JOHN MARCH

SOUTHERNER

BY GEORGE W. CABLE

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JOHN MARCH, SOUTHERNER

I.

SUEZ

In the State of Dixie, County of Clearwater, and therefore in the very heart of what was once the "Southern Confederacy," lies that noted seat of government of one county and shipping point for three, Suez. The pamphlet of a certain land company—a publication now out of print and rare, but a copy of which it has been my good fortune to secure—mentions the battle of Turkey Creek as having been fought only a mile or so north of the town in the spring of 1864. It also strongly recommends to the attention of both capitalist and tourist the beautiful mountain scenery of Sandstone County, which adjoins Clearwater a few miles from Suez on the north, and northeast, as Blackland does, much farther away, on the southwest.

In the last year of our Civil War Suez was a basking town of twenty-five hundred souls, with rocky streets and breakneck sidewalks, its dwellings dozing most months of the twelve among roses and honeysuckles behind anciently whitewashed, much-broken fences, and all the place wrapped in that wide sweetness of apple and acacia scents that comes from whole mobs of dog-fennel. The Pulaski City turnpike entered at the northwest corner and passed through to the court-house green with its hollow square of stores and law-offices—two sides of it blackened ruins of fire and war. Under the town's southeasternmost angle, between yellow banks and over-hanging sycamores, the bright green waters of Turkey Creek, rambling round from the north and east, skipped down a gradual stairway of limestone ledges, and glided, alive with sunlight, into that true Swanee River, not of the maps, but which flows forever, "far, far away," through the numbers of imperishable song. The river's head of navigation was, and still is, at Suez.

One of the most influential, and yet meekest among the "citizens"—men not in the army—whose habit it was to visit Suez by way of the Sandstone County road, was Judge Powhatan March, of Widewood. In years he was about fifty. He was under the medium stature, with a gentle and intellectual face whose antique dignity was only less attractive than his rich, quiet voice.

His son John—he had no other child—was a fat-cheeked boy in his eighth year, oftenest seen on horseback, sitting fast asleep with his hands clutched in the folds of the Judge's coat and his short legs and browned feet spread wide behind the saddle. It was hard straddling, but it was good company.

One bright noon about the close of May, when the cotton blooms were opening and the cornsilk was turning pink; when from one hot pool to another the kildee fluttered and ran, and around their edges arcs of white and yellow butterflies sat and sipped and fanned themselves, like human butterflies at a seaside, Judge March—with John in his accustomed place, headquarters behind the saddle—turned into the sweltering shade of a tree in the edge of town to gossip with an acquaintance on the price of cotton, the health of Suez and the last news from Washington—no longer from Richmond, alas!

"Why, son!" he exclaimed, as by and by he lifted the child down before a hardware, dry-goods, drug and music store, "what's been a-troublin' you? You a-got tear marks on yo' face!" But he pressed the question in vain.

"Gimme yo' han'ke'cher, son, an' let me wipe 'em off."

But John's pockets were insolvent as to handkerchiefs, and the Judge found his own no better supplied. So they changed the subject and the son did not have to

confess that those dusty rivulet beds, one on either cheek, were there from aching fatigue of a position he would rather have perished in than surrender.

This store was the only one in Suez that had been neither sacked nor burned. In its drug department there had always been kept on sale a single unreplenished, undiminished shelf of books. Most of them were standard English works that took no notice of such trifles as children. But one was an exception, and this world-renowned volume, though entirely unillustrated, had charmed the eyes of Judge March ever since he had been a father. Year after year had increased his patient impatience for the day when his son should be old enough to know that book's fame. Then what joy to see delight dance in his brave young eyes upon that volume's emergence from some innocent concealment—a gift from his father!

Thus far, John did not know his a-b-c's. But education is older than alphabets, and for three years now he had been his father's constant, almost confidential companion. Why might not such a book as this, even now, be made a happy lure into the great realm of letters? Seeing the book again to-day, reflecting that the price of cotton was likely to go yet higher, and touched by the child's unexplained tears, Judge March induced him to go from his side a moment with the store's one clerk—into the lump-sugar section—and bought the volume.

II.

TO A GOOD BOY

In due time the Judge and his son started home.

The sun's rays, though still hot, slanted much as the two rose into oak woodlands to the right of the pike and beyond it. Here the air was cool and light. As they ascended higher, and oaks gave place to chestnut and mountain-birch, wide views opened around and far beneath. In the south spread the green fields and red fallows of Clearwater, bathed in the sheen of the lingering sun. Miles away two white points were the spires of Suez.

The Judge drew rein and gazed on five battle-fields at once. "Ah, son, the kingdom of romance is at hand. It's always at hand when it's within us. I'll be glad when you can understand that, son."

His eyes came round at last to the most western quarter of the landscape and rested on one part where only a spray had dashed when war's fiery deluge rolled down this valley. "Son, if there wa'n't such a sort o' mist o' sunshine between, I could show you Rosemont College over yondeh. You'll be goin' there in a few years now. That'll be fine, won't it, son?"

A small forehead smote his back vigorously, not for yea, but for slumber.

"Drowsy, son?" asked the Judge, adding a backward caress as he moved on again. "I didn't talk to you enough, did I? But I was thinkin' about you, right along." After a silence he stopped again.

"Awake now, son?" He reached back and touched the solid little head. "See this streak o' black land where the rain's run down the road? Well, that means silveh, an' it's ow lan'."

They started once more. "It may not mean much, but we needn't care, when what doesn't mean silveh means dead loads of other things. Make haste an' grow, son; yo' peerless motheh and I are only wait'n'—" He ceased. In the small of his back the growing pressure of a diminutive bad hat told the condition of his hidden audience. It lifted again.

"'Evomind, son, I can talk to you just as well asleep. But I can tell you somepm that'll keep you awake. I was savin' it till we'd get home to yo' dear motheh, but yo' ti-ud an' I don't think of anything else an'—the fact is, I'm bringing home a present faw you." He looked behind till his eyes met a brighter pair. "What you reckon you've been sitt'n' on in one of them saddle pockets all the way fum Suez?"

John smiled, laid his cheek to his father's back and whispered, "A kitt'n."

"Why, no, son; its somepm powerful nice, but—well, you might know it wa'n't a kitt'n by my lett'n' you sit on it so long. I'd be proud faw you to have a kitt'n, but, you know, cats don't suit yo' dear motheh's high strung natu'e. You couldn't be happy with anything that was a constant tawment to her, could you?"

The head lying against the questioner's back nodded an eager yes!

"Oh, you think you might, son, but I jes' know you couldn't. Now, what I've got faw you is ever so much nicer'n a kitt'n. You see, you a-growin' so fast you'll soon not care faw kitt'ns; you'll care for what I've got you. But don't ask what it is, faw I'd hate not to tell you, and I want yo' dear motheh to be with us when you find it out."

It was fairly twilight when their horse neighed his pleasure that his crib was near. Presently they dismounted in a place full of stumps and weeds, where a grove had been till Halliday's brigade had camped there. Beyond a paling fence and a sandy, careworn garden of altheas and dwarf-box stood broadside to them a very plain, two-story house of uncoursed gray rubble, whose open door sent forth no welcoming gleam. Its windows, too, save one softly reddened by a remote lamp, reflected only the darkling sky. This was their home, called by every mountaineer neighbor "a plumb palace."

As they passed in, the slim form of Mrs. March entered at the rear door of the short hall and came slowly through the gloom. John sprang, and despite her word and gesture of nervous disrelish, clutched, and smote his face into, her pliant crinoline. The husband kissed her forehead, and, as she staggered before the child's energy, said:

"Be gentle, son." He took a hand of each. "I hope you'll overlook a little wildness in us this evening, my dear." They turned into a front room. "I wonder he restrains himself so well, when he knows I've brought him a present—not expensive, my deah, I assho' you, nor anything you can possible disapprove; only a B-double-O-K, in fact. Still, son, you ought always to remember yo' dear mother's apt to be ti-ud."

Mrs. March sank into the best rocking-chair, and, while her son kissed her diligently, said to her husband, with a smile of sad reproach:

"John can never know a woman's fatigue."

"No, Daphne, deah, an' that's what I try to teach him."

"Yes, Powhatan, but there's a difference between teaching and terrifying."

"Oh! Oh! I was fah fum intend'n' to be harsh."

"Ah! Judge March, you little realize how harsh your words sometimes are." She showed the back of her head, although John plucked her sleeves with vehement whispers. "What *is* it child?"

Her irritation turned to mild remonstrance. "You shouldn't interrupt your father, no matter how long you have to wait."

"Oh, I'd finished, my deah," cried the Judge, beaming upon wife and son. "And now," he gathered up the saddle-bags, "now faw the present!"

John leaped—his mother cringed.

"Oh, Judge March—before supper?"

"Why, of co'se not, my love, if you——"

"Ah, Powhatan, please! Please don't say if I." The speaker smiled lovingly—"I don't deserve such a rebuke!" She rose.

"Why, my deah!"

"No, I was not thinking of I, but of others. There's the tea-bell. Servants have rights, Powhatan, and we shouldn't increase their burdens by heartless delays. That may not be the law, Judge March, but it's the gospel."

"Oh, I quite agree with you, Daphne, deah!" But the father could not help seeing the child's tearful eyes and quivering mouth. "I'll tell you mother, son—There's no need faw anybody to be kep' wait'n'. We'll go to suppeh, but the gift shall grace the feast!" He combed one soft hand through his long hair. John danced and gave a triple nod.

Mrs. March's fatigue increased. "Please yourself," she said. "John and I can always make your pleasure ours. Only, I hope he'll not inherit a frivolous impatience."

"Daphne, I——" The Judge made a gesture of sad capitulation.

"Oh, Judge March, it's too late to draw back now. That were cruel!"

John clambered into his high chair—said grace in a pretty rhyme of his mother's production—she was a poetess—and ended with:

"Amen, double-O-K. I wish double-O-K would mean firecrackers; firecrackers and cinnamon candy!" He patted his wrists together and glanced triumphantly upon the frowsy, barefooted waitress while Mrs. March poured the coffee.

The Judge's wife, at thirty-two, was still fair. Her face was thin, but her languorous eyes were expressive and her mouth delicate. A certain shadow about its corners may have meant rigidity of will or only a habit of introspection, but it was always there.

She passed her husband's coffee, and the hungry child, though still all eyes, was taking his first gulp of milk, when over the top of his mug he saw his father reach stealthily down to his saddle-bags and straighten again.

"Son."

"Suh!"

"Go on with yo' suppeh, son." Under the table the paper was coming off something. John filled both cheeks dutifully, but kept them so, unchanged, while the present came forth. Then he looked confused and turned to his mother. Her eyes were on her husband in deep dejection, as her hand rose to receive the book from the servant. She took it, read the title, and moaned:

"Oh! Judge March, what is your child to do with 'Lord Chesterfield's Letters to his Son?'"

John waited only for her pitying glance. Then the tears burst from his eyes and the bread and milk from his mouth, and he cried with a great and continuous voice, "I don't like presents! I want to go to bed!"

Even when the waitress got him there his mother could not quiet him. She demanded explanations and he could not explain, for by that time he had persuaded himself he was crying because his mother was not happy. But he hushed when the Judge, sinking down upon the bedside, said, as the despairing wife left the room,

"I'm sorry I've disappointed you so powerful, son. I know just how you feel. I made—" he glanced round to be sure she was gone—"just as bad a mistake one time, trying to make a present to myself."

The child lay quite still, vaguely considering whether that was any good reason why he should stop crying.

"But 'evomind, son, the ve'y next time we go to town we'll buy some cinnamon candy."

The son's eyes met the father's in a smile of love, the lids declined, the lashes folded, and his spirit circled softly down into the fathomless under-heaven of dreamless sleep.

III.

TWO FRIENDS

It was nearly four o'clock of a day in early June. The sun shone exceptionally hot on the meagre waters of Turkey Creek, where it warmed its sinuous length through the middle of its wide battle-field. The turnpike, coming northward from Suez, emerged, white, dusty, and badly broken, on the southern border of this waste, and crossed the creek at right angles. Eastward, westward, the prospect widened away in soft heavings of fallow half ruined by rains. The whole landscape seemed bruised and torn, its beauty not gone, but ravished. A distant spot of yellow was wheat, a yet farther one may have been rye. Off on the right a thin green mantle that only half clothed the red shoulder of a rise along the eastern sky was cotton, the sometime royal claimant, unsceptred, but still potent and full of beauty. About the embers of a burned dwelling, elder, love-pop, and other wild things spread themselves in rank complacency, strange bed-fellows adversity had thrust in upon the frightened sweet-Betsy, phlox and jonquils of the ruined garden. Here the ground was gay with wild roses, and yonder blue, pink, white, and purple with expanses of larkspur.

A few steps to the left of the pike near the wood's strong shade, a beautiful brown horse in gray and yellow trappings suddenly lifted his head from the clover and gazed abroad.

"He knows there's been fighting here," said a sturdy voice from the thicket of ripe blackberries behind; "he sort o' smells it."

"Reckon he hears something," responded a younger voice farther from the road. "Maybe it's C'nelius's yodle; he's been listening for it for a solid week."

"He's got a good right to," came the first voice again; "worthless as that boy is, nobody ever took better care of a horse. I wish I had just about two dozen of his beat biscuit right now. He didn't have his equal in camp for beat biscuit."

"When sober," suggested the younger speaker, in that melodious Southern drawl so effective in dry satire; but the older voice did not laugh. One does not like to have another's satire pointed even at one's nigger.

The senior presently resumed a narrative made timely by the two having just come through the town. "You must remember I inherited no means and didn't get

my education without a long, hard fight. A thorough clerical education's no mean thing to get."

"Couldn't the church help you?"

"Oh—yes—I, ch—I did have church aid, but——Well, then I was three years a circuit rider and then I preached four years here in Suez. And then I married. Folks laugh about preachers always marrying fortunes—it was a mighty small fortune Rose Montgomery brought me! But she was Rose Montgomery, and I got her when no other man had the courage to ask for her. You know an ancestor of hers founded Suez. That's how it got its name. His name was Ezra and hers was Susan, don't you see?"

"I think I make it out," drawled the listener.

"But she didn't any more have a fortune than I did. She and her mother, who died about a year after, were living here in town just on the wages of three or four hired-out slaves, and——"

The younger voice interrupted with a question indolently drawn out: "Was she as beautiful in those days as they say?"

"Why, allowing for some natural exaggeration, yes."

"You built Rosemont about the time her mother died, didn't you?"

"Yes, about three years before the war broke out. It was the only piece of land she had left; too small for a plantation, but just the thing for a college."

"It is neatly named," pursued the questioner; "who did it?"

"I," half soliloquized the narrator, wrapped in the solitude of his own originality.

He moved into view, a large man of forty, unmilitary, despite his good gray broadcloth and wealth of gold braid, though of commanding and most comfortable mien. His upright coat-collar, too much agape, showed a clerical white cravat. His right arm was in a sling. He began to pick his way out of the brambles, dusting himself with a fine handkerchief. The horse came to meet him.

