former office enjoyed sundry aristocratic privileges, numbered among them a cherry chest of drawers, with a swing mirror, a dimity valance to her bed, and a Marseilles quilt instead of one made of patchwork. Around her neat little dwelling grew scarlet runners trained over diamond-bright panes of glass; and sunflowers stared in at the windows. The inner walls were a curious mosaic of pictures from illustrated papers and fashion magazines, pasted on, one dovetailing into the other, as the boys themselves had decorated their nursery. Judy always contrived to let quality callers find out, very soon, that her table had a drop leaf and her dishes were "real" china. Her bric-a-brac was limited to a "Little Samuel at Prayer," a cat and parrot in painted plaster, a china mug "To my good Girl," and a shell pincushion—the last two brought to their nurse by Dick and Miles, on their return from a visit to the seaside at Cape May. She owned also the "doge-types" of the Colonel, Madam Throckmorton, and the lads, and a silver watch presented by her master after nursing Miles through scarlet fever.

In the chimney-corner, her smile of welcome widening in billows of fat till lost in her cap-frills, sat the

old nurse, and on a bench without, smoking a corncob pipe, was her ancient husband, Job—a gay buck in his youth, who in his toothless age was still regarded by his helpmeet as dangerous to the hearts of the plantation belles.

“Well, Uncle Job, how are you?” said Miles, giving him a handshake.

“Sarvant, Marster; I’se po’ly, tank de Lawd. Pears like de roomatiz ain’ gwine let me do much uv anyting dese days, cep bambilate and soshiate, an pass away de time wid de lay-dies.”

“Hear dat, Marse Miles, honey,” beamed his wife. “An my ole man he wonders why I keeps his Sunday close locked up in de chist.”

“She’s tellin’ de troof, Marse Miles,” said the patriarch, displaying his gums in a flattered grin. “Haint I nebber tole you ’bout dat time Judy tuk and lock up bofe my pair o’ breeches, en kep me abed two days, case I scort Ikey Simses widder home from her husband’s burrying? Ahe! Ahe!”

His chuckling reminiscence was interrupted by a cough that would have debarred the antique beau from further conversation without the interference of his wife.

“You ole tattletale, shut you mouf, ’en stop you barkin’,” she said good-humoredly. “Tell Ma-y Jane to come cook her Marse Miles an ash-cake. Reckon Mammy’s got some chinquapins in de cupboard fo’ her

boy. Sit ye down, Miles, baby; en tell Mammy de news up to de Gret Hus."

It was delightfully like his old returns from shooting to be enthroned in the best arm-chair with the goose-down cushions plucked by her own hand and covered with blue domestic that smelt of lavender, while Mary Jane, Judy's youngest, bustled around, mixing meal and water in a tray. This simple compound, enhanced by a pinch of salt, was destined to final translation into a dainty renowned in old plantation days. Deftly shaping the dough into cakes, Mary Jane ran out into the garden, reappearing with the inner husks of late-bearing maize—cabbage leaves were as often used—and wrapped each cake in a fresh green coverlid. Next, hot ashes were raked from wood embers upon the hearth, and the cakes, laid on their glowing bed, were hidden from sight by the ashes. By the time Mary Jane had arranged to her satisfaction a table with knife, fork, pat of fresh butter, a plate displaying the passage of General Washington across the Delaware, and a glass of buttermilk from the morning's churning, an appetizing smell announced the ash cakes browned to a perfect crisp. Try it, ye who are doubters; 'tis a meal fit for the gods! But alas! with the Mammy Judys of the South the skilful Mary Janes have vanished into the limbo of forgotten things!

Hungry or not, Miles would not have failed to

appear to do justice to the simple offering of Judy's hospitality. It was an unwritten law of the obligation of masters to their slaves, that visits to their cabins should be conducted with all observance of their right to dispense the honors.

"And now, honey," the old woman said coaxingly, the others having left them to themselves, "tell me if dat's true what Phyllis say bout Marse Dick and Miss Bonnibel?"

There was a sudden fall in Miles's barometer. He could not disguise from the faithful eyes of the old nurse the woeful look that came upon his face.

"I don't think anybody knows, for certain," he said reluctantly.

"My lamb!" cried the fond creature, seizing his hand and stroking it. "If 'taint sartin, why don't you try too? Wha you reckon Miss Bonnibel gwine to find a purtier, conformabler sweetheart dan my pet? S'pose I aint heerd from Phyllis an de res how dem young ladies at de Springs was pullin' caps to git you to dance an' ride wid 'em, dis summer? Why, my way o' lookin' at it, Miss Bonnibel'll far'ly jump at you, and say thankye in de bargain."

"Mammy, Mammy, what a blithering old idiot you are," said Miles, laughing. "Remember I'm just beginning life, and except for a little nest-egg the Colonel is nursing for me, from the sale of my father's share in those Jamaica sugar lands, I'm dependent on

my grandfather for the bread I eat and the clothes I wear. A nice cheek I'd have to ask a girl to marry me."

"Well, en aint you goin' to law wid Marse Peyton Willis—aint smart lawyers bound to git along, en you iddicated like you is?"

"Just at present, my going to law consists in spending three mornings a week in the corner of Willis's office, and I can't say the vista opening from there offers immediate riches," Miles said, with a smile. "But you know, Mammy, my good grandfather is to give me Timberneck, and I've already started in to get the place in shape."

"Timberneck House was a gran' place in its day," said Mammy. "Heerd tell dat Lawd Co'nwallis en General Washington used to set out on de roof dar, smoking deir pipes en 'sputin' bout how to manage de Revellutionary war. Ole Marse, he bought it to foreclose de mor'gage wen der warnt a one ob de family dat owned it fus, to pay de price."

"Well, it's hardly likely I'd get any young lady to wish to set up housekeeping in that old rookery, Mammy. So rest content to let me stay a bachelor. When I'm forty, perhaps, I'll ask some plump widow with a comfortable income to join hands with me—but till then—ah! well—And you oughtn't to forget that my grandfather wants Dick to marry young—so don't bother your head about me any more. When I do

find my lady-love, you'll be the first I'll tell—and when we're married you and Job may dance a breakdown at the wedding."

"Go long wid your sauce, now," cried the old woman, her great body heaving with laughter. "Might's well spec de ephelan out de succus to git up en dance de hawnpipe."

Miles laughed with her, but in a half-hearted way. His chin dropped into the palm of his hand, and he sat gazing into the embers and striving to subject his soul to the discipline enjoined by a sense of right and duty. Something of the boyish spirit of revolt had been stirred within him by the old woman's wheedling words. Latterly, more than once, it had come over him that Bonnibel, under cover of the general assumption that she should pair with Dick, had allowed him—Miles—to catch glimpses of an intoxicating preference for his own society. The impressions thus received were fitful, evanescent, dazzling; but unless the heart of man be as desperately credulous as it is—according to the Psalmist—wicked, she had meant that he should have them. And the bare memory of her looks, the smile of her lips, the confiding touch of her hand upon his arm, woke in the young man's breast a tumult of emotion!

"Wot de matter wid you, Miles, honey?" said Mammy Judy, who was accustomed to wait upon his moods, as a dog waits at his master's side and follows

his movements with beseeching eyes. "Dey's sum'pin troublin' you mightily. Lord knows wot put it in my head; but, wen you sot dere lookin' in de fire, you wos de breathin' image uv Marse Philip, fore he went away from home en got married to dat Spanish lady Ole Marse tole him he couldn't nebber bring to Flower de Hunderd as his wife. Dem was awful times, chile—ke'arnt bear to think about 'em now—dere warn' no real ole times at de plantation any more, till Marse brought you and Dick en put you in my arms to nuss. . . . 'Here's two babies for you, Judy,' sez he, 'and dey's de hope ob my old age.' Dick was a beauty den, fair as a lily like his pa—Marse Phil took after his ma en his gran'ma, pink and white. Your pa, now, had jet-black hair and eyes like coals—my, but he was handsome—when he used to come to de plantation to spend his holidays! Marse Phil allers follered arter him, like Dick did you. Yes, Dick's like his father dat way, en no mistake; but ef I'm not losin' eye-sight, you'd a look o' Marse Phil in you, jes now, dat wos like the dead cum back—"

"We've only to look around at the portraits in the Great House and compare them with living people," said Miles, "to see what queer resemblances crop out among those who have the same blood in their veins. Sometimes I wish I were of the Colonel's own descent, though; I envy Dick the right to stand in the dear old fellow's shoes."

"Haint it never come over you, honey, to wonder what would ha' happened ef Dick hadn't a worn dat little gold locket round his neck dat had Marse Phil's picture in it, when Marster found de babies in de boat?"

"Mammy, you are a regular penny-dreadful!" said the young man impatiently.

"No, but, honey, shua's you live, Gustus tole me dat war de on'y sign ole Marse had o' *which was which*."

"Nonsense, old woman. I suppose Gus was drawing on his not over-brilliant imagination to make capital of his adventures. I often wonder what persuaded that fellow to leave the plantation. He is just the one I'd like to interview to get the testimony of an eye-witness as to our first appearance in American society."

"Don't you ask no questions, chile," said the nurse, looking around her nervously. "When Gustus run away we all got ole Marse's orders to keep our mouths shet 'bout him; and Lawd knows Daddy Jack's skeered everybody on de place to hole dere tongues. Gustus warnt three months back from his journey wid de Kunnel to git you and Dick fore he turned up missin'; he was a roamin' kind o' nigger any ways, an' wid Daddy Jack behind him dere warnt many folks to blame de boy for scootin'. But it hurt Old Marse powerful, seein' he'd had Gustus for his own body-sarvant since de feller was eighteen—ke'arnt think whar

Gus tuk the sperrit to run away. He war allers peaceable enough, and ez spruce and peart ez a jay bird, wen all at once, befo' he left, he tuk to mopin', an' look'd like he'd seed a ghost. Dar now, dar's de udder chil-lun comin' back dis way. Mine wat I tell you, sugah-sweet, de beautiful young lady's lookin out fo' *you*. I warnt baun yistidday, en I sees it in de shinin' ob her eyes."

The blood streamed into Miles's cheek, and his own eyes kindled.

"Miles! Miles!" came in a merry chorus. "Victory has perched upon our banners."

"It's all right!" said Dick, when he went out to them; "I've left a powder with Jock's wife that Daddy says will cure the sick man right away! I'm half ashamed of the share we had in it, but the end justifies the means. We'll have to keep it from my grandfather. He despises this Voodoo business, root and branch. It's as if we'd compounded a felony, but what was I to do?"

"How in the name of wonder did you manage the old fraud," asked Miles, unfeignedly relieved at the prospect of Yellow Jock's release from thralldom.

"It was the basest bribery and corruption," said Bonnibel. "Dick promised him a hog and a jug of whisky, Nutty a pair of mittens of her own knitting, and I sacrificed upon the spot the little gold trinket I had dangling to my bracelet. Ugh! it's the most

gruesome place—I shall dream of it, to-night. He has a sweet pet rattlesnake in a basket on the hearth.”

“That trinket put Daddy Jack into the nearest approach to good humor I ever saw him in,” said Dick. “But I was disgusted to have Bonnibel give a thing she had worn to such a creature. I tried to save it but in vain. The fellow was evidently flattered by our appeal to his occult powers, though I warned him plainly that the next attempt at such hocus-pocus on his part will see him in the lock-up.”

“I hope his Master will fly away with him, before that time comes,” answered Miles piously. “They have been kept too long asunder.”

Betimes, next day, the rosy fingers of the dawn plucked intending huntsmen out of bed. “Mint julep, sah? Hot water, sah? Breakfas’ in half an hour, sah! Fine mornin’ fo’ de scent, sah! Light anudder candle, sah?” Such were the sounds to greet the awakening ear in the men’s portion of the house. The long corridor dividing their rooms was filled with negro boys, tripping each other up in their haste to carry buckets of spring water, morning drams, and newly brushed shoes and clothes. Outside might be heard the gathering of horses, the sounding of horns, the whimper of impatient hounds. In the dining-room the table was spread with substantials for a regiment. Bonnibel, in her habit, poured out coffee behind the

tall silver urn, Ursula serving the less favored beverage of tea. Neighboring squires, in hunting garb, succeeded each other at table amid the jocund clatter of knives, forks, plates, and voices only to be heard on such occasions.

The sun was rising as the cavalcade finally set off down the long avenue, to the noisy delight of the pack, whose yelps precluded conversation among the riders. Yellow Jock, sitting upon his hunter like a Centaur done in bronze, demure, dignified, and master of the hour, was followed at a respectful distance by a motley gang of negroes, some on foot, some mounted on raw-boned plow horses taken from the pasture—one venerable darkey in a beaver hat bestriding a mule and urging him on with the aid of a pair of huge cavalry spurs used in our war with Mexico. The tail of the procession was brought up by juveniles, shaded from cream color to ebony, dressed in shreds and patches of finery,

“Wee folk, odd folk, trooping all together,
Green jacket, red cap, and white owl’s feather.”

This contingent was cheerfully determined to keep up as long as their legs would carry them. One little girl “toted” a baby, which she clearly longed to drop but dared not, and another was equipped against the ardor of the rising sun with a faded parasol, once rose-color.

Dick rode with Bonnibel, Miles with Helen Willis,

whose fine features wore a look of serenity till now long a stranger to her friends. At starting, she had managed to bestow upon the Colonel a whispered expression of thanks that welled up from a heart full of gratitude, for he had forbidden her to speak openly of the transaction by which Helen's old nurse and her son had become his property, while remaining with their former owners who were to pay wages for their use.

Ursula kept, by the Colonel's orders, close to his bridle till he could satisfy himself as to her ability to manage the plunging gray she had begged hard to be allowed to mount.

"He goes *beautifully*, Cousin Richard," she announced, when, after a series of jumps, her horse settled down to a more manageable gait. "That was only his play, you know; we understand each other perfectly. But" (confidentially) "I'm just a wee bit afraid I'm not *quite* big enough for Selim. How do I look on him?"

"Very much like a mosquito, my dear," said the Colonel dryly. "Now, Nutty, I depend on you to play no pranks and to keep Selim well in hand." And Nutty knew that she must obey.

They had come out of the woods into an open country, scattered with brier-patches, fallen trees, and gulleys of varying width, where the marauder of the duck pond had been tracked to cover. The dogs,

thrown off, enraptured, nosed their way along the suspected places, while the horses, held in check, chafed madly, covering themselves with foam. There was a long, nervous half-hour, every eye following the movements of the pack with strained attention; and then arose a mellow, doubtful note. "That's Flirt! That's my beauty!" cried the exulting Colonel; "no babbling when she gives tongue."

Another stronger cry from Flirt was swelled by the answer of the pack, and then a loud halloo from Yellow Jock as he put spurs to his horse and took the lead. The fox is unkenneled, running in full view across the field, the hounds after her, keeping close together—the Colonel's boast was like Washington's, "You might cover them with a blanket as they run"—and then the whippers-in.

With glad halloos and ringing horn-blasts, horses and riders thrilling in accord, the hunters follow, and the chase is under way!

It is not my purpose to detail the fortunes of the day—enough to say that Mrs. Reynard provided her pursuers with a run long remembered and thoroughly exciting. Ursula's gray carried her "like a streak," said Miles approvingly. She, the Colonel, Peyton Willis, Miles, Parson Crabtree, and Yellow Jock, were in time to see Argus, the ancient of the pack, divide with his youngest grandchild, Flirt, the honors of attack. And then Nutty, who had ridden gallantly,

wanted to burst into tears over the cruel fate of the poor dear little fox! But she accepted the brush, nevertheless, and the Colonel took the pads; and if, in after years, other pleasures of this world came into her grasp, Ursula could truly say there had been in her life few enjoyments more keen than that October ride after the Flower de Hundred hounds!

In response to the coaxing of the girls, the Colonel had ordered luncheon to be sent to meet the home party in a glen at some distance from the house. The day, now warmed to the core by sunshine, was delightful, and they gathered with renewed spirits around a cloth laid under a spreading oak-tree on a carpet of moss and russet leaves. Bonnibel, swinging in the festoon of a vine, her cheeks blooming from the ride, purple clusters of grapes dropping upon her auburn locks, was like a wild-wood bacchante of the golden age. Dick, to whose lot it fell to carve a round of "hunter's beef," cured after a recipe kept secret in the family, and Parson Crabtree, who dispensed a partridge pasty, had no time for dalliance by the way. The Colonel, uncorking some bottles of Bordeaux, and Ursula dipping water from a crystal spring, were also fully occupied. The rest had scattered in groups about the mossy amphitheatre. Miles, only, was recreant to the service of hospitality. Nutty thought he had forgotten his manners, standing with his back to the company steadying the grape-vine swing with one

hand, with the other holding her plate or glass for Bonnibel, gazing into the girl's face, speaking ardent hurried words into her ear! With her usual belief that it was her mission to keep rein on everybody's affairs, the little girl had called Miles and whispered a suggestion that he should hand the potted tongue to Mrs. Willis.

"Oh, she has Dick and the Colonel," said Miles, tossing the lock off his forehead impatiently. "When you are grown up, little girl, you'll know what it means to let well enough alone."

Nutty's heart swelled with resentment at this cruel stab. She had been fancying herself three inches taller and quite one of the elders since her achievement in the hunt. She did not recover her equanimity until somebody produced Bonnibel's guitar, surreptitiously ordered to be sent from home with the luncheon, and Bonnibel, descending from her sylvan throne, sat on the gnarled root of a great oak, and threw the blue ribbon around her shoulders.

Yes! those were the days when the twang of the light guitar had not ceased to echo in our homes, to make place for the more "fetching" banjo. The Colonel dearly loved Bonnibel's songs, sung in a low, clear mezzo voice, admirably enunciated, and reflecting her humor of the hour. To-day, his first call was for "Allan Percy"; and the girl, fixing her eyes on the

greenwood depths, chanted—for it is hardly more than a monotone—the plaintive ballad:

“It was a beauteous lady, richly dressed;
 Around her neck were chains of jewels rare;
 A velvet mantle shrouds her snowy breast,
 And a young child was sweetly slumbering there.
Lullaby!

“Lullaby, Lullaby,” sang Bonnibel; and when she finished there was a flattering call for a contribution from Ursula. Nutty, with much spirit, plunged into the stanzas that run as follows:

“Lord Lovell he stood at his castle gate
 A-combing his milk-white steed,
 On a balcony high stood Nancy Bell,
 A-wishing her lover good speed, speed, speed,
 A-wishing her lover good speed.

Oh! where are you going, Lord Lovell, she said,
 Oh! where are you going, said she;
 I’m going, my fair Lady Nancy Bell,
 Far countries for to see, see, see,
 Far countries for to see.

He had not been gone but a year and a day
 Or at most but two or three,
 When languishing thoughts popped into his head,
 Lady Nancy Bell for to see, etc.

He rode and he rode, as fast as he could,
 Till he came to London town,
 And there he saw a funeral
 With the mourners all weeping around, etc.

Oh! who is it dead, good people, he said,
 Oh! who is it dead, said he;
 ’Tis the Lord’s only daughter, the people replied,
 And they called her the Lady Nancy, etc.

He ordered the coffin to be opened straight,
 And the shroud to be pulled down,
 And there he kissed the clay-cold corpse,
 While the tears they came trickling down, etc.

Lady Nancy she died on that self-same eve ;
 Lord Lovell he died on the morrow ;
 Lady Nancy she died of pure, pure grief,
 Lord Lovell he died of sorrow—*ror-rorror*,
 Lord Lovell he died of sorrow.

Lady Nancy was buried in St. Martin's Kirk,
 Lord Lovell was laid in the choir,
 And out of her breast there grew a red rose,
 And out of her lover's a brier, etc.

That grew, and that grew, till they reached the church top,
 Till they couldn't grow any higher ;
 And there they intertwined in a true lover's knot,
 All true lovers for to admire—*ire, rire*,
 All true lovers for to admire."

Bonnibel struck a chord in accompaniment now and again. And Ursula's soul, aflight on the pinions of song and imaginary woe, was all unconscious of the impression she produced!

They revived glees and catches: "White Sand and Grey Sand," "Frère Jacques," "Scotland's Burning," and "A Southerly Wind and a Cloudy Sky"—the forest echoing to the blithe chorus:

"To horse, my brave boys, and away,
 Bright Phœbus the hills is adorning,
 The face of all nature looks gay,
 'Tis a beautiful scent-laying morning.
 Hark! hark! forward!
 Tirrila! Tirrila! Tirrila!"

"That's after time," said Miles, as all broke down simultaneously in a laugh; "but it's pure poetic license to talk of people wanting to carol when they're routed early out of bed."

Bell and he wandered away from the rest, and presently found themselves again at the tempting grape-vine swing.

"Let me mount you," he said. Bell put her foot upon his palm, and lightly swung into place.

"There, nothing could be more comfortable," she exclaimed. "Oh, how I love the woods! How I wish this day might never end."

"That's all very well. But when I remember you flying around the ball-room at the White Sulphur in all your fineries!"

"And where, pray, were you," replied the girl. "So much in demand that I used to call you the agreeable Rattle of the Ladies Club!"

"A man can't go moping and mooning because the one he wants has other strings to her bow. But I was glad enough to leave the place. A week of that philandering around women's footstools will last me the remainder of my days."

"This is not philandering—and I've no footstool, *par exemple?*" said Bell mischievously.

"Whatever it is, I've no desire to change. No, I am not a ladies' man. Actually, I never wrote a line of poetry—stop, though, I'm forgetting—I did once—last

fourteenth of February at the University—and I've not lisped in numbers since."

"A valentine! To some belle of Charlottesville? One of those charming Miss Mollies or Miss Betties, I suppose," said Bell, bridling. "Why have we never heard of her? No doubt, the poor thing is crying her eyes out for another—"

"The girl for whom I wrote it never cries," said Miles, lowering his voice. "She's like airy Lilian, who clasps her tiny hands above her, laughing all she can. That's the reason I smothered my poor little first attempt at verse and resisted the temptation to publish it in the University Magazine."

"Dear me! I believe he has it in his pocket all this time! I'm sure that oblivion was assumed."

"I own up. It's here in my pocket-book, close to my heart. A cold comfort but the best I had."

"Let me see. Let me see!" begged she, eagerly. "If this were Ardennes you might have hung it on a tree."

"If you were Rosalind, who cared to read it for the writer's sake."

"Come, come," she said imperiously; and with some reluctance, he took from an inside pocket a paper thus inscribed:

HER VALENTINE.

This merry maiden, radiant, rare,
With winsome ways and debonair,
When sweet she smiles on me, I swear

That Eden's light is resting there
Upon those lips so ripe, so fair !

One look at her, and e'en Old Care
Would cease to carp and court Despair,
Would put off dole, his trade forswear,
Don sunny looks, make Joy his heir.

What wonder, then, that I should wear
Her colors and to love her dare—
Her Valentine myself declare ?
This merry maiden, radiant, rare !

"Shall I tell you what I think of it?" said Bell, after reading the verses, and keeping close hold of the paper.

"Frankly—critically?"

"Frankly; I can't criticise. But I shall never give this up."

"You'll accept my tribute?" he asked boyishly. "When you know you're the only girl in the world who could have inspired me!"

Bonnibel's color flamed into her face. "I'll make no rash promises," she said, tucking, nevertheless, the folded paper safely within her bodice. "If by next Valentine's day, you have not changed your mind—perhaps—"

"Don't be so begrudging," he urged, pressing nearer to her. "Treat yourself to the luxury of royal giving—"

He had forgotten all but her beauty, her half-inviting, half-repelling manner to him, that had be-

come a draught he needs must drink. They were a fair sight to look upon, those two, in the amber glory of the autumn sun sifting through quivering leaves—she, slender but rounded to maidenly maturity, her head blooming like an exquisite rose upon its stalk—he, brown and comely, bending his great shoulders down to whisper in her ear!

Long ago forsaken by the others, they had not observed that the vehicles sent to fetch the party home—their good steeds being long since comfortably stabled—were already filled with laughing, beckoning folk—their two places, only, vacant.

Dick, sent by his grandfather to “hurry Miles and Bell,” came upon the recreant ones, who had been half screened from sight by a tangle of wild bamboo and grape leaves. He stopped short, reddened in spite of himself, and then, avoiding the eye of Miles, addressed himself to Bonnibel:

“I was to say they’re waiting for you,” he said, in a voice sounding strangely unlike that of cordial, outspoken Dick.

Bell, startled more than she cared to show, slipped down from her swinging seat, and ran fleetly across the crisp carpet of the woods, clearing with a bound the little stream that divided them from the forest road where the carriages were in waiting. Miles, in the first rush of animal instinct to defend possession of a prize, turned upon Dick with an angry snarl.

"Because you are the lord of the manor, and I'm a beggar, you've the right to call me to account, you think?" he muttered, a whirl, as of wheels, within his brain.

Many a time had Dick faced and quelled his uncontrollable bursts of passion. But there was now a menace in Miles' eyes that was a revelation. It made Dick turn sick at heart and banished the rancor from him. Breathing more quickly, but with outward calm, he said:

"It must be an awful power inside of him that drives a man to words like those. Don't answer me, now, please. This isn't the time or place. There'll be chances enough, when you're ready, to pay me what you owe."

That night, when Miles was walking alone on the gravel of the driveway, looking up at the twinkling planets that gemmed the stainless sky, Dick came out to join him, hesitating for a moment before he slipped his hand within Miles's arm. In a moment Miles had his big arm around Dick's shoulder, instead, gripping him fiercely, and crying out in love and penitence:

"Do you know what I've been thinking of, this last hour? Not of her, but of you—of your fidelity to me, of our lives together, of what you have been to me—and I shuddered at the gulf we stood upon to-day."

"Nothing can part us," Dick said, greatly moved.

"No, nothing. Whatever else I gained, I should always be wanting you. And if I seemed to forget you, it was only because I was dazzled a moment when the sun shone in my eyes. Another time, I shall turn my eyes away."

"You're making me a selfish sort of brute, I think," Dick said, his voice trembling a little. "When I've no more right than you—"

"That, we had better not discuss. Out here, alone with my cigar, I've come to a good many conclusions. And one of them is to ask you not to talk to me of this matter again but to trust me. Promise, Dick, promise. It is my only hope of recovering my self-respect."

"Miles—old man!" Dick said, edging again closer to him in fraternal amity. In this way, as regards the ending, had most of their differences been adjusted. Dick did not know how this time the iron had entered into his cousin's soul.

Poor Miles, who persisted in equipping Bonnibel with the sandals and cestus of a goddess, would have resented the suggestion that she was in reality a woman of ordinary, if fascinating, clay. Susceptible to kindness, of a happy, even temper, inclined to take sunny paths rather than shady ones, to shed tears easily kissed away, to make herself companionable and soothing to whomsoever she might chance to be with, to coax, to cheer, to charm—that was Bell's nature—

infinitely the best outfit for this work-a-day world as women have to meet it. After the episode narrated, when Miles kept his distance from her and Dick drifted into more intimate devotion, she maintained her balance in an admirable way. Cousin Polly, who had feared dear Miles had been falling in love with Bonnibel, and who held the Virginia doctrine that all girls are flirts until they marry, extolled her to Grandmamma; and Grandmamma, with a heavenly smile, hoped dear Dick would get a girl worthy of him, whoever it might be. The Colonel, pleasing himself with romance-weaving in his study, as a bird constructs her nest bit by bit,—brought every straw he could collect to aid in his pleasant task. The presence in the house of this brilliant apparition of young womanhood made him as gallant as a younker, he declared. Bonnibel's entry at breakfast time, dewy from sleep and bath, in crisp attire, gracious and courteous to all, the good-morning kiss her soft lips dropped upon his withered cheek, made him wonder how the old home had done so long without a fair young mistress. If Dick had pluck, by Jove, he'd never let any other fellow woo Bonnibel away from Flower de Hundred. But withal, the old gentleman kept himself religiously in check, since, to his notions of chivalry, 'twould never do to let the young lady see they had designs upon her liberty.

Autumn waned, and frost had touched the coy per-

simmons, hoarding their sugar until other fruits were picked, and hanging in pinkish red globes upon branches watched by faithful worshipers. It was a great moment on the plantation when the first rime had fallen upon the grass, and persimmon gatherers might journey in open day to visit the trees nocturnally haunted by little and big negroes, awaiting their chance to rifle these delights. Corn shucking was over, the harvests stored within well-filled barns, chinquapins and chestnuts were gathered, when to Ursula's active spirit occurred the fancy to organize a possum-hunt by torch-light in the woods. "The boys," sated by days of successful shooting in the stubble, forests, and marshes, consented to the primitive entertainment, the Colonel was kissed into giving his sanction, and it remained for Grandmamma and Cousin Polly, both of whom had been suborned by the governess to express disapproval of a pursuit so little becoming a young lady, to be won over to say—Yes.

"You'd jes better let Miss Nutty go de pace, Ole Miss," advised Phyllis, the ladies' maid. "She's a tomboy baun, fo' shua; but dem's de kind dat mos' in general settles down all over when dey gits married an has chilluns of dey own."

Grandmamma, with Cousin Polly as her lieutenant, was undergoing the daily ceremony of giving audience to the slaves, when Ursula, her arm linked in Bonni-bel's, came into the "chamber." This apartment was a

large bright room on the ground floor, with mahogany wardrobes, a four-poster standing on a dais requiring carpeted steps to mount up to it, a deep chintz easy-chair like a cave, in which Grandmamma sat, and a fire of light-wood knots spluttering on the hearth. In the recessed window seats, maids were at work making the garments Cousin Polly had cut out. On stools near the fire were perched three or four unwilling acolytes learning to sew, one of them inclined to fall asleep off her cricket into the ashes, from which she was reclaimed and thumped on the head by the brisk hand of Phyllis, wearing a brass thimble warranted to do execution of the most awakening character.

Nutty's request was kept in abeyance by an interview in progress between the authorities and Poll (Paul) Todd, the blacksmith, and his wife. Paul was a foolish-faced giant with a small head, and low brow shelving backward under a dense mat of wool. The girls remembered him as the hero of a "baptisin'" they had attended during the summer at a pretty pond in the woods. Brother Jones, the preacher of the occasion, stood waist-deep in the water, adjuring, exhorting, encouraging the converts, who one by one waded in, were seized, submerged, and sent ashore amid the ringing echoes of a hymn of piercing sweetness from the congregation gathered on the bank. Poll, the last to present himself, stood staring before him with dilated eyes.

"Come on!" roared out Brer' Jones. "Don't stan' dere tremblin' on de brink o' blessedness. Come on, poor sinner, wot's yer feard uv?"

"I'se afeerd o' dat air pesky little mocassin on de rock behin' you," stammered Poll; and with a yell, a shudder, and a bound, the preacher gathered his flapping robes about him and splashed ashore.

Poll had recently married a termagant, Louisa, under circumstances of novel interest. Louisa had waited to secure a new black "alapaky" gown, and a black bonnet and crape veil, before having the "funeral" (i.e. a sermon to the memory of her former lord) preached by Brother Jones, whose oratory on these occasions was esteemed by the quarter to be of an agreeably "rousin'" quality. About a month after his actual interment, therefore, the friends of Louisa's husband, with the disconsolate widow, resorted to meeting one Sunday, and there indulged in a full measure of groaning, shouting, and tears, during the progress of Brer' Jones' eulogy of the departed saint. Hardly had the sermon concluded, and the audience straightened itself up, when Brer' Jones advanced to the front and requested the parties contracting "matteramony" to please step forward. The widow was the first to rise. Throwing back her crape vei', she looked about her with a commanding air, and, soon perceiving the object of her search, signed to him to come forth. Poll, emerging supremely sheepish from the crowd, shambled

up the aisle, and Louisa, a waspish little woman reaching just above his elbow, fastened upon his arm—nor released it till the couple were made one. No explanation was given of this telescoping of religious rites, but the announcement by the bride that she “giv Brer’ Jones a shote to preach Sam’s funeral, and he dun the weddin’ too for a bushel o’ sweet potatoes.”

Poll took Louisa back to his cabin, and with her a comfortable array of worldly goods and live stock. But she kept him in perpetual hot water. Their spats were the life of the *chroniques scandaleuses* of Flower de Hundred. In vain Mr. Sampson, Cousin Polly, Grandmamma, and finally the Colonel, interfered. Louisa continued to treat Poll outrageously. Her last exploit, now under discussion, appeared to have reached the culminating point.

“Louisa, I insist that you let Paul tell his story,” said the little Madam, from her throne; and Poll, blubbering at intervals, and displaying a deep hollow apparently burnt into the wool upon his crown, began:

“I war des havin’ a mug o’ simmon beer, Miss, wot I made myself. I brung dem simmonses, en I fotch ’em, en I brew de beer, en Louizy she so mad at me case I went widout her to de barbecue, she sassed me awful, en she up wid a shovel o’ hot coals en dumps ’em a-top my ha-ad—” Here Poll’s feelings overcame him, and he swabbed his eyes with a red bandana.

“Laws, Ole Miss, didn’t hurt dat niggah one bit,”

snapped Louisa. "He des stood dar en bellered, wid his wool a-frizzlin', he did, and nevah offaw'd to git shet o' dem dar coals tel Mr. Sampson cum' en seed 'em!"

"Louisa!" said Madam Throckmorton, in what, for her, were awful tones. They silenced the culprit, as also the spasmodic giggling of the seamstresses.

When, with a pledge from Louisa that she would dispense in future with this particular method of conjugal reproof, the happy couple were dismissed, Nutty sat down at Grandmamma's elbow under the eaves of the big chair where she had received many a lesson in the fine arts of needlework,

"Fern stitch, finny stitch, new-stitch, and chain stitch, Spanish stitch, rosemary stitch, herring-bone, and maw-stitch."

"Now, Granny dear," she said. "Let us go 'possum-hunting this once more, and I'll never ask again. Bonnibel has promised to go, too, and you may be sure we'll run into no mischief."

"Well, once more," said the old lady. "I was just sending Phyllis for you, my dear. There's a letter from your Aunt Eleanor."

Nutty's face flamed. She looked ready to burst into tears.

"Oh, don't say it's to make me go to stay with her!" she cried. "Dear, dear Granny, it would break my heart to leave you and Flower de Hundred."

"But consider, my child. Mrs. Courtland is your

mother's only sister. She has the means and the desire to give you more advantages than you could possibly have here. They are, it appears, just going to sail for Europe to spend a year, and she wants you to share the education, there, of her own two girls."

"Oh, Grandmamma, there must be something wrong inside of me," said the girl earnestly; "but I can't feel towards Aunt Eleanor as I should. She was so cold to us while Mamma lived, I've always heard; and she took no notice of my existence till you'd had me here for a year or two. My one visit to her two years ago I never can forget. That great fine country house on the Hudson, everything so formal and so different from our life here! Aunt Eleanor seemed to be always apologizing to her husband for the South. The governess and the girls were always criticising my way of speaking, and looking at me as if they had to put up their lorgnettes to find me. They had such queer notions of us—and Mr. Courtland said things I never could forgive—I felt every drop of my Throckmorton blood bubble in my veins—he's so narrow, and worships his money so. I believe it's he who has spoiled Aunt Eleanor. When I came back to the plantation I jumped for joy."

"My poor, foolish little girl!" said Grandmamma, stroking her head with infinite gentleness. "What can I say to you? Dear Richard has left it all to me. It's my duty not to let you stand in your own light."

"You are my light, Granny—you and Cousin Richard," cried the child. "I love every brick of the house, every twig of the trees. Don't, don't, don't banish me; and I'll be grateful all my life. What's more, I'll study hard with Mademoiselle, and beg Mr. Crabtree's pardon, and—"

"Don't promise too much, dear child," said the little lady smiling. "There, run away, now; here's old Sabra coming with eggs to sell, and a new chapter of grievances to pour out. I'll talk it over with your Cousin Richard, and see what can be done."

Nutty, wild with delight, ran bareheaded out-of-doors, and, summoning Vic, danced like a mote in the sunshine of the joyous autumn day.

"The question is, have we the right?" said Grand-mamma, sighing. "The child would leave a sad gap in the house. I can't let her see it, but there's no doubt her estimate of the Courtlands is correct. Although Nutty's father was only Richard's second cousin once removed—we were very fond of him and he of us—and it isn't as if Ursula were altogether poor. Richard says he'll have a tidy sum laid up for her by the time she comes of age—not much, but an independence for the girl."

"I've no patience with Eleanor Courtland, and that's a fact," said Miss Polly. "She's a New Orleans woman born, and has turned her nose up at us ever since she married in the North. As to those second-

hand fans and trumpery dress patterns she sends down here to Nutty, you'd think she took us for a parcel of Ojibbeways. Nutty shows her good sense by wanting to stay just where she is; and if I were Richard I wouldn't let her budge."

Nutty's April clouds had vanished when, after night-fall, the 'possum hunters set out on their inglorious but entertaining quest. The girls, wearing short dresses, with scarlet sashes knotted around their waists, and caps of scarlet wool set sidewise on their locks, looked like huntress-fairies. They were accompanied by the two young men, and a cousin or so from the supply always on hand at the house, and preceded by Yellow Jock with his whimpering dogs and a couple of negro boys carrying torches of fat pine. The glare of red light between drifting columns of black smoke, lit up the tracery of boughs overhead with brilliant effect, causing the torch-bearers to resemble gnomes, and the rest of the party conspirators bent on uncanny enterprise. When Yellow Jock, at the end of a half-mile tramp through brake and brier, loosed his dogs from the leash, they darted ahead, and soon proclaimed a "find." Following the trail, our hunters saw the two dogs sitting on their haunches at the foot of a slender sapling, waking the echoes of wood and swamp with joyous barks. A torch, swung under the tree, disclosed clinging to an upper branch and looking down at his pursuers with

intelligent eyes, his hair ruffled with fright, a small rat-tailed animal, with a sharp nose.

"Golly, dat's a gran'pa possum," cried one of the negro lads. "He des bulgin' out wid fat, Unk Jock."

"Gimme dat axe, boy," said Yellow Jock, and with a single expert blow at the root, the little persimmon tree, with its double burden of fruit and game, fell crashing to the earth. The dogs with a jump fastened upon their prey.

"Git along wid yer nonsense, gals," cried Yellow Jock, beating them off and administering a blow to the victim that stunned it instantly. The bright eyes were glazed and the creature lay limp and pitiful as Jock picked it up and consigned it to one of the negroes, the dogs with mouths watering as they watched his shoulder where it hung.

"Ain' mor'n a quarter dead, Missy," the old man explained to Bonnibel. "Ef I was to nuss him by de cabin fire, he'd jump up peart nough, 'en make tracks fo' de swamp. But des as long's he tinks dem dogs a-watchin' him, he pertend to be deader'n a do' nail. Dat's possum natur, honey; dey's dat 'ceetful, I hain' nebber see nutin' but a 'ooman as can equil 'em for foolin' men folks. You, Sam, wot you larfin at, 'n swingin' dat ar torch so's you mos' sot Marse Dick's coat-tails afire?"

Sam, who had some keen personal relish of the joke at the expense of the beguiling sex, continued to

chuckle and show his ivories, until the dogs discovered another opossum, small and timid, lying flat on the bough of a maple. In his excitement Sam laid down the first prize upon a root, and Ursula, happening to look that way, saw the "gran'pa possum" stiffening up into a semblance of his former self, and glancing cautiously around preparatory to escape. The alarm given, the fugitive was incontinently seized by the tail; and Jock, whose imagination was already reveling in a vision of a toothsome roast bedded in "taters," with corn pone and coffee to follow, bestowed on Sambo an admonitory buffet.

The baby opossum seemed to be possessed of an almost human ingenuity in baffling their efforts to shake it down—Dick not wishing to sacrifice the limb of a fine tree. He would loosen first one leg, then another, then a third, and when apparently about to fall exhausted to the ground, annexed himself by the tail, and hung, as tightly welded as before. When he had fooled them to the top of his bent, the little deceiver turned and ran off like a flash, but unfortunately, encountering Sambo in a crotch of the tree, took by mistake the downward course, and was seized by the dogs on reaching terra firma.

"Let him off," cried Bonnibel and Ursula. But Yellow Jock had already decided his fate by a stinging blow upon the head.

"Now, shall we go home?" said Bonnibel; and, as

the procession again took up the line of march, she walked with Miles, following the others.

"How weird this light makes the beautiful forest look!" she said. "I seem to see crouching forms in every thicket, here especially, on the edge of the swamp, where the trees are gray and distorted with age, and those long vines hang down and the 'old man's beard' clothes every bough."

It was in truth a dreary bit of woodland they were crossing, and involuntarily the girl drew close to her companion.

"I hope you have found our aboriginal sport worth your effort," said Miles. "It was, at any rate, exceedingly picturesque."

"I should not succeed as a hunter. The spectacle of those poor little wretches, bringing their ingenuity into competition with man's craft, filled me with sympathy for them. But then, I can't resist the impulse to side with any living thing at bay. I never read of a prisoner's escape—any prisoner—without feeling glad that justice is eluded."

"Fortunately, the reins of government are put into other hands than yours. For me, I can't pretend to understand sentimentalism with offenders. If a man has outraged law, by law he ought to suffer; and the less palaver over it, the better."

"Oh, what's that?" cried Bell.

"I heard nothing."

"It was like a sigh—or a moan—or both," she whispered, shuddering. The path they were following, faintly lighted by starlight and the receding torches, was full of moss-grown roots and hummocks, and so narrow at the margin of the swamp as to compel them to walk in single file. Bell, ashamed to acknowledge it, had been seized with nervous horror of the place. The sound she had heard did not reassure her, and when Miles, falling back, stopped for a moment to light his pipe and she saw, lurking behind a tree and nearly touching him, a man's form, she was fairly terrified.

"Make haste, make haste," she said; trembling in every limb, "or we shall never catch up with them."

Panic lending wings to her feet she darted ahead, Miles following, all unconscious of what impelled her.

"What a swift Atalanta you are," he said, overtaking her at last. "You caught me by surprise in giving me this breather."

"Oh, Miles—that man—that dreadful man!" she panted, clinging to his arm. "In the swamp—close to you—when you stopped—"

"My dear Bell, you are dreaming," he said, startled by her evident distress.

"Oh! no, no! he was there—I saw by the light of your match—plainly—the negro—I thought he would hurt you, and I didn't dare to scream."

Bell made a brave fight for self-control, but weak

nature overpowered her, and she burst into a flood of hysterical tears.

"Bonnibel, darling," whispered Miles, clasping her in his arms. "How can you be afraid, when I am here? I, who love you so that I'd give my life to save you from one pang." So fierce was his joy at feeling that she did not resist his touch, but rather trembled sighing to his heart, he could not find words to speak. One moment he held her so, and then back through the forest gloom floated the ring of Dick's voice in a yodeling call they had used as a summons to each other from boyhood.

The two started apart, and stood with violently beating hearts. Miles felt as if a gun-shot had gone through him.

"Wont you wont somebody go back and look after him that man?" Bell said, with a mighty effort to steady her utterance.

"When we have seen you safe at home. It is not far from here to the house," he answered, and the sound of his voice struck on his consciousness with curious effect. It was as if some one far away were speaking through a storm.

"Let us hurry, then," she answered, turning her face from him.

CHAPTER V.

“ But when comes winter
With hail and storm,
And red fire roaring,
And ingle warm—
Sing first sad going
Of friends that part,
Then sing glad meeting
And my love's heart.”

CHRISTMAS in old Virginia! All was in readiness at Flower de Hundred for the entertainment of as large a party as could be disposed of within its walls.

In every chimney, high-piled hickory was snapping defiance of Jack Frost, for to the surprise of the household a light snow had fallen, powdering woods and fields, crowning fences and gables, and lending a strange charm to the green of magnolias, yews, and hollies on the lawns.

The ladies of the house, relaxing their work of preparation, went from floor to floor admiring the results. Through the open doors upon the corridors upstairs, bed-rooms displayed plump shrines in speckless drapery, bright fires, and that general air of nicety it seems a pity to disturb. Below, chairs, couches, curtains, books, hearths, vases, each had received its final touch from beautifying fingers. In the store-

room and still-room, perhaps, had been reached the high water mark of old time housekeeping. For days past, the womenkind had been whisking about with flushed cheeks, sticky fingers, and garments distilling odors of the East, checking with stern rebuke all overtures to intimate approach. Bonnibel, who excelled in making high art canopies of lace-work icing dropped from a paper cone, had executed the decorations of a Christmas cake that was a wonder of its kind. Ursula, idle and fitful in her ministry, inclined to dart about, to taste, to comment, to investigate, had been condemned to blanch almonds, which she afterwards pounded with rose-water in a marble mortar—on the whole, a rather fascinating toil. Little Grandmamma, informed peremptorily that her duty was to “sit on a cushion and look like a queen,” begged for leave to cut out of note paper the Toby frills used to finish ham-bones and deck candle sockets. As for Cousin Polly, her eye and hand were everywhere. Her least care was to ascertain in person that a supply of her own *pot-pourri* scent-bags, quince seed bandoline, and rose paste for chapped hands was distributed in the chambers of the guests; and she herself hung the towel-racks with damask naperies, and stuck the cushions full of pins.

Who was expected? Oh, for such a week of festivity, cousins were convened from Henrico, from New Kent, from Gloucester, from Goochland, from Albe-

marle, from Orange, from Fluvanna, from Fairfax—people who knew what was good for them always accepted an invitation to Flower de Hundred! They would journey thither by boat, in family coaches, or, if near enough, on horseback, with the usual array of grooms and valets to carry handboxes and bags. One rosy daughter of a neighboring squire arrived, that year, seated behind her father on a pillion, with both arms clasped around his portly waist.

Ursula loved the buzz and soft confusion of the filling of the house. Ladies chatting, maids unpacking, running hither and thither, pinning, tying, complimenting, over all such a smell of Christmas greens brought out by the summer warmth!

When, on Christmas Eve—their number was well nigh complete—the yellow coach from Honey Hall drew up upon the drive-way, everybody felt relieved. It would have been an *affaire manquée* without the presence of Tom and Tabby; and Tom had been threatened with an attack upon his chest, which made it doubtful whether Vashti would allow him to take the air. But here they were, at last. Down came the creaking carriage steps, and out came Tom, muffled and top-coated beyond the chance of recognition from his nearest friend. The tyrant had even endued him with a pair of blue-glass spectacles. After the master descended Mistress Tabby, ample and beaming, and lastly the inevitable Vashti, glum and upright, bearing

upon her arm a basket containing vials of medicine and spoons.

"Howdye, howdye, and a Merry Christmas, all," chirped Tabby; "Tom can't speak, poor thing, till he gets his muffler off. Vashti suspects a leetle touch of quinsey, and if there's anything goes hard with Tom—now Tom dear, don't you struggle so, or you'll never get out of all those—and whatever you do, don't get a check of—there's nothing Vashti dreads so much for you as a check of perspiration."

"Hang it all!" spluttered "Tom dear" angrily, emerging from his lendings as red as a boiled lobster. "Colonel, these women between 'em would like to stop me breathin'. They've had all the windows down—confound it,—Vashti, what you want with me, girl—aint you tortured me enough?"

"Time for your medicine, Marse Tom," said the imperturbable, presenting at his elbow a spoonful of black dose. Mr. Hazleton made a face. Vashti stood motionless. There was no escape. Down went the medicine, and, going the wrong way, threw the unfortunate victim into a paroxysm of choking while Vashti beat him on the back.

"There now, Tom dear," said his placid lady, when peace had been restored. "That comes of being excitable. Dear, dear, how natural everybody looks. Howdye Saul, howdye Chris and Jim and Phyllis—it always feels so good to get back to Flower de Hun-

dred—the reason we're so late the snow balled under the horses' feet and made them slip, and Vashti thought we'd better not drive fast—all's well that ends well, though. I've a pair of bantams for you, Polly Lightfoot, that'll make you feel ashamed of yours—just a drop of apple toddy, Saul—we always say nobody can beat Saul in apple-tod—no, thank you, Colonel, I'm quite warm enough—so nice to see this splendid fire. Why, Dick, you're looking as happy as a prince—no wonder if the little bird says right—well, well, I spare your blushes. What's this I hear about Miles going down to stay at Timberneck—an owl in an ivy-bush, Tom says he's like. Tom's full of jokes, you know. Coming for Christmas, I suppose?—That's good, it wouldn't be half a ball, if Miles weren't here to turn me in the reel. Said I to Tom, depend upon it this is nothing but a whim. I sent Miles down a head-cheese when Cæsar was going to the mill—though Sally Johnson isn't a bad cook. Well, well, he'll tire of single blessedness, they always do; but I'll vow I've looked round and don't see a girl that's good enough for Miles in *our* neighborhood—why aren't there two Bonnibels?—here she comes, the beauty, with a sprig of holly in her hair—and there's Cousin John and Sophia, and the Major and his girls, and the Thompsons of Belair—dear, dear, dear, how many pleasant people—my head's quite turned with pleasure! Lucky for Tom that Christmas comes but

once a year to unsettle his old wife—now isn't it, Tom dear?"

Contrary to expectation, Miles did not present himself for the first evening of festivities, and loud was the lamenting over his absence. After dinner, the company broke up into little groups, the younger members volunteering to entertain their elders by a series of charades, dumb-crambo, and tableaux vivants. Among the latter, were the time-honored "Game of Life," and "Rebecca and Rowena." Rebecca, always popular with brunettes, was gotten up with plenty of turkey red, old China crêpe shawls, and the jewelry of everybody in the house pinned and hung over the self-denying Jewess, wherever practicable! Rowena, equally liked by blondes as offering an opportunity to wear sky-blue and to let down one's back hair, smiled broadly in the act of receiving Rebecca's casket, but was much applauded when the folding doors were shut. Then they had "Magical Music," supplied by Mr. Crabtree with his flute; "Stage Coach," and "Hide and-go-Seek." A tail of young people, headed by Ursula, ran up and down the stairs and corridors—peeping through Christmas garlands—crouching in the deep window-seat upon the landing, where the panes of glass bore many a name inscribed with diamond rings by the gay idlers of succeeding generations—screaming with laughter when caught, till every echo of the staunch old house came from its hiding-place to repeat the fun!

At eleven o'clock Saul went through the rooms with a silver salver displaying cut-glass tumblers of egg-nog—other servants following with silver baskets of cake tasted by the matrons and indorsed with nods as meaning as Lord Burleigh's. Just before midnight, the hall door opened to let in, with the rush of frosty air and glimpses of starlight and snow-tipped boughs, two stalwart wood-cutters bearing between them the huge segment of a forest monarch, long seasoned in the woodhouse. This was the Yule-log, always rolled into place by the men of the family upon the iron dogs under old Guy Throckmorton's fire-back with the twisted monogram and crest, and lighted with a brand from last year's log.

As the flame from a bed of red embers leaped up and licked the moss and lichens from the Yule-log, the master of the house, with his beautiful old mother on his arm, stood on the hearth-rug watching it. Surrounded by kinsfolk, friends, and beneficiaries, not one but might have borne witness to some act of his loyal generosity; with a conscience void of offense, with his fondest hopes for some of his best beloved on the eve of fruition, he looked proud and glad; and yet those who read him aright saw a shadow upon the good man's brow, as, according to annual custom, wheeling about to face his guests, he cleared his throat to speak:

"My dear kinsmen and friends," said Richard

Throckmorton, "this is the time at which those who have been wont to meet around my hearth to celebrate the most beautiful festival of our Christian year have always let me be their spokesman. Since we last gathered here, thank God, there have been no breaks in our circle to mar the joy of this reunion. My own cup has been sweetened by blessings I have ill-deserved. My dear grandson, Dick, and my adopted grandson, Miles, have finished their University course and come back to me with credit honestly achieved by manly purpose, and ready to begin a life which I hope and believe will make of them good citizens, good masters, honorable bearers of a name that has never known dishonor. In wishing for you all, from the bottom of my heart, a 'Merry Christmas' and a 'Happy New Year,' I have something, in return, to ask of you—I want your best wishes—come Dick—come Bonnibel, my dear,—here, let me hold a hand of each of you—for these two young people who have promised each other to make me happy by becoming man and wife. My friends as you see my heart's too full to say more. I present to you Miss Amabel Leigh, the future mistress of my grandson's home."

As the Colonel spoke, there had been a start—a rustle around the ring of lookers-on, a swaying to and fro of heads eager to lose no detail of the scene—Dick, proud, alert, a love-light in his blue eyes that beautified his face, stood on his grandfather's right—Bonni-

bel, her eyes dropped, the bloom deepened to carmine in her lovely cheeks, nestled, as if frightened, on the left arm the old man had thrown around her shoulders!

Only Ursula chanced to see that, at the moment the Colonel had begun to speak, the door leading into the study had opened and Miles had come in and stood pale and silent on the outskirts of the group. The little girl repressed an exclamation of dismay, and as an understanding of what her childish heedlessness had failed hitherto to see flashed upon her mind, she followed the impulse of her heart and glided to his side. In the confusion that ensued of laughter, chat, congratulations, and kisses, all pressing around Bonnibel who remained tightly clinging to the Colonel's arm, nobody observed Nutty, who had eyes but for one darkling face, looking up into it, pleading for leave to suffer in silence with his grief.

It was over at last! Miles had wrung Dick's hand, had taken Bonnibel's chill fingers in his clasp, had been embraced by his grandfather with a muttered "God bless you, my own lad," that went far to warming his sad heart—had exchanged greetings and pleasantries with the guests as best he could. He could bear the strain no longer. When the clock in the hall chimed midnight, he left them and went out into the darkness. Here, again, all was jollity. The Colonel, pleasing himself by planning surprises for every one, had ordered a bonfire to be kindled. Around it gath-

ered black faces lit by the ruddy glow, the number swelled by arrivals from the quarter, by twos, threes, and in groups, whistling or singing—and whoopings came from afar in token that laggards were on the way. Then sounds were heard of hurrying feet, of a “pat and dance” beginning, in which gradually all would join till the rich swell of the accompanying chorus, blending in natural unison, should seem like one vast organ pipe, unstopped to pour its volume on the air.

Miles, knowing not which way to turn, stood, his back against a tree, gazing at the lighted façade of the house. It was like the fairy palace of his childish fancy, at which the wandering, disinherited prince arrives in search of adventure. His adventure was now as a tale that had been told, with “finis” written at the end. His disastrous love dream had worked out his virtual exclusion from his home. No, not *his* home—Dick’s—Dick, who was master of all he loved and coveted—Miles, an outsider gazing with hungry eyes at a banquet he might not taste.

On the day following the night-walk through the woods with Bonnibel, he had told his grandfather of his love and his temptation—of all, in fact, but her apparent leaning of fancy toward himself. He had besought and won leave to go down to Timberneck, and “camp out” in the old house, where the Colonel had always kept a man and his wife in charge, “as

a temporary measure only," the fond elder used to say.

In his solitude, Miles had reasoned out that her turning to him had been the mere seeking of young tendrils to curl around the nearest object. He knew himself to be a restless, undisciplined fellow, ill prepared to settle in any bonds; one who would make no woman's happiness till some of what was in him had found a vent.

So far, good! He had come home for Christmas Eve, informed of the new bond between Dick and his sweetheart, who had persuaded herself that what she now did would make everybody happy; but at the sight of them together, a fury of jealousy had assailed and mastered him. And the tempest was not stilled.

Then the great hall door swung open heavily. Out into the night came, in a burst of warmth and radiance, the figures of the guests, wrapped and bundled, to group on the "back porch," the Colonel appearing last with Bonnibel and Dick. The light of the torches carried by the negroes, who, advancing, closed in a ring around that side of the house, fell full upon the old man's white head and noble features. At once arose shouts, "three cheers, for Ole Marse!" with a response of deafening cordiality.

"Now boys," said the Colonel, coming to the front, "it's cold work speechifying here; and I've but few words to say. When I've done saying them, Mr.

Sampson will take care you're supplied with stuff for a first class barbecue. For, as I'm pretty sure you suspect, I've sent for you to-night and am going to let you have the barbecue because something has happened that I want the whole plantation to enjoy."

"Bress Jesus!" "Lawd, send down marcy!" here irrelevantly put in one or two old crones who, as the Colonel began, had closed their eyes and stood rocking their bodies back and forth.

"The time must come," continued their master, "and in the nature of things can't be very far away, when somebody else must live here and direct you in my place."

"No indeedy!" "Nebber say die, Ole Marse." "Aint got tired o' presen' company!" were some of the flattering interruptions to this statement.

"Well, boys, I'm in no hurry to go," said the Colonel. "But when I do, you all know that your Master Dick will succeed me. A good son, a good friend, makes a good master; and I don't think you'll be the worse when he takes the reins into his hands. He's grown up among you, you've loved him and made much of him. He thinks of you as friends who, after his family, should be first to know when any good luck befalls him. Master Dick, therefore, wishes me to tell you all that he's been fortunate enough to get Miss Bonnibel to promise to be his

wife—stop! wait one minute, and you've my leave to make all the noise you can. I want, before I stop, to bespeak for my grandson and his beautiful young bride the same love and loyalty you've yielded me. If there's any ill-will in the Flower de Hundred plantation toward the family at the Great House, I've yet to hear of it. You're an orderly, decent, faithful set of fellows, and you've got as nice wives and daughters as any on the river. For myself, for my dear old mother, and for those who are to follow us, I say good-night and Merry Christmas to you all." Miles, with his back against the oak, felt stunned by the rousing cheers that sent wave after wave of sound upon the night. He saw Dick take Bonnibel by the hand to lead her forward and stand there in the torch-light—and then, like a lost soul shut out of Heaven, he turned and fled away.