At the same time his young companion stepped upon a fallen tree, and stood to gaze, large-eyed, like the horse, across the sun-bathed scene. He seemed scant nineteen. His gray shirt was buttoned with locust thorns, his cotton-woolen jacket was caught under an old cartridge belt, his ragged trousers were thrust into bursted boots, and he was thickly powdered with white and yellow dust. His eyes swept slowly over the battle-ground to some low, wooded hills that rose beyond it against the pale northwestern sky.

"Major," said he.

The Major was busy lifting himself carefully into the saddle and checking his horse's eagerness to be off. But the youth still gazed, and said again, "Isn't that it?"

"What?"

"Rosemont."

"It is!" cried the officer, standing in his stirrups, and smiling fondly at a point where, some three miles away by the line of sight, a dark roof crowned by a white-railed lookout peeped over the tree-tops. "It's Rosemont—my own Rosemont! The view's been opened by cutting the woods off that hill this side of it. Come!"

Soon a wreath of turnpike dust near the broken culvert over Turkey Creek showed the good speed the travelers made. The ill-shod youth and delicately-shod horse trudged side by side through the furnace heat of sunshine. So intolerable were its rays that when an old reticule of fawn-skin with bright steel chains and mountings, well-known receptacle of the Major's private papers and stationery, dropped from its fastenings at the back of the saddle and the dismounted soldier stooped to pick it up, the horseman said: "Don't stop; let it go; it's empty. I burned everything in it the night of the surrender, even my wife's letters, don't you know?"

"Yes," said the youth, trying to open it, "I remember. Still, I'll take its parole before I turn it loose."

"That part doesn't open," said the rider, smiling, "it's only make-believe. Here, press in and draw down at the same time. There! nothing but my card that I pasted in the day I found the thing in some old papers I was looking over. I reckon it was my wife's grandmother's. Oh, yes, fasten it on again, though like as not I will give it away to Barb as soon as I get home. It's my way."

And the Reverend John Wesley Garnet, A.M., smiled at himself self-lovingly for being so unselfish about reticules.

"You need two thumbs to tie those leather strings, Jeff-Jack." Jeff-Jack had lost one, more than a year before, in a murderous onslaught where the Major and he had saved each other's lives, turn about, in almost the same moment. But the knot was tied, and they started on.

"Speakin' o' Barb, some of the darkies told her if she didn't stop chasing squir'ls up the campus trees and crying when they put shoes on her feet to take her to church, she'd be turned into a boy. What d' you reckon she said? She and

Johanna—Johanna's her only playmate, you know—danced for joy; and Barb says, says she, 'An' den kin I doe in swimmin'?' Mind you, she's only five years old!" The Major's laugh came abundantly. "Mind you, she's only five!"

The plodding youth whiffed gayly at the heat, switched off his bad cotton hat, and glanced around upon the scars of war. He was about to speak lightly; but as he looked upon the red washouts in the forsaken fields, and the dried sloughs in and beside the highway, snaggy with broken fence-rails and their margins blackened by teamsters' night-fires, he fell to brooding on the impoverishment of eleven States, and on the hundreds of thousands of men and women sitting in the ashes of their desolated hopes and the lingering fear of unspeakable humiliations. Only that morning had these two comrades seen for the first time the proclamation of amnesty and pardon with which the president of the triumphant republic ushered into a second birth the States of "the conquered banner."

"Major," said the young man, lifting his head, "you must open Rosemont again."

"Oh, I don't know, Jeff-Jack. It's mighty dark for us all ahead." The Major sighed with the air of being himself a large part of the fallen Confederacy.

"Law, Major, we've got stuff enough left to make a country of yet!"

"If they'll let us, Jeff-Jack. If they'll only let us; but will they?"

"Why, yes. They've shown their hand."

"You mean in this proclamation?"

"Yes, sir. Major, 'we-uns' can take that trick."

The two friends, so apart in years, exchanged a confidential smile. "Can we?" asked the senior.

"Can't we?" The young soldier walked on for several steps before he added, musingly, and with a cynical smile, "I've got neither land, money, nor education, but I'll help you put Rosemont on her feet again—just to sort o' open the game."

The Major gathered himself, exaltedly. "Jeff-Jack, if you will, I'll pledge you, here, that Rosemont shall make your interest her watchword so long as her interests are mine." The patriot turned his eyes to show Jeff-Jack their moisture.

The young man's smile went down at the corners, satirically, as he said, "That's all right," and they trudged on through the white dust and heat, looking at something in front of them.

IV.

THE JUDGE'S SON MAKES TWO LIFE-TIME ACQUAINTANCES, AND IS OFFERED A THIRD

They had been ascending a long slope and were just reaching its crest when the Major exclaimed, under his voice, "Well, I'll be hanged!"

Before them stood three rusty mules attached to a half load of corn in the shuck, surmounted by a coop of panting chickens. The wheels of the wagon were heavy with the dried mud of the Sandstone County road. The object of the Major's contempt was a smallish mulatto, who was mounting to the saddle of the off-wheel mule. He had been mending the rotten harness, and did not see the two soldiers until he lifted again his long rein of cotton plough-line. The word to go died on his lips.

"Why, Judge March!" Major Garnet pressed forward to where, at the team's left, the owner of these chattels sat on his ill-conditioned horse.

"President Garnet! I hope yo' well, sir? Aw at least," noticing the lame arm, "I hope yo' mendin'."

"Thank you, Brother March, I'm peart'nin, as they say." The Major smiled broadly until his eye fell again upon the mulatto. The Judge saw him stiffen.

"C'nelius only got back Sad'day," he said. The mulatto crouched in his saddle and grinned down upon his mule.

"He told me yo' wound compelled slow travel, sir; yes, sir. Perhaps I ought to apologize faw hirin' him, sir, but it was only pending yo' return, an' subjec' to yo' approval, sir."

"You have it, Brother March," said Major Garnet suavely, but he flashed a glance at the teamster that stopped his grin, though he only said, "Howdy, Cornelius."

"Brother March, let me make you acquainted with one of our boys. You remember Squire Ravenel, of Flatrock? This is the only son the war's left him. Adjutant, this is Judge March of Widewood, the famous Widewood tract. Jeff-Jack was my adjutant, Brother March, for a good while, though without the commission."

The Judge extended a beautiful brown hand; the ragged youth grasped it with courtly deference. The two horses had been arrogantly nosing each other's muzzles, and now the Judge's began to work his hinder end around as if for action. Whereupon:

"Why, look'e here, Brother March, what's this at the back of your saddle?"

The Judge smiled and laid one hand behind him. "That's my John—Asleep, son?—He generally is when he's back there, and he's seldom anywhere else. Drive on, C'nelius, I'll catch you."

As the wagon left them the child opened his wide eyes on Jeff-Jack, and Major Garnet said:

"He favors his mother, Brother March—though I haven't seen—I declare it's a shame the way we let our Southern baronial sort o' life make us such strangers—why, I haven't seen Sister March since our big union camp meeting at Chalybeate Springs in '58. Sonnie-boy, you ain't listening, are you?" The child still stared at Jeff-Jack. "Mighty handsome boy, Brother March—stuff for a good soldier—got a little sweetheart at my house for you, sonnie-boy! Rosemont College and Widewood lands wouldn't go bad together, Brother March, ha, ha, ha! Your son has his mother's favor, but with something of yours, too, sir."

Judge March stroked the tiny, bare foot. "I'm proud to hope he'll favo' his mother, sir, in talents. You've seen her last poem: 'Slaves to ow own slaves—Neveh!' signed as usual, Daphne Dalrymple? Dalrymple's one of her family names. She uses it to avoid publicity. The Pulaski City *Clarion* reprints her poems and calls her 'sweetest of Southland songsters.' Major Garnet, I wept when I read it! It's the finest thing she has ever written!"

"Ah! Brother March," the Major had seen the poem, but had not read it, "Sister March will never surpass those lines of her's on, let's see; they begin—Oh! dear me, I know them as well as I know my horse—How does that——"

"I know what you mean, seh. You mean the ballad of Jack Jones!

"'Ho! Southrons, hark how one brave ladThree Yankee standards——'"

"Captured!" cried the Major. "That's it; why, my sakes! Hold on, Jeff-Jack, I'll be with you in just a minute. Why, I know it as—why, it rhymes with 'cohorts enraptured!'—I—why, of course!—Ah! Jeff-Jack it was hard on you that the despatches got your name so twisted. It's a plumb shame, as they say." The Major's laugh grew rustic as he glanced from Jeff-Jack, red with resentment, to Judge March, lifted half out of his seat with emotion, and thence to the child, still gazing on the young hero of many battles and one ballad.

"Well, that's all over; we can only hurry along home now, and——"

"Ah! President Garnet, *is* it all over, seh? *Is* it, Mr. Jones?"

"Can't say," replied Jeff-Jack, with his down-drawn smile, and the two pairs went their opposite ways.

As the Judge loped down the hot turnpike after his distant wagon, his son turned for one more gaze on the young hero, his hero henceforth, and felt the blood rush from every vein to his heart and back again as Mr. Ravenel at the last moment looked round and waved him farewell. Later he recalled Major Garnet's offer of his daughter, but:

"I shall never marry," said John to himself.

V.

THE MASTER'S HOME-COMING

The Garnet estate was far from baronial in its extent. Rosemont's whole area was scarcely sixty acres, a third of which was wild grove close about three sides of the dwelling. The house was of brick, large, with many rooms in two tall stories above a basement. At the middle of the north front was a square Greek porch with wide steps spreading to the ground. A hall extended through and let out upon a rear veranda that spanned the whole breadth of the house. Here two or three wooden pegs jutted from the wall, on which to hang a saddle, bridle, or gourd, and from one of which always dangled a small cowhide whip. Barbara and Johanna, hand in hand—Johanna was eleven and very black—often looked on this object with whispering awe, though neither had ever known it put to fiercer use than to drive chickens out of the hall. Down in the yard, across to the left, was the kitchen. And lastly, there was that railed platform on the hip-roof, whence one could see, in the northeast, over the tops of the grove, the hills and then the mountains; in the southeast the far edge of Turkey Creek battle-ground; and in the west, the great setting sun, often, from this point, commended to Barbara as going to bed quietly and before dark.

The child did not remember the father. Once or twice during the war when otherwise he might have come home on furlough, the enemy had intervened. Yet she held no enthusiastic unbelief in his personal reality, and prayed for him night and morning: that God would bless him and keep him from being naughty—"No, that ain't it—an' keep him f'om bein'—no, don't tell me!—and ast him why he don't come see what a sweet mom-a I'm dot!"

People were never quite done marveling that even Garnet should have won the mistress of this inheritance, whom no one else had ever dared to woo. Her hair was so dark you might have called it black—her eyes were as blue as June, and all the elements of her outward beauty were but the various testimonies of a noble mind. She had been very willing for Rosemont to be founded here. There was a belief in her family that the original patentee—he that had once owned the whole site of Suez and more—had really from the first intended this spot for a college site, and when Garnet proposed that with his savings they build and open upon it a male academy, of which he should be principal, she consented with an alacrity which his vanity never ceased to resent, since it involved his leaving the pulpit. For Principal Garnet was very proud of his moral character.

On the same afternoon in which John March first saw the Major and Jeff-Jack, Barbara and Johanna were down by the spring-house at play. This structure stood a good two hundred yards from the dwelling, where a brook crossed the road.

Three wooded slopes ran down to it, and beneath the leafy arches of a hundred green shadows that only at noon were flecked with sunlight, the water glassed and crinkled scarce ankle deep over an unbroken floor of naked rock.

The pair were wading, Barbara in the road, Johanna at its edge, when suddenly Barbara was aware of strange voices, and looking up, was fastened to her footing by the sight of two travelers just at hand. One was on horseback; the other, a youth, trod the stepping stones, ragged, dusty, but bewilderingly handsome. Johanna, too, heard, came, and then stood like Barbara, awe-stricken and rooted in the water. The next moment there was a whirl, a bound, a splash—and Barbara was alone. Johanna, with three leaping strides, was out of the water, across the fence, and scampering over ledges and loose stones toward the house, mad with the joy of her news:

"Mahse John Wesley! Mahse John Wesley!"—up the front steps, into the great porch and through the hall—"Mahse John Wesley! Mahse John Wesley! De waugh done done! De waugh ove' dis time fo' sho'! Glory! Glory!"—down the back steps, into the kitchen—"Mahse John Wesley!"—out again and off to the stables—"Mahse John Wesley!" While old Virginia ran from the kitchen to her cabin rubbing the flour from her arms and crying, "Tu'n out! tu'n out, you laazy black niggers! Mahse John Wesley Gyarnet a-comin' up de road!"

Barbara did not stir. She felt the soldier's firm hands under her arms, and her own form, straightened and rigid, rising to the glad lips of the disabled stranger who bent from the saddle; but she kept her eyes on the earth. With her dripping toes stiffened downward and the youth clasping her tightly, they moved toward the house. In the grove gate the horseman galloped ahead; but Barbara did not once look up until at the porch-steps she saw yellow Willis, the lame ploughman, smiling and limping forward round the corner of the house; Trudie, the house girl, trying to pass him by; Johanna wildly dancing; Aunt Virginia, her hands up, calling to heaven from the red cavern of her mouth; Uncle Leviticus, her husband, Cornelius's step-father, holding the pawing steed; gladness on every face, and the mistress of Rosemont drawing from the horseman's arm to welcome her ragged guest.

Barbara gazed on the bareheaded men and courtesying women grasping the hand of their stately master.

"Howdy, Mahse John Wesley. Welcome home, sah. Yass, sah!"

"Howdy, Mahse John Wesley. Yass, sah; dass so, sot free, but niggehs yit, te-he!—an' Rosemont niggehs yit!" Chorus, "Dass so!" and much laughter.

"Howdy, Mahse John Wesley. Miss Rose happy now, an' whensomever she happy, us happy. Yass, sah. De good Lawd be praise! Now is de waugh over an' finish' an' eended an' gone!" Chorus, "Pra-aise Gawd!"

The master replied. He was majestically kind. He commended their exceptional good sense and prophesied a reign of humble trust and magnanimous protection.—"But I see you're all—" he smiled a gracious irony—"anxious to get back to work."

They laughed, pushed and smote one another, and went, while he mounted the stairs; they, strangers to the sufferings of his mind, and he as ignorant as many a far vaster autocrat of the profound failure of his words to satisfy the applauding people he left below him.

In the hall Jeff-Jack let Barbara down. Thump-thump-thump—she ran to find Johanna. A fear and a hope quite filled her with their strife, the mortifying fear that at the brook Mr. Ravenel had observed—and the reinspiring hope that he had failed to observe—that she was without shoes! She remained away for some time, and came back shyly in softly squeaking leather. As he took her on his knee she asked, carelessly:

"Did you ever notice I'm dot socks on to-day?" and when he cried "No!" and stroked them, she silently applauded her own tact.

Virginia and her mistress decided that the supper would have to be totally reconsidered—reconstructed. Jeff-Jack and Barbara, the reticule on her arm, walked in the grove where the trees were few. The flat out-croppings of gray and yellow rocks made grotesque figures in the grass, and up from among the cedar sprouts turtle-doves sprang with that peculiar music of their wings, flew into distant coverts, and from one such to another tenderly complained of love's alarms and separations. When Barbara asked her escort where his home was, he said it was going to be in Suez, and on cross-examination explained that Flatrock was only a small plantation where his sister lived and took care of his father, who was old and sick.