"Marse Miles," said a piping little voice; and a claw-like hand tugged at his coat.

Miles turned. He was at some distance from the house, striding with set lips whither he knew not. The little darkey had been running at his heels. In his hand a lighted torch bobbed up and down.

"What do you want? Why do you bother me?" he said roughly.

"I'se Chris, Marse Miles, Aun' Sabra's gran'child. Daddy Jack sont me, sah. He say I war to fin' you at de Gret Hus, en ax you to come dar right away."

"Come there—where?" asked the young man impatiently.

"Daddy Jack's cabin, sah. I'se got to go wid you, sah, en carry de tawch; en, Marse Miles, I so afeard."

The little fellow was shivering with cold and terror. Miles, who could not bear to see suffering in any shape, answered him more kindly:

"Here, you go along back to where the fire is, and give me the torch."

"Please, sah, I'se *bow'n*' to go," shivered Chris. "Daddy Jack, he cum after me to Mammy's cabin en *sont me* on de arrant. He say I was to tell Marse Miles 'twar a arrant o' life an def'. I'se bin lookin' fur, you, sah, 'en jus' cotch a sight o' you under dat ar tree wen you tuck to clippin' out dis a way, 'en I run arter you."

"Well, here goes," said Miles, anything at the moment seeming to him relief. "Don't be afraid, Chris; I'll keep close at your heels, and the powers of evil are more likely to think you one of their own goblins, than to go for you, I'm sure. Skip, now, you little rascal."

It was not unusual for the members of the family to be summoned to visit a cabin in cases of sudden illness; but Daddy Jack's case had in it a smack of the eerie, offering an outlet to the mad humor dominating Miles at the moment. Entering the monotonous arcades of the pine-wood, their way became as

much isolated from the chances of human interruption as if in desert wilds. A dreary path by day, by night it was always shunned.

Jack's cabin, built of lichen-covered logs the interstices filled with moss, cowered on the edge of a pond of copper-tinted water. Behind it rose blighted pines, some having died of overcrowding, old age, or want of nutriment, others having been blasted by lightning, and leaning across each other in *chevaux de frise*. At the approach of footsteps to the spot, a night bird perched upon the roof-peak uttered a warning note and flew away. At once, a light gleamed from a loop-hole beside the door, and the voice of Daddy Jack was heard to call:

"Is that you, Chris?"

"I've come with Chris, Daddy Jack," said Miles carelessly. "Hurry up and let us in; or, what's better, send this boy home to his mammy before his eyes drop quite out of his head with fear."

"Run home now, Chris," said the old man benevolently, as he unbarred and opened the heavy door of cross-laid timbers. Chris needed no second bidding. Dropping his torch, that fell into the water and went out with a hiss, the little fellow tore along the path of pine needles, more fleet of foot and willing than before or after during the span of his mortal experience. The young man, in the vigor of his athletic youth, would have laughed to scorn the idea of per-

sonal violence from the African, for whom, physically, he was so much more than a match. Nor did the magician's powers, accredited to Jack by the negroes, impress him with respect. But as the ape-like figure, a tame crow sitting upon his shoulder, stood there confronting him with a curiously sinister gaze, Miles felt a trifle shaken from his balance of cool indifference.

"Well, old man, what do you want with me?" he said, lightly stepping across the gloomy threshold, "I suppose this is your idea of a pleasant way for a man to spend the night before Christmas. If you've anything to say, out with it. I'm not one to stand tricks, remember."

"I'se a pretty good han' at rememberin', Marse Miles," said the negro, assuming meekness, as he carefully shut and barred the door again. "An ef hit *hadn' bin time*, you wouldn' nevah bin called to darken my door-step, sah. But dere's somebody upstars in de lof' dat's got to see you. Many an' many's de day he axed fur to hev you come, but hit warn't time. But I reckon hit's time now—oh, yes, I reckon hit's time now. Jes wait a minit, twel I see."

Darting at Miles a glance in which hatred and triumph were plainly blended, he scrambled up a ladder leading to the loft. Left alone, the young man looked about him with a growing consciousness that he had let himself be led into something like a trap.

Stooping to the hearth, he picked up a short club made of the root of a marsh sapling, of a pattern such as Jack had long been in the habit of selling at the boat wharf. In the gleam of embers banked in wood ashes, he saw that he had disturbed a blind fox-hound from his sleep, and at the same moment became creepingly conscious of another—deadlier presence. In a basket swathed in woolen rags, near where his hand had touched, an ominous writhing was perceptible.

“Good Heavens!” cried Miles, recoiling, to give the hearthside a wide berth. He had forgotten the witch-doctor’s home companions, which he many a time had seen Jack pack and handle like coils of rubber hose. At the same moment, something like an animated shoe brush crawled across his foot. It was a domesticated hedgehog; but at its touch Miles felt his skin turn to goose-flesh.

“The fiend take his Happy Family!” he thought. “It is only the man scared by a ‘rattler,’ who loses his grip like this.”

The hut, lighted by a wick floating in melted lard, owned little furniture save a moss-lined bunk with blankets, a table, and some stools. After Jack’s pets, including a land-turtle, its shell curiously inscribed and declared to be a thousand years old—the negroes most feared the sorcerer’s display upon the shelves half covering his walls. All that in wood or swamp Na-

ture could produce in the way of distorted growths, were here assorted. Strange roots, leprous fungi, odd mosses, nests, boughs, noose-like vines were grouped amid skulls of animals, snakes in alcohol, stuffed birds and lizards. And the chief terror of the collection was a stuffed black cat of formidable size, which never failed to reduce the most callous visitor to groveling credence in the magician's art.

Miles, calling to mind the Voodoo stories whispered in trembling by the slaves upon the solitary passing of Daddy Jack through the plantation haunts, tried to picture the old man leading his fellow worshipers to the trysting place in unfrequented woods. Jack's whistle, fashioned of swamp willow, had power like Hernani's pipe. Where and whenever it might sound, the votary must follow. The gallant captain of the corn shuckers, throned on his pile of golden ears of maize, hearing but a single flute note in the thicket, must doff his sovereignty and glide away. The bridegroom making ready his nuptials by applying odorous unguents to his wool, nay, even on his way to the cabin of his fair, must leave bride and maidens lamenting if Daddy summoned him. Old Jinny, Judy's sister, a mammoth like herself, would tremble at sound of Jack's whistle as an elephant trembles at sight of a mouse. Poll Tod, the silly giant, half stripped and streaked with dyes, would leap and dance himself into convulsions at Jack's signal, it was said. Ah!—this

was certainly not an agreeable spot in which to spend one's Christmas Eve after midnight.

There had been until now no sound overhead but the tread of Jack's flat feet on the floor. Then Miles heard a faint voice speaking between gasps, and dismissed his suspicions of intended mischief.

"Yo' can walk up now, sah, ef you please," said the African, reappearing at the trap-door above. "He's awake an' axing fer yer, sah."

Miles, climbing the ladder, found himself in a small raftered room, lit, as was the floor below, by a wick floating upon oil. There, on a pallet, lay a man painfully emaciated, spending his scant supply of breath in labored pantings, his large eyes gleaming with the unearthly light that heralds death's approach.

"Hit's my son 'Gustus, Marse Miles," said Daddy Jack, in the restrained manner he had hitherto observed. "Mebbe you aint nebber heerd o' Gus?"

"What—the one who ran away—who—" said Miles, halting in his surprise.

"Yes, sah, my on'y son, sah. Aint wuth tellin' de overseer 'bout now, is he? We haint allers bin frien's, Gus en me haint; but now he's gin out, he's cum back to his ole fader."

"Don't waste time, father," said the invalid, speaking painfully but with determination. "Many and many's the time I begged to see you, sir, since I first

came here a couple of months ago and asked shelter from my father; but he's put me off till now."

"It was you then—that night in the woods—that we hunted everywhere next day—and I was so sure she had imagined it?" Miles asked, light breaking on the confusion of his thoughts.

"Yes, sir, I'd been hiding in the swamp, waitin' my chance to get to Daddy's cabin. I was hungry, and had come out to get some nuts, when I heard voices, and the dogs, and was afraid to stir. I never meant, sir, to frighten the young lady—indeed, I didn't. The minute I laid eyes on you, I knew from the picture I had seen, it must be you, sir. Oh! if you had my secret on your soul, you'd have groaned as I did—I couldn't help it."

"Why didn't you throw yourself upon my grandfather's mercy?" said Miles. "Whatever your secret is, he'd have been kind to you."

"Oh, sir, I didn't dare! By night and by day, these twenty years and more, I've carried it. It's driven me to be a thief and worse. My hands are dipped in sin—if I had my deserts I'd be rotting now in jail."

"Come, come," said Miles. "This will not help the matter. I don't want to hear about your sins. I suppose you want me to make your peace with my grandfather; but I can tell you he'd have been better satisfied to have you send for him, direct."

“Oh, can’t you see, sir, I’m a dying man?” cried Gus, in anguish. “I couldn’t look my kind old master in the face and *want* to live. Listen to me, Master Miles, listen to every word I speak; for it means more to you than anybody in the world. And I call on God to hear me that I’m speaking gospel truth.”

He raised his right hand solemnly in the air, then dropped it heavily, racked by a fit of coughing making it impossible for him to go on with his recital.

“Sposen I tell Marse Miles, honey, twel yo’ git yo’ breff agin,” said Daddy Jack, who, perching himself upon the foot of the pallet, had lost not an expression of Miles’s face. “It’s a long time, sah, sence the Kunnel took dat journey to de Souf, and Gus went wid him as his walet. Gus was a fine young fellow, den, ’en all de gals mirationin’ him. He lub’d finery, mightily, he did; war jus’ sot on gitten all he could—”

“Surely this can do no good,” interposed Miles, disgusted.

“Let me speak, father,” said Gus. “Yes, sir, I had rings on my fingers, money in my pocket, fine clothes, all an indulgent master could give, but the devil wouldn’t let me be satisfied. That day—after the babies came ashore—you know the story, Master Miles, I can’t spare the breath to tell it over—I was walking on the beach—I saw the corpse of a woman drifting on a spar—I waded in and tried to pull her out—there, right around her body, in full view, was

strapped a belt full of money and jewelry and a lady's miniature and some papers. I'd stole studs from Master, sir, and dress-shirts and handkerchiefs, before, but never money. I counted it—five hundred in gold there was, and the diamonds were the biggest I ever saw—a necklace and earrings, and a splendid cross of emeralds—oh! Master Miles—forgive me—*they* were your mother's, sir."

"Dick's mother, you mean; go on," said Miles, with feverish eagerness.

"No, sir, I mean just what I say. The jewels belonged to Mrs. Philip Throckmorton, the lady in the picture, sir, the wife of the Colonel's only son, who was your father, Master Miles, if God calls me to judgment while I speak!"

"Good God!" said Miles hoarsely.

"I could read and write, sir, and I soon made out what the letters were about. The long one, written by Mr. Philip to the Colonel—said as plain as day—it's in my mind like it was branded there—these are his very words—'the dark hair and rich coloring of my baby boy must plead with me for the memory of his Spanish mother—whom you never saw; he is her living image, as her miniature will show.'"

Miles heard the hoot of an owl in the forest that seemed to mock him. His lips parted, but he could not speak.

"That gave me the first shock, sir, for I knew the

Colonel had settled as it was the light-haired little boy that was his grandson, along of his likeness to Marse Phil, and the locket around his neck. There warn't another blessed mark about either child to tell 'em; for I helped to take 'em both out of the basket, and me and Master undressed them by ourselves. Master was bothered enough at first, but, when he made his mind up about Master Dick, he told me that was his grandson, and kissed and blessed him solemnly."

"Go on," said Miles, after a pause filled with the labored breathing of the sufferer.

"Those diamonds, sir," cried out Gus, in sudden anguish, "they were my ruin. First, I thought I'd give up the miniature and letter; then I remembered Master was on the lookout for the belt, for the Consul at Jamaica had told him in the first letter what Mrs. Rollins had—and these things couldn't have come dry, ashore, without the belt. I hid all in a hollow tree back in the woods, and hurried up the coast, and met one of the fishermen who was out looking for the nurse's body. He gave me good-morning, and I told him I'd been walking in the woods. Pretty soon he came hurrying back to say there was a corpse ashore, and he believed he'd surely handle the reward Master had put up. He begged me to notify my master, while he staid there and watched—and I ran back, and told the Colonel, who never once suspected me. That

was my last day of honesty. I never drew a free breath again. When I got back to the plantation the sight of the jewels that were no use to me were always goading me to run away and go to France where I'd heard tell a black skin was as good as any white one. I got off safe—'twarn't hard with such an easy master, sir. He wouldn't even advertise for me. Oh, Master Miles, tell him I've repented on my knees the wrong I did him, and you, and Master Dick! Those jewels, sir—they're gone past recall. Oh, how I prayed for strength to get back here and tell you all before it was too late! I'd ha' been before, sir, but I was in jail; once in France, and here in America, too—there's a reward upon me, now—I broke jail to get here; it was hiding in the marsh that was my death. I'd ha' spoken to you that night, Master Miles, I think—it didn't seem to matter much whether I lived or died—but I heard you say those words about the man . . . that sinned against the law . . . must be punished by the law—"

Miles, in a tremor of anxiety for what was yet to come, had not dared to interrupt him by a question. Now, to his dismay, he perceived that the man's strength seemed suddenly to fail. An awful pallor came upon his face. Great beads of sweat stood out upon his brow.

"I forgive you fully, Gus," he cried, leaning over and speaking into a dying ear. "But the letter—the pic-

ture—can't you understand they'd be worth more to me than all the diamonds in the world."

"Scuse *me*, Marse Miles," interposed Daddy Jack, with terrible suavity; "I'm not wishin' to interrump' you, sah, but dat's jes de p'int whar I comes in to dis heah business. I'll tell you, sah, bout dat ar letter and picter. When 'Gustus run off from dis plantashun, I followed him en watched him hide 'em, en I dug 'em up."

"Give them to me, you black scoundrel," cried Miles, furious at his taunting tones.

"I tole Gus twarn' no use lettin' Marse Miles know he was de Kunnel's gran'son *widout de proof*," went on Daddy Jack, unmoved; "Gus'll tell you I said tw'd des unsottle you."

"Give them to me, I tell you."

"Dat time wen you wos a little sassy shaver, mocking pore ole Daddy Jack, tink I didn't put de letter en de pictur, whar you'd nebber find 'em," said the African, his face working with a fury gradually breaking bounds. "Dey's hid deeper'n dead men's bones—whar I'd ha put you long ago, but I know'd dis day would come."

"I'll give you one chance more," said the young man, "and if you surrender my stolen property, I'll let both of you go in peace. If not—and I believe there's no dealing with a snake like you—by the Lord, I'll strangle you."

"He wants to git de pooty lady stid o' Marse Dick—" sneered Daddy Jack.

With a bound, Miles sprang across the room and seized the negro by the throat. Jack fastened upon his limbs with astonishing activity, but the grip Miles had on him was irresistible and, blind with passion, he shook the old man as a terrier shakes a rat.

There was a shrill cry from the bed. Gus, drawing himself up to lean upon one elbow, called out imploringly:

"Daddy! Master Miles! for God's sake let him go. Lean down, sir. Listen. I've got more to tell you yet."

Miles loosed his hold—hurling Jack across the foot of the bed, where he lay stunned and motionless.

"Oh, sir, he's not—?"

"He's not hurt," said Miles grimly.

"Thank the Lord," Gustus whispered painfully. "Oh, sir, it's dreadful how he's always hated you! I had to humor him by letting him think he had this safe. But—I stole it back—quick, sir, quick, you can never tell what mischief he'll be up to."

His feeble fingers thrust into Miles's clasp a packet sewn in kid. It was the last effort of his strength. With a prayer for mercy on his lips, the thief fell back and ceased to breathe. When Daddy Jack became aware of the change, he threw himself upon the corpse with frantic cries, appearing not to know that Miles was present.

The young man, after waiting undecided for a time, left the father with his dead. Tarry within the loathsome den he could not, but, lifting the bar, went out under the pale skies that precluded the Christmas dawn.

Strange anomaly of negro nature, however degraded, that finds an outlet for all emotions in the utterance of religious aspiration! From the cabin loft floated the words of the hymn:

“There is a foun-tain filled with blood
Drawn from—Emman-uel’s veins,
And sin-ners plunged beneath that flood
Lose all—their guilty stains.

The dy-ing thief—rejoiced to see
That foun-tain in his day,
Oh! may not I—as vile as he—
Wash all—my sins—away!”

“The old scoundrel,” thought Miles. “He’ll be back to-morrow at his old tricks; what I’ve got to do is to look sharp when he discovers he has been out-witted.”

Dizzy, and heedless of his steps, he followed the tunnel in the pines out to the quarter road. In the cabins all was silent; except by the ailing or the youngest children they were deserted. All night the revels of the barbacue had kept up. Over fires of corncobs, built in shallow pits, hung the carcasses of sheep and hogs, while around them capered dark forms, singing, yelling, the scene suggesting some barbaric human

sacrifice. From such occasions, it seemed that these sons and daughters of far Africa had but one step to make backward into the condition of their forefathers. Skirting the pine knoll on whose bare summit the feasting was in progress, Miles, too absorbed in his own reflections to give heed to aught beside, hesitated upon the threshold of the house. He shrank from the room he had been expected to share with Dick. The mere thought of Dick affected him as if a cold hand were laid upon his beating heart. Remembering the old school-room was easily entered through doors never locked, he found his way into its dark interior. From a basket of pine cones and twigs upon the hearth, he built a fire, and at the quick blaze, mounting up in the cavernous chimney, warmed his fingers still clinging to the packet which remained to convince him that he had not dreamed an evil dream. Tossed between hope and fear that he had been deceived, dreading yet longing to open it, he turned over and over the worn, soiled object; and at last, with an impetuous movement, cut with his pocket-knife the stitches that confined it, and threw with disgust the outer envelope into the fire.

“Is it my future and Dick’s that I have here?” he wondered, still hesitating.

Then, with impatience at the cowardice of his own delay, he unfolded the tissue-paper wrapped in many thicknesses about the contents, and within, incased in

cotton-wool, found a miniature and a letter. As he slanted the glass covering the picture, to catch the proper light, Miles uttered an exclamation—refined, softened into the lines of womanly beauty, it was yet unmistakably his own face. On the reverse of the medallion were engraved these words, in Spanish:

“To my beloved husband, Philip, from his wife Euphrasia, this picture of herself, on the birthday of their son, Richard Miles Throckmorton, May 25th, 183—”

“Richard *Miles*,” he thought; “then at least I have had my rightful name.”

Crowding under duress of his will the ugly demons that were already swarming to his soul, he lifted the thin sheet of foreign paper, and unfolded it—the letter written by poor Philip after his wife’s death of the pestilence, and in face of the risk of the same fate for himself—the letter for which the dear Colonel had spent so many yearning moments of regret, which would have made so vast a difference in Miles’s lot in life had it but reached its destination in due time!

In reading it, Miles was conscious of intrusion as into a sanctuary. It was a boy’s outpouring of penitence for pain given to a beloved parent, of hope for the future, framed in words meant for the loving eyes of one alone. It struck Miles as so very curious that the writer had been but twenty-three years old—but a little older than himself, and yet a husband sorrowing

for a lost wife, a father pleading for his child. It softened his heart not only to the shadowy image of Philip Throckmorton, but to feel the first throb of filial love he had experienced. There was something exquisite and yet poignant in this tenderness that rose up from far distant graves, and fell on his bruised spirit like a balm. Was not this what the hurt child feels whose heart is lightened because his father has kissed his tears away, although the pain endures? Miles's eyes moistened more than once during the reading which made him aware of hopes and plans for his future conceived so fondly and so unavailingly.

There was no room to doubt the accuracy of the statement Gus had made. The jewels, as described—by him, were enumerated, the miniature identified—here were the very words gasped by the thief in dying:

“ . . . the dark hair and rich coloring of my baby boy must plead with me for the memory of his Spanish mother whom you never saw—he is her living image, as her miniature will show. He will be hot tempered and impetuous, but easily swayed by love. If I read my son aright, you will have no cause to blush for your successor. Oh! that it may be that what I dread may never come to pass and that I, myself, may place him in your arms Tom's boy is healthy and sweet-tempered. With his fair locks, and unusually light blue eyes, he repeats his little New England mother, showing no trace of poor

Tom. The two came to us for a visit when Tom sailed away. When the news arrived of his loss at sea, of course my home was theirs—you know I loved Tom dearly, spite of all his faults; and it was because I was here he came over to Jamaica and took a turn at sugar-planting (a failure, need I say it, like the rest). Mrs. Tom, poor little thing, sickened the day before my Euphrasie—they were buried together. At the first approach of the epidemic we had sent away the children in the care of the faithful Englishwoman, a soldier's widow, who will—if I do not—place them in your hands. To Jane Rollins, who is thoroughly trustworthy, I have confided the valuables you know of, and she will also consign to you this letter. I assured Mrs. Tom that I could depend upon your welcome of her child. Choosing to fancy me her benefactor, she, with her own hands, hung around her baby's neck a little picture of me which she begged Mrs. Rollins not to take off. Who better than I, my dearest dad, knows that your heart is big enough for two? Oh, if I could sweep away the cloud that lies between us—could, face to face, tell you all these things—! . . . Tom's baby, also, is called Richard Miles. In our family, we seem to have a passion for repeating the same names. Knowing your objection to having children called after living sponsors, I have decided on giving my fellow, for everyday use, his second name of Miles. How far back it goes in our line, doesn't it? A good, square, straightforward name, that none but a straightforward man should bear. But Richard, I love best—Richard-the-Lion-Heart-Throckmorton, as I remember scrawling in a book of

yours one day, and almost getting licked for it. Dear old days!—dear father,—my heart melts like a woman's as I write. By Jove, though, this letter's as full of hearts as a valentine. I must brace up and look on the bright side of our possible reunion. Glancing at the date of this, I find I was twenty-three last week! Think of it will you? What an old fellow, and you a grandfather! God send the rest of my life may be spent on the old plantation side by side with my father, who now, and always, has the love and duty of his son,

PHILIP MILES THROCKMORTON.

After he had read for a second time the entire letter, and had laid it down, Miles felt a lump swelling in his throat. His first impulse was to knock boldly at the door of his grandfather's room, and walk into it, head erect, proclaiming his discovery and his proofs. . . . It was broad day when he started from his reverie to find his fire gone out and his limbs cramped. But he heeded not these things, for the notion that was tugging at his heartstrings and vexed him sorely and yet would not leave him. Goaded by it, he went out again and tried by active exercise to rid himself of the unwelcome guest that had found a lodgment, now, to stay. He took his trouble to the woods as he had done many a time before. Like a stag flying to green glades with the arrow sticking in his side, the poor boy rushed through the undergrowth, crackling and rending thorny thickets, and

never pausing till he came to a spot remote from the haunts of man.

It was a beautiful place, as green almost as in summer, with clumps of laurel and arbor vitæ and cedar all about. The hollies here, growing to great height and breadth, and covered with crimson berries, were like blazing lamps in the forest. Every tuft and twig had its coating of hoar frost, and the morning air was wondrously clear and still, filling the lungs with exhilaration. Miles knelt down and drank at a little stream tinkling under green moss and dead leaves, and laved his head and felt refreshed. He looked up and saw on the bough of an oak high above a splendid cluster of gray-green mistletoe with pearly berries, and the old boyish desire to climb and fetch it down for grandmamma, came over him. A rabbit, skurrying by, made him wonder if Dick had been to see the traps—it was Dick's day to go yesterday, and—Miles laughed aloud—in the woods at Flower de Hundred a man could never grow old! Surely this was the tree,—yes, of course it was,—he knew that odd bulge, midway on a branch, so difficult to get over—whence he had tumbled the day he sprained his knee and shoulder. They had set out, Dick and he, with the cart and mule and old Jock, to pick mistletoe for Christmas ten years back, and, straying away from Jock, had come upon this tree, as tempting then as now. Miles volunteered to “shin” it, though Dick

warned him of its unusual height. After a tough climb he had seized the bunch and started to descend. A limb, betraying his keen sight, broke under him, and down he crashed to earth, clutching the mistletoe through all. Dick's face, when he got his wind again and lay there squeezing down the groans, he never could forget—so dirty, tear-stained, wretched, full of yearning love! What an affectionate little kid Dick was to be sure! How he'd rolled his jacket up, and put it under the sufferer's head, who fainted before Dick had gone far on the way to get old Jock and the cart.

When Dick returned and found him senseless, and believed him dead—"his mo'nin wud a bruk yer heart to see," said Jock to Judy. . . . So it had ever been . . . to the rest of the world Dick ranked first—to Dick, Miles! And now, without premonition, had come into Miles's life—that, halting, stumbling in achievement as it had been, was yet full of generous impulse and on the threshold of a broader sphere of manly action—the greatest opportunity his mind could conceive to prove the love he bore Dick in return. It was that thought which goaded him and drove him, and would not let him rest. For Dick's sake he had renounced his chance with Bonnibel; Dick might never know it, even the dear grandfather had but half guessed at the wrench it cost him; but it was done, and his unworthy passion, in its final throes the night before, shamed him now to think about. Of

what value the sacrifice, if he were to take the ground from under Dick's feet, to rob him of place and fortune, to cover him with the odium of having filled a false position before the world, to set the thousand tongues of gossip wagging, and rend away forever from their peaceful home its veil of privacy? Next came also to torment him the idea that some things are not easy to do in cold blood. When, now, after deliberation, it had reached the point of revealing his news to the family, the poor fellow absolutely shuddered and drew back as from a dishonorable action. What in the first flush of triumph he had called his right, seemed to him a thing that it would be rather sneaking to stretch out his hand to take. It is, indeed, never certain that a break is welcome in any long-settled and not unpleasant habit. That this law of routine which rules us inexorably might make everybody in the household wish he had held his peace, suggested itself in the most matter of fact fashion, and dashed his heroism as with an icy shower. There was one point over which Miles struggled long and distressfully. Had he also the right to withhold from his grandfather the letter, so precious in his eyes? At this, the tenderness put to flight by cold calculation came back and filled the eyes of the lonely boy with honest tears.

When he came out of the woods Miles had quite made up his mind what it was best for him to do. The sun was shining, the plantation was noisy with

cries of "I ketch you Christmas gif'," and when sleepy Dick awoke it was to find Miles fully dressed, and smiling down upon him with something more than mere Christmas brightness in his face.

"Christmas gift!" said Dick drowsily.

"All right, old man, I'll pay up," Miles answered.

Directly after breakfast was observed the ceremony of distributing gifts to the quarter, the negroes in gala-array assembling at the "Gret Hus" to receive their dole. Then the house-party walked across a field path to the little church where Cousin Polly Lightfoot kept everything in charge except the rector, who assisted her in the matter of chancel decorations, and the black velvet alms-pouch attached to a long pole, which it was the Colonel's duty to pass among the worshipers. The quaint old pew, built for the family, was a sort of curtained gallery, relinquished long since for one in the body of the church. The little Colonial edifice, erected in the form of a cross, with massive walls, a roof shingled with juniper, and a flagging of freestone, had well resisted Time. The graceful arches, the pulpit hanging apparently like an oriole's nest in mid-air, the silver chalice and paten presented by Queen Anne, and the tablets, with inscriptions in Latin and armorial bearings that were set round the walls, spoke of old times more glorious to state than church; for there was a legend that one of the earliest rectors had preached a sermon here in pink and spurs under his

gown, and after service had carried a challenge from one to another of his parishioners to fight a duel!

The Colonel, seated between Dick and Bonnibel, looked reverently happy. More than once his eyes were observed to wander in the direction of the slab recording the names of Mildred "Wife of Richard Throckmorton," and of Philip, "their beloved Son," and his lips to move as if in prayer. Miles, who sat facing them, thought the beautiful peace on his grandfather's face a better sermon than any that could be preached to him from the pulpit. It gave him strength to do what was yet to be done. And it made him feel there is a possession worth more to a man than a goodly heritage in lands.

The Christmas ball at Flower de Hundred, since spoken of as "the last before the wah," came off with due *éclat*. Old Saul, who kept together the traditions of former festivities, announced that this one exceeded its predecessors as one star surpasseth another in splendor, chiefly because "'taint ebbry day de plantation sees a bride like Miss Bonnibel lead de Virginny reel wid a groom like Marse Dick." The old butler did not, however, carry an entirely light heart into the festivities. On the return of the family from church, he had met them with the startling announcement that Daddy Jack's cabin had been burnt out in the night, and the old man had disappeared. No trace was found of him in the square of blackened earth

under the ruins. Miles, who went with the other men of the household to satisfy himself upon this point, felt convinced that the old reprobate had, upon discovering his loss, in a frenzy of baffled rage fired his cabin and escaped into the swamp carrying the body of his son. However that may be, Daddy Jack was never seen again in his old haunts, and the negroes did not hesitate to believe that he had gone off with his comrade, the night-doctor, on a blast of wind which, as they averred, had arisen and departed in the hour before daybreak.

This circumstance was coupled with another of equal portent in Saul's mind. When he had come into the hall that morning early, he had for the first time in his memory found the Yule-log gray and cold, with not a spark remaining to prophesy good fortune to Flower de Hundred during the coming year!

Old Guy the founder, and Lady Mary, and the other silent guardians enframed in wild wood greenery, must have been satisfied with the pleasant aspect of affairs! To outward view there was not a cloud upon the scene. The quadrilles,—cotillions, they called them,—more in vogue than waltz or polka, were danced under the dominion of black Cæsar in a high stock, standing collar, blue coat with brass buttons, nankeen breeches, and pumps dating fifty years back, fragrant of the camphor of old Sabra's chest. He played first fiddle in every sense, shouting at intervals,

“Forward en back! Balance to yer pardners! Right en lef’ through! Ladies change! *Sachay!* Balancay! Now! den! Han’s all roun’.” The dark faces looking in at every door and window were to the full as much impressed by Cæsar swaying the multitude as by the white folks’ show. When the reel was danced Cæsar rose to concert pitch of excitement. He waved, scraped, shouted, made his fiddle sing. He was no more to be resisted than the Pied Piper of Hamelin. His jolly visage shone with glee and perspiration. Mrs. Selina Ackley in a Bayadère magenta silk, with ringlets and a scarf, hung her head to one side, held her skirts out and, like Cherubina de Willoughby, “danced up insidious” to meet Miles. Mrs. Hazleton had captured Mr. Crabtree for her partner, and, having once consented, the Parson put conscience into his work. Solemn, painstaking, he revived by-gone steps, and even cut a rusty pigeon’s wing. Tabby, losing her breath at the outset, made no attempt to regain it, but puffed down the middle and panted back, her cap askew, her gown of changeable silk ballooning, her face beaming with fun. Old Tom, dancing with handsome Mrs. Willis, had put on his best spirits with the ruffled shirt and hair brooch reserved for balls and weddings. The only fly in his ointment was that Vashti had made him wear a titillating plaster on his chest, and a bit of red flannel around his throat. He knew the one was beginning

to burn him like the deuce, and he was afraid the other would "ride up" into sight above his stock.

Bonnibel, in white "Swiss," with cape-jasmines in her hair, and Ursula, in white too (her first frock that "touched"), with a cherry sash and topknot, throwing themselves into the spirit of the scene; Dick, feeling that life could hold only one moment happier for him than this; Miles, dark, handsome, carrying his head erect, adored by the girls who shared his favors evenly; Cousin Polly, footing it with the best of them; the gay girls and stalwart youths, kinsmen, neighbors, friends, who made up the company,—as I write they seem to join hands in a dizzy round, before vanishing into the shadows of the war!

And now the ball is over, the dancers scattered! Old Saul goes about putting out Christmas candles, banking ashes on the fires. Good-night to Flower de Hundred! Good-bye to happy days!

CHAPTER VI.

IN the spring of 1860, on the mountains that looked upon Palermo as Palermo, couched on her "golden shell," looked on the sea, had gathered the little army of a patriot-chief, waiting his order to swoop to rescue of the town from Bourbon rule. Their camp life was of the roughest. As Garibaldi fared, so fared they. But they were all—officers, soldiers, priests, guides—united in a tremendous purpose, that made them brothers, and the hardships of every day a mere tale to tell to future generations of the children of free Sicily.

One May morning during the period of enforced quiet before the descent upon the town, a young volunteer sat apart from the others engaged in writing upon leaves torn from his pocket-book. His desk was the guacho saddle which served also as a pillow to the sheepskin stretched on the grass, where by night he dreamed under the stars. He was dark and picturesque enough to be an Andalusian; so said, at least, Frate Léone, a jolly, fighting monk who made one of the expedition, and was his especial chum. The Sicilian compromised with his first astonishment over his friend's assertion that he was an American, by saying, "American? Oh, yes, but it is South Americans you are who call yourselves Virginians; that explains

your looks, my son, and makes you so much at home among us Latins."

Frate Léone, basking like a lizard in the sun, waits for the conclusion of the young man's letter. We, who need not stand on ceremony, may follow his pencil as it flies.

"Yes, it is you, my dear staunch little cousin, who have earned the right to my last long letter before the next move forward in our glorious campaign—and if I fall before Palermo you will know what store I set by the charming budget of home news you have given me in your inimitable way—for, young as you are, my dear, you have already the light touch, inspired by a warm heart, that creates the ideal woman's letter. Why, only to re-read it just now, and shut my eyes, carried me back to old Virginy's shore, and I could smell the magnolia blooms,—they are passing now, and all the other trees upon the river lawn are shaking out their censers,—and every day the darling little Madam goes out in her chair between the box hedges and notes how this honeysuckle is encroaching over everything, and says the pink daily rose must really not be allowed to cover the poor old smoke-tree with its blossoms—and her little black charioteer picks calycanthus shrubs and bruises them to smell, working his toes in the warm sand of the walks. You ride with grandfather to see the sheep shorn—foolish, struggling things, resisting capture till overpowered, and held prone, while Cæsar drives his sharp shears around so skillfully that the fleece turns back like a lady's glove—and they emerge mincing and sidling and

afraid to walk—"lawk-a-mercy on me, can this be I." Then, far away on the other side of the field, huddled in a whitey yellow blur upon the green, they espy their comrades—sure enough, it *is* fashionable to go without overcoats—and off, bleating and running, in staggers at first, then swift as the wind to join the rest!—And this is only a little part of the long May day's delights! There is nothing too small to interest me as to the place and people. I have *devoured* all you say about the gray mare's colt and the big sturgeon Jock caught, and Fuzzy Top's chickens; and I congratulate you heartily that the powers that be have decided to let Mademoiselle go back to live with her sister in France. You wont be a model young lady, Nutty, unless you encourage their sending you to a finishing school in Richmond or Baltimore. But, bless me! I for one, don't want you finished. If it is what you are now, I think I prefer you *half-done!* Get Parson Crabtree to suggest books for you to read, and to have an eye to your Latin and mathematics. Nutty, a hundred times I've thought of your brave, pale little face the day I came away. You were off by yourself upon the wharf. There were no tears in any eyes but yours—it warmed my heart that was like a stone inside of me. And though I've never said anything about your coming to my side that Christmas eve, you must not think I did not understand. Some day you'll be the sunshine of a good man's life. If he's not good enough for you, I think I'll throttle him. There are only two good men, and they are my grandfather and Dick. You ask if I am happy. Aye, that am I, it is the life I was born

for, and I wouldn't give it up for a king's ransom. After knocking about in the East as you know, and happening in for a nice little scrimmage with seventy Arabs, who set on our party of less than twenty men, on our way from Jericho,—my grandfather will have had the letter telling this,—I loafed around awhile in Greece—the most perfect atmosphere in all the world—and then, Italy and Garibaldi! I'm only a private in his ranks, but that's enough for me. Such a man! I feel as if my pencil would tear the paper to tatters if I went to saying what I think. He's taken notice of me and made me a sort of a scout already, with a horse to ride, and he never passes me without a kind word for America.

“We are camped upon the hills above Palermo, and any day may descend upon the town. Our tents are blankets stretched over lances stuck into the ground. Our fare a calf stewed with onions, with the black bread of these peasants, and we drink the native wine. (This is not to say I wouldn't be after fancying a cut of one of the Honey Hall hams, or a pot of blackberry jam, you'll please to understand!) Happy? Who wouldn't be? Such a glorious view of sea and mountain tops before me, as I scribble. Such clear air, such merry company! There, I must stop, but I'll take it up again to-morrow. One thing, though—that packet I left with you—remember, if I die, you are to open it, and then do with it what you like—and I must not forget to say here that I got Dick's note, saying his wedding day was set for April—”

“What is it that has stung you, my son?” cries out the good brother, stirred from his repose.

"Me? · Nothing!" says the other.

But he writes no more that day; and at dawn upon the morrow the little army creeps down the rocky stairway of the hills and catches the sleeping city unawares. As the Bourbons retreat, and all the foreigners in town take to their ships lying in the offing, amid fire and smoke, but with little bloodshed, Garibaldi enters into possession of his prize.

Here, it has been said, began the epic of the Garibaldian legend. The Palermese, looking upon the hero as an angel sent by God to their relief, surrounded him, kissing his garments, hailing him as deliverer. For a couple of days thereafter, the bombarding from the ships kept them busy; but when that ceased Palermo belonged once more to Sicily, and Garibaldi assumed the dictatorship of the island.

The letters from Miles to his family, after this, were necessarily infrequent. The summer's campaign, which was like a march of triumph, kept his blood at fever heat, his thoughts concentrated on the fortunes of the hour.

After the battle of Melazzo, a letter was written for, not by, the young American, whom the chief had honored with his friendship, and whose pluck and soldierly bearing had stood him in good stead, as we shall see. His sword-arm was in a sling, but he was otherwise in good shape, sitting at an inn table in Messina, dictat-

ing to an Englishman, a volunteer like himself, who cheerfully served as scribe.

"I am all right, my dear grandfather, and I make haste to give you the details of the fight of the 20th of July. It began, at daybreak, by the Neapolitans opening fire on our left, from behind a reed-bed where they lay concealed. We were in the center near the General, and at once got the order to charge on the enemy's line. They were so well screened by fig-trees and thick growing reeds our bayonets were no good, but on we went, to the assault, plunging headlong into a tremendous fight. One of our Generals, Medici, had a horse killed under him, and gallant Cosenz was popped over by a spent ball, and we believed him to be killed. But he was up in a minute shouting. "Viva l'Italia." Then Garibaldi, with a few aids and guides and the Genoese Carbineers, while attempting to take the enemy on the flank, came on an ugly gun in the middle of the road, before a party of soldiers, who showered us with grape. Great Heaven, what a slaughter! When the smoke cleared away, there was Garibaldi on foot, one boot and stirrup gone, beside his wounded horse—a mere handful of his men around him, the ground strewn with dead. I lost my horse, and was hit in the right arm, but managed to scramble into somebody's empty saddle, and follow the General, who had done the same. Well, we took that monster of a gun, but a troop of cavalry came down on us like a hurricane, trying to get it back.

"They rode into a ring of fire, their leader meeting face to face with ours, who seized his bridle-rein and

called on him to surrender. His answer was a saber-thrust, parried by our chief, who, with his sword, laid the Neapolitan Colonel's cheek open to the bone. Then came one of those sights that dazzle and thrill you—a sort of flash of up-swung sabers around Garibaldi's head, and our men, closing around him, fighting like fiends to rescue him! I had the luck to knock the horse from under a man who was trying to ride me down, but he grabbed at my throat in return, and where I should be now, but for the hand that writes this letter—he says, 'enough of that,' and so, perhaps, it is. The newspapers, will tell you about our taking Messina. The little town is crowded with soldiers, like a camp—”

So far the letter was in a strange hand. An addition to it, in cramped characters, evidently the work of the left hand, was from Miles himself.

“Now for my news. I couldn't let Cunningham—the best fellow you ever saw, besides having saved my life—put this in. I'm Captain on the General's staff, this fortnight past—he called me out upon the field, sir, and did it publicly. I knew you'd want to hear it. Tell Dick and Ursula (who's as good as any boy), and the Parson—and God bless you all, dear grandfather.”

During his period of service with Garibaldi, Captain Throckmorton enjoyed the privilege of taking part in eleven battles and many skirmishes, besides being sent by the Commander-in-Chief upon one or two delicate missions, involving risk to his neck. This was, on the

whole, a fortunate state of things, for his messmates—who had made such a favorite of the dare-devil young American with the soft voice and courteous manners; who had been entertained by his clever imitations of the negro patting Juba on the banks of the James, or dancing breakdowns after the corn was harvested—had found out also that Miles was never happier than when in action. He had moody spells during which none cared to approach him; and the one or two exhibitions of his temper when roused had not invited a repetition of the display. The marches, the bivouacs, the fights, the secret service,—above all the hero-worship for his chief,—kept him wholesome and generally cheerful. With his friend Cunningham, he was sent to London upon an expedition to recruit volunteers and in search of the sinews of war, and, returning, remained by Garibaldi until the splendid transfer by that leader, to King Victor Emmanuel, of a kingdom he might have claimed as his own, and his subsequent retirement to Caprera.

Let us now, for the better understanding of events that are to follow, bestow a passing glance upon the social conditions of the American Republic, so soon to be plunged into fratricidal war.

In the Southern States, the discussion of the tragedy at Harper's Ferry—the bass note struck at the beginning of the struggle, whose echoes will go on

reverberating down all Time—had known a temporary lull. Talk was now all about the new President, upon whom so much depended, and everywhere the voice of the politician was heard in the land. A charming young English prince, come over the seas into loyal Canada, had danced his way gayly through the Eastern and Middle States. People at the North might pretend republican indifference to this event, but in the South it was quite otherwise. Virginians especially, who still treasured portraits of the beautiful Florizel, great-uncle of the present royalty,—who, spite of their Washington and Jefferson, continued to talk of England as “home” and the “*parent* land,”—were properly excited at his coming. They even felt a little uncertain how they could continue to like that delightful, witty Mr. Thackeray, after his lectures upon the Georges.

Elsewhere, the Japanese princes divided attention with a new mammoth steamship called the Great Eastern. Washington Irving had died; and, following matchless Geoffry Crayon to the shades, had passed that kindly gentleman, G. P. R. James, whose works were many, but, by my halidom! I trow, there be few who read them now! People were buying, borrowing, taking out of libraries, eagerly talking about, four new novels: Elsie Venner, The Mill on the Floss, The Marble Faun, and the Woman in White. (One could wish there were some to equal these in

the present year of grace!) Spiritualism, through its accomplished prophet, Mr. Home, had brought into vogue table-turnings, raps, and flights of the soul through space.

But, in Virginia, there was too much of anxiety for the future of their State to allow indulgence in many fashionable pastimes. Men, living in sequestered neighborhoods, mounted their horses and cantered over to the cross-roads' post-office or County Court House to hear the news, and feel the pulse of the community. Mothers of families, to whom their lords returned from these disturbing expeditions to sit for hours poring with knitted brows over the newspapers, could not at first understand what the whole thing was about. They were well off as they were. The crops were good, hog-killing promised fairly, the negroes, in spite of that horrid scare of Harper's Ferry, were behaving as usual, not a pot of the summer preserves had fermented, and it was a healthy season. The children gave little heed to the brewing trouble. From what the young ones had been able to pick up in the conversation of their elders, there existed in the far-away North, a race of dark-complexioned folk called "Black Republicans," who wanted to get their colored people to run away and sit at hotel tables beside the whites! A silly notion, not worth all this pother—and they went back to their play, these children who were to see the wave of civil war

in all its horrors invade their hearth-stones, and some of them to grow up deprived of education, pinched and narrowed to live the lives of the poorest.

Seeing farther into a millstone than did the quiet dwellers of the interior, those of the Border gathered themselves together to meet the coming shock. Moderate men shrank aghast from the apparition confronting them. At Flower de Hundred, the Colonel watched the movement of the advanced secessionists with an anxiety little short of fever. Day and evening he would pace the hall and study, brooding over affairs; and thus, one afternoon in December, Peyton Willis, riding over to inquire what news had come by the down boat, found him in great perturbation.

Willis, a then rare type in the better class of Virginia society, an "extreme measures" man, had been pressing the Colonel hard for reasons why he desired their State to hold back in the attitude of a mediator between the contending parties.

"South Carolina has seceded, sir!" the Colonel said, greeting him with a somber face.

"Then it is war—war to the knife," cried out Willis, violently striking his fist upon the table. "If our men in power are fit for their places, they'll show those cursed Abolitionists we're prepared to meet them in the field. I'm ready to take up arms to-morrow. I hope before a year has gone the soil of our State will

be one vast military camp awaiting the drum tap to repel armed interference from the North."

"I trust not, Willis; I trust not," said the old man, gnawing his gray mustache, as he did when sorely vexed. "We have had wise rulers in the past as well as good soldiers. Let's hope the men of to-day are fit to cope with the issues of to-day. Of this action of South Carolina there has been hardly room to doubt. Long ago, when she was so near seceding about nullification, Mr. Calhoun prophesied that when it came to be a question not of taxes but of slavery, she would not hesitate to leave the Union. To my judgment the misfortune is that we're letting party shriekers make slavery the matter of contention between the States. If to fight we are finally driven, which God forbid, let it be for the right of self-government, for liberty, but not for slavery."

"If I fight, Colonel," said Willis, in a deliberately drawling voice, assumed in his moments of keen excitement, "I wish it to be clearly understood that it is to maintain my place as one of the governing race who wont brook having his slave held as his equal. I decline to submit to be plundered by a set of highway robbers from another country, who, sneaking down here to sow the seeds of revolt among our slaves, would forever destroy the security of our homes; who are directly responsible for the ruin and bloodshed sure to come. Peace! There is no peace, when we

are linked in the bonds of brotherhood to fellows who stoop to that. The torch John Brown put into the hands of our blacks has already burnt away such bonds. There are none existing. By the act of the men of the North we are freed from them. If we must fight to stay free, then let us fight."

"I don't sympathize with the sentimentalists who cry out on us as fiends, because we accept the conditions of life and society transmitted to us by our fathers," said the Colonel, "and which, till recently, mark you, existed in Massachusetts. We, at a tremendous cost, have kept our negroes from lapsing into barbarism, and they are a heavy weight to carry. But I'd have been glad to have been born free of the responsibility of slaves. I wish my great-grandchildren could live free of it."

"Why, Colonel!" exclaimed Willis, with a glitter in his eye. "This is queer talk for a slaveholder at a time like this."

"I have held this opinion since before you were born, and you know it," answered Richard Throckmorton, getting up to walk the floor.

"Then you don't mean to resist the Yankees when they come?"

"Why, sir, confound you, d'ye think a man who's fought under *that*, can wish to fight against it?" cried out the old man, stopping short, and pointing to the flag that hung above his midshipman's sword upon the

wall. "When I was a little chap, pacing the decks of the *Constitution*, I used to watch it every day above me, and think of the blood that had been shed to put it there—I was lifted up, then and there, out of boyhood into a man's sense of responsibility and honor. When we went into action with the *Guerrière*, and hot shot began to rain upon our decks, I can remember catching a glimpse of those colors that was like a shock of electricity. A man don't forget such things because his hair is white, Peyton Willis. Put that into your pipe and smoke it, and then you'll understand why I don't want to take arms against this flag."

"But suppose your State goes out of the Union," suggested Willis, with a half-smile.

A flush mounted to the Colonel's forehead, and deepened the brown of his withered cheeks.

"Virginia!" he exclaimed, in reverent accents; "I should feel as if my mother called me to come to her in need."

"You make me think of that epitaph over the Throckmorton who was the last of the Burgesses to hold out for King George," Willis said, softened against his will: "'Loyal to his King, As he was Born, he Died—a True Virginian.'"

"You may write 'ditto' over my old bones, when it's time to lay me at his feet, Phil," answered the Colonel gently.

"I'm thinking this little rumpus will bring home that young cockerel of yours, over the sea, to crow on his own fence," went on his neighbor. "That's what we need now—young blood and spirit that does not count the cost."

"You'll have enough of it, never fear," said the Colonel, sighing. "My last letter from Miles tells me he is determined to resign the commission the King has given him in the Sardinian service,—as he has done to all of Garibaldi's officers,—and sail for home at the first indication that his State requires his services."

"Good!" cried Willis, slapping his knee. "And Dick? We can depend on Dick?"

"You may depend on Dick not to hold back in time of real emergency—yes. But he will not move without weighing well the reasons and the proprieties."

"Geography has taken care that whatever comes we shall be in for it. A few months, and this quiet sluggish old river of ours may be alive with gun-boats, and our shores with camps. Nobody, living where we do, can sit down with folded hands and merely pray for the result. I shall run up to Richmond to-morrow, and take the sense of my friends there as to the action of our State. If Virginia fails to follow Carolina, then I shall blush for her, and shake her dust off my feet. To secure Southern independence, I'd pull up stakes to-morrow, and go down to enlist as a South Carolina volunteer."

“Put on the brakes, Phil,” said the Colonel, wincing. “Let us talk of something pleasanter. I hope Helen has decided to come to us for Christmas. We must draw together over our broken links, you know. Miles and Nutty both away! The little girl is a great loss to me, but her aunt was in such dire trouble at the death of both her daughters from Roman fever that, when she came back to America and begged for Ursula, we felt obliged to send her off. Dick and Bonnibel will have to do double duty in cheering us old people. And this is no time,” here the good man unconsciously groaned aloud, “when our land has passed under the pillar of cloud, for Christian men who love their country to give their days to idle pleasuring. So, take it all and all, we are not likely to be gay.”

January saw the secession of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, and Florida, to join hands with their hot-blooded little sister State. By the time April had again girdled the green slopes of the James River country with flowers, there was no longer room for much doubt of the intention of the Old Dominion. On the seventeenth of that month the ordinance of secession was adopted by the Convention of Virginia, “subject to popular vote,” and the populace said,—war! The first gun fired in the bombardment of Fort Sumter had loosened the tongue of the most chary of speech among them. The excitement was universal,

and no voice was now heard but bade God speed the independence of the South. With the formal proffer of his sword to Virginia, by her true son and trained soldier, Colonel Robert Edmund Lee, and his assignment to the command of her forces, a feeling of security was established that went far to dismiss doubt from the mind of the most conservative. And when, on the first day of May, was heard the call of the Governor of the State for volunteers to defend her from invasion, thousands of willing swords flashed in the air.

The Colonel, going to Richmond to meet Miles on his return from Italy, put his arm within that of his splendid young soldier, and proudly walked to the Governor's house in the Capitol Square, where, in an interview with his old friend, the Executive, he reported both himself and Captain Throckmorton, late of his Majesty King Victor Emmanuel's service, as ready for military duty to the State; and they were in due time and with due formality assigned to their respective commands. The Reverend Taliaferro Crabtree, who, like the "fine Irish gentleman all of the olden time," had a rooted objection to being left out "when such good stuff as this was flying around his head," offered himself as Chaplain, and was assigned to the regiment of infantry to which Miles was appointed Major. Peyton Willis, clutching eagerly at the first straw of opportunity for active service, had

been a volunteer at the capture of Harper's Ferry; he had there joined a company of artillery reporting to Col. Thomas J. (afterwards "Stonewall") Jackson, and was by that officer mustered into the army for the war.

Of the other friends and neighbors of Flower de Hundred, none were found satisfied to hug the hearthstone or remain hand on the plow. Men of advancing years, whose gray hairs had earned the honorable right to stay, enlisted as privates side by side with boys of sixteen who had strained away from their mother's tears and kisses. Richmond, already the center of activity, and on the first day of June to be the Capital of the new Government, was filled with daily arriving volunteers from the more distant counties, most of them eager to furnish their own uniforms, horses, and personal equipments. Citizens of easy fortune like Richard Throckmorton, who had also fitted out a company in his grandson's regiment, gave money, horses, mules, and supplies for the gathering troops.

And Dick? He had lingered—not so much on the score of his wife, who already made altars before him, sacrificing thereon as full a measure of praise and petting as if the world contained no other man than hers—but for the sake of his little great-grandmother, who could not consent to give him up.

To the young, that war in its infancy inspired more

of exhilaration than of awe. Turning its gala face upon them, it dazzled but did not dismay. The very air seemed to thrill with joyous clamor, with clatter of swords and rattle of guns, with squeak of fifes and roll of drums. Inside the plantation gates—with the gaping negroes and the crops rippling like seas of emerald, and the old-time ways that made life as comfortable as rest on a feather-bed—was stagnation, pure and simple. Who that had blood in his veins and virile force to carry him away could bear to loll there at ease and read in the newspaper about his brothers in the fight? The women were as eager as the men. All over the South they were standing bareheaded at their house doors in the spring sunshine, swallowing sighs, affecting cheerfulness, waving hands and handkerchiefs till their horsemen had spurred out of sight.

How noble he looks ("my husband" or "my boy") in uniform! No one sits a horse as well as he! How bright his eyes are, and his smile! He will ride into battle looking so, and the foe will fly before him! And it is I—I—who have given this hero to my country: therefore I will not weep, but rather exult that he is mine, and I am his!

But to the aged, who had long since narrowed their universe into the radius of home, it was harder to face these partings; and Mrs. Throckmorton, at first, begged Dick to stay with her, at least until after har-

vest, as her son Richard had convinced himself it was his duty to go at once.

Dick promised, and found enough to do to fill his days, for, although Sampson, the faithful overseer, had shown no symptoms of intention to forsake their interests, the negroes were uneasy, and the general interruption to agricultural industries throughout the country had already begun to affect their own. The Colonel, in command of a regiment of State infantry, temporarily encamped near Richmond, came now and again to look after them. He was in good spirits, hopeful of results, and seemed to have taken a new lease of life.

“Since Richard was a little fellow, I have never opposed him when he has once made up his mind,” said the old lady, in her flute-like voice. “He was always kind to me, even before his sorrows that made him kind to every one. But there were certain things no one could have stopped him from doing, I believe. I often think, Polly, my dear, that there is a streak of him in Miles. Ah, me! God knows best, but I did hope we were settled in peace when dear Dick got Bonnibel to be his wife.”

“Now, Aunt dear, I’ll not have you sighing,” cried brisk Miss Polly. “As our days so shall our strength be, you know better than I. And if it wont tire you, suppose you scrape a little lint while you are sitting there. I’m planning to send a box off to Richard’s

camp, to-morrow, with fresh vegetables and eggs and things, and I think I'll put in some bandages and lint. There's always sickness, and there may be something worse."

"May I come in, Granny?" said Dick, putting his head in at the door. "I've news for you. Miles will be down to-day, or to-morrow, to spend a night with us."

"Miles!" exclaimed both ladies in delight.

For, what with one interruption or another, there had always been some reason why the wanderer had not yet, a month after arrival in the country, put in an appearance at his home. The tales of his beauty and his prowess had filled their hearts and overflowed their lips continually. Dick, who had seen him in Richmond, the Colonel, and Miss Polly who achieved a pilgrimage on the boat to cry all hail to the family hero, reported that Miles's soldiering had made of him the best-looking fellow in the new service, and that was saying much.

There were, on the young man's side, many conflicting emotions to keep him away from the old place and its new mistress. He had indeed put off going until he could, in decency, do so no longer. As on horseback he now journeyed leisurely along the familiar roads leading southward from town, Miles began to feel the sting of an old-time wound apparently long healed. The thought of Bonnibel's radiant face

again turned upon him, of her white neck and hand, her dropping auburn hair, made his head swim for a time. He remembered having stood half of one summer night watching her window in the wing, then in a tumult throwing himself on horseback to ride madly through the woods till daybreak, fording streams, jumping fences, anything to rid himself of the fever in his blood. A-ah! that was sharp; but the pang had left him, all the same. Why, a year ago it would have staggered him! And, presently, under the spell of the blossoming woods, he began to trol a song, to feel a school-boy's delight at returning home for holiday, to wonder whether Bonnibel still had that little obstinate way of holding on to an immaterial point which in a wife must be so very trying. A woman with a square jaw like hers was pretty sure to fight about little things, he'd noticed—! Miles laughed aloud. Now, for certain, he knew himself to be no longer the desperate lad who had flung himself away from home and fatherland for the sake of a creature made up of milk and roses. As he rode along, his brain cleared, his pulse held firm, his heart beat only at thought of returning home and casting down before them all the laurels he had won. He experienced a joyous thrill at the idea of visiting Mammy Judy's cabin and telling the dear old soul about his soldier's life in Sicily. Grandmamma and Cousin Polly appeared before his mind's eye crowned with

separate aureoles. Dick's wife, his old-time charmer, was only one of the home procession, thank God, and his passion for her was over.

Two interruptions there were to the serene enjoyment of his return to Flower de Hundred—one, the doubt whether he could yet look with resignation upon the inheritance he might have had; the other, Nutty's absence. For with every precious remembrance of boyhood in these places, his faithful little henchwoman was blended. In the babble of a hidden stream its course betrayed by green things growing and blowing on the banks, he seemed to hear her laugh. A veritable sprite of the forest was Nutty, so keenly alive to the melodies and mysteries of Nature in her secret haunts; so light of foot; so tireless in the saddle; so quick in sympathy. Poor little girl! He should miss her dreadfully. And under a quivering canopy of gum-trees he checked his horse upon a carpet of fairy-flax, to take from his breast-pocket and read again a letter, the last to come from Ursula.