He seemed to Barbara to be very easily amused, even laughing at some things she said which she did not intend for jokes at all. But since he laughed she laughed too, though with more reserve. They picked wild flowers. He gave her forget-me-nots.

They did not bring their raging hunger into the house again until the large tea-bell rang in the porch, and the air was rife with the fragrance of Aunt Virginia's bounty: fried ham, fried eggs, fried chicken, strong coffee, and hot biscuits—of fresh Yankee flour from Suez. No wine, and no tonic before sitting down. In the

pulpit and out of it Garnet had ever been an ardent advocate of total abstinence. He never, even in his own case, set aside its rigors except when chilled or fatigued, and always then took ample care not to let his action, or any subsequent confession, be a temptation in the eyes of others who might be weaker than he.

Barbara sat opposite Jeff-Jack. What of that? Johanna, standing behind mom-a's chair, should not have smiled and clapped her hands to her mouth. Barbara ignored her. As she did again, after supper, when, silent, on the young soldier's knee, amid an earnest talk upon interests too public to interest her, she could see her little nurse tiptoeing around the door out in the dim hall, grinning in white gleams of summer lightning, beckoning, and pointing upstairs. The best way to treat such things is to take no notice of them.

In the bright parlor the talk was still on public affairs. The war was over, but its issues were still largely in suspense and were not questions of boundaries or dynasties; they underlay every Southern hearthstone; the possibilities of each to-morrow were the personal concern and distress of every true Southern man, of every true Southern woman.

Thus spoke Garnet. His strong, emotional voice was the one most heard. Ravenel held Barbara, and responded scarcely so often as her mother, whose gentle self-command rested him. Not such was its effect upon the husband. His very flesh seemed to feel the smartings of trampled aspirations and insulted rights. More than once, under stress of his sincere though florid sentences, he rose proudly to his feet with a hand laid unconsciously on his freshly bandaged arm, as though all the pain and smart of the times were centring there, and tried good-naturedly to reflect the satirical composure of his late adjutant. But when he sought to make light of "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune," he could not quite hide the exasperation of a spirit covered with their contusions; and when he spoke again, he frowned.

Mrs. Garnet observed Ravenel with secret concern. Men like Garnet, addicted to rhetoric, have a way of always just missing the vital truth of things, and this is what she believed this stripling had, in the intimacies of the headquarter's tent, discerned in him, and now so mildly, but so frequently, smiled at. "Major Garnet," she said, and silently indicated that some one was waiting in the doorway. The Major, standing, turned and saw, faltering with conscious overboldness on the threshold, a tawny figure whose shoulders stared through the rags of a coarse cotton shirt; the man of all men to whom he was just then the most unprepared to show patience.

VI.

TROUBLE

Outside it was growing dark. The bright red dot that, from the railed housetop, you might have seen on the far edge of Turkey Creek battle-ground, was a watch-fire beside the blackberry patch we know of. Here sat Judge March guarding his wagon and mules. One of them was sick. The wagon, under a load of barreled pork and general supplies, had slumped into a hole and suffered a "general giving-way." While in Suez the Judge had paid Cornelius off, written a note to be given by him to Major Garnet, and agreed, in recognition of his abundant worthlessness, to part with him from date, finally.

Yet the magnanimous Cornelius, still with him when the wagon broke, went back to Suez for help and horse medicine, but trifled so sadly, or so gayly, that at sunset there was no choice but to wait till morning.

John, however, had to be sent home. But how? On the Judge's horse, behind Cornelius? The father hesitated. But the mulatto showed such indignant grief and offered such large promises, the child, of course, siding with the teamster, and after all, they could reach Widewood so soon after nightfall, that the Judge sent them. From Widewood, Cornelius, alone, was to turn promptly back——

"Well, o' co'se, sah! Ain't I always promp'?"—

Promptly back by way of Rosemont, leave the note there and then bring the Judge's horse to him at the camp-fire. If lights were out at Rosemont he could give the letter to some servant to be delivered next morning.

"Good-bye, son. I can't hear yo' prayers to-night. I'll miss it myself. But if yo' dear motheh ain't too ti-ud maybe she'll hear 'em."

It suited Cornelius to turn aside first to Rosemont.

"You see, Johnnie, me an' Majo' Gyarnet is got some ve'y urgen' business to transpiah. An' den likewise an' mo'oveh, here's de triflin' matteh o' dis letteh. What contents do hit contain? I's done yo' paw a powerful favo', an' yit I has a sneakin' notion dat herein yo' paw express hisseff wid great lassitude about me. An' thus, o' co'se, I want to know it befo' han,' caze ef a man play you a trick you don't want to pay him wid a favo'. Trick fo' trick, favo' fo' favo', is de rule of Cawnelius Leggett, Esquire, freedman, an' ef I fines, when Majo' Gyarnet read dis-yeh letteh, dat yo' paw done intercallate me a trick, I jist predestinatured to git evm wid bofe of'm de prompes' way I kin. You neveh seed me mad, did you? Well, when you see Cawnelius Leggett mad you wants to run an' hide. He wou'n't

hu't a chile no mo'n he'd hu't a chicken, but ef dere's a *man* in de way—jis' on'y in de *way*—an' specially a *white* man—Lawd! he betteh teck a tree!"

The windows of Rosemont had for some time been red with lamplight when they fastened their horse to a swinging limb near the spring-house and walked up through the darkening grove to the kitchen. Virginia received her son with querulous surprise. "Gawd's own fool," she called him, "fuh runnin' off, an' de same fool double' an' twisted fo' slinkin' back." But when he arrogantly showed the Judge's letter she lapsed into silent disdain while she gave him an abundant supper. After a time the child was left sitting beside the kitchen fire, holding an untasted biscuit. Throughout the yard and quarters there was a stillness that was not sleep, though Virginia alone was out-of-doors, standing on the moonlit veranda looking into the hall.

She heard Major Garnet ask, with majestic forbearance, "Well, Cornelius, what do you want?"

The teamster advanced with his ragged hat in one hand and the letter in the other. The Major, flushing red, lifted his sound arm, commandingly, and the mulatto stopped. "Boy, can it be that in my presence and in the presence of your mistress you dare attempt to change the manners you were raised to?"

Cornelius opened his mouth with great pretense of ignorance, but——

"Go back and drop that hat outside the door, sir!" The servant went.

"Now, bring me that letter!" The bearer brought it and stood waiting while the Major held it under his lame arm and tore it open.

Judge March wrote that he had found a way to dispense with Cornelius at once, but his main wish was to express the hope—having let a better opportunity slip—that President Garnet as the "person best fitted in all central Dixie to impart to Southern youth a purely Southern education," would reopen Rosemont at once, and to promise his son to the college as soon as he should be old enough.

But for two things the Major might have felt soothed. One was a feeling that Cornelius had in some way made himself unpleasant to the Judge, and this grew to conviction as his nostrils caught the odor of strong drink. He handed the note to his wife.

"Judge March is always complimentary. Read it to Jeff-Jack. Cornelius, I'll see you for a moment on the back gallery." His wife tried to catch his eye, but a voice within him commended him to his own self-command, and he passed down the hall, the mulatto following. Johanna, crouching and nodding against the wall, straightened up as he passed. His footfall sounded hope to the strained ear of the

Judge's son in the kitchen. Virginia slipped away. In the veranda, under the moonlight, Garnet turned and said, in a voice almost friendly:

"Cornelius."

"Yass, sah."

"Cornelius, why did you go off and hire yourself out, sir?"

At the last word the small listener in the kitchen trembled.

"Dass jess what I 'How to 'splain to you, sah."

"It isn't necessary. Cornelius, you know that if ever one class of human beings owed a lifelong gratitude to another, you negroes owe it to your old masters, don't you? Stop! don't you dare to say no? Here you all are; never has one of you felt a pang of helpless hunger or lain one day with a neglected fever. Food, clothing, shelter, you've never suffered a day's doubt about them! No other laboring class ever were so free from the cares of life. Your fellow-servants have shown some gratitude; they've stayed with their mistress till I got home to arrange with them under these new conditions. But you—you! when I let you push on ahead and leave me sick and wounded and only half way home—your home and mine, Cornelius—with your promise to wait here till I could come and retain you on wages—you, in pure wantonness, must lift up your heels and prance away into your so-called new liberty. You're a fair sample of what's to come, Cornelius. You've spent your first wages for whiskey. Silence, you perfidious reptile!

"Oh, Cornelius, you needn't dodge in that way, sir, I'm not going to take you to the stable; thank God I'm done whipping you and all your kind, for life! Cornelius, I've only one business with you and it's only one word! Go! at once! forever! You should go if it were only——Cornelius, I've been taking care of my own horse! Don't you dare to sleep on these premises to-night. Wait! Tell me what you've done to offend Judge March?"

"Why, Mahse John Wesley, I ain't done nothin' to Jedge Mahch; no, sah, neither defensive nor yit offensive. An' yit mo', I ain't dream o; causin' you sich uprisin' he'plessness. Me and Jedge Mahch"—he began to swell—"has had a stric'ly private disparitude on the subjec' o' extry wages, account'n o' his disinterpretations o' my plans an' his ign'ance o' de law." He tilted his face and gave himself an argumentative frown of matchless insolence. "You see, my deah seh——"

Garnet was wearily turning his head from side to side as if in unspeakable pain; a sudden movement of his free arm caused the mulatto to flinch, but the ex-master said, quietly:

"Go on, Cornelius."

"Yass. You see, Major, sence dis waugh done put us all on a sawt of equality——" The speaker flinched again.

"Great Heaven!" groaned the Major. "Cornelius, why, Cor—*ne*lius! you *viper*! if it were not for dishonoring my own roof I'd thrash you right here. I've a good notion——"

"Ow! leggo me! I ain't gwine to 'low no daym rebel——"

Ravenel, stroking Barbara and talking to Mrs. Garnet, saw his hostess start and then try to attend to his words, while out on the veranda rang notes of fright and pain.

"Oh! don't grabble my whole bres' up dat a-way, sah! Please sah! Oh! don't! You ain't got no mo' right! Oh! Lawd! Mahse John Wesley! Oh! good Lawdy! yo' ban' bites like a *dawg*!"

Ravenel paused in his talk to ask Barbara about the sandman, but the child stared wildly at her mother. Johanna reappeared in the door with a scared face; Barbara burst into loud weeping, and her nurse bore her away crying and bending toward her mother, while from the veranda the wail poured in.

"Oh! Oh! don't resh me back like that! Oh! Oh! my Gawd! Oh! you'll bre'k de balusters! Oh! my Gawd-A'mighty, my back; Mahse John Wesley, you a-breakin' *my back*! Oh, good Lawd 'a' mussy! my po' back! my po' back! Oh! don't dra—ag—you ain't a-needin' to drag me. I'll walk, Mahse John Wesley, I'll walk! Oh! you a-scrapin' my knees off! Oh! dat whip ain't over dak! You can't re'ch it down!—ef I bite——" There was a silent instant and the mulatto screamed.

With sinking knees a small form slipped from the kitchen and ran—fell—rose—and ran again across the moonlight and into the grove toward the spring-house.

Barbara's crying increased. Ravenel said:

"Don't let me keep you from the baby"—while outside:

"Oh! I didn't mean to bite you, sweet Mahse John Wesley. 'Fo' Gawd I—oh!—o—oh—h—you broke my knees!"

"If you'll excuse me," said the mother, and went upstairs.

"Oh! mussy! mussy! yo' foot a-mashing my whole breas' in'! Oh, my Gawd! De Yankees 'll git win' o' dis an' you'll go to jail!"

The lash fell. "O—oh!—o—oh! Oh, Lawd!" Jeff-Jack sat still and once or twice smiled. "Oh, Lawd 'a' mussy! my back! Ow! It bu'us like fiah!—o—oh! oh!—ow!"

"It doesn't hurt as bad as it ought to, Cornelius," and the blows came again.

"Ow! Dey won't git win' of it! 'Deed an 'deedy dey won't, sweet Mahse John Wesley!—oh!—o—oh!—Ow!—Oh, Lawd, come down! Dey des *shan't* git win' of it! 'fo' Gawd dey shan't! Ow!—oh!—oh!—oh!—a—ah—oo—oo!"

"Now, go!" said Garnet. Cornelius leaped up, ran with his eyes turned back on the whip, and fell again, wallowing like a scalded dog. "Oh, my po' back, my po' back! M—oh! it's a-bu'nin' up—oh!"

The Major advanced with the broken whip uplifted. Cornelius ran backward to the steps and rolled clear to the ground. The whip was tossed after him. With a gnashing curse he snatched it up and hurried off, moaning and writhing, into the darkness, down by the spring-house.

Garnet smiled in scorn, far from guessing that soon, almost as soon as yonder receding clatter of hoofs should pass into silence, the venomous thing from which he had lifted his heel would coil and strike, and that another back, a little one that had never felt the burden of a sin or a task, or aught heavier than the sun's kiss, was to take its turn at writhing and burning like fire.

The memory of that hour, when it was over and home was reached, was burnt into the child's mind forever. It was then late. Mrs. March, "never strong," and,—with a sigh,—"never anxious," had retired. Her two handmaids, freedwomen, were new to the place, but already fond of her son. Cornelius found them waiting uneasily at the garden-fence. He had lingered and toiled with the Judge and his broken wagon, he said, "notwithstanding we done dissolve," until he had got the worst "misery in his back" he had ever suffered. When they received John from him and felt the child's tremblings, he warned them kindly that the less asked about it the better for the reputations of both the boy and his father.

"You can't 'spute the right an' custody of a man to his own son's chastisement, naw yit to 'low to dat son dat ef ever he let his maw git win' of it, he give him double an' thribble."

When the women told him he lied he appealed to John, and the child nodded his head. About midnight Cornelius handed the horse over to Judge March, reassuring him of his son's safety and comfort, and hurried off, much pleased

with the length of his own head in that he had not stolen the animal. John fell asleep almost as soon as he touched the pillow. Then the maid who had undressed him beckoned the other in. Candle in hand she led the way to the trundle-bed drawn out from under the Judge's empty four-poster, and sat upon its edge. The child lay chest downward. She lifted his gown, and exposed his back.

"Good Gawd!" whispered the other.

VII.

EXODUS

As Major Garnet's step sounded again in the hall, Barbara's crying came faintly down through the closed doors. He found Ravenel sitting by the lamp, turning the spotted leaves of Heber's poems.

"Mrs. Garnet putting Barb to bed?" he asked, and slowly took an easy chair. His arm was aching cruelly.

"Yes." The young guest stretched and smiled.

The host was silent. He was willing to stand by what he had done, but that this young friend with lower moral pretensions wholly approved it made his company an annoyance. What he craved was unjust censure. "I reckon you'd like to go up, too, wouldn't you? It's camp bedtime."

"Yes, got to come back to sleeping indoors—might as well begin."