"Away off on the banks of the beautiful Hudson, the spring fever in my veins is all for dear old Virginia," Nutty wrote. "They are good to me here, this place is exquisite, but 'it's hame, hame in my ain countree, I fain wad be,' little, wretched, homesick thing that I am! Miles, I trod, out walking, on a shoot of garlic in the grass, and presto! the smell of it carried me back to the day I was puzzling out my second Eclogue

in the parlor closet on the chest. The Parson had scolded me, and I loathed Virgil. You came in to get some corks for your seine from off the upper shelf. You sat down on the chest, and lent me your handkerchief to wipe my eyes, for my pocket was torn out and its contents lost, as usual (—do you remember ‘Lucy Locket’ was my name with you?). Then, you read how Thestylis put garlic in with the herbs to mix her salad, while around her sat the reapers resting in the heat of the day—that salad brought back my wandering interest in the classics—how well I understand now the hold those trifles about home had on you in Sicily! But I must not trust myself to write. I don’t dare hope to get away. My poor aunt is heart-broken, and dependent on me, every day—I hear things said constantly that make it doubly hard to stay; but then how can I go? People are very kind. I think they see I am lonely and that I am trying to do right. My uncle is kinder, too; he is much changed since the loss of the poor girls; but he can’t help wounding me about politics. Every meal is seasoned with them. I *can’t* answer back; and I get up with a swelling heart, and run and weep my heart out in my room. I am sixteen only, but I feel twenty. Yes, you will see how I have grown and aged! Here I am always ‘Ursula.’ I allow none but the Flower de Hundred people to call me ‘Nutty’—that is more than enough about myself! Good-by, dear Miles, I have your parcel still. It shall never leave me till I give it into your hands. For you will come out of this war safe and victorious, I feel. Oh, with such a cause! oh, if I were a man!—”

“Poor bird, fluttering behind golden bars,” he mused,

putting her letter back. "Home isn't home without her."

Miles, at his own request, went to bed that night in the old nursery on the ground-floor where Tarlton's troopers had stabled their steeds—Dick's vacant cot beside his own. The walls, the deep-mouthed chimney-place, the screen around the wash-stand, where Dick and he, like Beau Brummell in his exile, had pasted a fine mosaic of many pictures during their convalescence after measles, still bore the marks of their boyish mischief or ingenuity. After he had blown his candle out, the hero of Melazzo, and of the more recent daring venture into Calabria as a spy, by which the cross of the Legion of Honor had been won, hesitated a moment, then knelt down by his bed and thanked God for bringing him safe home.

A great peace had come into his heart. The past with all its bitterness was gone. Before him lay a soldier's future. He fell asleep listening with a pleased ear to the twitter of swallows in the chimney, and the rustle of flying-squirrels on the low roof.

Shaken though he was by Miles's visit home, Dick remained at the plantation as long as the troops were inactive around Richmond and ladies were calling at the camp and there were tea-parties and gay battalion drills. But as the month of June wore away, and the order came to move forward to Manassas, facing the

outposts beyond which gathered host upon host of splendidly equipped soldiers from the North, the strain became too much for him. Bonnibel, finding that he was fretting his heart out to be gone, told Cousin Polly, who told Grandmamma; and so, one day Dick was summoned into the old lady's room, where she signed to those present to leave her alone with him.

The very sight of her was one to calm excited thought. Sitting in the deep arm-chair where the children had always carried to her their joys and troubles, she looked so waxen white, so flower-like, he was tempted to throw himself on his knees, clasp her around the waist, and laying his yellow head upon her lap, offer again to do only what she wished. Little knowing that she had sent for him to deliberately rid herself of this dear prop, he longed to lend to her his youthful strength.

"Here I am, Granny darling; so glad you want me," Dick said.

"My own dear!" the old lady said, smoothing his locks. Not even Bonnibel's touch affected him like hers.

"What is it, sweetheart, something I can do for you?" he asked.

"Oh, my son, my son, you have done for me enough!" she cried, pitifully moved. "Never shall it be said that I held back child of mine from the way his duty pointed him to go."

Dick started up, the glad blood tingling in his veins.

"Then you give me leave, Granny! You have taken a mill-stone from my heart."

"Was it so bad as that, Dick? Well, I am blinder than I thought—and more selfish than I thought!"

They talked long and intimately, Dick emerging from the room with a look of exaltation on his face. She had given him her benediction, and with it had exhaled the aroma of a pure life, whose days had been made more lovely by his love; she had girded on his sword that must never be drawn unworthily of her.

And over all our broad land, North and South, partings were going on like this. They sanctified the ends for which both sides were fighting; they lifted men out of the ignoble into heroism; they filled the ranks of blue and gray with soldiers of a caliber no other nation's history has surpassed—and they filled, alas! innumerable graves.

Manassas was fought, and the existence of a Southern Confederacy was proved to be more than a mere castle in Spain erected by restless politicians. From that day the steady swing of the tremendous pendulum went on. With the opening of the second year's campaign, the theater of events was transferred again to Richmond and its vicinity. Colonel Throckmorton, who had been able during the spring to make only a brief visit to his home, found, thanks to the indefatigable care of Sampson and Miss Polly, that matters

were progressing there more favorably than he had dared to hope. With regard to many negroes who saw the way unimpeded between them and freedom, it was not to be supposed they would not avail themselves of the opportunity to seek it. There had, in fact, been instructions from the Colonel to his overseer to make no effort to restrain those who showed any desire to go. A number of the younger field hands, therefore, had tied up their bandana bundles and were off to the disillusionment falling to the portion of so many "contrabands." The work of the place thus interrupted, the results of its various industries were correspondingly reduced; but the household had known no hardships other than the inevitable alarm and anxiety, the fruit of civil war. Early in May, 1862, the ladies, from the windows of the drawing-room at Flower de Hundred, saw a fleet of United States gunboats steam past them in gallant style, and heard a loud-mouthed but unavailing protest from the Confederate batteries stationed farther up the river bank.

A few days later, Norfolk was occupied by the Federals, and the Confederate watch-dog, *Merrimac*, so long the terror of the enemy's fleets, was destroyed by the masters he had served. The river now became an unimpeded highway, along which the war-ships of the Union made haste to push, to aid in the siege of Richmond. Two grim monsters of the deep, the

Monitor and the *Naugatuck*, having joined in safety the flotilla beneath Drewry's Bluff, an engagement occurred which, had the shore batteries been silenced and passed, might have carried the Union troops in triumph to the goal of all their hopes, and so ended the war. But the Confederates stood firm; the panic at Richmond was allayed, and during the month of flowers, the "bridal of earth and sky" along the James, this terrible pageant of armed ships continued to pass and repass without accomplishing much more than startling the birds from their nests, and driving the cattle away from their grazing places in purple clover that reached to the water's edge.

At this juncture of affairs, Cousin Polly congratulated herself that she had "sent Bell into Richmond, where, whether comfortable or not, the child can get to her husband if he needs her." The household, consisting now only of the two older ladies, was reinforced by Sampson, who had been brought into the Great House to sleep. Throughout the neighborhood everywhere, the men-folk had betaken themselves to be part and parcel of the fray, the women and children following to huddle into lodgings in Richmond. Old Tom Hazleton, large as Mars in person, had volunteered; and Septimius Ackley made a soldier of the best. (Poor Sabina undertook to keep a boarding-house in town, with but indifferent results!) None stopped to count the cost. All felt sanguine of the

early deliverance of Richmond from her foes. This universal movement to protect the Capital it was, that brought about the curious desertion of neighborhoods so often noted in the Northern memoirs of the time. Ride for miles through the rich country weighted with neglected crops, and you might see only improvident negroes left in charge, stock wandering in woods or fields, hospitable manor houses or farm-houses with shutters closed and chimneys sending forth no smoke—a Canaan for tramps and weary foot-soldiers!

Inside the beleaguered city, people had their full share of trial, but it was better, they agreed, than the uncertainty of the excluded. Hardly was there to be found a house among the substantial dwellings set back in the magnolia-shaded gardens of the chief streets, that had not sent its male creature to strengthen the line of steel about the town. Most of the humble homes, as well, had given their treasures. These men were literally defending hearth-stones, and banded with volunteers as ardent as themselves, were soon to fight with the fury and devotion of their forbears in all history.

From the women and non-combatants left behind, there arose and swelled toward the army one of those waves of spontaneous and exalted gratitude that nerve the soul to any trial while the energies are in action. In the dreadful hospital preparations, that in the

South became drawing-room work and a part of domestic life everywhere, gentle and simple, residents and "refugees" joined. Of the tremendous strain they were under, there was no time to think. Outwardly calm and collected, crushing down the sick fear of what might be to come, each gave a daily offering, nor counted it a tax.

One little scene of every day, to show the common lot! On the morning of the battle of "Seven Pines" or "Fair Oaks," as it is variously known, young Richard Throckmorton spurred his horse along muddy roads, bearing a message from camp to the Executive in Richmond. During the half hour that must elapse before an answer to his Chief could be prepared, he galloped up the shady street where his wife had found shelter with some friends.

Bell, sewing behind the bowed shutters of the drawing-room, caught sight through the pink snow of the crape myrtles that shaded the garden gate of her young Captain of cavalry dismounting. With a scream of delight she ran out to meet him, and, regardless of passers-by,—who were indeed all sympathizers, and to whom these little outbursts were too common to be remarked,—threw around Dick's neck two lovely arms, from which the summer sleeves had floated back, and laid upon the Captain's insignia embroidered on his collar, a cheek of peach-blow hue.

"Dick, Dick, how glorious that you have come to-

day," she cried. "Hurry, hurry into my room before he's gone to sleep. Will you believe, I saw it first this morning?"

"What? Where?" said bewildered Captain Dick.

"Of course, I mean his tooth," answered she disdainfully.

And there on a pillow, moist and pink and beautiful, lay Dick's first-born, crowing unconscious of the turmoil of the hour. At sight of him and his radiant mother hovering over, the young man, who had not slept a wink all night, who was mud-splashed to his middle, dizzy with riding in the sun, and hungry as a hawk, felt his heart leap in happiness.

Bonnibel enthroned him in an easy-chair, brought food and cooling drinks and fans, while chatting ceaselessly of him and herself and the baby. Dick, dreading to break the spell of exquisite repose, answered her hardly at all. She had evidently no idea of his mission, and with love shining in his blue eyes, he gazed at her as they sat hand in hand above the baby's crib. Then, mingling with the honey of her voice distilled upon his ear, came a long, low, rumbling sound that jarred on the sultry air. "Oh, what is it?" faltered the wife seeing him spring to his feet.

"It's the guns! The fight's begun," Dick said hoarsely. "And I've no right to be here."

It was but a moment he gave himself to kiss her baby first and then Bell, on eyes, and cheeks, and lips;

to strain her to his fiercely beating heart. Neither spoke, and no words could have availed. With a chill as of death upon him, Dick strode down the garden walk with clanking sword and spurs, and vaulted upon his horse. Through her tears she saw his boyish figure in the stained gray uniform bend to the saddle-bow as he waved his cap and tried to smile. Another rumble, cut short by the receding gallop of Dick's horse! Bell staggered back into the room and snatching up her baby held him to her heart to still its pain.

And again, and again, and again sounded the cannon of Seven Pines! Until sunset, it did not cease. Till far into the night people in Richmond thronged the pavements, eager for tidings. "Victory for the South," was the word passed from lip to lip, and then—the ambulances came! Wagons, carts, caissons, were among the vehicles impressed for this drear procession, some bound for the temporary hospitals fitted up in buildings cleared for the occasion, some to halt before private dwellings, where their stopping stilled the heart-beats of the occupants till after the worst was known. Victory, and a repulse of the enemy! How hard to realize their worth in the presence of dead and dying, wounded and suffering, who by dawn of the first of June appeared to fill the town! By this time again the guns were at their bloody work, and a blazing sun poured its intolerable heat upon the crowded thoroughfares!

Early on that Sunday morning, a messenger brought to Bell a note from Dick telling her that he and Miles were safe, but that the dear Colonel, receiving a severe wound in the right arm, had been taken to a private hospital in Grace Street, where she was bidden to go with all haste and devote herself to him. Bell, in her hysterical delight over her own good tidings, kissed the smoke-stained billet, and hastened to do its behest.

She found the old man weak from loss of blood. They had amputated his arm; and, at his age, there was grave danger from exhaustion. But he was calm and quiet, and gave her a sweet smile of greeting. It was characteristic of the courteous gentleman that he should have first motioned to her to preserve her muslin gown from the blood that still oozed from his bandaged stump. Dazed from the chloroform, when she bent over him to fan his forehead and supply a drop of stimulant, he called her "wife" and "Mildred," bidding her not to cry, since Phil had come through the battle without harm.

Bell, with her nurse and baby, took up her abode in the house of which the Colonel had a little room in the third story. An attic, hastily cleared of rubbish, and cleaned for their accommodation, contained a mattress on the floor for her, when she could snatch time for rest. The heat was intolerable, the resources for comfort few, and on the afternoon of the fourth day, when Miles rode in from the front to look after his grand-

father, he found, to his alarm, that the child was sickening, and that Bell might not, without danger to its life, be allowed to remain at her present post.

The Colonel, making better progress than they had dared to expect, would not hear of her remaining; and Miles, with a heart-felt sigh for the presence of Cousin Polly, started on a weary quest in search of a proper nurse. What at another time would have been an easy matter, was made difficult by the tax put upon the generous townspeople by the numbers of sufferers for whom their preparations had proved inadequate. With listless steps he walked under floods of withering sunshine over the burning bricks of the sidewalks, turning away from house after house whence nobody could be spared, and finally engaging, in despair, a man of whose skill he could not feel confident. Returning to Grace Street with his prize in tow, he climbed the uncarpeted stairway. In the sound of a woman's draperies upon the landing near the Colonel's room, he divined some one of the anxious friends who were daily coming to offer service. What was his delight at the apparition, at the head of the last flight, of the tall, stately young person, who greeted him with finger upon lip.

"Hush!" she whispered, "I came directly you had left, and he's been dozing ever since. The very best sleep he's had, Dr. Ferguson says."

"Ursula! Have you dropped out of the skies?"

"No," she said, blushing at his warmth. "Quite the contrary. I've been running the blockade."

"Alone?" he said, darkling.

"Oh, no! I had refugees in plenty. More than I cared for, and almost no adventures. We were in Washington when the news of the battle came, and I saw *his* name in the list of Confederate wounded. After that, cart ropes couldn't have held me there."

"But your aunt—your uncle?"

"I believe I frightened them into giving their consent. My uncle went off saying he washed his hands of me—but she was, oh, so good! I shall be grateful to her always. She found people coming South and helped me in every way. Oh, Miles, she saw—everybody must have seen—that, rather than not get to him I'd have crawled on my hands and knees."

"My dear, brave little Nutty," he began, taking her hand to stroke it, and then stopped, struck by the incongruity of his diminutive.

While she whispered her tale of travels, his eyes took in with keen appreciation the lines of her splendid form, the deepened luster of her wide brown eyes, the indescribable rounding into graceful womanhood of his whilom boyish comrade. Coming to him in this moment of sore need, linked to him by a common sympathy amid these poor surroundings, she shone like a star of hope. Whatever impressions of their interview Ursula in turn derived, they were

merged, with every energy of her nature, into the task of winning their beloved invalid back from the jaws of death.

In this, Miles returning at once to duty, she was aided by old Saul, who, following, dog-like, his master to the war, had, in the first day of the fight, been stunned by a spent ball and left on the field for dead. Coming to life like a chilled fly upon a sun-warmed pane of glass, Saul had made his slow way to Richmond and so to the Colonel's side.

"No, I'se 'bleeged to you, Miss Nutty an' Marse Miles," the patriarch had said, when urged by them to retire and take his rest, "my duty's to my mistis, an' I kyant think o' leaving Marse Richard to no young folks's hands. When I'se ready to gin out, you'll hear it, and not before. Reckon I aint put dat ar little Doctor Ferguson out'n my pantry, along wi' Marse Miles, many a time, fo' rummagin' de dishes I dun sot out for dessart? Think I'm gwine to trus' my master wid any little shavers like dat, widout watchin' out to see dey don' play no tricks?"

In vain Ursula pleaded the skill, the unflagging care of the young assistant surgeon by whom his old friend was served so tenderly; Saul was obdurate, keeping vigil by the bed like Fine Ear of the fairy tale, quick to detect the faintest movement of the sufferer and to forestall his wants.

Installed in her attic chamber, living from hand to

mouth and in dire discomfort although she was, Ursula felt happier than before in months. A daily visit from Bonnibel, a glimpse at Miles whenever he could get off for a gallop into town, the sympathy of kind people who pressed around them with every offer that good feeling could desire,—above all, the sense that her vigorous health and rich vitality were now of the utmost service to her beloved Colonel,—nerved her continually.

But it was a hard time for all of them. The stifling heat, the cruel lack of ice during that battle-summer, the suffering in the town that was now one vast hospital, made the June days seem twice their torrid length and the nights as bad. Just when the Colonel gave some faint indication of a rally that might be counted upon as permanent, Bonnibel's baby showed symptoms of again succumbing to the heat, and to save it the young mother was forced to make all speed to the hill-country, in a direction in which the railway lines were fortunately open.

Bell had not seen her husband since the day of Seven Pines. Except when on special service, every man held to his post, in front. Heavy-hearted at the despairing necessity of leaving town without another glimpse of him, she set out for a region remote from the stir of war. Ursula, taking time from her own busy day—for in addition to her care for the Colonel, she had assumed duties as a volunteer nurse in other

wards of the little hospital—to see Dick's little family off, turned back again to her patients with a sigh. It seemed to her that the air was full of the partings of those who loved.

On the afternoon of the same day, she received from an orderly dispatched by Miles, information that a body of cavalry to which Dick was attached had set out that morning on an expedition of which the aim was not announced, but which, in view of the rations taken, would presumably be short. Miles's note inclosed one scribbled on a leaf of his pocket-book to his grandfather, from Dick.

“God bless you and all my dear ones. For us this move is glorious. Anything's better than such harassing waits between the acts. We start, presently, none of us know whither; but, with Stuart at the fore, what matters it? I shall have never heard the bugles sing out 'Boots and Saddles' with a gladder heart. If I don't come back, you and Miles will take care of *her* and *him*, I know—

“R. T.”

“Ah, me! I'd have liked to see my lad before he started,” said the Colonel wistfully, after Ursula had finished reading him these lines. “And I'd like mightily to know what Jeb Stuart's little game is, in this move.”

Doubts upon this score were, a few days later, set

conclusively at rest, by the announcement to the expectant public of an event chronicled in the Richmond journals, under head-lines, as below:

“A Brilliant Reconnoissance by Stuart’s Cavalry—They make the Circuit of the Enemy’s Lines on the Chickahominy—Capture and Dispersion of Yankee Cavalry—Burning of Three Transports in the Pamunkey—Capture and Destruction of a Wagon Train—A Railroad Train Surprised, etc., etc.”

This much for glory and a little niche in history! Farther down the column and in much smaller type, among the few casualties of the brilliant raid with whose praises the Southern country rang, was mentioned the lamented death, while leading his men in a fierce hand to hand skirmish with a squadron of the enemy’s cavalry whom they had put to rout, of Captain Richard Throckmorton of the —th Virginia cavalry.

At the moment when Dick, shot through the body with five balls, fell from his horse upon the roadside, his comrades were borne impetuously forward in pursuit of a flying column of the enemy, another pressing them upon the rear, and the spot was for a time deserted. They found him—the skirmish ended—lying upon his back amid the ferns, looking straight upward to the sky with a smile upon his lips. One of the bullets had shivered the glass of Bonnibel’s picture on his breast, staining it with his blood. While his

troopers sorrowing and uncertain stood around their young leader's body, the General, who had heard of the occurrence, rode up, his genial face dark and drawn with grief. Situated as the Confederates then were, well in the rear of McClellan's army and likely at any moment to be attacked by Federal cavalry desiring to cut off their retreat, the Chief decided to send the body to Dick's own home, in charge of old Jock who had been the young man's constant attendant in the field. . . .

Hands tender as women's lifted the dead Captain across the saddle, the horse standing intelligently still while his burden was bound in place. Jock, mounting his own steed, took both bridles—every hat was doffed, every head bowed.

A moment later, the Confederates were in saddle and sweeping forward like a cloud driven by the wind to rejoin their advancing column, and their dead comrade was alone with Jock.

In the bright light of a full moon, the old negro journeyed with his charge. To avoid notice, he had remained until nightfall in a secluded wood. Once only, he encountered a Federal vidette, but after a few questions and answers was allowed to pass unmolested on his way—the soldiers in blue falling back reverently when the moon shone on the still face of the dead. And at sunrise next morning, the heir of Flower de Hundred came into his own.

There was bitter lamenting among the negroes remaining on the place. Old Judy left her chimney-side to perform with her own hands the last rites of the toilet for her boy. Jock, with the help of another ancient, fashioned the rude coffin in which covered from sight with flowers they carried Dick across the field-path to the little church.

It was to her who had made of him an idol, that all eyes turned in affectionate solicitude. She was very quiet, sitting at his head, changing here and there a spray of the white Lamarque roses he had aided her to plant, and stroking his flaxen locks until they came to carry him away. Cousin Polly, who had broken to her this news, so soon following that of her son's wound, pleaded with her not to be present at the interment. But she answered that, since in their isolated position it was impossible to secure the services of a clergyman at the grave, she had determined to take the duty on herself.

Gathered about the yawning space they stood—the ladies, Sampson, who could not see for crying, and the negroes—while in a clear voice, audible to all present, the aged saint read or recited the funeral service of the Church.

Some marveled at the peace upon her face as she turned her last look upon her darling's new-made grave. They could not see that in her eyes it was but the shutting of a gate that must open soon for her.

This episode of the battle-summer impelled an old man upon his bed of pain in Richmond to turn groaning to the wall and beg God to take him too; and it flashed over the wires to Dick's wife, sitting with her ailing child upon her knees, and blotted the sunshine from her world.

CHAPTER VII.

"COME, Ursula, it is your duty to yourself," urged Miles.

She gave him a wan smile, and handing her fan to Saul rose up from the Colonel's bedside. The critical relapse of her patient after his grandson's death, had taxed to the utmost even her superb physique. An outing after night-fall was now her chief opportunity for exercise. Miles, borne down under the weight of sorrow that robbed his soldier life of charm, had come into town to look after them, finding the Colonel better but listless and disinclined to rally, and his young nurse pale and weary.

They went out into an atmosphere unrefreshed by a recent thunder-storm, and freighted to oppression with the scent of rain-washed flowers—an atmosphere so sluggish that it seemed by burning exhalations to resent even disturbance with a fan. During those June days in the great hospital-camp, the chief social interchange of friends was thus held after dark. From the houses would issue bands of pilgrims, white robed, bareheaded, carrying palm leaves, longing for a breeze that came not, sauntering slowly under the gas-lamps, over pavements that had not parted with their noon-

tide heat. After this fashion, greetings and inquiries were exchanged, movements of the armies were discussed, the irrepressible making of love went on! When visits were received, it was always upon verandas, or sitting on the front steps. Few cared to linger in rooms where, from dawn till dawn again, no drop in temperature was perceived.

Amid all other pre-occupations, it was clear to Ursula that since Dick's death an excitement to which she had no clew had been fermenting under the self-restraint Miles showed to the world at large. Whatever it might mean, he had several times seemed to be upon the point of confiding in her, and on each occasion had reined himself into a reserve more obstinate than before. As they walked side by side, grieved at this gloomy silence, she turned over in her mind every method by which she might venture to explore his depression. Woman-like, in her solicitude to ease his share of their common burden, she forgot how large a portion of it was borne on her own slight shoulders.

"This is poor entertainment for you, Nutty," he said, at last, rousing into consciousness of his abstraction. "It looks as if I were forgetting that you are a traveled young woman now, who has a right to expect suavities from her cavalier."

"Nonsense, Miles; if you ever begin to be polite to me, I shall think we have quarreled in dead earnest. My dear boy, nothing can blind me to the fact that

you've some trouble on your mind, over and above that I share with you."

"God help me, so I have," he burst out; "and if any human being could be bettered by speaking of it, it would be you I'd turn to, first."

"That ought to content me. But, unfortunately, it doesn't."

"Rest assured, daughter of Eve, that there is nothing you or any one can do to alter the situation. The matter is, so to speak, an abstraction—a case of conscience, if you will—and, though I've looked at it in every aspect, I can see nothing for me but to continue to hold my tongue."

"It would relieve you to speak out?"

"So much so, that I have never felt the temptation as strong as now. But there, I'm babbling like a child. Talk to me of yourself, of the dear Colonel."

"He is a daily, hourly lesson in patience and fortitude. In his sympathy for Bell, his own grief is submerged. He dreads the effect of this new blow on Grandmamma; but, withal, I've seen his eye light up when you are mentioned, and he smiled—oh, so sweetly, when I read Bell's letter saying Dick's boy grows stronger every day. My dear Miles, what ails you?"

"I suppose it's the mental strain. My nerves are mere fiddle-strings. One thing is certain, that you put me to the blush. When I think of all you have

undertaken—have so nobly carried out—and see you so calm, so cool—”

“I shall never be cool again,” she said, with attempted cheerfulness. “Let us take this street leading to the water. I love the voice of our river at night when the town is still. I follow it in thought till it flows by dear Flower de Hundred. Is there any tie stronger and sweeter than the one linking us to such a home? The very name has a spell in it, to soothe and charm me—Miles, I wonder if I may speak to you of something about yourself.”

“You, if any one.”

“To-day the Colonel said, ‘This little chap makes a great difference to Miles.’ After a while he went on, ‘I am glad Dick’s will named Miles as guardian. Dick knew—Dick knew!’”

“How loud the rapids sound!” Miles answered, afraid of the tremor in his voice.

“The matter seemed to be dwelling on his mind, for presently he said again, ‘Miles would have been master; it is what I’d have wished.’ Then he fell into a doze, and roused out of it, crying, ‘They have lopped its branches, but the old trunk still remains!’ The effort waked him, and he said, ‘I beg your pardon, I had forgotten where I am; you will oblige me by putting my handkerchief in reach.’ And with his poor left hand, I saw him wipe his eyes.”

“By Jove, I’d give years of life to see him back at

the plantation," Miles said, with a gulp. "And to think he may die here, and never know that I am—"

"Never know that you—?"

Miles did not answer. With her hand still upon his arm, they paused at a street corner for the passing of an officer's funeral on its way to Hollywood. The band preceding the coffin smote on their ears with poignant loud lamenting, then carried its sorrow to die moaning on the night. As the shadowy cortège filed by—men bearing lanterns on either side the hearse—a horse, riderless, with boots empty in the stirrups, following—a few soldiers carrying arms reversed—a single carriage with mourners—the effect was infinitely sad. So common the spectacle during the Battle Summer, it did not occur to them to even wonder which of our martyrs was thus journeying to his last home.

"The end of soldiering!" said Miles, recovering his head. "Ah well, my dear, there is more than a chance that this kind of thing may soon cut my Gordian knot for me. If it comes, Ursula, you'll remember that you are my sole executor."

Ursula's unexpected answer was to drop her head upon his arm in a passionate burst of tears.

"My dear little girl, you are overwrought!" he said as genuinely distressed as he was surprised; for she was not of the melting kind. Wisely however, he made no attempt to check her. Alone in an unfre-

quented street, they walked slowly until her emotion had spent its force.

"This will relieve the strain," he went on soothingly. "Poor long-suffering little heroine, I think we all forget that it's a girl-creature of seventeen who is our bulwark."

With a caressing touch he laid his hand on hers, but Ursula withdrawing herself almost brusquely, wiped her eyes. When she next spoke it was in her ordinary tone.

"You overestimate my services. Do I not owe all I have done, and more a thousand times, to the one who has been home and father to me? I am only dreading lest in some way Grandmamma should hear how bad his condition is, for nothing would keep her from him, and she could not stand our life."

"Yes, she is a flower that will not bear transplanting," said Miles sighing. "My chief fear is that from the situation of Flower de Hundred the house will be taken as headquarters, or as a hospital. Then they will be forced to push into town. But come, in the little time we have together let us talk of brighter things."

"The brightest thing I have seen to-day is the smile poor little Elliot, the Lieutenant of the — Georgia, who has the room below your grandfather, bestowed on me when I had finished writing a letter for him to his mother, whose only son he is—so brave, so confident—and I know they believe him doomed—"

“Ursula, you are incorrigible. Put away your patients for one half hour, and act and feel like other young women of your age. For a novelty, take a little interest in me. So far as heard from, I am in full possession of health and faculties and consequently not a legitimate object of solicitude—but still—”

Ursula laughed.

“You are your jealous, petulant old self—” she interrupted him. And during the remainder of their walk her rather bewildered companion fell to wondering what he could have done or said that had set between them a slight but evident barrier.

At the house door, they stood aside to give passage to two rigid, sheeted forms, carried out, uncoffined, to be put in the army wagon that was to transport them to the morgue. As the heavy vehicle rumbled off, Ursula ascertained, to her dismay, that one of the bodies thus unceremoniously hurried from the company of the living was that of her young friend Elliot, who had died since she left the hospital.

Shocked beyond measure, she gave way to a fresh burst of weeping, hurriedly mounting the stairs with a new sense of the intolerable weight of war—Miles following, scarcely less hopeful of the dawn that was to succeed their darkest hour.

And now what was this dream of the oppressive summer's night that brought before their eyes, seated

beside the patient, her snow-flake hand resting upon his head, the small fair shape of Grandmamma? What witchery of imagination had planted in their path Cousin Polly, tearful but smiling, her fond arms outstretched?

It was no time to ask or answer questions. As they came into his room, the sufferer, who had been lying with closed eyes, stirred and looked about him. Then, Grandmamma, calling him by her pet name of "Ritchie," bade him "be good and go to sleep."

They saw a wan smile flit across the old soldier's face; and, feeling for his mother's hand to carry it to his lips, he again closed his eyes, and, child-like, composed himself to rest.

"Oh, he will be better now," whispered Ursula, with a glad bound of the heart.

Late that night, sharing Ursula's pallet beneath the roof in a stifling atmosphere, Cousin Polly recounted to eager ears the happenings at Flower de Hundred that had brought about their unexpected journey through the lines.

"Of course, if you had known it, my dear, you'd have all been doubly wretched; so it's just as well you didn't—" averred the practical narrator.

Let us, with Ursula, hear of the strange flitting from Flower de Hundred.

The ladies had kept up bravely until the massing of Union troops on the Peninsula, and the assemblage

of gunboats in the river, made it clear they could no longer hope to preserve their home from the depredations of an idle soldiery. Day after day Sampson came in with a longer face and a budget more full of petty annoyances, and at last advised his employers of his intention to "quit work for a spell," and go North to look up a sister residing in the rural districts of New Hampshire. The honest fellow, owning himself "tuckered out," in health and spirit, "rather guessed" the ladies would find it to their best advantage to allow the house to be occupied as Headquarters by a conspicuous General, who had signified his willingness to thus possess it.

Perplexed, and unwilling to own herself driven from the field, Miss Polly could not gainsay his arguments. Feeling that the debt they owed their counsellor was not one to be paid in money, and recognizing the common sense of his advice, fearing of all things to harass with this discussion the old lady, now visibly broken, she bowed to the inevitable and set about hasty preparations to forsake their home.

Taking into consultation Judy, Duke, and a few others of the negroes upon whom she might rely to guard the property, she determined to journey in the family coach over the more than thirty miles of roads intervening between Richmond and the plantation. "Any one with half an eye," declared Miss Polly, "can see we are a couple of harmless old women traveling

about our own affairs. If we are challenged by our own soldiers, it is sure to come all right; and if the Yankees disapprove of us on general principles, they will never be able to resist 'Old Miss,' especially when they hear it's a mother going to see her wounded son. Isaac, of course, will drive us, and we'll need Phyllis to wait on her mistress. One of the wagons with a pair of mules will take our luggage. It isn't the first time in history that a mistress of Flower de Hundred has been driven from home in war-time; and, feeble though she may be, dear Aunt's spirit will carry her through all. Besides," she concluded, a throb of pain assailing her valiant heart, "He that watches over the sparrow's fall will not suffer harm to come to a saint so near to her reward."

Miss Polly, once decided, went at her preparations with Napoleonic intrepidity and dash. And now, at the hour of midnight, behold in the familiar rooms of the old mansion, when all others on the plantation were wrapped in slumber, a band of conspirators including Sampson and the negroes admitted to confidence, at unaccustomed work. Mounted upon step-ladders, they detached from their nails upon the wainscoting and enveloped in blankets and bed-quilts, Guy the founder, the Lady Mary with her lute, the gloomy Earl, Kneller's Miles the debonair and his smiling spouse Lydia, heartbroken Ursula with her sheep, the Burgesses, redcoats, Continentals, all of that unwinking

company henceforth doomed to imprisonment in the stone chamber built after the Revolutionary war, and receiving their decree of exile with, it must be said, praiseworthy phlegm.

Lowered into Cimmerian depths, these worthies were safely masked with boards, and barricaded with boxes containing books, household ornaments, and family papers, the whole heaped with hay. Then Sampson, emerging with cobwebbed hair and smutty countenance again into the upper world, withdrew the ladder that had aided their descent, replacing the rusty machinery of the old well long familiar to the spot.

Such silver as could not be carried into Richmond was buried in pits dug in the cellar of the house. A sad interment by the light of lanterns, to which Miss Polly, a laugh on her lips and tears in her eyes, lent yeoman's assistance with her little garden spade.

Not to risk all in one place of concealment, other household goods were intrusted to the care of Judy, who weepingly declared, "Ef dat ar waugh was to last a thousan' years, Miss Polly, honey, wen it lets out you'll find ole Judy a-settin' on dis chist."

The rising sun looked through the windows upon a home wearing a sad likeness to its former cheerful self. Bare spaces were on the walls, all of the little litterings of ev'ryday, books and ornaments, were missing. The ladies, equipped for traveling, turning neither right nor

left, hurried through the rooms to their carriage in waiting on the drive.

The iron gates wrought in England a century before and surmounted by the familiar wyvern crest, swung stiffly back, shaking the dew from the honeysuckle that entwined them, to fall as if in a shower of tears.

To the negroes, coming up from the quarter to see the quality set out, this was nothing more than the yearly excursion to "the Springs." Sampson, stolid but inwardly disconsolate, knew better, and so did Judy, who waddling to the carriage laid in Miss Polly's lap a basket of fresh figs plucked from Miles's garden plot for "Mammy's boy"!

Miss Polly sat bolt upright, distributing good-byes in her lively off-hand way. Her secret anxiety was for the fragile old lady at her side, who while they were in sight of it kept her eyes fixed upon the church-yard with its gleaming stones.

Passing out of the gates, they were curiously conscious of an unwonted sound. It was that of the closing in summer of the great hall door.

"Courage, ole Miss!" said Miss Polly, with a spirit she did not feel. "It will be only for a little while."

"Only a little while," echoed the aged lips patiently.

There was no sign in the peaceful landscape of the forces already at work that in a few weeks' time were to lay it waste. Well for our travelers they were not

to see these fields of grain trampled by the hoofs of horses, by the tread of battalions, by the wheels of battery and division wagons, these roads one vast slough of tenacious mud ingulphing forsaken ambulances, spiked guns, burning stores, cast-away uniforms and muskets—all the *débris* of a mighty army in retreat.

Resting for the night at the house of friends, the ladies pursued upon the morrow their journey into the Confederate lines. Meeting by good chance with no serious interruption, they were escorted into Richmond from the outposts by soldiers, from whom the old lady's sweet face crowned with silver hair elicited more of gallant service than they would have offered had she been young and pretty, Cousin Polly said.

“So, what with kindness all along the way,” concluded her narrator, “and Aunt holding out so well, our getting here was as easy as rocking in a chair. They all say, though, we were not a day too soon, as a fight is imminent. Now, Ursula, it's plain that Richard will never get well in air like this, and it'll just kill your Grandmamma; so I mean to see Jack Ferguson and the other surgeon, the first thing in the morning, and get the whole party of us packed off to the country to poor dear Bonnibel.”

It was a family belief that circumstances yielded to Cousin Polly's will like the coon that came down the tree when Captain Scott took aim. Certain it was that one obstacle after another disappeared before her,

and in an incredibly short time she had accomplished the removal of the invalid from town.

Attended by his three devotees,—five, it should be said, to include Saul and Phyllis,—the Colonel was comfortably ensconced in a farm-house far from the noise of strife, where Bonnibel and her boy were already lodged.

The poor young widow's greeting of them was hysterically glad. The sight of her in a cheap black frock, bought in the village shop and fashioned by her own fingers, the change wrought upon her beauty by days and nights of weeping, her pathetic clinging to the little bundle of cambric she would hardly let out of her arms, affected Ursula powerfully. She felt that such a loss was the rending of soul from body, beside which all else was light. Her first realizing sense of the might and meaning of the marriage-bond came to her with Bonnibel's desolation, and sent the girl often into seclusion with bitter tears for "a sorrow that might be to come, a sorrow she knew not what."

Bell's best comforter was little Grandmamma. These two women, the one with her feet upon the brink of eternity, the other broken on the threshold of a happy life, clung together, talking incessantly of him who had been their common treasure. Bell's couch, placed across the foot of Mrs. Throckmorton's bed, heard many a midnight lamentation, relieving in

spite of her the mourner, who from it would fall into deep sleep to arise refreshed. And in the baby, kicking and cooing away his waking hours between them, they never wearied in discovering the traits and lineaments of his sire.

The country surrounding their new place of refuge was one of rolling hills, encircled by summits of melting azure, and dominated by the glorious battlements of the Blue Ridge Mountains, known as the Peaks of Otter. Here, where war's destroying finger had not yet touched to mar it, the landscape breathed of rest and peace. Meadows with sheep and cattle, hedgerows rich with bloom, brawling rivers and gushing springs, orchards weighted with fruit—little was lacking to this rural Paradise.

But to Ursula the days were long and heavy. To be back in town, her ear close to the heart-beats of the war, was her one desire. Her recreation, when free from duty in the farm-house, was to mount an old horse, upon an older side-saddle, and explore alone the wood-roads and blooming lanes about the neighborhood. News from the front came to them grudgingly. They wrested it piecemeal from the slow speech of passing stage-drivers. They read it in newspapers arriving long after date—and they held their breath between each arrival of a post bag. Little more than a month since the Colonel had received his wound, the flowers scarce withered under Dick's

coffin-lid, and yet the crowding of great events into brief space made the weeks seem thrice their length!

* * * * *

“Forward, quick, march!”

It had come at last, the call upon their reserve on the second afternoon of the Seven Days fight. Miles felt the fierce longing that had been tugging at his heart-strings break its barriers with a leap.

Hot work had fallen to his share since the signal gun of Mechanicsville proclaimed the opening of the fray. During the brief battle of the 26th, he had seen two thousand Confederates swept to earth like leaves before an autumn gale. He had seen a brigade of his countrymen push forward into the death-trap at Beaver Dam Creek, and there, beneath the murderous batteries hid in the wood above, fall, piled one upon another in the slender stream that ran red with their blood.

All night he heard the groans and cries of sufferers go up to heaven, and saw ambulances filled with men in every stage of mutilation, sent back from this cruel sacrifice. And although they had driven the enemy and won for the army the passage of the Chickahominy River, the evening fell upon a struggle just begun.

Not till the next day's fight was well along had his regiment been summoned. It was never in Miles Throckmorton to be patient under waiting. Since sunrise, when the Confederate line closing over its

losses had drawn up stretching for miles along hill valley, wood, and swamp on the far side of the disputed stream they had paid such a price to cross, he had been chafing for this moment. He had gone over the contingencies of his probable fall in battle, had put away thoughts of home, had said his prayers as a brave man should, and felt childishly restless at delay. Among that hideous pile of dead left in the creek were college-mates and friends of his childhood, serving as privates, unhonored and unsung—gone to a cruel death for the sake of an idea. To him it was no longer an idea; he had felt no such stir within him under foreign flags. He knew it was every man's duty who had survived the scene of yesterday, to build up for those dead heroes a soldier's monument, by completing what they had begun.

Since midday the battle had waxed every hour more fierce. "Gaines's Mill," "Cold Harbor," and "The Silent Battle of the Seven Days' Fight," they variously called it, afterwards—the last because, through some trick of the atmosphere against acoustics, the noise of continuous firing from sixty thousand muskets and one hundred pieces of artillery was unheard on the opposite slopes of the river, scarcely a mile way.

That it was fighting to be proud of, was long afterwards attested by the spirited description of the General commanding the right flank of the Union army:

"Dashing down the intervening plains, floundering

in the swamps, and struggling against the tangled brushwood, brigade after brigade seemed almost to melt away before the concentrated fire of our artillery and infantry; yet others pressed on, followed by supports as dashing and as brave as their predecessors, despite their heavy losses and the disheartening effect of having to clamber over many of their disabled and dead." *

Upon these batteries masked in summer foliage the Southern troops had dashed themselves in vain, when to Miles, waiting in his saddle, the order came to carry his regiment where the rest had gone.

At the moment of setting out a rider galloped down out of the battle smoke toward him, and with a smile he recognized Chaplain Crabtree mounted on Orthodoxy, his face begrimed, a light in his gray eyes not suggesting his peaceful calling.

"Hallo, Parson."

"So we're off at last, Colonel. I'm glad I caught you first." The chaplain did not see fit to explain that he had been engaged in carrying a message from the Division General to a distant point, under fire from first to last. His present business was to get from his late pupil some expression of affectionate remembrance that, in an event to be distinctly apprehended, would be a solace to his friends.

* Major-General Fitz John Porter, in "Battles and Leaders of the Civil War."

“And you’re after me to shrieve me, eh? Well, do it quickly, for my time is short.”

“My dear Miles—my dear boy,” began the old fellow with a strange break in his voice. “I can only say God bless you, and pardon all your sins.”

“Amen!” said Miles. “I’ve been praying on my own account to-day. You’ll remember that, sir, if I don’t come out of this.”

“Aye, that will I, thank the Lord,” said Crabtree. “But, Miles, lad, have you no message to send home?”

“Ask Ursula,” the young man answered briefly. And at that instant the word to march was given, and the splendid regiment broke into double quick. The Parson kept along with them. He could not divest himself of the sense of responsibility to his benefactor in caring for this youngster who had grown up under his eye. And, truth to tell, the old gentleman had no fancy for the wrong side of the show.

From the slope down which they swept in gallant style, he watched them, in the teeth of a raking fire, cross a ditch impeded by fallen timber, rise out of it, and ascend the crest of a hill opposite fringed with woods belching smoke and flame. There was the fatal palisade beneath which so many souls of heroes had that day gone to their last account. There were the batteries, which, to take, meant to avenge the Confederate losses, and to break the Union line!

In a rain of lead and iron; closing upon every gap

made in their ranks around the colors, with firm resolve; treading underfoot the bodies of comrades who but a short half-hour before had preceded them, gayly cheering; silent, unfaltering, firing not a gun in answer to grape, shell, and canister that cut them down by platoons—the men in gray pressed on. Not until hard upon the enemy did the shattered remnant of those who began the assault rid their lungs of the famous rebel yell! Then, with bayonets fixed, they charged the breastworks. The fury of their onslaught was resistless. The Federals, driven from their ambuscade, rushed up the hill, carrying with them their second line of defense. Then began a blinding fire from the pursuers, which paid back with interest the debt of blood so recently acquired. And so, on and on, pushing a foe as stubborn as themselves, the Confederates rested not till darkness was upon them and the day was theirs.

Before this came to pass, one of the leaders of that imperishable charge had fallen within the second fortification, upon a field strewn with bodies, over which horses were galloping, riderless and maddened by bayonet thrusts and minie balls. With the shout of victory on his lips, Colonel Miles Throckmorton had been struck from his horse by a saber in the hands of an officer of Union cavalry, sent unavailingly to attempt the salvation of the works. Stunned and bleeding from the head, Miles fell at arm's length from

the man whom, in their duel with sabers, he had also unhorsed and wounded. As his eyes rested upon the pallid face of his opponent, he uttered an exclamation of distress.

“Good God! It’s Cunningham!”

By one of those strange coincidences so often recurring in our war, this was indeed the young Englishman who had saved Miles’s life in the battle of Melazzo. A soldier of fortune, he had enlisted with the cause that claimed his sympathy, and chance had brought him into personal clash with the one, who, in their comradeship two years before, had been to him as a brother.

“Cunningham, old fellow, rouse up—it’s I—Throckmorton—God forgive me if I’ve killed him.”

Dragging himself nearer, Miles found that his friend had fainted. Fumbling with weak fingers in the breast of his uniform, he managed to get at a flask and moisten Cunningham’s lips with brandy.

But for dead and dying, the two were quite alone, and in continual peril from the hoofs of frightened horses. As Cunningham revived, Miles became aware of keen pain and a weakness never felt before. Was it death? Perhaps. Well, he had challenged and must meet it like a man. He fell back, and as through a mist saw what he took to be Dick’s face, then his grandfather’s—“dear old man, he’ll know me now as his own.” Then these faded, and Ursula’s alone re-

mained—"true Ursula, his mate--no child, but a woman to inspire and to be loved." How had this knowledge never come to him before?

Miles heard the gallop of an approaching horse. With the instinctive dread of mutilation he threw his arms up with a cry.

"Miles!"

Surely he knew that voice. He was in the school-room at Flower de Hundred, behindhand with a task.

"Coming, sir, presently," his dazed voice answered feebly.

"Thank God!" cried the Chaplain, dismounting at his side. "Are you much hurt, boy?"

"It's my head. I can't tell."

Kneeling upon the stained moss, the Parson dispensed the rude surgery at his command. His chief care was to carry Miles off the Hill Difficulty, up which, for this end, he had spurred amid whistling balls, back where no turn of the tide could trouble them.

"Oh! it's no use—you'd better give me up. Do something, if you love me, for Cunningham—don't you know Cunningham that saved my life in Sicily?—Queer, isn't it, he and I should meet in a mess like this; tell him I don't bear him any grudge—Ah! that's right—he's rousing—I didn't hurt him much. Hallo! What's that?—troops?—our troops—are they

coming back—oh! not *driven* back? Go Parson, leave us, don't stop—Go, I tell you, you'll only come to grief—please, *please* go.”

“I'll be switched if I do, sir!” roared the Parson in a rage.

Miles lost count of time from this point. When he recovered it he was under a fly-tent in an apple orchard in the Confederate rear, the Parson and some badly frightened robins to keep him company. His first coherent inquiry, for the welfare of Captain Cunningham, met with satisfactory response.

What they had mistaken for a column of Federal troops had been prisoners marching to the Confederate rear, and to these Cunningham, while trying to help the Chaplain to get Miles upon Orthodoxy's back, was added by the officers in charge. His wound proving trifling, he was, at the instance of Colonel Throckmorton, soon named on an early list for exchange of prisoners of war, and ten days later went to the North, via Aiken's Landing, while Miles, less fortunate, was tossing in delirium at a private house in Richmond.

On the day following the battle, before the Chaplain could prevent it, the rumor of Miles's death in action had spread everywhere. The army and the Richmond newspapers united in extolling his brilliant behavior on the field, and in deploring a loss irreparable to the South.

Sunday intervening, Mr. Crabtree's message by telegraph to the Colonel was not received at the nearest railway station until Monday morning, and was there held over to be forwarded by the hand of a stage-driver, leaving that afternoon for the interior. In the mean time, Ursula, who had risen early to ride five miles to the cross-roads post-office whence their mail matter was distributed, secured a newspaper containing a report of the engagements of Mechanicsville and Gaines's Mills; and, opening it when again in the saddle and on her way back to the farm-house, the first name that attracted her eye among the killed was that of Miles Throckmorton.

It had always been Ursula's way to bleed and make no moan. She was not conscious under this blinding blow of so much as a start or a shiver. It was hardly unexpected, what she had just read. For days, she had taken the dread of it to bed with her, waked with it, eaten, and gone abroad with it. When alone in a shady lane, she looked again at the printed list, trying to believe she had been under a delusion. There were the letters of his name flaming up to sear her brain! Poor child! Few were the people from whom, in troubles small or great, she did not resent condolence. Now, her one idea was to hide herself—if she could have followed out her first agonized impulse it would have been to fly anywhere rather than return home with this news. And for the first time in her life she

thought of herself without reference to those she loved.

Reaching the farm-house, she gave the newspaper into the hands of Cousin Polly who came to meet her, and pushing brusquely by went into her own room and locked the door. What to do there? To pace the floor like a tigress robbed, and to cast herself across the bed with a bursting heart and eyes still dry of tears. Then, in a flash, came the thought of Miles's legacy. Here was a piece of him, intrusted to her sole keeping—a link between them made by him. With hot hands she broke the seal, and examined the contents of the packet.

The tears flowed as she ended the reading of the letters—Philip Throckmorton's to his father, inclosed in a manly and touching statement from Miles of his own discovery and voluntary self-sacrifice; within, was the miniature none could mistake to be other than it was.

Ursula started up, every consideration of prudence or delay swept away in the whirlwind of her burning championship. Gathering the precious relics in her hand, she flew down the stairs and into the Colonel's room. All of the others were there, gathered in a sorrowing group around the old man lying on his couch. Ursula was conscious that she made but a savage entry among these patient Christian folk, bending their hearts to accept the Lord's decree. She tried to curb

herself, to lower her voice to the pitch of gentle commiseration, and failed. The one image of Miles dying on the battle-field, with none to tell him that the great things he had done in his short life were recognized and honored, enchained her imagination, melted and stirred her with its overwhelming pathos. Of him, him only, could she think. When she tried to speak, her voice came in hysterical gasps. Then, gathering herself in a passionate effort, she laid the miniature and letters upon the Colonel's knee.

"Look! read!" she cried. "And oh, you will see what you have lost!"

CHAPTER VIII.

DISABLED for active service, although fairly restored to health, Colonel Richard Throckmorton might have felt tempted to turn his sword into a pruning-hook, and take up the care of his deserted home, but for the exposed situation of the estate. More than one stolen glimpse he had had at Flower de Hundred, stopping over night and keeping a horse saddled in the stable to escape at the first warning of hostile visitors by land or water. Known as the property of a rebel officer of rank, the place was until the end of the war continually subject to raids from the enemy, and piece by piece its glories fell away, until a day came more memorable in disaster than any that had preceded it. One January night in 1864, the Colonel, withdrawing the curtain of his window as he had been always wont to do for a last glance at lawn and river, before retiring, thought he had never seen them lovelier. In the clear light of a wintry moon, so bright that he might almost have read print under it, the magnolias glistened with a silver sheen, the turf was washed in silver, and the water glimmered unbroken by a sail. No sign was there, in this unearthly radiance, of the ravages that war had left and daytime

would reveal. Soothed by the peaceful spectacle, a fresh hope that the dear ones still left to him might once again be united in happiness within these walls came into his perennially young heart. He went to bed under blankets taken by Judy's fingers from Judy's "chist," and fell into an old man's troubled sleep, to be aroused at daybreak by a negro creeping barefoot to his side.

"Wake up, Marse Richard," the man said, shaking with fear. "De ribber's jess chock-full o' Yankee boats, an' yo' hoss is at de back do'."

But before the Colonel had time to do more than spring out of bed and lay hold upon his clothes, the room was filled with blue-coated soldiers, and he found himself a prisoner of war.

Half-clad and shivering, with head uncovered, his gray locks streaming in the keen breeze from the water, they hurried him across the frozen lawn to a gunboat at the wharf, and into the presence of the officer in command.

From the cuddy to which, under guard, he was consigned, Richard Throckmorton watched all day long the sack of his ancient homestead. Under suspicion as a depot of Confederate supplies, the outbuildings were recklessly put to the torch, and a ring of smoke and flame from burning stables, barns, school-house, bowling-alley, kitchens, and dairy, the whole, in fact, of the little village tributary to a great Virginia dwell-

ing, encircled and swept perilously near the mansion. Soldiers mad with excitement overran the rooms and, dragging whatever they could lay hands on out upon the lawn, made merry with their spoil. Furniture, pictures, mirrors, carpets, books, saddles, fire-irons strewed the grass; and when to these were added the unfortunate discovery of a cask of buried whisky, an orgy followed in which all semblance of restraint was thrown aside. The pet donkey, coming upon the scene bestriden by a huge fellow attired in a Colonial poke-bonnet and flourishing a lady's parasol, threw his rider over head, and was at once seized and given a treble burden beneath whose weight he sank to earth. Judy, appearing to make heroic protest, was driven back to her cabin with jeering threats, and the other negroes faithful to their master, who had remained upon the place, were glad to cower out of sight, if not to curry favor by providing food to the revelers.

And so the day wore on till evening closed the saturnalia, while Colonel Throckmorton, maimed, despoiled, and helpless, saw with a heart swelling with gratitude that the surrounding fire had burnt out, leaving the empty shell of his dwelling still standing. At night, the boat steamed back to Fortress Munroe, where, without interrogatory and in company with two marauding negroes of the fleet, the Colonel was consigned to a dungeon to await the pleasure of his captors.

This episode was happily brief. The prisoner, shortly thereafter exchanged, returned to Richmond, confronting the situation with quiet dignity. He bore this blow of fate as he had borne the others. Without a word of violence for his enemies, he patiently resumed the frayed and broken threads of everyday existence.

"I sometimes think, Richard," quoth Cousin Polly, taking the sole of an old shoe out of soak before refitting it to the cloth upper, ingeniously contrived from the tails of a moth-eaten coat discarded by the Colonel, "that I was thrown away among people of my own estate in life. Look at this gaiter I've already made. As a shoemaker I could have coined gold for us in these blockaded days."

"If it is not in current specie you coin it all the same, my dear Polly," said the Colonel, laying down his saffron-tinted "Examiner." "But where, pray, is my Ursula?"

"She went off after office hours for a walk somewhere," vaguely answered Miss Polly, who had her own reason for keeping dark on the subject. "No doubt she will be in soon."

"Ah, well! As our circle narrows, I grow more restless when one is out of sight."

"We are like those regiments that started out into the war with the full complement of men, and with colors flying," Miss Polly said, "and have come down

to a ragged remnant. There is one, though, that I cannot wish were back."

"No, poor little mother! She was too fine and frail for a life of ups and downs. As Miles truly says, she was a flower that would not bear transplanting."

"She is blooming in the garden of the Lord," added Miss Polly, a tear dropping upon her homely work. "And if ever man died of a broken heart it was Saul when his 'Ole Miss' was taken. He was like a dog that strayed out to die upon his master's grave. But, bless me! Here I am forgetting that it's supper time, though precious little I've got for you and Ursula, I'm free to say."

Jumping up, she went bustling about her simple preparations. Their meal at midday, dinner, so-called, having consisted of rashers of fat bacon and hot "corn-pone," the supper was destined to set forth hard-tack soaked in boiling water, and coffee made of parched beans and served without milk or sugar. Yes, the Confederate wolf was at the door. It was now late in the year which to the Colonel had been heralded in by the sacking and destruction of his home; and the little family were glad to find refuge in a crowded lodging-house in town. Their actual possessions in the matter of accommodation were scant—a sitting-room in the basement, where a lounge sufficed for the Colonel to sleep upon, and a closet near by held his equipage of the toilet—while, up under the eaves, Miss

Polly and Ursula perched in a pigeon-box where only one inmate could move about at a time.

Every floor of the domicile that sheltered the family from Flower de Hundred was inhabited by refugees and Department clerks—driven to various expedients to secure food and the ordinary comforts of existence. Around Ursula and Polly congregated chiefly young women employed in the different bureaux of Government, and the walls echoed with merry twitterings over the make-shifts of their lot. In the story below, an infirm man and his wife, two children, and a paralytic mother whose bed was concealed behind a screen fashioned from quilts and clothes-pins, occupied a room in common. During an illness of the breadwinner of this little family of gentlefolks, they were supported by the self-sacrificing efforts of two friends, girls employed in the Confederate treasury, who pledged the recipients of their bounty to tell no one whence it came.

Thanks to an old friend of Colonel Throckmorton, a householder in the town, the rooms he had been glad to secure with scantiest furniture wore an air of comfort then uncommon, and even of what was almost elegance as compared with the surroundings of others. Chairs, tables, books, and a student's lamp, were lent until the owner should need them. Everybody was borrowing household necessities. The family of a member of the Cabinet, unable to secure

by purchase a dining-table, and having had the use of one from an acquaintance, was called on to surrender it at a moment when spread for the rare occasion of a dinner to invited guests. A lady had borrowed salt-cellars, but returned them on demand to the owner who was driven to sell them to buy bread, and supplied their place with "cocked-hats," made of old invitations to a ball, issued when paper was still white. Blankets, given up in an emergency, were replaced by sheets lined with newspapers.

But the Colonel's furniture was not of this migratory class. All he would take was for his use, "till you choose to get rid of it," said the friend who furnished it. And, by adding here and there some pretty touch, pots of plants on the window sill to conceal a dreary outlook, curtains, cushions, table covers, those magicians Polly and Ursula bestowed on their tiny kingdom the pleasant air of home.