On the staircase they met Johanna, with a lighted candle. The Major said, as kindly as a father, "I'll take that."

As she gave it her eyes rolled whitely up to his, tears slipped down her black cheeks, he frowned, and she hurried away. At his guest's door he said a pleasant good-night, and then went to his wife's room.

Only moonlight was there. From a small, dim chamber next to it came Barbara's softened moan. The mother sang low a child hymn. The father sat down at a window, and strove to meditate. But his arm ached. The mother sang on, and presently he found himself waiting for the fourth stanza. It did not come; the child was still; but his memory supplied it:

"And soon, too soon, the wintry hourOf man's maturer ageMay shake the soul with sorrow's power,And stormy passion's rage."

He felt, but put aside, the implication of reproach to himself which lay in the words and his wife's avoidance of them. He still believed that, angry and unpremeditated as his act was, he could not have done otherwise in justice nor yet in mercy. And still, through this right doing, what bitterness had come! His wife's, child's, guest's—his own—sensibilities had been painfully shocked. In the depths of a soldier's sorrow for a cause loved and lost, there had been the one consolation that the unasked freedom so stupidly thrust upon these poor slaves was in certain aspects an emancipation to their masters. Yet here, before his child had learned to fondle his cheek, or his home-coming was six hours old, his first

night of peace in beloved Rosemont had been blighted by this vile ingrate forcing upon him the exercise of the only discipline, he fully believed, for which such a race of natural slaves could have a wholesome regard. The mother sang again, murmurously. The soldier grasped his suffering arm, and returned to thought.

The war, his guest had said, had not taken the slaves away. It could only redistribute them, under a new bondage of wages instead of the old bondage of pure force. True. And the best and the wisest servants would now fall to the wisest and kindest masters. Oh, for power to hasten to-morrow's morning, that he might call to him again that menial band down in the yard, speak to them kindly, even of Cornelius's fault, bid them not blame the outcast resentfully, and assure them that never while love remained stronger in them than pride, need they shake the light dust of Rosemont from their poor shambling feet.

He rose, stole to the door of the inner room, pushed it noiselessly, and went in. Barbara, in her crib, was hidden by her mother standing at her side. The wife turned, glanced at her husband's wounded arm, and made a soft gesture for him to keep out of sight. The child was leaning against her mother, saying the last words of her own prayer.

"An' Dod bless ev'ybody, Uncle Leviticus, an' Aunt Jinny, an' Johanna, an' Willis, an' Trudie, an' C'nelius"—a sigh—"an mom-a, an'—that's all—an'——"

"And pop-a?"

No response. The mother prompted again. Still the child was silent. "And pop-a, you know—the best last."

"An' Dod bless the best last," said Barbara, sadly. A pause.

"Don't you know all good little girls ask God to bless their pop-a's?"

"Do they?"

"Yes."

"Dod bless pop-a," she sighed, dreamily; "an' Dod bless me, too, an'—an' keep me f'om bein' a dood little dirl.—Ma'am?—Yes, ma'am. Amen."

She laid her head down, and in a moment was asleep. Husband and wife passed out together. The wounded arm, its pain unconfessed, was cared for, pious prayers were said, and the pair lay down to slumber.

Far in the night the husband awoke. He could think better now, in the almost perfect stillness. There were faint signs of one or two servants being astir, but in the old South that was always so. He pondered again upon the present and the

future of the unhappy race upon whom freedom had come as a wild freshet. Thousands must sink, thousands starve, for all were drunk with its cruel delusions. Yea, on this deluge the whole Southern social world, with its two distinct divisions—the shining upper—the dark nether—was reeling and careening, threatening, each moment, to turn once and forever wrong side up, a hope-forsaken wreck. To avert this, to hold society on its keel, must be the first and constant duty of whoever saw, as he did, the fearful peril. So, then, this that he had done—and prayed that he might never have to do again—was, underneath all its outward hideousness, a more than right, a generous, deed. For a man who, taking all the new risks, still taught these poor, base, dangerous creatures to keep the only place they could keep with safety to themselves or their superiors, was to them the only truly merciful man.

He drifted into revery. Thoughts came so out of harmony with this line of reasoning that he could only dismiss them as vagaries. Was sleep returning? No, he laid wide awake, frowning with the pain of his wound. Yet he must have drowsed at last, for when suddenly he saw his wife standing, draped in some dark wrapping, hearkening at one of the open windows, the moon was sinking.

He sat up and heard faintly, far afield, the voices of Leviticus, Virginia, Willis, Trudie, and Johanna, singing one of the wild, absurd, and yet passionately significant hymns of the Negro Christian worship. Distance drowned the words, but an earlier familiarity supplied them to the grossly syncopated measures of the tune which, soft and clear, stole in at the open window:

"Rise in dat mawnin', an' rise in dat mawnin',Rise in dat mawnin', an' fall upon yo' knees.Bow low, an' a-bow low, an' a-bow low a little bit longah,Bow low, an' a-bow low; sich a conquerin' king!"

The eyes of wife and husband met in a long gaze.

"They're coming this way," he faltered.

She slowly shook her head.

"My love——" But she motioned for silence and said, solemnly:

"They're leaving us."

"They're wrong!" he murmured in grieved indignation.

"Oh, who is right?" she sadly asked.

"They shall not treat us so!" exclaimed he. He would have sprung to his feet, but she turned upon him suddenly, uplifting her hand, and with a ring in her voice that made the walls of the chamber ring back, cried,

"No, no! Let them go! They were mine when they were property, and they are mine now! Let them go!"

The singing ceased. The child in the next room had not stirred. The dumfounded husband sat motionless under pretence of listening. His wife made a despairing gesture. He motioned to hearken a moment more; but no human sound sent a faintest ripple across the breathless air; the earth was as silent as the stars. Still he waited—in vain—they were gone.

The soldier and his wife lay down once more without a word. There was no more need of argument than of accusation. For in those few moments the weight of his calamities had broken through into the under quicksands of his character and revealed them to himself.

VIII.

SEVEN YEARS OF SUNSHINE

Poets and painters make darkness stand for oblivion. But for evil things or sad there is no oblivion like sunshine.

The next day was hot, blue, and fragrant. John rose so late that he had to sit up in front of his breakfast alone. He asked the maid near by if she thought his father would be home soon. She "reckoned so."

"I wish he would be home in a hour," he mused, aloud. "I wish he would be on the mountain road right now."

When he stepped down and started away she crouched before him.

"Whah you bound fuh, ole gen'leman, lookin' so sawt o' funny-sad?"

"I dunno."

"W'at you gwine do, boss?"

"I dunno."

"Well, cayn't you kiss me, Mist' I-dunno?"

He paid the toll and passed out to his play. With an old bayonet fixed on a stick he fell to killing Yankees—colored troops. Pressing them into the woods he charged, yelling, and came out upon the mountain road that led far down to the pike. Here a new impulse took him and he moved down this road to form a junction with his father. For some time the way was comparatively level. By and by he came to heavier timber and deeper and steeper descents. He went ever more and more loiteringly, for his father did not appear. He thought of turning back, yet his longing carried him forward. He was tired, but his mother did not like him to walk long distances when he was tired, so it wouldn't be right to turn back. He decided to wait for his father and ride home.

Meantime he would go to the next turn in the road and look. He looked in vain. And so at the next—the next—the next. He went slowly, for his feet were growing tender. Sometimes he almost caught a butterfly. Sometimes he slew more Yankees. Always he talked to himself with a soft bumbling like a bee's.

But at last he ceased even this and sat down at the edge of the stony road ready to cry. His bosom had indeed begun to heave, when in an instant all was changed. Legs forgot their weariness, the heart its dismay, for just across the road, motionless beside a hollow log, what should he see but a cotton-tail rabbit. As he

stealthily reached for his weapon the cotton-tail took two slow hops and went into the log. Charge bayonets!—pat-pat-pat—slam! and the stick rattled in the hole, the deadly iron at one end and the deadly boy at the other.

And yet nothing was impaled. Singular! He got his eyes to the hole and glared in, but although it was full of daylight from a larger hole at the other end, he could see no sign of life. It baffled comprehension. But so did it defy contradiction. There was but one Resource: to play the rabbit was still there and only to be got out by rattling the bayonet every other moment and repeating, in a sepulchral voice, "I—I—I'm gwine to have yo' meat fo' dinneh!"

He had been doing this for some time when all at once his blood froze as another voice, fifteen times as big as his, said, in his very ear—

"I—I—I'm gwine to have yo' meat fo' dinneh."

He dropped half over, speechless, and beheld standing above him, nineteen feet high as well as he could estimate hastily, a Yankee captain mounted and in full uniform. John leaped up, and remembered he was in gray.

"What are you doing here all alone, Shorty?"

"I dunno."

"Who are you? What's your name?"

"I dunno."

The Captain moved as if to draw his revolver, but brought forth instead a large yellow apple. Then did John confess who he was and why there. The Captain did as much on his part.

He had risen with the morning star to do an errand beyond Widewood, and was now getting back to Suez. This very dawn he had made Judge March's acquaintance beside his broken wagon, and had seen him ride toward Suez to begin again the repair of his disasters. Would the small Confederate like to ride behind him?

Very quickly John gave an arm and was struggling up behind the saddle. The Captain touched the child's back.

"Owch!"

"Why, what's the matter? Did I hurt you?"

"No, sir."

The horse took his new burden unkindly, plunged and danced.

"Afraid?" asked the Captain. John's eyes sparkled merrily and he shook his head.

"You're a pretty brave boy, aren't you?" said the stranger. But John shook his head again.

"I'll bet you are, and a tol'able good boy, too, aren't you?"

"No, sir, I'm not a good boy, I'm bad. I'm a very bad boy, indeed."

The horseman laughed. "I don't mistrust but you're good enough."

"Oh, no. I'm not good. I'm wicked! I'm noisy! I make my ma's head ache every day! I usen't to be so wicked when I was a little shaver. I used to be a shaver, did you know that? But now I'm a boy. That's because I'm eight. I'm a boy and I'm wicked. I'm awful wicked, and I'm getting worse. I whistle. Did you think I could whistle? Well, I can.... There! did you hear that? It's wicked to whistle in the house—to whistle loud—in the house—it's sinful. Sometimes I whistle in the house—sometimes." He grew still and fell to thinking of his mother, and how her cheek would redden with something she called sorrow at his shameless companioning with the wearer of a blue uniform. But he continued to like his new friend; he was so companionably "low flung."

"Do you know Jeff-Jack?" he asked. But the Captain had not the honor.

"Well, he captures things. He's brave. He's dreadful brave."

"No! Aw! you just want to scare me!"

"So is Major Garnet. Did you ever see Major Garnet? Well, if you see him you mustn't make him mad. I'd be afraid for you to make him mad."

"Why, how's that?"

"I dunno," said Johnnie, very abstractedly.

As they went various questions came up, and by and by John discoursed on the natural badness of "black folks"—especially the yellow variety—with imperfections of reasoning almost as droll as the soft dragging of his vowels. Time passed so pleasantly that when they came into the turnpike and saw his father coming across the battle-field with two other horsemen, his good spirits hardly had room to rise any higher. They rather fell. The Judge had again chanced upon the company of Major Garnet and Jeff-Jack Ravenel, and it disturbed John perceptibly for three such men to find him riding behind a Yankee.

It was a double surprise for him to see, first, with what courtesy they treated the blue-coat, and then how soon they bade him good-day. The Federal had smilingly shown a flask.

"You wouldn't fire on a flag of truce, would you?"

"I never drink," said Garnet.

"And I always take too much," responded Jeff-Jack.

I think we have spoken of John's slumbers being dreamless. A child can afford to sleep without dreaming, he has plenty of dreams without sleeping. No need to tell what days, weeks, months, of sunlit, forest-shaded, bird-serenaded, wide-awake dreaming passed over this one's wind-tossed locks between the ages of eight and fifteen.

Small wonder that he dreamed. Much of the stuff that fables and fairy tales are made of was the actual furnishment of his visible world—unbroken leagues of lofty timber that had never heard the ring of an axe; sylvan labyrinths where the buck and doe were only half afraid; copses alive with small game; rare openings where the squatter's wooden ploughshare lay forgotten; dark chasms scintillant with the treasures of the chemist, if not of the lapidary; outlooks that opened upon great seas of billowing forest, whence blue mountains peered up, sank and rose again like ocean monsters at play; glens where the she-bear suckled her drowsing cubs to the plash of yeasty waterfalls that leapt and whimpered to be in human service, but wherein the otter played all day unscared; crags where the eagle nested; defiles that echoed the howl of wolves unhunted, though the very stones cried out their open secret of immeasurable wealth; narrow vales where the mountain cabin sent up its blue thread of smoke, and in its lonely patch strong weeds and emaciated corn and cotton pushed one another down among the big clods; and vast cliffs from whose bushy brows the armed moonshiner watched the bridle-path below.

These dreams of other children's story-books were John's realities. And these were books to him, as well, while Chesterfield went unread, and other things and conditions, not of nature and her seclusions, but vibrant with human energies and strifes, were making, unheeded of him, his world and his fate. A little boy's life does right to loiter. But if we loiter with him here, we are likely to find our eyes held ever by the one picture: John's gifted mother, in family group, book in her lap—husband's hand on her right shoulder—John leaning against her left side.

Let us try leaving him for a time. And, indeed, we may do the same as to Jeff-Jack Ravenel.

As he had told Barbara he would, he made his residence in Suez.

A mess-mate, a graceless, gallant fellow, who at the war's end had fallen, dying, into his arms, had sent by him a last word of penitent love to his mother, an aged widow. She lived in Suez, and when Ravenel brought this message to her—from whom marriage had torn all her daughters and death her only son—she accepted his offer, based on a generous price, to take her son's room as her sole boarder and lodger. Thus, without further effort, he became the stay of her home and the heir of her simple affections.

IX.

LAUNCELOT HALLIDAY

General Halliday was a distant cousin of Mrs. Garnet. He had commanded the brigade which included Garnet's battalion, and had won fame. Garnet, who felt himself undervalued by Halliday, said this fame had been won by show rather than by merit. And in truth, Halliday was not so much a man of genuine successes as of an audacity that stopped just short of the fantastical, and kept him perpetually interesting.

"Launcelot's failures," said Garnet, "make a finer show than most men's successes. He'd rather shine without succeeding, than succeed without shining."

The moment the war ended, Halliday hurried back to his plantation, the largest in Blackland. This county's sole crop was cotton, and negroes two-thirds of its population. His large family—much looked up to—had called it home, though often away from it, seeking social stir at the State capital and elsewhere. On his return from the war, the General brought with him a Northerner, an officer in the very command to which he had surrendered. Just then, you may remember, when Southerners saw only ruin in their vast agricultural system, many Northerners thought they saw a new birth. They felt the poetry of Dixie's long summers, the plantation life—Uncle Tom's Cabin—and fancied that with Uncle Tom's good-will and Northern money and methods, there was quick fortune for them. Halliday echoed these bright predictions with brave buoyancy and perfect sincerity, and sold the conqueror his entire estate. Then he moved his family to New Orleans, and issued his card to his many friends, announcing himself

prepared to receive and sell any shipments of cotton, and fill any orders for supplies, with which they might entrust him. The Government's pardon, on which this fine rapidity was hypothecated, came promptly—"through a pardon broker," said Garnet.

But the General's celerity was resented. He boarded at the St. Charles, and, famous, sociable, and fond of politics, came at once into personal contact with the highest Federal authorities in New Orleans. The happy dead earnest with which he "accepted the situation" and "harmonized" with these men sorely offended his old friends and drew the fire of the newspapers. Even Judge March demurred.

"President Garnet," John heard the beloved voice in front of him say, "gentlemen may cry Peace, Peace, but there can be too much peace, sir!"

The General came out in an open letter, probably not so sententiously as we condense it here, but in substance to this effect: "The king never dies; citizenship never ceases; a bereaved citizenship has no right to put on expensive mourning, and linger through a dressy widowhood before it marries again.... There are men who, when their tree has been cut down even with the ground, will try to sit in the shade of the stump.... Such men are those who, now that slavery is gone, still cling to a civil order based on the old plantation system.... They are like a wood-sawyer robbed of his saw-horse and trying to saw wood in his lap."

All these darts struck and stung, but a little soft mud, such as any editor could supply, would soon have drawn out the sting—but for an additional line or two, which gave poisonous and mortal offense. Blackland and Clearwater replied in a storm of indignation. The Suez Courier bade him keep out of Dixie on peril of his life. He came, nevertheless, canvassing for business, and was not molested, but got very few shipments. What he mainly secured were the flippant pledges of such as required the largest possible advances indefinitely ahead of the least possible cotton. Also a few Yankees shipped to him.

"Gen'l Halliday, howdy, sah?" It was dusk of the last day of this tour. The voice came from a dark place on the sidewalk in Suez. "Don't you know me, Gen'l? You often used to see me an' Majo' Gyarnet togetheh; yes, sah. My name's Cornelius Leggett, sah."

"Why, Cornelius, to be sure! I thought I smelt whiskey. What can I do for you?"

"Gen'l, I has the honor to espress to you, sah, my thanks faw the way you espress yo'self in yo' letteh on the concerns an' prospec's o' we' colo'ed people, sah. An likewise, they's thousands would like to espress the same espressions, sah."

"Oh, that's all right."

"Gen'l, I represents a quantity of ow people what's move' down into Blackland fum Rosemont and other hill places. They espress they'se'ves to me as they agent that they like to confawm some prearrangement with you, sah."

"Are you all on one plantation?"

"Oh, no, sah, they ain't ezac'ly on no plantation. Me? Ob, I been a-goin' to the Freedman' Bureau school in Pulaski City as they agent.

"Sah? Yass, sah, at they espenses—p-he!

"They? They mos'ly strowed round in the woods in pole cabins an' bresh arbors.—Sah?

"Yaas, sah, livin' on game an' fish.—Sah?

"Yaas, sah.

"But they espress they doubts that the Gove'ment ain't goin' to give 'em no fahms, an' they like to comprise with you, Gen'l, ef you please, sah, to git holt o' some fahms o' they own, you know; sawt o' payin' faw'm bes' way they kin; yass, sah. As you say in yo' letteh, betteh give 'm lan's than keep 'em vagabones; yass, sir. Betteh no terms than none at all; yass, sah." And so on.

From this colloquy resulted the Negro farm-village of Leggettstown. In 1866-68 it grew up on the old Halliday place, which had reverted to the General by mortgage. Neatest among its whitewashed cabins, greenest with gourd-vines, and always the nearest paid for, was that of the Reverend Leviticus Wisdom, his wife, Virginia, and her step-daughter, Johanna.

In the fall of 1869 General Halliday came back to Suez to live. His wife, a son, and daughter had died, two daughters had married and gone to the Northwest, others were here and there. A daughter of sixteen was with him—they two alone. The ebb-tide of the war values had left him among the shoals; his black curls were full of frost, his bank box was stuffed with plantation mortgages, his notes were protested. He had come to operate, from Suez as a base, several estates surrendered to him by debtors and entrusted to his management by his creditors. This he wished to do on what seemed to him an original plan, of which Leggettstown was only a clumsy sketch, a plan based on his belief in the

profound economic value of—"villages of small freeholding farmers, my dear sir!"

"It's the natural crystal of free conditions!" John heard him say in the post-office corner of Weed & Usher's drug-store.

Empty words to John. He noted only the noble air of the speaker and his hearers. Every man of the group had been a soldier. The General showed much more polish than the others, but they all had the strong graces of horsemen and masters, and many a subtle sign of civilization and cult heated and hammered through centuries of search for good government and honorable fortune. John stopped and gazed.

"Come on, son," said Judge March almost sharply. John began to back away. "There!" exclaimed the father as his son sat down suddenly in a box of sawdust and cigar stumps. He led him away to clean him off, adding, "You hadn't ought to stare at people as you walk away fum them, my son."

With rare exceptions, the General's daily hearers were silent, but resolute. They did not analyze. Their motives were their feelings; their feelings were their traditions, and their traditions were back in the old entrenchments. The time for large changes had slipped by. Haggard, of the *Courier*, thought it "Equally just and damning" to reprint from the General's odiously remembered letter of four years earlier, "If we can't make our Negroes white, let us make them as white as we can," and sign it "Social Equality Launcelot." Parson Tombs, sweet, aged, and beloved, prayed from his pulpit—with the preface, "Thou knowest thy servant has never mixed up politics and religion"—that "the machinations of them who seek to join together what God hath put asunder may come to naught."

Halliday laughed. "Why, I'm only a private citizen trying to retrieve my private fortunes." But—

"These are times when a man can't choose whether he'll be public or private!" said Garnet, and the *Courier* made the bankrupt cotton factor public every day. It quoted constantly from the unpardonable letter, and charged him with "inflaming the basest cupidity of our Helots," and so on, and on. But the General, with his silver-shot curls dancing half-way down his shoulders, a six-shooter under each skirt of his black velvet coat, and a knife down the back of his neck, went on pushing his private enterprise.

"Private enterprise!" cried Garnet. "His jackals will run him for Congress." And they did—against Garnet.

The times were seething. Halliday, viewing matters impartially in the clear, calm light of petroleum torches, justified Congress in acts which Garnet termed "the

spume of an insane revenge;" while Garnet, with equal calmness of judgment, under other petroleum torches, gloried in the "masterly inactivity" of Dixie's whitest and best—which Launcelot denounced as a foolish and wicked political strike. All the corruptions bred by both sides in a gigantic war—and before it in all the crudeness of the country's first century—were pouring down and spouting up upon Dixie their rain of pitch and ashes. Negroes swarmed about the polls, elbowed their masters, and challenged their votes. Ragged negresses talked loudly along the sidewalk of one another as "ladies," and of their mistresses as "women." White men of fortune and station were masking, night-riding, whipping and killing; and blue cavalry rattled again through the rocky streets of Suez.

Such was life when dashing Fannie Halliday joined the choir in Parson Tombs's church, becoming at once its leading spirit, and John March suddenly showed a deep interest in the Scriptures. He joined her Sunday-school class.

X.

FANNIE

Was sixteen—she said; had black eyes—the dilating kind—was pretty, and seductively subtle. Jeff-Jack liked her much. They met at Rosemont, where he found her spending two or three days, on perfect terms with Barbara, and treated with noticeable gravity, though with full kindness, by Mrs. Garnet, whom she called, warmly, "Cousin Rose."

Ravenel had pushed forward only two or three pawns of conversation when she moved at one step from news to politics. She played with the ugly subject girlishly, even frivolously, though not insipidly—at least to a young man's notion—riding its winds and waves like a sea-bird. Politics, she said, seemed to her a kind of human weather, no more her business and no less than any other kind. She never blamed the public, or any party for this or that; did he? And when he said he did not, her eyes danced and she declared she disliked him less.

"Why, we might as well scold the rain or the wind as the public," she insisted. "What publics do, or think, or say, or want—are merely—I don't know—sort o' chemical values. What makes you smile that way?"

"Did I smile? You're deep," he said.

"You're smiling again," she replied, and, turning, asked Garnet a guileless question on a certain fierce matter of the hour. He answered it with rash confidence, and her next question was a checkmate.

"Oh, understand," he cried, in reply; "we don't excuse these dreadful practices."

"Yes, you do. You-all don't do anything else—except Mr. Ravenel; he approves them barefaced."

Garnet tried to retort, but she laughed him down. When she was gone, "She's as rude as a roustabout," he said to his wife.

For all this she was presently the belle of Suez. She invaded its small and ill-assorted society and held it, a restless, but conquered province. John's father marked with joy his son's sudden regularity in Sunday-school. If his wife was less pleased it was because to her all punctuality was a personal affront; it was some time before she discovered the cause to be Miss Fannie Halliday. By that time half the young men in town were in love with Fannie, and three-fourths of them in abject fear of her wit; yet, in true Southern fashion, casting themselves in its way with Hindoo abandon.

Her father and she had apartments in Tom Hersey's Swanee Hotel. Mr. Ravenel called often. She entered Montrose Academy "in order to remain sixteen," she told him. This institution was but a year or two old. It had been founded, at Ravenel's suggestion, "as a sort o' little sister to Rosemont." Its principal, Miss Kinsington, with her sister, belonged to one of Dixie's best and most unfortunate families.

"You don't bow down to Mrs. Grundy," something prompted Ravenel to say, as he and Fannie came slowly back from a gallop in the hills.

"Yes, I do. I only love to tease her now and then. I go to the races, play cards, waltz, talk slang, and read novels. But when I do bow down to her I bow away down. Why, at Montrose, I actually talk on serious subjects!"

"Do you touch often on religion? You never do to the gentlemen I bring to see you."

"Why, Mr. Ravenel, I don't understand you. What should I know about religion? You seem to forget that I belong to the choir."

"Well, politics, then. Don't you ever try to make a convert even in that?"

"I talk politics for fun only." She toyed with her whip. "I'd tell you something if I thought you'd never tell. It's this: Women have no conscience in their intellects. No, and the young gentlemen you bring to see me take after their mothers."

"I'll try to bring some other kind."

"Oh, no! They suit me. They're so easily pleased. I tell them they have a great insight into female character. Don't you tell them I told you!"

"Do you remember having told me the same thing?"

She dropped two wicked eyes and said, with sweet gravity, "I wish it were not so true of you. How did you like the sermon last evening?"

"The cunning flirt!" thought he that night, as his kneeling black boy drew off his boots.

Not so thought John that same hour. Servants' delinquencies had kept him from Sunday-school that morning and made him late at church. His mother had stayed at home with her headache and her husband. Her son was hesitating at the church-yard gate, alone and heavy-hearted, when suddenly he saw a thing that brought his heart into his throat and made a certain old mortification start from its long sleep with a great inward cry. Two shabby black men passed by on plough-mules, and between them, on a poor, smart horse, all store clothes, watch-chain, and shoe-blacking, rode the president of the Zion Freedom Homestead League, Mr. Cornelius Leggett, of Leggettstown. John went in. Fannie, seemingly fresh from heaven, stood behind the melodeon and sang the repentant prodigal's resolve; and he, in raging shame for the stripes once dealt him, the lie they had scared from him at the time, and the many he had told since to cover that one, shed such tears that he had to steal out, and, behind a tree in the rear of the church, being again without a handkerchief, dry his cheeks on his sleeves.

And now, in his lowly bed, his eyes swam once more as the girl's voice returned to his remembrance: "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy son."

He left his bed and stood beside the higher one. But the father slept. Even if he should waken him, he felt that he could only weep and tell nothing, and so he went back and lay down again. With the morning, confession was impossible. He thought rather of revenge, and was hot with the ferocious plans of a boy's helplessness.

XI.

A BLEEDING HEART

One night early in November, when nearly all Rosemont's lights were out and a wet brisk wind was flirting and tearing the yellowed leaves of the oaks, the windows of Mrs. Garnet's room were still bright. She sat by a small fire with Barbara at her knee. It had been election-day and the college was silent with chagrin.

"Is pop-a going to get elected, mom-a?"

"I don't think he is, my child."

"But you hope he is, don't you?"

"Listen," murmured the mother.

Barbara heard a horse's feet. Presently her father's step was in the hall and on the stairs. He entered, kissed wife and child, and sat down with a look first of care and fatigue, and then a proud smile.

"Well, Launcelot's elected."

A solemn defiance came about his mouth, but on his brow was dejection and distress.

"You know, Rose," he said, "that for myself, I don't care."

She made no reply.

He leaned on the mantlepiece. "My heart bleeds for our people! All they ask is the God-given right to a pure government. Their petition is spurned! Rose,"—tears shone in his eyes—"I this day saw the sabres and bayonets of the government of which Washington was once the head, shielding the scum of the earth while it swarmed up and voted honor and virtue out of office!" The handkerchief he snatched from his pocket brought out three or four written papers. He cast them upon the fire. One, under a chair, he overlooked. Barbara got it later—just the thing to carry in her reticule when she went calling on herself. She could not read its bad writing, but it served all the better for that.

Next evening, at tea—back again from Suez—"Wife, did you see a letter in blue ink in your room this morning, with some pencil figures of my own across the face? If it was with those papers I burned it's all right, but I'd like to know." His unconcern was overdone.

Barbara was silent. She had battered the reticule's inner latch with a stone. To get the paper out, the latch would have to be broken. Silence saved it.

The election was over, but the turmoil only grew. Mere chemicals, did Fannie call these incidents and conditions? But they were corrosives and caustics

dropped blazing hot upon white men's bare hands and black men's bare feet. The ex-master spurned political fellowship with his slave at every cost; the ex-slave laid taxes, stole them, and was murdered.

"Make way for robbery, he cries," drawled Ravenel; "makes way for robbery and dies."

"Mr. Ravenel," said Judge March, "I find no place for me, sir. I lament one policy and loathe the other. I need not say what distress of mind I suffer. I doubt not we are all doing that, sir."

"No," said Jeff-Jack, whittling a straw.

"I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Ravenel," said Fannie Halliday; "it's a war between decency in the wrong, and vulgarity in the right."

"No," said Jeff-Jack again, and her liking for him grew.

Cornelius's explanation in the House was more elaborate.

"This, Mr. Speaker, are that great wahfare predicated in the New Testament, betwix the Republicans an' sinnehs on one side an' the Phair-i-sees on the other. The white-liners, they is the Phair-i-sees! They is the whited sculptors befo' which, notinstan'in' all they chiselin', the Republicans an' sinnehs enters fust into the kingdom!"

So, for two more years, and John was fifteen.

Then the Judge decided to explain to him, confidentially, their long poverty.

"Daphne, dear"—he was going down into Blackland—"if you see no objection I'll take son with me.—Why, no, dear, not both on one hoss, you're quite right; that wouldn't be kind to son."

"A merciful man, Powhatan, is merciful to——"

"Yes, deah; Oh, I had the hoss in mind too; indeed I had! Do you know, my deah, I can tend to business betteh when I have ow son along? I'm gett'n' to feel like as if I'd left myself behind when he's not with me."

"You've always been so, Judge March." Her smile was sad. "Oh! no, I mustn't advise. Take him along if you're determined to."