Seasons had passed since the Battle Summer set its indelible imprint upon their family. Many another conflict had left its heart-aches to the land. Every step forward of the invading army had been contested till their tracks were dyed in blood, the bones of combatants were bleaching upon a thousand fields, and the war was drawing to its inevitable close. In Virginia, of the troops that upon the first call to arms had been rallied from the fine flower of Southern society, there remained the gaunt, ragged, and barefooted veterans

with whom Lee stood between the enemy and Richmond—and starvation stared them in the face.

At the hospitals, the cry was no longer for delicacies but for sustenance. The coarsest bread was now sold sparingly; tea, coffee, and sugar were almost unattainable; milk and eggs were, like brandy, dispensed only in the extremity of need.

In the army, rations had been cut down to meager bits of bacon, handfuls of meal, dried peas or parched corn, and at times either of these was lacking until some happy chance should supply the commissariat anew. Whilst the summer lasted, all that was edible in vegetation was stripped to supply the cravings of the troops. As the winter closed in, officers and men alike dreamed dreams of abundance, to awake with pangs of hunger. To these facts, familiar to those who surrendered to Grant at Appomattox, may be appended a pregnant paragraph from the original letter written by General Lee to the Secretary of War at Richmond, dated, "Hd Quarters C. S. Armies, 9th March, 1865," and lying now before me as I write:

"Unless the men and animals can be subsisted, the army cannot be kept together, and our present lines must be abandoned. Nor can it be moved to any other position where it can operate to advantage without provisions to enable it to move in a body. The difficulties attending the payment and clothing of the troops, though great, are not so pressing, and would

be relieved in a measure by military success. The same is true of the ordnance supplies. And I therefore confine my remarks chiefly to those wants which must be met now, in order to maintain a force adequate to justify a reasonable hope of such success."

Shut up in Richmond, the goal of Northern hopes, more than one hundred thousand inhabitants, in addition to the thirty thousand the town had been built to contain, shared with the army the hardships of the time. The supplies to be had were controlled by speculators who disposed of them at enormous prices, even when stated in Confederate currency. The markets, during that winter, were but a beggarly array of empty benches. From the ravaged and exhausted country within practicable reach, little could be got or expected, and the same difficulties of transportation that in a few months were to make it impossible to subsist the army, prevented drafts upon remoter regions. The stress thus felt was almost universal. It was only those who had anything to sell who could put money in their purse, and they were few and marked. Men like Richard Throckmorton, who, in their early buoyancy of faith in the result of the war, had invested their available means in Confederate Bonds, as a loan to the government, found themselves in actual need of money. The inflation of the currency, until more than fifty dollars, that winter, were required to represent the value of one to-day,

lent a ghastly joviality to the affairs of traffic. People told their expenses, laughed at the prices asked, jested over their full purses and the minute equivalents in necessaries, detailed their straits and contrivances, and, throughout, never lost confidence that the South would succeed and that good times would come again!

After all, poverty and hunger weigh far more lightly when shared by a community bent on putting the bright face upon affairs, than when compared with well-fed solvency crowding to a banquet the poor and famished may not taste. And there was something original, almost piquant, in those meetings together of men and women, who had been affluent, at banquets served upon silver, porcelain, and cut glass, where the food offered was meager and only such as could be found in the humblest cabin of the negro prior to the war! Under such conditions, society quickly rids itself of the desire for display, the pretenses, the petty ambitions which go to the bottom in such a ferment of humanity.

While Miss Polly was in the act of immersing her hard tack under the spout of a persistently cheerful kettle, Ursula came in from the early dusk of the winter's afternoon, her eyes sparkling, a bright tinge upon her cheek.

"Oh, am I too late to lay the cloth?" she cried. "You know, Cousin Polly, it's the only indulgence possible to my æsthetic sense, at meal time, to make the

table look pretty. Blessed be you for remembering to bring away from home a good supply of damask and small silverware! And I never take one of Mr. Barclay's Devonport dishes off the cupboard shelf, that I don't want to kiss the nice old thing for lending them to us."

"Don't waste your kisses upon Barclay," said the Colonel, to whom the strong young creature brought new life with the outer air that lingered in her garments.

Ursula laughed, and stooping over his chair bestowed on his forehead a fervent caress. He had been trying to read, but was sadly interrupted by a crack in one of his eyeglasses, which he now took off and laid aside with a sigh over their incompetency.

"Oh, I can't wait!" cried the girl. "I never could wait. I'm just bursting with anxiety to see if these will suit your eyes."

And kneeling down by him, she fitted upon his nose a brand-new pair of gold-bowed spectacles.

"Ursula!" exclaimed the Colonel.

"Scold as you may, Cousin Richard, they're bought and paid for, honestly—not out of the house-money, or the hospital fund, as Cousin Polly'll bear me witness."

"Yes, Richard, they are Ursula's own present, and if they give you half the pleasure they've given her to plot for them, she'll be amply satisfied."

"They suit me to a T," said the Colonel, beaming with satisfaction. "And now I can read without bothering my arm perpetually to take off or put on the others. But I'm completely mystified. How did my Ursula become a capitalist? Many a time I've walked past the shop wishing I could afford this luxury. Last week, only, Dawson told me he was asking five hundred dollars a pair for such as these, for I was weak enough to go in one day and try them on."

"Of course you were, and of course I tracked you, you dear old ostrich," exclaimed the girl gleefully. "Why you haven't seen that for two months past Cousin Polly and I have thought of nothing else—!"

"But that doesn't answer my question? Where did you get five hundred dollars to throw away on me?"

"In the first place I indited a poem—a noble effort—for which an editor gave me seventy-five. That check demoralized me. I felt equal to any extravagance. Then I wrote a story, then more verses—and after that—the deluge—and no more questions answered!"

Not until long afterwards did the Colonel find that, to amass the sum desired, she had done extra work at the Bureau, and, still lacking a small amount, had that day recklessly carried her one muff and boa to the Ladies' Exchange and disposed of them for the balance required. To Ursula, the knowledge that he had been wistfully wanting and steadily denying himself this

necessary, was fraught with such pathos that to bestow it on him filled her with bubbling pleasure. Coming home with her prize, she had danced through the streets!

And as blessings, like misfortunes, are apt to come in pairs, when they were gathering around the table to their frugal meal, a tap at the door disclosed one of the bevy of Department girls who occupied the rooms on the third floor.

"Oh, please, Miss Throckmorton!" she said excitedly, "I have had a box from the country, and we are laying out *such* a spread! And if you'll not refuse to take three sausages and a glass of apple jelly, it would be doing me a favor—you've been so kind to us, you know, and there's so little I can do."

Pressing her gifts into Ursula's hands where she stood at the open door, the girl, flushed with pleasure, ran away.

"The ravens provide!" exclaimed Miss Polly, "not to say that our poor, dear, generous Betty Millson is that kind of a bird—I wont stop, Richard, to send these sausages out to the cook. If you don't mind, I'll just toast them here."

Betsey, the negro woman who did cleaning and "serious" cooking for the lodgers, inhabited the kitchen in the yard; but, save for bread-making, her culinary service had, of late, been light. Miss Polly, secretly afraid that even a short margin of time would

suffice for the Colonel to advance his usual proposition to reserve this superfluous dainty for the hospitals, made all haste to pop her sausages upon the toasting-fork!

In the act of lifting his first welcome mouthful to his lips, the good man paused. He did not speak, but they saw him wince. He was thinking of a passage in the last letter Miles had written from the front:

“To-day one of my staff officers took teamsters and mules and scoured the country, coming back with some loads of unshucked corn. The men fell upon it like wild animals. In a driving snow-storm they shelled the corn with numb fingers and giving the husks to the horses parched the hard grains and ate them ravenously. Our own mess was supplied with a pot of cow-pea soup and a morsel of corn bread for each officer. We slept last night under frozen blankets, most of us, upon the ground. And yet my fellows, when they can manage to only half-fill their stomachs, are as fit as fiddles and ready to keep it up till Doomsday. If—if—what can an if accomplish—but oh, if I could only shoe them properly, and give them one square meal a day!”

After supper, when the Colonel, according to his wont on fine nights, had strolled around to one of the houses where he was an honored guest, sometimes to indulge in a rubber of whist and more often to talk over the increasing gravity of the military situation,

the ladies tidied their room, and sat down to their work.

"And now, my dear child," said the brisk disposer of family affairs, "I should be really glad for you to put aside your mourning and go to this party at the Annandale's."

"It's all very well, Cousin P," said Ursula resignedly. "I don't deny that I'd like a peep at some of the fun. But I'm laboring under the same embarrassment that Mr. Swiveller felt when he was debarred from going into the street by the sale of all his clothes—'even an umbrella would be something.'"

"I know very well, you darling, that the proceeds of your wardrobe in colors bought mourning for us both. How I wish, now, I had made you keep that sweet sprigged muslin!"

"Never mind the sprigged muslin," began Ursula, but was interrupted.

Mrs. Tabby Hazleton, carrying a bundle under her arm, came panting in.

"Howdye, girls—I'm in luck to find you both—but then, somehow, it seems to me, I always am in luck. Tom's having to give up the service through that fever he got in the Chickahominy—though it left him the color of a pumpkin and a little hard to manage—still, he's at home safe; and if I give him enough newspapers—you know how odd he always was about Vashti—well, when she made her mind up to go

North and be a freedwoman I thought Tom would *never* get along—if you'll believe me, he says, now, he'd as lief the war would hold on twenty years, if 'twould keep Vashti at the North—oh, my dear, he don't mean it, though—the sights we see—even among the lodgers—who'd have ever thought I'd come to taking rent for rooms of mine—those poor exiled homesick things, huddled together, starving almost—the only thing I minded about having *them*, is that it isn't *you all*—but I seemed to have got them settled down on me, from the first, and you can't ask people to go out, even if it is your dearest friends you want in place of them—couldn't spare a servant this evenin', and so brought this around myself. First, a mutton-bone for Betsey to make some broth to-morrow for the Colonel—my dear, I'd hoped to bring some meat but my boarders have such appetites and this is the first mutton we've had, in I don't know when—there's enough to make a right good mess of broth—and here's a half a pound of rice—”

“Tabby Hazleton!” said Miss Polly severely.

“What are you talkin' 'bout, Polly Lightfoot? What's a mutton bone?”

“Didn't you solemnly promise you'd not take another morsel off your table to put on ours?”

“Polly, I declare to gracious we got up from dinner feeling as if we'd eaten too much—please, please, don't prevent me—why, when Tom and I sit and

talk about the Colonel till our hearts are like to burst—!"

The faithful soul fell to crying, and the unaccustomed sight of tears coursing upon her ruddy cheeks was too much for Miss Polly to resist. Crossing over, she not only took the offerings from Tabby's hand, but bestowed a hug upon their bearer. Peace being restored, Tabby again began to chirrup.

"Look here, Ursula, child, I hear the Colonel wants you to go to some of these merrymakings—'Starvation Parties,' don't they call 'em—the young folks are getting up. Well, of course, I knew you'd nothing but black things, and, thinks I to myself, what will the darling wear? Then I remembered the changeable silk I wore to the Christmas Ball at Flower de Hundred—it's never been out of the linen pillow-case, since then—fashions alter, of course, and you're so much taller; but, with gores coming in, and Polly's head for managin'—the only thing is, blue is not your color nor purple either, with your skin—maybe old Judith can get something for it at the Exchange—don't open it till I'm—can't bear to think of those happy, happy—four dollars a yard in Baltimore before the scissors were stuck—speaking of Judith, when the Lord makes up his jewels that old woman will be there—I've found out 'twas she that paid for Peyton's funeral, while poor Helen was lying ill—"

"Just like Judith. When she first got the place as

manager of the Exchange, she wanted the Colonel to take her earnings; and when he refused outright, and Helen did too, the faithful creature fell to hoarding 'against a rainy day.' Our people have been fidelity itself. Phyllis, who's hired out as a lady's maid at the Annandales, had rather have starved with us than leave us. Isaac is a porter in the Quartermaster's Department, you know; but when his work's done, he never fails to come in of an evening to brush the Colonel's clothes and clean his shoes. I found the old fellow almost crying, last night, over a big patch in one of Richard's boots. Jock sticks to Miles like a leech, and when our darling boy complained of an empty pocket, recently, offered, in good earnest, to let himself be sold to set Miles up in cash. Miles told Jock he'd knock him down if he opened his mouth again, and that was an end of it."

"Did you hear the story of Major Carter's Jim," asked Ursula. "He, too, under the stress of the times, begged to be sold 'for a good big price, for I'se a fuss class waitah, sah.' 'No, Jim, old boy, there's no price big enough to buy you,' said his master, 'when you leave me you go free.' 'Laws, Marse Gawge, who's talkin' bout leavin' you?' answered Jim, with a twinkle in his eye. 'All you'se got to do's to put *me* in your pocket, and git along out o' Richmon' to de camp. Ef I turns up wid de army a few days arter, *you'se* not sponsible.'"

"Well, well, well, mustn't stay chattin' here," said Tabby, arising to depart. "But I'll declare to gracious, girls, I was forgettin' to tell you I've had a letter from Cousin Maria Crayshaw, of Rose Hill—always said 'twas foolishness to talk about Miles courting one of those Crayshaw girls, when 'twas only because they are such friends with Bell—what *do* you think, Sally Crayshaw's made Bell promise to go for a visit to Rose Hill, and Miles's headquarters are not a mile away!"

"Tabby Hazleton, you're a gossip," said Miss Light-foot, with a sniff.

"Oh, come now, Polly, when a widow's young and pretty, and her first love is still—tongues will wag, and everybody says it's bound to be a match."

"Miles will have all he can do," returned Miss Polly, quite awfully for her, "to take care of his grandfather and to bring up the ruins of the place. It will be a long time before he can think of marrying any one. And I must say it's hardly decent to talk so, when Bell hasn't left off wearing crape."

"Oh, crape don't hinder!" said the incorrigible Tabby, "especially in war-times, when husbands are husbands—don't you know—and surely when she's so young and unprotected, living on from day to day with those cousins who can only give her a roof to cover her—and Miles, the guardian of the boy, and all—and naturally wanting to make amends to him—I do hope,

Polly Lightfoot, if such a thing's to be, you're not going to hump your back up—I just know the Colonel would take it the right way—and Ursula, who is so fond of Bell—Ursula, child, I don't like to see you poking a coal fire—nothing destroys the skin like Richmond coal—my! my! what *will* Tom say to me leaving him so long?"

"I never came nearer flying into a rage in all my life," declared Miss Polly, when they were left alone. "Of course, Ursula, *you* know this thing's impossible?"

"Impossible to make Mrs. Tabby's left-off finery adjust itself to me?" said Ursula, who was unpinning Tabby's bundle. "Cousin Polly, she's the kindest soul alive. Look at this lovely old Mechlin lace she has put in with the silk."

"Ursula, sometimes I think you care for nothing but the Colonel and myself."

"Oh, but I do!" cried the girl gayly. "I adore old Mechlin lace."

Ursula's mornings, spent in writing and rewriting her signature upon endless series of slips of paper, bearing the superscription of the Register of the Confederate Treasury, were not intellectually invigorating. But the pittance of salary thus earned was important, and while on duty she was surrounded by women, young and old, most of them called by historic names of England and Virginia, many of them sprung from

the statesmen who had cradled the Constitution of the United States, all having left homes of comfort and luxury to be near their men-folk in the struggle that had wrought such havoc upon their fortunes. The atmosphere was congenial, elastic, even gay. The same element of fearless vivacity, born of Southern soil, which in all times has been difficult for the Northern mind to accept as anything more than frivolity—and which, among the grandes dames awaiting death by guillotine in the French Conciergerie, sparkled like fire-flies in the dark—infused their industry. Here and there, you would see a grave, silent worker, clad in black, still under the shadow of crushing bereavement. Her, the others respected, spared, lavished little tender words and acts upon. Some, known to be so poor that they must perforce go without luncheon in order to feed mouths waiting for them at home, were surprised by benefactions achieved through blessed artifice. During the hours of official service all sat alert and business-like, guiding their rapid pens; but at the moment of relaxation, such a loosening of the flood-gates of speech—such trills of laughter, such gesticulations by fair hands; such eye-beams and blushes over General This and Private That; such charges and counter-charges, denials, rebuttals; such fluttering gossip over weddings, where the bride, happy in possessing a new homespun frock, gave herself, without dowry, to a groom owning but the horse he rode and the sword he

carried, as, kissing his new-made wife, he spurred away again into battle!

On the day following Tabby's little skirmish with Cousin Polly, there was in one of the dove-cotes of the Treasury Department much discussion. The whole of luncheon-time was taken up with a ball, to be held at the house of a new member of the "Starvation Club," new also in the sense of Richmond conservatism, and of a family that might be depended upon to introduce at supper some variation of the *ménu*, heretofore consisting of water of the James with abundant attic salt. Many, denouncing in advance as presumptuous the suggested innovation of "refreshments," secretly determined to be present. It was even hinted by some daring spirit that the host might be intending to test the temper of the company with a bowl of claret-punch, but this was dismissed as a visionary's dream.

"One thing is certain, girls," declared one of the acknowledged belles; "we may go without eating, but the exigencies of society require that something shall be worn! Until yesterday, I was in despair for a party dress, and suddenly my good spirit gave me a new idea. Every rag I own has been so turned and twisted, one old thing trimmed with another, that nothing original remains."

"Excepting original sin!" quoted Ursula.

"No interruptions, please. When you see what I've evolved—and provided no one comes too near, I'm

pretty sure of my effect—you will all be wild to copy! It's a frock of mosquito netting looped over pink cambric, with paper roses! The inspiration came to me during the sermon last Sunday, I'm sorry to say, and soon after hearing that divine General Throckmorton is to be at this ball."

"He is such a beauty!" exclaimed another girl. "But, Ursula, if you tell him I said so, I'll get even with you, never fear."

"He has such a don't-care-for-anybody air, it's quite enchanting," cooed a third.

"Oh, my dear girls, it's breath wasted for any of *us* to talk about Miles Throckmorton!" said Gracie Gray. "Of course Ursula won't tell, but all the world knows he's wild about Mrs. Dick. Captain Carter, who came to town on furlough yesterday, told me he'd seen them riding together near the General's headquarters—she's on a visit to Rose Hill. Bell Throckmorton is prettier than ever in her hat and habit, Carter says, and all the officers are pulling caps for her. I don't know how you others find it,—” here a melancholy shake of a very pretty head,— “but my experience shows that these old cousinly attachments are the worst to contend against—” another shake and sigh; “I know it, for I've tried.”

In the laugh that followed, Ursula escaped. Turning her steps that afternoon in the direction of the “Ladies' Exchange,” she assured herself that there, at

least, she would be free of the mocking specter that so persistently dogged her path.

With Miles's recovery from the long and dangerous illness following his wound, and after the formal recognition by his grandfather of the young man's rights as heir of the estate, a new condition of things had arisen between the comrades of lang syne. For reasons known only to herself the girl withdrew into a shell of maidenly reserve, puzzling, annoying, and finally exasperating the none-too-patient Miles, until he had vowed not to belittle himself before such a creature of whims again. With returning health, and the lifting of the weight he had so long borne alone, winning a soldier's guerdons with every onward step, leading a life so crowded with stirring incident, he was carried by the rush of circumstance continually away from her. Only Cousin Polly guessed—and she could but speculate in silence—what this meant to Ursula!

No haunts more eloquent of war's pervading presence were to be found throughout the South than those marts instituted in many towns for the sale or barter of the wearing apparel of needy gentlefolks. That in charge of which old Judith of Werowocomico had been placed by some benevolent ladies shrank away into a quiet side street, and concealed its mossy roof under the boughs of two great magnolias. About its chief room, long, low-studded, and scrupulously neat, there hung a perpetual odor of camphor, sandal-

wood, attar-of-roses, and tonquin-beans, as if the cupboard-shelves of a legion of maiden aunts had been emptied and aired within its precincts. Here old Judith would unfold and display to trusted customers an extraordinary variety of woman's gear and ornaments. State robes of satin, put by after having made their curtesy to Queen Victoria, Empress Eugenie, or the ladies of the White House; silks and tarlatans that had swept the ball-room floors of Newport, Saratoga, and the White Sulphur Springs; gauzy muslins of New Orleans, fashioned by the skilled fingers of Olympe; wedding-gowns taken from silver paper and sent away from home with tear-drops in their folds. Flounces there were of Point d'Alençon, like frost-work upon the window; yards of Honiton, Mechlin, Valenciennes, and Brussels lace; wraps of camel's hair; "marrowy shawls of China crêpe, like wrinkled skins on scalded milk," and others of those Oriental webs that are tinted like pigeons' blood rubies. Then Judith's tawny hand would unlock the drawers of a brass-bound cabinet, and, untying knots of faded silk, touching the springs of tarnished jewel-cases, would bring to light fans, parasols, trinkets,—garnets or amethysts set in seed-pearl were most often seen, and discs of turquoise, framed in yellow gold—here and there an old miniature even, courting its equivalent in clothes or dollars.

In the silence of the embalmed atmosphere, in the

green light streaming through small panes of glass, a fitting priestess of this shrine of long ago was the ancient mulatto, standing always in the presence of her guests, wearing the turban and apron, dropping the old-time reverence, of her class—her mild eyes full of sympathy in the exigencies her visitors revealed—keeping secrets to the death—honest in rendering account to the smallest fraction of the bargain's worth.

Cousin Polly had lost no time in despatching to Judith's mart the relic given by Mrs. Hazleton, and the old woman greeted Ursula with a smile curbing welcome news. Already a customer had presented herself, a maiden lady with a taste for high colors, offering in exchange for Tabby's flamboyant robe a roll of India muslin that had been lying by since the spinster's grandmother had danced at the Richmond Assemblies. With a keen appreciation of its artistic value, Judith drew through her fingers the lovely filmy stuff with its trceries of white embroidery. As the mulatto descanted upon how the gown might be made, Ursula felt her girl's heart beat with unwonted excitement.

"Law's sake, Miss Nutty, I aint a sayin' it to flatter, but you'se grown up into a real beauty, and wid your lace in a soft full ruffle around de low neck, and de same thing in de arms, you wont need a speck o' trimmin', take my word. I just wan' my young lady to

show folks what ole Flower de Hunderd kin turn out. Time was when all de plantation thought there worn't no beauty to hold a candle to Miss Bonnibel, but if they'd see Miss Nutty now—And so Marse Miles is coming to visit Marse Richard. Bless de Lawd, that marcy's spared to the Colonel. Miss Nutty—fore you go—it aint takin' liberty from me to you—Is it true what I heard de ladies in here a-yistidday, say bout Marse Miles gwine to marry Miss Bonnibel—it aint *true*, is it, chile?"

Ursula's exhilaration took immediate leave of her. "How can I answer, Mammy," she said, trying to speak lightly, though her words seemed framed in lead. "Don't you know a man's family are the last to hear the truth about such matters."

"It aint fitten for me to pass opinions," went on the old woman. "But, chile, when I think what a little while it is since him she loved was cut off in his youth's flower,—and besides, Miss Nutty, honey—Miss Helen and me's so often talked of it together—It always seemed as if—"

Mammy faltered and stopped short; and, Ursula's silence inviting no further discussion of the theme, she curtsied and said good-by.

"Am I never to cease to feel the goad of it?" the girl asked herself, as she hastened home.

No heroine, however rent by sentimental woe, can fail to derive consolation from the knowledge of a

moment of best looks. Ursula, equipped for the "Starvation Ball," stood gazing at herself in the little bed-room mirror held aslant by Cousin Polly to afford a fuller view, and attended by five Department girls bristling with pins, compliments, and suggestions. During the progress of the frock (made at home, we may be sure), these generous creatures had flashed in and out of her tiny cold room, begging to be allowed to hem, to pipe, to cord, to gather; she had had much ado to reject their offers of necklets, ear-rings, bandoline, and what not; and they now stood, arms wreathed around each others' waists, cheeks flushed in sympathetic triumph, in a living, palpitating chain, to hail her Queen of Beauty.

To her New Orleans-born mother, Ursula owed the *mât* tint of a complexion like the petal of a cape jasmine that by candle light gleams with such dazzling whiteness. "Pale comme un beau soir d'automne," Miles had said of her once, what time that young gentleman allowed himself to drop into rare compliment. Her soft dusky hair shaded a low brow and harmonized with the hazel eyes that could look pathetic as a wounded fawn's, then gleam with sudden sparkles when a bright thought flashed its way across her brain. She was tall, erect, moved easily, and—surpassing charm in woman—carried her head grandly upon her shoulders—entering a room with an air of natural supremacy that oftentimes sent into

eclipse some piece of pink and white prettiness, till then the belle in general estimation.

Now, in her clinging draperies of misty white, the short waist zoned with white, she suggested the swan-necked beauties of Napoleon's court at the period when Josephine, weary of heavier stuffs, ransacked the Indies for webs of gauze and made muslin *à la mode*. Kissed and caressed by all of the girls in turn until threatened with the death of a fly in honey, she gathered up her train and running down the stairs to display herself to the Colonel, threw open with a flourish the door of the sitting-room.

"Enter Madame la Duchesse," she cried gayly, sweeping in splendid style across the threshold and halting with a blush.

For, beside his grandfather's chair, drawing the dear old man's single arm around his neck, knelt a stalwart soldier. Miles, who, in obedience to the Colonel's suggestion, had delayed after arriving in town long enough to make his toilet for the ball, was not prepared for Ursula's magnificence. Both men rose up to do her homage, Miles vowing inwardly that the sight was well worth coming from afar to look upon.

"No one told me you had come," she said, giving Miles her hand.

"Why, Cousin Polly knew," replied the blundering soldier. "By Jove, Ursula, you are perfectly stunning—isn't she, grandfather?"

But the old gentleman had disappeared into his dressing-room—returning whence he displayed a case of worn blue velvet.

“I had meant this for you, Ursula—you will remember, Miles, it is mentioned in my will. It was my gift to my wife upon our wedding-day. I see now how much wiser it is to let it adorn your youth, than to put off the fulfilling of its mission.”

Touching the spring of the case, Ursula saw for the first time the exquisite string of pearls of which she had often heard.

“It would have been my pleasure to clasp them around your neck, my dear,” the Colonel went on gallantly. “But, seeing that I’m disabled, perhaps Miles will do it for me.”

Ursula gave one quick imploring glance around her for Cousin Polly, who was nowhere to be seen. Then holding herself very straight, and bending toward Miles with much the air of a sovereign enthroned, she allowed him to perform the service thus enjoined.

This dignity affronted Miles. Why could she not have submitted to it as a natural thing? He had half a mind to back out, in his turn. But resolutely, as if marching upon a battery, he took the chain and snapped it around her slim and stately throat. A “drake’s tail” curl, escaping from the hair beneath her knot, became entangled in the clasp. Ursula exclaimed impatiently and stamped her foot. Trying to

loosen the tiny curl, it entwined his finger. Then the big soldier drawing away brusquely begged her pardon, and left the affair for Cousin Polly, who, bustling in with wraps, put an end to the situation by telling them it was time to go and turning both young people out of doors.

Ursula wondered what had transformed him into such a lamb of meekness, as, walking to their party after the Southern fashion—(what astonishment, it will be remembered, was the portion of a French nobleman enlisted under the Confederate banner, when assigned to escort a young lady to a dance, alone and on foot through the streets of Richmond! what eulogy, afterwards, of her admirable bearing “*calme et fière comme une squaw dans vos forêts vierges,*” during the ordeal!)—the cousins kept side by side in silence.

“It was nice of the dear old fellow to give you that trinket as he did,” remarked Miles, finally, with an odd tremor in his voice. “No one has been allowed to touch or see it since my grandmother died. Some time ago, when we were going through the formalities about my taking poor Dick’s place, he mentioned to me the family tradition concerning it, and asked if I’d any objection to—I’ll swear, Ursula, you’d better take my arm—you stumbled stepping off that curb.”

“No, thank you, I prefer walking alone,” said the

young lady, who congratulated herself that she had effected a diversion at this point.

"Just as you like. I'll not obtrude myself, of course. As I was saying, it's well known in the family those pearls have been given by the eldest son to his bride on her wedding-day, until my poor father broke the record. My grandfather told me it was his earnest wish—as a token of gratitude, you know—to give you the most precious thing he had, and I quite agreed with him."

Ursula's pearls seemed to burn into her throat.

"It wasn't only for nursing him, he said, but for what you did for me."

"Miles, I forbid you to mention that dreadful day," the girl cried, flaming at thought of an intervention so reckless of results. "I can't bear to think of it."

"It almost seems as if you have been repenting ever since," he answered bitterly. "As if you begrudge my having presumed to be alive. Really, Ursula, you are more trying than you know. For months, it has been growing worse and worse. When I remember my little old-time comrade who once would have put on page's dress to follow me to the wars, and contrast her with this cool and haughty damsel, I think the world's turned upside down."