XII.

JOHN THINKS HE IS NOT AFRAID

"Son," said the father as they rode, "I reckon you've often wondered why, owning ow hund'ed thousand an' sixty acres, we should appeah so sawt o' reduced; haven't you?"

"Sir?"

The father repeated the question, and John said, dreamily:

"No, sir."

"Well, son, I'll tell you, though I'd rather you'd not mention it—in school, faw instance—if we can eveh raise money to send you to school.

"It's because, in a sense, we a-*got* so much lan'. Many's the time I could a-sole pahts of it, an' refused, only because that particulah sale wouldn't a-met the object fo' which the whole tract has always been held. It was yo' dear grandfather's ambition, an' his father's befo' him, to fill these lan's with a great population, p'osp'ous an' happy. We neveh sole an acre, but we neveh hel' one back in a spirit o' lan' speculation, you understan'?"

"Sir?—I—yes, sir."

"The plan wa'n't adapted to a slave State. I see that now. I don't say slavery was wrong, but slave an' free labor couldn't thrive side by side. But, now, son, you know, all labor's free an' the time's come faw a change.

"You see, son, that's where Gen'l Halliday's village projec' is bad. His villages are boun' han' an' foot to cotton fahmin' an' can't bring forth the higher industries; but now, without concealin' anything fum him or anybody—of co'se we don't want to do that—if we can get enough of his best village residenters fum Leggettstown an' Libbetyville to come up an' take lan' in Widewood—faw we can give it to 'em an' gain by it, you know; an' a site or two faw a church aw school—why, then, you know, when capitalists come up an' look at ow minin' lan's—why, first thing you know, we'll have mines an' mills an' sto'es ev'y *which* away!"

They met and passed three horsemen armed to the teeth and very tipsy.

"Why, if to-morrow ain't election-day ag'in! Why, I quite fo'gotten that!"

At the edge of the town two more armed riders met them.

"Judge March, good mawnin', seh." All stopped. "Goin' to Suez?"

"We goin' on through into Blackland."

"I don't think you can, seh. Our pickets hold Swanee River bridge. Yes, sah, ow pickets. Why *ow* pickets, they're there. 'Twould be strange if they wa'n't—three hund'ed Blackland county niggehs marchin' on the town to burn it."

"Is that really the news?"

"That's the latest, seh. We after reinfo'cements." They moved on.

Judge March rode slowly toward Suez. John rode beside him. In a moment the Judge halted again, lifted his head, and listened. A long cheer floated to them, attenuated by the distance.

"I thought it was a charge, but I reckon it's on'y a meet'n of ow people in the square." He glanced at his son, who was listening, ashy pale.

"Son, we ain't goin' into town. I'm going, but you needn't. You can ride back a piece an' wait faw me; aw faw further news which'll show you what to do. On'y don't in any case come into town. This ain't yo' fight, son, an' you no need to get mixed in with it. You hear, son?"

"I"—the lad tried twice before he could speak—"I want to go with you."

"Why, no, son, you no need to go. You ain't fitt'n' to go. Yo' too young. You a-trembling now fum head to foot. Ain't you got a chill?"

"N-no, sir." The boy shivered visibly. "I've got a pain in my side, but it don't—don't hurt. I want to go with you."

"But, son, there's goin' to be fight'n'. I'm goin' to try to p'vent it, but I shan't be able to. Why, if you was to get hurt, who'd eveh tell yo' po' deah mother? I couldn't. I jest couldn't! You betteh go 'long home, son."

"I c-c-can't do it, father."

"Why, air you that sick, son?"

"No, sir, but I don't feel well enough to go home—Father—I—I—t-t-told—I told—an awful lie, one time, about you, and——"

"Why, son!"

"Yes, sir. I've been tryin' for seven years to—k—own up, and——"

"Sev—O Law, son, I don't believe you eveh done it at all. You neveh so much as told a fib in yo' life. You jest imagine you done it."

"Yes, I have father, often. I can't explain now, but please lemme go with you."

"Why, son, I jest can't. Lawd knows I would if I could."

"Yes, you can, father, I won't be in the way. And I won't be af-raid. You don't think I would eveh be a-scared of a nigger, do you? But if the niggers should kill you, and me not there, I wouldn't ever be any account no more! I haven't ever been any yet, but I will be, father, if you'll——"

Three pistol shots came from the town, and two townward-bound horsemen broke their trot and passed at a gallop. "Come on, Judge," laughed one.

"I declare, son, I don't know what *toe* do. You betteh go 'long back."

"Oh, father, don't send me back! Lemme go 'long with you. Please don't send me back! I couldn't go. I'd just haf to turn round again an' follow you. Lemme go with you, father. I want to go 'long with you. Oh—thank you, sir!" They trotted down into the town. "D' you reckon C'nelius 'll be there, father?—I—hope he will." The pallor was gone.

As the turnpike became a tree-shaded street, they passed briskly by its old-fashioned houses set deep in grove gardens. Two or three weedy lanes at right and left showed the poor cabins of the town's darker life shut and silent. But presently,

"Father, look there!"

The Judge and his son turned quickly to a turfy bank where a ragged negro lay at the base of a large tree. He was moaning, rocking his head, and holding a hand against his side. His rags were drenched with blood. The white eyes rolled up to the face of the Judge, as he tossed his bridle to his son.

"Wateh," whispered the big lips, "wateh."

John threw his father's bridle back, galloped through a gate, and came with a gourd full.

"Gimme quick, son, he's swoonin' away." The draught brought back some life.

"Shan't I get a doctor, father?"

"Tain't a bit of use, son."

"No," moaned the negro. "I'm gwine fasteh dan docto's kin come. I'm in de deep watehs. Gwine to meet my Lawd Jesus. Good-by, wife; good-by, chillun. Oh, Jedge March, dey shot me in pyo devilment. I was jist lookin' out fo' my boy. Dey was comin' in to town an dey sees me, an awdehs me to halt, an' 'stid o' dat I runs, thinkin' that'd suit 'em jist as well. Oh, Lawd!—Oh, Lawd! Oh!" He stared into the Judge's face, a great pain heaved him slowly, his eyes set, and all was

over. A single sob burst from the boy as he gazed on the dark, dead features. The Judge hasted to mount.

"Now, son, I got to get right into town. But you see now, you betteh go along back to yo' motheh, don't you?"

"I'm goin' with you."

XIII.

FOR FANNIE

They came where two men sat on horses in the way. "Sorry, Judge, but them's orders, seh; only enrolled men can pass."

But the speakers presently concluded that it could never have been intended to shut out such a personage as Judge March, and on pledge to report to Captain Shotwell, at the Swanee Hotel, or else to Captain Champion at the court-house, father and son proceeded. Montrose Academy showed no sign of life as they went by.

Yet John had never seen the town so populous. Saddled horses were tied everywhere. Men rode here or there in the yellow dust, idly or importantly, mounted, dismounted, or stood on the broken sidewalks in groups, some sober, some not, all armed and spurred, and more arriving from all directions. Handsome Captain Shotwell, sitting in civil dress, a sword belted on him and lying across his lap, explained to the Judge.

"Why, you know, Judge, how ow young men ah; always up to some ridiculous praank, jest in mere plaay, you know, seh. Yeste'd'y some of 'em taken a boyish notion to put some maasks on an' ride through Leggettstown in 'slo-ow p'ocession, with a sawt o' banneh marked, 'SEE YOU AGAIN TO-NIGHT.' They had guns—mo' f'om fo'ce o' habit, I reckon, than anything else—you know how ow young men ah, seh—one of 'em carry a gun a yeah, an' nevah so much as hahm a floweh, you know. Well, seh, unfawtunately, the niggehs had no mo' sense than to take it all in dead earnest. They put they women an' child'en into the church an' ahmed theyse'ves, some thirty of 'em, with shotguns an' old muskets—yondeh's some of 'em in the cawneh. Then they taken up a position in the road just this side the village, an' sent to Sherman an' Libbetyville fo' reinfo'cements.

"Well, of co'se, you know, seh, what was jes' boun' to happm. Some of ow ve'y best young men mounted an' moved to dislodge an' scatteh them befo' they could gatheh numbehs enough to take the offensive an' begin they fiendish work. Well, seh, about daay-break, while sawt o' reconnoiterin' in fo'ce, they come suddenly upon the niggehs' position, an' the niggehs, without the slightes' p'ovocation, up an' fi-ud! P'ovidentially, they shot too high, an' only one man was inju'ed—by fallin' from his hawss. Well, seh, ow boys fi-ud an' cha'ged, an' the niggehs, of co'se, run, leavin' three dead an' fo' wounded; aw, accawdin' to latest accounts, seven dead an' no wounded. The niggehs taken shelteh in the church, ow boys fallen back fo' reinfo'cements, an' about a' hour by sun comes word that the niggehs, frenzied with raage an' liquo', a-comin' this way to the numbeh o' three

hund'ed, an' increasin' as they come.—No, seh, I don't know that it is unfawtunate. It's just as well faw this thing to happm, an' to happm now. It'll teach both sides, as Garnet said awhile ago addressin' the crowd, that the gov'ment o' Dixie's simply got to paass, this time, away f'om a raace that can't p'eserve awdeh, an' be undividedly transfehed oveh to the raace God-A'mighty appointed to gov'n!"

Judge March's voice was full of meek distress. "Captain Shotwell, where is Major Garnet, sir?"

"Garnet? Oh, he's over in the Courier office, consultin' with Haggard an' Jeff-Jack."

"Do you know whether Gen'l Halliday's in town, sir?"

The Captain smiled. "He's in the next room, seh. He's been undeh my—p'otection, as you might say, since daylight."

"Gen'l Halliday could stop all this, Captain."

"Stop it? He could stop it in two hours, seh! If he'd just consent to go under parole to Leggettstown an' tell them niggehs that if they'll simply lay down they ahms an' stay quietly at home—jest faw a day aw two—all 'll be freely fo'givm an' fo'gotten, seh! Instead o' that, he sits there, ca'mly smilin'—you know his way—an' threatenin' us with the ahm of the United States Gov'ment. He fo'gets that by a wise p'ovision o' that Gov'ment's foundehs it's got sev'l ahms, an' one holds down anotheh. The S'preme Cote—Judge March, you go in an' see him; you jest the man to do it, seh!"

John waited without. Presently father and son were seen to leave Captain Shotwell's headquarters and cross the square to the Courier office. There a crowd was reading a bulletin which stated that scouting parties reported no negro force massed anywhere. At the top of a narrow staircase the Judge and his son were let into the presence of Major Garnet and his advisers.

Here John had one more good gaze at Ravenel. He was in the physical perfection of twenty-six, his eyes less playful than once, but his smile less cynical. His dress was faultlessly neat. Haggard was almost as noticeable, though less interesting; a slender, high-strung man, with a pale face seamed by a long scar got in a duel. One could see that he had been trying to offset the fatigues of the night with a popular remedy. Garnet was dictating, Haggard writing.

"Captains Shotwell and Champion will move their forces at once in opposite circuits—through the disturbed villages—and assure all persons—of whatever race or party—that the right of the people peaceably to bear arms—is

vindicated—and that order is restored—and will be maintained." A courier waited.

"At the same time," said Ravenel, indolently, "they can ask if the rumor is true that Mr. Leggett and about ten others are going to be absent from this part of the country until after the election, and say we hope it's so."

Haggard cast a glance at Garnet, Garnet looked away, the postscript was made, and the missive sent.

"Brother March, good-morning, sir." The Major kept the Judge's hand as they moved aside. But presently the whole room could hear—"Why, Brother March, the trouble's all over!—Oh, of course, if Halliday feels any real *need* to confer with us he can do so; we'll be right here.—Oh—Haggard!"

The editor, in the doorway, said he would be back, and went out. He was evidently avoiding Halliday. Judge March felt belittled and began to go.

"If you're bound for home, Brother March, I'll be riding that way myself, presently. You see, in a few minutes Suez'll be as quiet as it ever was, and I sent word to General Halliday just before you came in, that no one designs, or has designed, to abridge any personal liberty of his he may think safe to exercise." The speaker suddenly ceased.

Both men stood hearkening. Loud words came up the stairs.

"Your son stepped down into the street, Judge," said Ravenel. The next instant the three rushed out and down the stairway.

John had gone down to see the two armed bands move off. They had been gone but a few minutes when he noticed General Halliday, finely mounted, come from a stable behind the hotel and trot smartly toward him. The few store-keepers left in town stared in contemptuous expectation, but to John this was Fannie's father, and the boy longed for something to occur which might enable him to serve that father in a signal way and so make her forever tenderly grateful. The telegraph office was up these same stairs on the other side of the landing opposite the *Courier* office; most likely the General was going to send despatches. John's gaze followed the gallant figure till it disappeared in the doorway at the foot of the staircase.

Near the bottom the General and the editor met and passed. The editor stopped and cursed the General. "You jostled me purposely, sir!"

Halliday turned and smiled. "Jim Haggard, why should you shove me and then lie about it? can't you pick a fight for the truth?"

"Don't speak to me, you white nigger! Are you armed?"

"Yes!"

"Then, Launcelot Halliday," yelled the editor, backing out upon the sidewalk and drawing his repeater, "I denounce you as a traitor, a poltroon, and a coward!" Men darted away, dodged, peeped, and cried—

"Look out! Don't shoot!" But John ran forward to the rescue.

"Put that thing up!" he called to the editor, in boyish treble. "Put it up!"

"Jim Haggard, hold on!" cried Halliday, following down and out with his weapon pointed earthward. "Let me speak, you drunken fool! Get that boy——"

"Bang!" went the editor's pistol before he had half lifted it.

"Bang!" replied Halliday's.

The editor's weapon dropped. He threw both hands against his breast, looked to heaven, wheeled half round, and fell upon his face as dead as a stone.

Halliday leaped into the saddle, answered one shot that came from the crowd, and clattered away on the turnpike.

John was standing with arms held out. He turned blindly to find the doorway of the stairs and cried, "Father! father!"

"Son!"

He started for the sound, groped against the wall, sank to his knees, and fell backward.

"Room, here, room!" "Give him air!" "By George, sir, he rushed right in bare-handed between 'em, orderin' Haggard"—"Stand back, you-all, and make way for Judge March!"

"Oh, son, son!" The father knelt, caught the limp hands and gazed with streaming eyes. "Oh, son, my son! air you gone fum me, son? Air you gone? Air you gone?"

A kind doctor took the passive wrist. "No, Judge, he's not gone yet."

Ravenel and the physician assumed control. "Just consider him in my care, doctor, will you? Shall we take him to the hotel?"

Garnet supported Judge March's steps. "Cast your burden on the Lord, Brother March. Bear up—for Sister March's sake, as she would for yours!"

Near the top stairs of the Ladies' Entrance Ravenel met Fannie.

"I saw it all, Mr. Ravenel; he saved my father's life. I must have the care of him. You can get it arranged so, Mr. Ravenel. You can even manage his mother."

"I will," he said, with a light smile.

Election-day passed like a Sabbath. General Halliday returned, voted, and stayed undisturbed. His opponent, not Garnet this time, was overwhelmingly elected. On the following day Haggard was buried "with great éclat," as his newspaper described it. Concerning John, the doctor said:

"Judge March, your wife should go back home. There's no danger, and a sick-room to a person of her——"

"Ecstastic spirit—" said the Judge.

"Exactly—would be only——"

"Yes," said the Judge, and Mrs. March went. To Fannie the doctor said,

"If he were a man I would have no hope, but a boy hangs to life like a cat, and I think he'll get well, entirely well. Move him home? Oh, not for a month!"

Notwithstanding many pains, it was a month of heaven to John, a heaven all to himself, with only one angel and no church. As long as there was danger she was merely cheerful—cheerful and beautiful. But when the danger passed she grew merry, the play of her mirth rising as he gained strength to bear it. He loved mirth, when others made it, and always would have laughed louder and longer than he did but for wondering how they made it. A great many things he said made others laugh, too, but he could never tell beforehand what would or wouldn't. He got so full of happiness at times that Fannie would go out for a few moments to let him come back to his ordinary self.

Two or three times, when she lingered long outside the door, she explained on her return that Mr. Ravenel had come to ask how he was.

Once Halliday met this visitor in the Ladies' Entrance, departing, and with a suppressed smile, asked, "Been to see how 'poor Johnnie' is?"

"Ostensibly," said the young man, and offered a cigar.

The General overtook Fannie in the hallway. He shook his head roguishly. "Cruel sport, Fan. He'll make the even dozen, won't he?"

"Oh, no, he'd like to make me his even two dozen, that's all."

When the day came for the convalescent to go home, he was not glad, although he had laughed much that morning. As he lay on the bed dressed and waiting, he was unusually pale. Only Fannie stood by him. Her hand was in both his. He shut his eyes, and in a desperate, earnest voice said, under his breath, "Good-by!" And again, lower still,—"Good-by!"

"Good-by, Johnnie."

He looked up into her laughing eyes. His color came hot, his heart pounded, and he gasped, "S-say m-my John! Won't you?"

"Why, certainly. Good-by, my Johnnie." She smiled yet more.

"Will—will"—he choked—"will you b-be my—k—Fannie—when I g-get old enough?"

"Yes," she said, with great show of gravity, "if you'll not tell anybody." She held him down by gently stroking his brow. "And you must promise to grow up such a perfect gentleman that I'll be proud of my Johnnie when"—She smiled broadly again.

—"Wh-when—k—the time comes?"

"I reckon so—yes."

He sprang to his knees and cast his arms about her neck, but she was too quick, and his kiss was lost in air. He flashed a resentful surprise, but she shook her head, holding his wasted wrists, and said, "N-no, no, my Johnnie, not even you; not Fannie Halliday, o-oh no!" She laughed.

"Some one's coming!" she whispered. It was Judge March. His adieus were very grateful. He called her a blessing.

She waved a last good-by to John from the window. Then she went to her own room, threw arms and face into a cushioned seat and moaned, so softly her own ear could not catch it—a name that was not John's.

XIV.

A MORTGAGE ON JOHN

As John grew sound and strong he grew busy as well. The frown of purpose creased at times his brow. There was a "perfect gentleman" to make, and only a few years left for his making if he was to be completed in the stipulated time. Once in a while he contrived an errand to Fannie, but it was always in broad day, when the flower of love is never more than half open. The perfect transport of its first blossoming could not quite return; the pronoun "my" was not again paraded. Only at good-by, her eyes, dancing the while, would say, "It's all right, my Johnnie."

On Sundays he had to share her with other boys whom she asked promiscuously,

"What new commandment was laid on the disciples?"—and——

"Ought not we also to keep this commandment?"

"Oh! yes, indeed!" said his heart, but his slow lips let some other voice answer for him.

When she asked from the catechism, "What is the misery of that estate whereinto man fell?" ah! how he longed to confess certain modifications in his own case. And yet Sunday was his "Day of all the week the best." Her voice in speech and song, the smell of her garments, the flowers in her hat, the gladness of her eyes, the wild blossoms at her belt, sometimes his own forest anemones dying of joy on her bosom—sense and soul feasted on these and took a new life, so that going from Sabbath to Sabbath he went from strength to strength, on each Lord's day appearing punctually in Zion.

One week-day when the mountain-air of Widewood was sweet with wild grapes, some six persons were scatteringly grouped in and about the narrow road near the March residence. One was Garnet, one was Ravenel, two others John and his father, and two were strangers in Dixie. One of these was a very refined-looking man, gray, slender, and with a reticent, purposeful mouth. His traveling suit was too warm for the latitude, and his silk hat slightly neglected. The other was fat and large, and stayed in the carryall in which Garnet had driven them up from Rosemont. He was of looser stuff than his senior. He called the West his home, but with a New England accent. He "didn't know's 'twas" and "presumed likely" so often that John eyed him with mild surprise. Ravenel sat and whittled. The day was hot, yet in his suit of gray summer stuffs he looked as fresh as sprinkled ferns. In a pause Major Garnet, with bright suddenness, asked:

"Brother March, where's John been going to school?"

The Judge glanced round upon the group as if they were firing upon him from ambush, hemmed, looked at John, and said:

"Why,—eh—who; son?—Why,—eh—to—to his mother, sir; yes, sir."

"Ah, Brother March, a mother's the best of teachers, and Sister March one of the most unselfish of mothers!" said Garnet, avoiding Ravenel's glance.

The Judge expanded. "Sir, she's too unselfish, I admit it, sir."

"And, yet, Brother March, I reckon John gets right smart schooling from you."

"Ah! no, sir. We're only schoolmates together, sir—in the school of Nature, sir. You know, Mr. Ravenel, all these things about us here are a sort of books, sir."

Ravenel smiled and answered very slowly, "Ye-es, sir. Very good reading; worth thirty cents an acre simply as literature."

Thirty cents was really so high a price that the fat stranger gave a burst of laughter, but Garnet—"It'll soon be worth thirty dollars an acre, now we've got a good government. Brother March, we'd like to see that superb view of yours from the old field on to the ridge."

Ravenel stayed behind with the Judge. John went as guide.

"Judge," Ravenel said, as soon as they were alone, "how about John? I believe in your school of nature a little. Solitude for principles, society for character, somebody says. Now, my school was men, and hence the ruin you see——"

"Mr. Ravenel, sir! I see no ruin; I——"

"Don't you? Well, then, the ruin you don't see."

"Oh, sir, you speak in irony! I see a character——"

"Yes "—the speaker dug idly in the sand—"all character and no principles. But you don't want John to be all principles and no character? He ought to be going to school, Judge." The father dropped his eyes in pain, but the young man spoke on. "Going to school is a sort of first lesson in citizenship, isn't it?—'specially if it's a free school. Maybe I'm wrong, but I wish Dixie was full of good, strong free schools."

"You're not wrong, Mr. Ravenel! You're eminently right, sir."

Mr. Ravenel only smiled, was silent for a while, and then said, "But even if it were—I had an impression that you thought you'd sort o' promised John to Rosemont?"

The Judge straightened up, distressed. "Mr. Ravenel, I have! I have, sir! It's true; it's true!"

"I don't think you did, Judge, you only expressed an intention."

But the Judge waived away the distinction with a gesture.

"Judge," said the young man, slowly and gently, "wouldn't you probably be sending John to Rosemont if Rosemont were free?"

The Judge did not speak or look up. He hunted on the ground for chips.

"Why don't you sell some land and send him?"

"Oh, Mr. Ravenel, we can't. We just can't! It's the strangest thing in the world, sir! Nobody wants it but lumbermen, and to let them, faw a few cents an acre, sweep ove' it like worms ove' a cotton field—we just can't do it! Mr. Ravenel, what *is* the reason such a land as this can't be settled up? We'll sell it to any real sett'ehs! But, good Lawd! sir, where air they? Son an' me ain't got no money to impote 'em, sir. The darkies don't know anything but cotton fahmin'—they won't come. Let me tell you, sir, we've made the most flattering offers to capitalists to start this and that. But they all want to wait till we've got a good gov'ment. An' now, here we've got it—in Clearwateh, at least—an' you can see that these two men ain't satisfied!"

"What do you reckon's the reason?"

"Mr. Ravenel, my deah sir, they can't tell! The fat one can't and the lean one won't! But politics is at the bottom of it, sir! Politics keeps crowdin' in an' capital a-hangin' back, an'——"

"Johnnie doesn't get his schooling," said Ravenel.

The response was a silent gesture, downcast eyes, and the betrayal of an emotion, not of the moment, but of months and years of physical want and mental distress.

"We all get lots of politics," said Ravenel.

"Not son! not fum me, sir. Oh, my Lawd, sir, that's one of the worst parts of it! I don't dare teach him mine, much less unteach him his mother's. She's as spirited as she's gentle, sir."

"Whatever was is wrong," drawled the young man. "That's the new creed."

"Oh, sir, a new creed's too painful a thing fo' jest. Ow South'n press, Mr. Ravenel, is gett'n' a sad facility fo' recantin'. I don't say it's not sincere, sir—least of all ow *Courier* since it's come into the hands of you an' President Garnet!"

"Garnet! Oh, gracious!" laughed Jeff-Jack. "Sincere—Judge, if you won't say anything about sincerity, I'll tell you what I'd like to do for John, sir. I'll take your note, secured by land, for the money you need to put John through Rosemont, and you needn't pay it till you get ready. If you never get ready, I reckon John'll pay it some day."

The moment the offer began to be intelligible, Judge March tried to straighten up and look Jeff-Jack squarely in the face, but when it was completed his elbows were on his knees and his face in his slender brown hands.

Up in the old field Garnet had talked himself dizzy. Northern travelers are by every impulse inquirers, and Southern hosts expounders; they fit like tongue and groove. On the ridge he had said:

"Now, Mr. Fair, here it is. I don't believe there's a finer view in the world."

"Hm!" said the slender visitor.

The two guests had been shown the usual Sleeping Giant, Saddle Mountain, Sugar Loaf, etc., that go with such views. John had set Garnet right when he got Lover's Leap and Bridal Veil tangled in the bristling pines of Table Rock and the Devil's Garden, and all were charmed with the majestic beauty of the scene. On the way back, while Garnet explained to Mr. Gamble, the heavier guest, why negroes had to be treated not as individuals but as a class, John had been telling Mr. Fair why it was wise to treat chickens not as a class but as individuals, and had mentioned the names and personal idiosyncrasies of the favorites of his own flock; Mr. Fair, in turn, had confessed to having a son about John's age, and wished they knew each other. Before John could reply, the party gayly halted again beside his father and Mr. Ravenel. As they did so Mr. Fair saw Ravenel give a little nod to Garnet that said, "It's all arranged."

On another evening, shortly after this, father and son coming to supper belated, John brought his mother a bit of cross-road news. The "Rads" had given a barbecue down in Blackland, just two days before the visit of Jeff-Jack and those others to Widewood—and what did she reckon! Cornelius Leggett had there made a speech, declaring that he was at the bottom of a patriotic project to open a free white school in Suez, and "bu'st Rosemont wide open."

"Judge March," said the wife, affectionately, "I wonder why Mr. Ravenel avoided mentioning that to you. He needn't have feared your sense of humor. Ah! if you only had a woman's instincts!"

John said good-night and withdrew. He wished his mother loved his father a little less. They would all have a so much better time.

"No," Mrs. March was presently saying, "Mr. Ravenel's motives are not those that concern me most. Rosemont, to me, must always signify Rose Montgomery. It is to her presence—her spell—you would expose my child; she, who has hated me all her life. Ah! no, it's too late now to draw back, he shall go. Yes, without my consent! Oh! my consent! Judge March, you're jesting again!" She lifted upon him the smile of a heart really all but broken under its imaginary wrongs.

There was no drawing back. The mother suffered, but the wife sewed, and when Rosemont had got well into its season's work and November was nearly gone, John was ready for "college." One morning, when the wind was bitter and the ground frozen, father and son rode side by side down their mountain road. A thin mantle of snow made the woods gray, and mottled the shivering ranks of dry cornstalks. At each rider's saddle swung an old carpet-bag stuffed with John's clothes. His best were on him.

"Maybe they're not the latest cut, son, or the finest fit, but you won't mind; you're not a girl. A man's dress is on'y a sort o' skin, anyhow; a woman's is her plumage. And, anyhow, at Rosemont you'll wear soldier clothes. Look out son, I asked yo' dear motheh to mend——"

The warning came too late; a rope handle of one of the carpet-bags broke. The swollen budget struck the unyielding ground and burst like a squash. John sprang nimbly from the saddle, but the Judge caught his leg on the other carpet-bag and reached the ground in such a shape that his horse lost all confidence and began to back wildly, putting first one foot and then another into the scattered baggage.

One, or even two, can rarely get as much into a bursted carpet-bag, repacking it in a public road and perspiring with the fear that somebody is coming, as they can into a sound one at a time and place of their own choice. There's no place like home—for this sort of task; albeit the Judge's home may have been an exception. Time flew past while they contrived and labored, and even when they seemed to have solved their problem one pocket of John's trousers contained a shirt and the other was full of socks, and the Judge's heart still retained an anxiety which he dared neither wholly confess nor entirely conceal.

"Well, son, it's a comfort to think yo' precious motheh will never have the mawtification of knowin' anything about this."

"Yass, sir," drawled John, "that's the first thing I thought of."

XV.

ARRIVALS AT ROSEMONT

The air was mild down on the main road which, because it led from Suez to Pulaski City, was known as the Susie and Pussie pike. The highway showed a mere dusting of snow, and out afield the sun had said good-morning so cavalierly to some corn-shocks that the powder was wholly kissed off one sallow cheek of each. The riders kept the pike northwesterly a short way and then took the left, saying less and less as they went on, till the college came into view, their hearts sinking as it rose.

The campus was destitute of human sounds; but birds gossiped so openly on every hand concerning the tardy intrusion that John was embarrassed, and hardly felt, much less saw, what rich disorder the red and yellow browns of clinging and falling leaves made among the purple-gray trunks and olive-dappled boughs, and on the fading green of the sod.

The jays were everywhere, foppish, flippant, the perfection of privileged rudeness.

It seemed a great way through the grove. At the foot of the steps John would have liked to make the acquaintance of some fat hens that were picking around in the weak sunshine and uttering now and then a pious housewifely sigh.

There was an awful stillness as the two ascended the steps, carrying the broken carpet-bag between them. Glancing back down the campus avenue, John hoped the unknown woman just entering its far gate was not observing. So mild was the air here that the front door stood open. In the hall a tall student, with a sergeant's chevrons on his gray sleeve, came from a class-room and led them into a small parlor. Major Garnet was in Suez, but Mrs. Garnet would see them.

They waited. On the mantel an extremely Egyptian clock—green and gilt—whispered at its task in servile oblivion to visitors. John stared at a black-framed lithograph, and his father murmured,

"That's the poet Longfellow, son, who wrote that nice letteh to yo' dear motheh. This colo'ed picture's Napoleon crossing the Alps."