No answer from Ursula.

"If you were like other girls, you'd be touched by my telling you how I've looked forward to this meet-

ing. Many a time lately, in camp, the thought's come to me of your sympathy, and I've felt as if hard lines are easier to bear."

Ursula, abandoning her defiant march, head in air and keeping her distance marked, drew nearer. With a quick movement, she slipped her hand within his arm.

"That's right, you little duck," said Miles. "Now tell me, Nutty, why have you kept me at arm's length."

"If I'm a duck, it is you who are a goose, Miles," she answered; and with that he was obliged to be content.

"Well, for fear you should go back again, I'll make hay while the sun shines," he said gaily. "Don't walk so fast, dear; I've something I want to say to you—"

"It depends on what kind of a something it is; whether it's worth the sacrifice of the waltz I might be having," she replied.

"It's a secret. Something that I have told to one other person only—and it is she who has made me think you will care to hear. You know, Ursula, that I've just come from Bonnibel?"

"I know it."

"She is prettier and lovelier than ever. You can understand when a man's been boxed up in camp surrounded by a lot of rough fellows, and hasn't seen a woman of his own kind for an age, what an angel like that must have seemed to me."

"I understand," said Ursula, feeling faint and chill.

"Well, when I met her again, and came under her spell, I forgot all my good resolutions to keep to myself what I didn't mean to let get the upper hand of me, as things are now. It just seemed to burst from me—how for months, I'd been letting a hope grow in my heart that I might win the only woman in the world worth living for—her whose dear sweet face came to me on the battle-field when I lay expecting death—good God, Ursula, do you mean to say it hurts you like that to hear it?"

With a fiery gesture of denial the girl loosened her arm from his. They were passing beneath a gas lamp and he saw the first look upon her face succeeded by a sort of pleading to be spared, like that of some dumb creature wounded unto death.

"Ursula—darling—speak to me," he said caressingly.

"Not now."

"When? Only tell me when?"

"I think you have overestimated my—what shall I say?—capacity as a confidante," she stammered, and her voice sounded in her own ears strained and thin. "Some other time, perhaps. Just now, I am bending all the energies of my mind to the consideration whether or not our entry at the ball will be well-timed for the display of my new frock. I am quite certain of its impression on Gracie Gray!"

Chilled and offended by her flippant speech, Miles withdrew into his shell and during the rest of the evening gave her no more of his society. When, after a prolonged disappearance from the gay-scene that in outward show managed so well to cheat the eye of a belief in war-times, he finally emerged from the conservatory with Miss Gracie Gray upon his arm, he found Ursula had gone home with other friends!

Meeting him next day, she was cool and bright like one of the December days they were then passing through, and during his brief holiday gave him no chance to reopen a subject he was in sorry humor to discuss.

CHAPTER IX.

HIS first transport of wounded feeling having had due time to subside, Miles had recourse to Bonnibel—something perhaps on the principle of the Confederate General who met the accusation that he had put the South Carolina regiments of his division in the forefront of the fight with the declaration, “Yes, I’ll send you to the front, and I’ll keep you there; you got us into this fix; and, confound it, you’ve got to get us out.”

Bonnibel, who with her boy had settled down for the winter at Rose Hill, heard with gentlest sympathy the young man’s fuming statement of his wrongs at his cousin’s hand; and, when he had finished, said with a deeper rose-tint upon her cheek:

“My poor, dear Miles, I could not have believed in such dullness of perception. Unless I am utterly at fault, your affair promises all that you could hope. Trust me, there is between you and Ursula only the shadow of a shade that a good straightforward talk will dissipate.”

“It’s all very well to say so,” grumbled the General, “but you’ve no idea how fierce she was, and then whipped around like a weathercock and treated me—well, there’s no use denying I was taken off my feet.

The extraordinary thing, you know, is what she meant by it."

"Write and ask her," suggested Mentor, a dimple showing through the blushes that had not ceased to come and go.

This very simple solution of a mighty problem was by the young officer finally adopted. Sitting in his tent, he penned a long and manly letter to which the signature alone was lacking, when an orderly put into his hand a batch of mail matter. Out of an envelope addressed in Cousin Polly's familiar hieroglyphs, he took a note written by Ursula:

"Good-by, dear Miles; when this reaches you, I shall again have turned my back on Dixie. I go to-day by flag-of-truce boat to Fortress Monroe, thence northward to be with my poor Aunt Eleanor, who is dangerously ill. The summons came to me from my uncle, who has made all arrangements for my journey. When we meet again, you will have forgiven my petulance. Put it away from you *forever* with the subject of our last talk, and let us be again, as always, true friends and cousins—God bless you, dear, good-by."

With a deliberate movement Miles tore the letter he had written into bits, and putting a match to the fragments watched it burn away into tinder.

Weeks passed; and by Ursula, again plunged into

the absorbing monotony of a sick room, her return to the South ceased to be thought of as an event for which a date could be reasonably set. Mrs. Courtland's death was followed by the long and wearing illness of her husband, who, broken in spirit as in health, clung like a child to Ursula.

A stronger contrast could not have been drawn than between the luxurious conditions surrounding her present service and those of the hospital in Richmond where she had, inch by inch, fought to wrest her adoptive father from the grave. Here, with servants at her call, trained nurses to succeed each other in forestalling the sufferer's demand, she was, however, as much on duty as in the former case—this duty entailing a sacrifice of personal inclination that made it the more severe. Often, when pouring out the costly stimulant accepted with a grimace, or preparing the dainty morsels varied to tempt a capricious appetite, tears filled her eyes at thought of the meager provision for the suffering at home, and of the strong arising hungry from their meals. As well might Dead Sea apples have been the entrées the chef continued to provide and the solemn butler to set forth upon her solitary board!

Not from the obsequious bearing of the servants and employees of the house did Ursula discover she was now looked upon as the heir of her uncle's wealth. The first knowledge of this possibility came through

relatives of Mr. Courtland, who, volunteering a visit, did not scruple to attack the lonely girl with charges of interested motives that wounded her to the quick. Bewildered, and driven to desperation, she made her arrangements to set out again, unprotected, for the South. Mr. Courtland's excitement upon being informed of her projected movement brought on a seizure—coming out of which, he summoned his lawyer and, after sufficient provision for his relatives, disposed of the bulk of his fortune, to the care of safe trustees, for "his beloved niece" Ursula. Then, with piteous appeals to her charity toward a dying man dependent for all happiness upon her daily care, he wrung from her the promise to remain.

Day after day, sitting in a dim room beside the half inanimate figure upon the bed, her heart strained at its leash in longing to be away sharing the fears, the sorrows, the hardships of her own kin. Kind friends were not lacking to soothe the evident anguish of the girl, as at every step forward of military affairs it became more clear that might was crushing the effort for Southern independence. Her daily snatches at the newspapers were like stabs in a fresh wound. And at last, in the very hour when, holding tightly to her hand, praying her to keep by him till his feet entered upon the valley of the shadow, her uncle left her free to go, the news came to Ursula of the surrender of Lee to Grant!

The consternation conveyed by these tidings to her lonely expatriated heart, was shared by thousands upon thousands upon whom it burst with overwhelming effect within the limits of the conquered States. Far and near, people living their ruined lives in ruined homes refused to believe it—crying out that, as in the Lord they had put their trust, He would still defend the Right. Some bowed to earth like broken stalks of wheat, others sat dry-eyed and obstinate, waiting, watching for news that might waken fresh hope in fainting spirits. Not until the soldiers of the outnumbered army came in straggling groups back to their homes, faces telling the story of defeat lips could not speak, was the sentence accepted as irrevocable. Many of these men had for nights before the final scene at Appomattox known no sleep, and were at the moment of stacking arms and laying down their tattered battle-flags starving for the food supplied them by a generous victor. But whatever expressions of hate and rancor were uttered then, came not from the men of either of the armies which for four long bloody years had faced each other behind guns and musket barrels. After the surrender was announced, not a shout of triumph went up, not a salute was fired, not a strain of martial music heard in the camp of the conquering army, until the soldiers in gray had disbanded and had gone their several ways.

Such conduct, taken in connection with General

Grant's allowance to the Confederates of their horses, side-arms, and personal effects, laid firm and broad the foundations of the kindly feeling on which is based the Union that was to be!

To old Richard Throckmorton, in Richmond, had befallen the stirring experience of sight of that April day of the capture, when the blue of heaven was shut out by smoke-wreaths that rolled up from the burning town; when amid the explosions of doomed war-ships in harbor, and of shells in the forsaken Confederate arsenals, the latter unceasing from dawn to dusk, the Union troops rode into Capitol Square and planted the Stars and Stripes there, within a wall of flame; when the householders who were stanch adherents of the Southern cause closed the blinds and shutters of their homes, and went on their knees behind them in mourning for the dead; when the streets, filled with flakes of fire and tinder, were possessed by a mad mob of marauding whites and negroes from the slums, joined by convicts escaped from the Penitentiary during the first alarm—all howling and chanting in drunken unison!

For a few days after the occupation of the capital, there existed in the hearts of the hopeful a belief that "tout est perdu fors l'honneur" was not yet to be written upon the Southern flag. Colonel Throckmorton, who had been in the confidence of the leaders, now, as he knew, scattered and in flight, or drawn up in

the last ditch to face the enemy, had no such delusion. To him, surrounded with a sorrow that made all the rest seem light, came a soldier's letter. Written in pencil upon a coarse yellow sheet, thrust into an envelope of wall paper, and stained here and there with blots that may or may not have resulted from exposure to weather, it has survived to be gazed at by a younger generation to whom it means little but a picturesque fragment of a past now rapidly blending with forgotten history :

“Yes, it is true, dear grandfather, the Army of Northern Virginia is no more. What I, personally, feel, is shared by some seven or eight thousand of my brothers-in-arms who held out till yesterday—we've fought and lost, and have no cause to droop our heads before those who've overwhelmed us, though I'm not going to say to you that the iron hasn't entered into our souls, for you know better. But when I think of of you, and the class you represent, it seems you have the better right to bitterness of spirit—all you have given, like water poured upon the ground—your poor right arm—our dear old Dick—your home and fortune—sacrificed in vain. But for you, I'd be off to-morrow with a lot of the fellows who are wild to offer their swords to Maximilian.

“Last night, after the worst was generally known, our men, having got some rations from *the other side*, rolled over on the bare ground, and fell dead asleep, like logs. For some days past, many of them have done their duty like somnambulists,—pinched faces,

strained eyes, pallid skin, showing the continual marching and fighting, without sleep or proper food. When they awoke this morning, under a driving rain, to face the stunning consciousness of the surrender, the poor fellows were refreshed in spite of themselves. All around me, I hear talk of 'what I intend to do when I get home'; but it must be owned the prospect's blue enough, and many a fellow stops short and chokes over it. Some men, who during the whole four years have been continually in the field, go around wearing faces that are a sadder sight to me than death from a bullet or a saber cut.

"Yesterday, when General Lee came back to his headquarters on his way from the meeting with General Grant to settle terms, we had a scene no man that saw it is likely to forget. His veterans, as they caught sight of the glorious old chief, swarmed around his horse, struggling to touch the General's hand, his clothing, or his accoutrements. There was an attempt to cheer; but it was choked by the lump in every throat. He shook hands as fast as they came up, and with the tears running down his cheeks, said these words: 'Men, we have fought through the war together. I have done the best I could. My heart is too full to say more.'

"They were crying all around as he rode off to his tent. I remembered Garibaldi at Palermo; but this was different. Those impetuous Latins expressed the fervor of the moment. Our fellows had followed Lee and tested him for years; and to us he was greater in defeat than any other man could be in victory. He looked, sitting upon his horse in the full uniform put

on for the interview with Grant, a model of the manly beauty that fires the popular heart. But it is the moral influence of the Christian gentleman, one felt most. His known wish that the troops should disband quietly, and going back to their homes try to be good citizens, has had an immense effect in determining the temper of our men.

“Well—even for you, it’s been like pulling teeth to get this much out of me. Perhaps, when in a few days I come to you in Richmond, it will be easier—‘The Last Edition of Lee’s Miserables,’* some wag called out at mess, this morning, and raised a sickly grin—”

While the strains of martial music from the victor’s military bands were yet echoing through Richmond streets, a spare old man, sitting a rusty horse, rode slowly up the avenue of Flower de Hundred and in at the iron gates, swung back upon their hinges and overgrown with a tangle of roses and honeysuckle vines doing their best to conceal where the finials of both granite pillars had been shot away. Dismounting unattended, and tethering his mare to graze beneath a tree—for of stable or outhouse remained only charred foundations, around which the grass grew lush—he gazed wistfully at the ancient walls scarred with bullet marks, at the line of window-frames like

* The army version of the title of Victor Hugo’s “Les Misérables,” one of the few new books printed in Richmond during the war.

empty eye-sockets, at the yawning space whence the old oaken house-door had been removed to serve as a special target for the practice shots of gunboats on the river. Stepping across the threshold of his home, Richard Throckmorton stood knee deep in dead leaves that had drifted into the hall. His coming disturbed birds that had nested upon the carving of the frieze inside; and by his cold hearth-stone a red squirrel, bright-eyed and sympathetic, paused to give him welcome. Of the paneling once lining the hall, the greater part had been torn away by soldiers in search of imagined treasure. Half-way up the stairs, upon the landing where a cushioned seat had been the pet lounging place of merry generations, there remained of the wide window once above it a single pane of glass, bearing the names, scribbled with a diamond ring by little Nutty long ago, of "Ursula and Miles."

Standing where he had stood on the Christmas night that had seen the Yule-log die upon Flower de Hundred hearth, the old man bowed his head. Long he remained there in somber reverie; then, hastily going through rooms and corridors where ghosts of remembered joys haunted the heavier furnishings that were left, he stepped out shivering into the April sunshine, and, crossing to the church-yard, sat down upon Dick's grave and sobbed like a child.

It is again April, and a year has passed since the war drums throbbed no longer and the battle-flags were

furled in Old Virginia. In the chief room of Timberneck Manor House, sparsely fitted up with chairs and tables, but boasting a generous fire of logs in its deep-set chimney place, three men had assembled for their evening meal.

Around the walls stained with damp and, despite the efforts of faithful Phyllis, apt to be garlanded with cobwebs, hung the most valuable of the family portraits once seen at Flower de Hundred—a cruel stroke of Fate to transplant these beribboned, high-busked, or periwigged gentry from Kneller's brush, into such drear surroundings—where, however, Madam Lydia looked prettier than ever, and Ursula, the shepherdess, made a bright spot upon the scene!

Hither, from the disheartening ruin of Flower de Hundred which he had actually no money to repair, Colonel Throckmorton had retired to live with his grandson Miles, and his old and devoted follower and friend, Parson, late Chaplain, Crabtree.

Duke, the Flower de Hundred chef, who now caught the fish he cooked, and drummed for other eatables as indefatigably as did Caleb Balderstone; Jock, who worked out-of-doors, and kept up a garden plot; and Phyllis, housemaid of general utility—took care that the creature comforts of the little family were not neglected.

In the absence of Cousin Polly, forcibly expedited by the Colonel to act as chaperone for Ursula, now by

the terms of her uncle's will a young lady of independent means, on a tour through Europe, their good neighbor Mistress Tabby Hazleton drove down, now and then, to look after "Polly's men folks." These visits were not as frequent as Tabby and Tom might have wished, since it was not always they could spare a horse from the plow to harness to Tom's old buggy. The stalls of Honey Hall stables were an empty show in these days, and Tabby's egg-shaped yellow chariot gathered dust in the 'locked coach-house. War had not withered the good lady's spirit in the least. Beginning life over again as humble farmers, she and her old husband were in their courageous activity a lesson to the community. Tom, brisk and cheerful, was observed to show signs of depression only when the re-establishment of regular passenger service on the James River boats restored to their home the wandering Vashti, who, weary of state as "a colored lady upon her travels" in the North, promptly took up again the rod of authority at Honey Hall. The most vivid expression of Tom's resentment against his recent foes was because, "Egad, sir, those Yankees hadn't the spunk to hold on to the old catermaran after they'd bamboozled her to go away with them!"

Throughout the neighborhood, smoke was curling from disused chimneys; ex-soldiers were digging their own potato patches, or hoeing corn beside a lingering "contraband"; women, who had spent their

lives in the wake of numerous house servants, made butter, baked, swept, sewed from dawn to evening, thankful to lie down to rest in peace near the remnant of a family, out of hearing of those awful guns whose echo would not, in years to come, die out of memory.

Miles Throckmorton, who had entered upon the slow business of petty farming without capital or a sufficient staff, very much as a war horse might be supposed to see himself harnessed between the shafts of a country cart, had only accepted the inevitable. During the lifetime of his grandfather, duty and inclination must hold him alike just here. By contrast with that of many of his fellow officers scattered penniless, homeless, glad to secure by any occupation a bare subsistence, his lot was indeed one to be considered enviable. But Richard Throckmorton, while apparently acquiescent to this condition of affairs for Miles, was inwardly grieved and fretted. After much silent cogitation, a visit or two to his man of affairs in town, and, recently, a diligent correspondence with the same person, the Colonel sat down one evening to the supper table wearing an excited face.

Miles and the Parson, doing full justice to Duke's broiled shad and tomatoes, followed by a ham omelet with waffles and such coffee as would have sustained the fame of a Parisian restaurateur, saw that the dear old man was laboring to disclose to them a new idea,

but forebore to urge him until he should see fit himself to broach the subject.

When the table was cleared away, the lamp put in place, and Miles, throwing himself upon a horsehair couch that had seen better days half a century before, shaded his eyes with his hand and fell into reverie, the Colonel cleared his throat.

"Miles, my dear boy," he said tenderly, and then came to a halt. Something in the relaxed lines of the young man's vigorous frame, the rough clothes he wore, his resigned abandonment of the place for which nature, society, and education had fitted him, thus to lead the life of a clod, without a future, and lacking present alleviation, touched the old boy's gentle spirit with a keen regret that for a time unfitted him to speak.

The Parson, seeing the turn of affairs, threw himself into the breach, and led the conversation off to the usual subjects of men of their condition at the time—the political outlook of the reunited States, the future of Virginia, the question of the negroes, the more than probable absorption of the old Southern element into that civilization of the masses that gave the mighty North its power; they deplored the confusion of ideas, the straits and stresses of the hour, that appeared to bewilder so many of their friends in their desire to know which way it was best to turn; and then, as was generally the case, fell to fighting their battles over

again till the dull room glowed with the scenes they had conjured up.

"Bodykins! Master Page," quoted the Parson, putting down his pipe, to get up and walk the floor with his hands beneath his coat-tails. "Though I am now old and of the peace, if I see a sword out my finger itches to make one—though we are justices and doctors and churchmen, Master Page, we have some salt of our youth in us; we are the sons of women, Master Page."

The Colonel laughed, Miles caught the infection and, pulling himself together, sat up, and laughed too.

In that favorable moment, the Colonel ventured to introduce his bombshell.

"I did not happen to mention to you, did I," said the gentle deceiver, "that I've sent my letter to McPheeters, telling him I have decided to close with his client's offer?"

"Grandfather!"

"My dear sir!" said the Parson.

"Yes," said the Colonel, with composure. "No good could come of delay. We have talked of it long enough. The money will put life into the barren acres of Timberneck, and patch up this old barracks into something like a home. I reckon in a day or two we shall hear the new owner's name."

"It's for me you've sold Flower de Hundred, sir?" cried out Miles, in a husky voice.

“My dear child,” said the old man very lovingly; “if you knew how glorious youth seems to me, how brief its season, how much more important the development of a human life to do good in its generation, than any mere sentiment for what is past, you’d believe that I don’t regret it. Besides, we Virginians have been taught a stern lesson in this war—to put away what has been done for us, and to do in our turn what our descendants may point to with pride. I don’t want our line to drop with you, Miles; and I can’t suffer you to rust in such a scabbard while I have means to prevent it.”

“But what a price to pay!” exclaimed his grandson.

“A very good price for a shell like that, as prices go. I told McPheeters not to press it, if his client thought the sum too high,” answered the Colonel, purposely misunderstanding. “I fancy the new owner will be either some sentimentalist from the North who is enamoured of our lawn and trees seen from the river, or some Richmond man of another stripe from us, who has saved money during the war, and wants to invest in something ‘old and settled.’ No friend of ours could afford to buy anything in the way of real estate just now, that’s certain.”

“I fear so,” said the Parson, breaking into the conversation with a sudden hollow groan. “My dear sir, the plantation was represented in the first representative legislative assembly in America, convened at

'James Citty in Virginia,' July 30, 1619; was in the next generation acquired by your ancestor, and has never since been out of the family. Is it not a matter to be weighed and measured—are there not other means—could not a sufficient sum be obtained for present uses by mortgaging—”

“Since it came into the family there has been no mortgage on the estate, my good Crabtree,” answered the Colonel mildly; “and even if it could be done, which is unlikely, I think you should know my views on that subject well enough to be sure I shall not be the first to shadow the old place with debt. No, no, my mind is made up, and let no more be said. There was an offer for such furniture as still remains there, Miles; and as we have no room for it elsewhere, you will oblige me by going over at once, to make an inventory.”

“Wouldn't they buy in these?” cried the young man, the vein in his forehead swelling as he pointed to the portraits on the wall; “and the silver, and books? and King Charles' medal might fetch a fine price at some dealer's shop in Broadway.”

“Not till I'm underground, Miles, lad,” answered the Colonel, with a forbearing smile.

Miles, standing in the leaf-strewn hall, gazed about him ruefully. He had, at his grandfather's bidding, come over from Timberneck to make note of the fur-

niture stored in the wings of which old Judy kept the keys, the main building having in chief part fallen a sacrifice to war. So sacred was to him the idea of his last ramble through the dwelling no longer his inheritance, that he had purposely avoided letting Judy know of his presence until his first emotion should be spent.

The squirrel tenants, whose tribes had increased, scuttled tamely about his feet. From a smoke-tree crowned with roseate bloom near the open door, he heard the spring song of a cardinal bird, who with scarlet helmet and jet black whiskers made a glorious bit of color amid the surrounding green. He remembered his efforts once to catch and tame one of these wild-wood beauties of Virginia for little Ursula, and how she had cried over its dead body, and, with Vic as chief mourner, made it a royal funeral. Everything spoke of Ursula. Recalling her name bracketed with his on the broken pane in the landing window, he resolved to rescue and bear away with him the token of her trustful girlhood, when to her he was all in all—but, strangely enough, when he looked up for it, the pane was gone, and had, as the marks showed, been recently and carefully removed!

Miles went back to his post to wonder. By a coincidence he paused, uncertain, on the very spot where, at the Christmas Eve ceremonial "before the war," Ursula had come to him of her own accord, looking

into his face with a sorrow she could not speak. Ah! why had she so changed that when he offered her his heart in manly fashion she should flout and forsake him, in a pet? And now that there was between them the great gulf fixed by her new wealth, it was doubly and trebly hopeless. But all the same, in him there had been no change; there could never be any change.

A brisk patter on the leaf carpet caused him to look around, and Miles saw, running toward him from the dining-room, her bonnet askew and her cheeks as red as cherries, the immortal Cousin Polly!

"Miles, my own dear boy!" she cried, hugging and kissing him, "I was never so glad in all my life before; when I spied it out there, I knew the horse in a minute. That willful girl of mine is so bent on mysteries—we came down here like thieves in broad daylight, I told her—what she'll say to me for telling on her, I'm sure I don't know—but now that she's got the place, it can't matter so very much—Yes, indeed, from Baltimore to Richmond, and down the river almost without a stop, so wild she was—directly McPheeters telegraphed her that her offer had been accepted."

"My dearest Cousin Polly, you are getting me deeper into the mire. I don't understand you in the least. I thought you and Ursula were in England. It never occurred to me that she—answer me one

question, only, to set me straight—is Ursula McPheetter's client?"

"Indeed and she is, and a pretty time I have had keeping the secret. After Richard refused to take a penny of her money, as a loan or otherwise, she was nearly ill with disappointment. Then the idea of buying Flower de Hundred possessed her. She said it broke her heart to have to make the offer as from a stranger. We came from England three weeks ago, because of a letter from the lawyer saying he had no doubt of her immediate success. This morning, when we left Richmond in the boat, she was so excited I was afraid people would think I had charge of somebody a little 'off.' My dear, I'm *that* thankful to see you, and the old place, even if it's like this. She's going to put everything exactly as it was before, she says, *exactly*; only what is absolutely necessary is to be new. And how's my darlin' Colonel—and the Parson—I can't rest till we get over to Timberneck; but Ursula says not until to-morrow; we are to camp out here, to-night. I'll tell you what it is, Miles, now you *are* here, I verily believe if you ask Ursula she will let us go to spend the night at Timberneck, for how I'm to stand not seeing Richard till to-morrow, passes me."

"You dear little soul," said the young man, touched by her affectionate incoherence. "You may be sure I shall do my best."

"Go look for her, *then*; she's out somewhere—good-

ness knows where. She's been sittin' this half hour on a cricket in Judy's cabin, listening to the old woman talk of you. Miles, my dear—if I only dared! If I only knew what it was that passed between Ursula and you! We've had a letter from Bonnibel, telling of her engagement to Colonel Chamberlayne—not the Chamberlaynes of Gloucester, but still an admirable man, and they say wealthy, and poor dear Bell seems so happy—and now, Ursula *can't* keep on thinking that you're going to marry Bell!"

Cousin Polly, in her excitement, had let a cat of respectable dimensions out of the bag, and stood back, rather alarmed by the expressions succeeding each other upon her hearer's face.

"So it was that!" he cried, for a moment exultant. Then, at once, a cloud came over him.

"Listen, Cousin Polly," he said, after a short pause; "I have loved Ursula and wanted her for my wife for so long I don't even know when it began—but I would no more ask her, now, than I would put my hand into the fire."

"Dear, dear, why did she go to all the trouble and cut her finger, too, to get that pane of glass out," said vexed Miss Polly. "But the least you can do, Miles, is to go to look for her."

Miles, who for a despairing swain was in a strangely exhilarated mood, laughed and obeyed. Only to look at her seemed such a glorious prospect, the conse-

quence was naught! He found her leaning over the decrepit fence of the home paddock, stroking the nose of old Orthodoxy, who, in his lean and shambling age, had been consigned to this haunt of clover. Miles saw her kiss the star in the old charger's forehead, before, hearing his footstep, she turned and ran forward to meet him with a face of exquisite delight.

There is none to say how it came to pass that Miles renounced his stern resolve to leave Ursula to spinsterhood, for him! They were certainly made man and wife within a reasonable time after this interview. Nobody thought of consulting the only eye-witness—Orthodoxy—and the old horse has lain these many years under the daisies, with an inscription on a board set over him to state that “for his faithful service in carrying General Miles Throckmorton, when wounded, from the battlefield of Gaines’ Mill, this tablet is erected by the General’s loving sons.” The execution of this work of art is original, and the spelling hardly reflects credit upon the boys’ preceptor, a seedy old man who adored them and was never happy when they were not tagging at his heels.

The lads in return, loved Parson Crabtree dearly. But there was one who in that reunited household had the best tenderness of every heart. The Colonel lived to a great age, and preserved his vigor of body and sweetness of nature to the last.

Among the guests who to-day come and go, as of old, at Flower de Hundred, the Throckmortons have lately welcomed Colonel Cunningham, the English volunteer in half a dozen wars, a grizzled oldster now, whose tales of adventure in various lands the boys find particularly to their taste.

Miles, the oldest son of Miles and Ursula, who has no love of farming, talks of going to Mexico to be a civil engineer. Their second son, Dick, has a scheme for reclaiming the overflowed marsh lands on the estate and putting them into wheat, which will keep him occupied at home. Their daughters, two charming young women, everywhere admired, have been recently upon a visit to their relative, Mrs. Chamberlayne, one of the ornaments of the fashionable world at Washington, where her husband holds high place. There is gossip about a match between one of the Flower de Hundred girls and young Guy Throckmorton, who made such a hit in some land speculations in the far West the other day, and who may come East to settle after all.

Mrs. Hazleton still lives at Honey Hall. Since the death of old Tom she has comforted her loneliness by filling the house with ailing people who 'need a change,' and 'poor things whose fortunes were ruined by the war.' Helen Willis opened a school for girls, which has continued to do well; old Judith lives with her, of course. Many of the Flower de Hundred ser-

vants came back at the close of the war, and asked for employment on the place. Those we have seen more closely associated with the family, resumed their respective industries about the house.

Flower de Hundred looks, to-day, very much as it did before the war—and so, for that matter, does Cousin Polly!

THE END.



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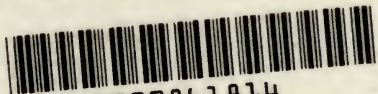
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