A footstep came down the hall, and John saw a pretty damsel of twelve or thirteen with much loose red-brown hair, stop near the door of the reception-room and gaze at someone else who must have been coming up the porch steps. He could not hear this person's slow advance, but presently a voice in the porch said, tenderly, "Miss Barb?" and gave a low nervous laugh.

Barbara shrank back a step. The soft footfall reached the threshold. The maiden retreated half a step more. Behind her sounded a faint patter of crinoline coming down the hall stairs. And then there came into view from the porch, bending forward with caressing arms, a slim, lithe negress of about nineteen years. Her flimsy dress was torn by thorns, and her hands were pitifully scratched. Her skirt was gone, the petticoat bemired, and her naked feet were bleeding.

"Miss Barb," said the tender voice again. From the inner stairs a lady appeared.

"What is it, son?" Judge March asked, and rising, saw the lady draw near the girl with a look of pitying uncertainty. The tattered form stood trembling, with tears starting down her cheeks.

"Miss Rose—Oh, Miss Rose, it's me!"

"Why, Johanna, my poor child!" Two kind arms opened and the mass of rags and mud dashed into them. The girl showered her kisses upon the pure garments, and the lady silently, tenderly, held her fast. Then she took the black forehead between her hands.

"Child, what does this mean?"

"Oh, it means nothin' but C'nelius, Miss Rose—same old C'nelius! I hadn't nowhere to run but to you, an' no chance to come but night."

"Can you go upstairs and wait a moment for me in my room? No, poor child, I don't think you can!" But Johanna went, half laughing, half crying, and beckoning to Barbara in the old-time wheedling way.

"Go, Barbara."

The child followed, while John and his father stood with captive hearts before her whom the youths of the college loved to call in valedictory addresses the Rose of Rosemont. She spent a few moments with them, holding John's more than willing hand, and then called in the principal's first assistant, Mr. Dinwiddie Pettigrew, a smallish man of forty, in piratical white duck trousers, kid slippers, nankeen sack, and ruffled shirt. Irritability confessed itself in this gentleman's face, which was of a clay color, with white spots. Mr. Pettigrew presently declared himself a Virginian, adding, with the dignity of a fallen king, that he—or his father, at least—had lost over a hundred slaves by the war. It was their all. But the boy could not shut his ear to the sweet voice of Mrs. Garnet as, at one side, she talked to his father.

"Sir?" he responded to the first assistant, who was telling him he ought to spell March with a final e, it being always so spelled—in Virginia. The Judge turned for a lengthy good-by, and at its close John went with his preceptor to the school-

room, trying, quite in vain, to conceive how Mr. Pettigrew had looked when he was a boy.

XVI.

A GROUP OF NEW INFLUENCES

All Rosemonters were required to sit together at Sunday morning service, in a solid mass of cadet gray. After this there was ordinary freedom. Thus, when good weather and roads and Mrs. March's strength permitted, John had the joy of seeing his father and mother come into church; for Rosemont was always ahead of time, and the Marches behind. Then followed the delight of going home with them in their antique and precarious buggy, and of a day-break ride back to Rosemont with his father—sweetest of all accessible company. Accessible, for his mother had forbidden him to visit Fannie Halliday, her father being a traitor. He could only pass by her gate—she was keeping house now—and sometimes have the ecstasy of lingeringly greeting her there.

"Oh, my deah, she's his teacheh, you know. But now, suppose that next Sunday——"

"Please call it the sabbath, Powhatan."

"Yes, deah, the sabbath. If it should chance to rain——"

"Oh, Judge March, do you believe rain comes by chance?"

"Oh, no, Daphne, dear. But—if it should be raining hard——"

"It will still be the Lord's day. Your son can read and meditate."

"But if it should be fair, and something else should keep us fum church, and he couldn't come up here, and should feel his loneliness——"

"Can't he visit some of our Suez friends—Mary and Martha Salter, Doctor Coffin, or Parson Tombs, the Sextons, or Clay Mattox? I'm not puritanical, nor are they. He's sure of a welcome from either Cousin Hamlet Graves or his brother Lazarus. Heaven has spared us a few friends still."

"Oh, yes, indeed. Dead loads of them; if son would only take to them. And, Daphne, deah,"—the husband brightened—"I hope, yet, he will."

School terms came and went. Mrs. March attributed her son's failure to inherit literary talent to his too long association with his father. He stood neither first, second, nor last in anything. In spiritual conditions he was not always sure that he stood at all. At times he was shaken even in the belief that the love of fun is the root of all virtue, and although he called many a droll doing a prank which the law's dark lexicon terms a misdemeanor, for weeks afterward there would be a

sound in his father's gentle speech as of that voice from which Adam once, in the cool of the day, hid himself. In church the sermons he sat under dwelt mainly on the technical difficulties involved in a sinner's salvation, and neither helped nor harmed him; he never heard them. One clear voice in the midst of the singing was all that engaged his ear, and when it carolled, "He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass," the notes themselves were to him the cooling shower.

One Sabbath afternoon, after a specially indigestible sermon which Sister Usher said enthusiastically to Major Garnet ought to be followed by a great awakening—as, in fact, it had been—Barbara, slim, straight, and fifteen, softly asked her mother to linger behind the parting congregation for Fannie. As Miss Halliday joined them John, from the other aisle, bowed so pathetically to his Sunday-school teacher that when she turned again to smile on Barbara and her mother she laughed, quite against her will. The mother and daughter remained grave.

"Fannie," said Mrs. Garnet, her hand stealing into the girl's, "I'm troubled about that boy." Barbara walked ahead pretending not to hear, but listening hard.

"Law! Cousin Rose, so'm I! I wish he'd get religion or something. Don't look so at me, Cousin Rose, you *make* me smile. I'm really trying to help him, but the more I try the worse I fail. If I should meet him on the straight road to ruin I shouldn't know what to say to him; I'm a pagan myself."

XVII.

THE ROSEMONT ATMOSPHERE

About this time Barbara came into new surroundings. She had been wondering for a month what matter of disagreement her father and mother were trying to be very secret about, when one morning at breakfast her father said, while her mother looked out the window:

"Barb, we've decided to send you to Montrose to stay." And while she was still gazing at him speechlessly, a gulping sob came from behind her mother's chair and Johanna ran from the room.

Barbara never forgot that day. Nor did her memory ever lose the picture of her father, as he came alone to see her the next day after her entrance into the academy, standing before the Misses Kinsington—who were as good as they were thin, and as sweet as they were aristocratic—winning their impetuous approval with the confession that the atmosphere of a male college—even though it was Rosemont—was not good for a young girl. While neither of the Misses Kinsington gave a hand to him either for welcome or farewell, when Mademoiselle Eglantine—who taught drawing, history, and French—happened in upon father and daughter a second time, after they had been left to say good-by alone, the hand of Mademoiselle lingered so long in his that Barbara concluded he had forgotten it was there.

"She's quite European in her way, isn't she, Barb?"

The daughter was mute, for she had from time to time noticed several women shake hands with her large-hearted father thus.

Twice a week Barbara spent an afternoon and night at Rosemont. Whether her father really thought its atmosphere desirable for her or not, she desired it, without ceasing and most hungrily. On Sunday nights, when the house had grown still, there would come upon her door the wariest of knocks, and Johanna would enter, choose a humble seat, and stay and stay, to tell every smallest happening of the week.

Not infrequently these recitals contained points in the history of John March.

Rosemont gave one of its unexpected holidays. John March and another senior got horses and galloped joyously away to Pulaski City, where John's companion

lived. The seat of government was there. There, too, was the Honorable Mr. Leggett, his party being still uppermost in Blackland. He was still custodian, moreover, of the public school funds for the three counties.

Very late that night, as the two Rosemonters were about to walk past an open oyster saloon hard by the Capitol, John caught his fellow's arm. They stopped in a shadow. Two men coming from an opposite direction went into the place together.

"Who's that white man?" whispered John. The other named a noted lobbyist, and asked,

"Who's the nigger?"

"Cornelius Leggett." John's hand crept, trembling, to his hip pocket.

His companion grasped it. "Pshaw, March, are you crazy?"

"No, are you? I'm not going to shoot; I was only thinking how easy I could do it."

He stepped nearer the entrance. The lone keeper had followed the two men into a curtained stall. His back was just in sight.

"Let's slip in and hear what they say," murmured John, visibly disturbed. But when his companion assented he drew back. His fellow scanned him with a smile of light contempt. There were beads of moisture on his brow. Just then the keeper went briskly toward his kitchen, and the two youths glided into the stall next to the one occupied.

"Yass, seh," Cornelius was tipsily remarking, "the journals o' the day reputes me to have absawb some paucity o' the school funds. Well, supposen I has; I say, jess *supposen* it, you know. I antagonize you this question: did Napoleon Bonapawt never absawb any paucity o' otheh folks' things? An' yit he was the greates' o' the great. He's my patte'n, seh. He neveh stole jiss to be a-stealin'! An' yit wheneveh he found it assential of his *destiny* to steal anything, he stole it!

"O' co'se he incurred and contracted enemies; I has mine; it's useless to translate it. My own motheh's husban'—you riccolec' ole Unc' 'Viticus, don't you?—Rev'en' Leviticus Wisdom—on'y niggeh that eveh refused a office!"—he giggled—"Well, he ensued to tu'n me out'n the church. Yass, seh, faw nothin' but fallin' in love with his daughteh—my step-sisteh—sayin' I run her out'n the county!

"But he couldn't p'ocure a sufficient concawdence o' my fellow-citizens; much less o' they wives—naw evm o' mine! No, seh! They brought in they verdic' that

jess at this junction it'd be cal'lated to ungendeh strife an' could on'y do hahm." He giggled again.

"My politics save me, seh! They always will. An' they ought to; faw they as pyo as the crystial fountain."

The keeper brought a stew of canned oysters. The lobbyist served it, and Mr. Leggett talked on.

"Thass the diffunce 'twixt me and Gyarnit. That man's afraid o' me—jess as 'fraid as a chicken-hawk is of a gun, seh!—an' which nobody knows why essep' him an' me. But thass jess the diff'ence. Nobody reputes him to steal, an' I don't say he do. I ain't ready to say it yit, you un'stan'; but his politics—his politics, seh; they does the stealin'! An' which it's the low-downdest kind o' stealin', for it's stealin' fum niggers. But thass the diff'ence; niggers steals with they claws, white men with they laws. The claws steals by the pound; the laws steals by the boatload!"

The lobbyist agreed.

"Jess so!" cried Mr. Leggett. "Ef Gyarnit'd vote faw the things o' one common welfare an' gen'l progress an' program, folks—an' niggers too—could affode faw him to vote faw somepm fat oncet in a while an' to evm take sugar on his vote—an' would sen' him to the ligislatur' stid o' me. Thass not sayin' I eveh did aw does take sugar on my vote. Ef I wins a bet oncet in a while on whether a certain bill 'll pass, why, that, along o' my official emoluments an' p'erequisites evince me a sufficient plenty.

"Wife?—Estravagant?—No!—Oh! you thinkin' o' my secon' wife. Yes, seh, she was too all-fired estravagant! I don't disadmire estravagant people. I'm dreadful estravagant myseff. But Sophronia jess tuck the rag off'n the bush faw estravagance. Silk dresses, wine, jewelry—it's true she mos'ly spent her own green-backs, but thass jess it, you see; I jess had to paht with her, seh! You can asphyxiate that yo'seff, seh.

"Now this wife I got now—eh? No, I ain't never ezac'ly hear the news that the other one dead, but I suspicioned her, befo' she lef', o' bein' consumpted, an'—O anyhow she's dead to me, seh! Now, the nex' time I marries—eh?—O yes, but the present Mis' Leggett can't las' much longeh, seh. I mistakened myseff when I aspoused her. I'm a man o' rich an' abundant natu'e an' ought to a-got a spouse consistent with my joys an' destinies. I may have to make a sawt o' Emp'ess Josephine o' her—ef she lives.

"Y'ought to see the nex' one!—Seh?—Engaged?—No, not yit; she as shy as a crow an'—ezac'ly the same colo'!—I'm done with light-complected women, seh.—But y'ought to see this-yeh one!—Shy as a pa't'idge! But I'm hot on her

trail. She put*tend* to be tarrible shocked—well, o' co'se thass right!—Hid away in the hills—at Rosemont. But I kin git her on a day's notice. All I got to espress myself is—Majo' Gyarnit, seh!—Ef you continues faw twenty-fo' hours mo' to harbor the girl Johanna, otherwise Miss Wisdom, the Black Diana an' sim'lar names, I shall imbibe it my jewty to the gen'l welfare an' public progress to renovate yo' rememb'ance of a vas'ly diff'ent an' mo' financial matteh, as per my letteh to you of sich a date about seven year' ago an' not an's'd yit, *an' tell what I know about you*. Thass all I'll say. Thass all I haf to say! An' mebbe I won't haf to say that. Faw I'm tryin' love lettehs on her; wrote the fus' one this evenin'; on'y got two mo' to write. My third inevasively fetches 'em down the tree, seh!"

The lobbyist revived the subject of politics, the publican went after hot water for a punch, and the eavesdroppers slipped away.

Early the following week Mr. Leggett reclined in his seat in the House of Representatives. His boots were on his desk, and he tapped them with his sword-cane while he waited to back up with his vote a certain bet of the Friday night before. A speaker of his own party was alluding to him as the father of free schools in Blackland and Clear water; but he was used to this and only closed his eyes. A page brought his mail. It was small. One letter was perfumed. He opened it and sat transfixed with surprise, and a-tremble between vanity and doubt, desire and trepidation. He bent his beaded eyes close over the sweet thing and read its first page again and again. It might—it *might* be an imposture; but it had come in a Rosemont envelope, and it was signed Johanna Wisdom.

The House began to vote. He answered to his name; the bill passed, his bet was won. Adjournment followed. He hurried out and away, and down in a suburban lane entered his snug, though humble, "bo'd'n' house," locked his door, and read again.

Two or three well-known alumni of Rosemont and two or three Northern capitalists—railroad prospectors—were, on the following Friday, at the Swanee Hotel to be the guests of the Duke of Suez, as Ravenel was fondly called by the Rosemont boys. To show Suez at its best by night as well as by day, there was to be a Rosemont-Montrose ball in the hotel dining-room. Major Garnet opposed its being *called* a ball, and it was announced as a musical reception and promenade. Mr. Leggett knew quite as well as Garnet and Ravenel that the coming visitors were behind the bill he had just voted for.

Johanna, the letter said, would be at the ball as an attendant in the ladies' cloak-room. It bade him meet her that night at eleven on the old bridge that spanned a ravine behind the hotel, where a back street ended at the edge of a neglected grove.

"Lawd, Lawd! little letteh, little letteh! is you de back windeh o' heavm, aw is you de front gate o' hell? Th' ain't no way to tell but by tryin'! Oh, how *kin* I resk it? An' yit, how kin I he'p but resk it?

"Sheh! ain't I resk my life time an' time ag'in jess for my *abstrac' rights* to be a Republican niggeh?

"Ef they'd on'y shoot me! But they won't. They won't evm hang me; they'll jess tie me to a tree and bu'n me—wet me th'oo with coal-oil, tech a match—O Lawd!" He poured a tremendous dram, looked at it long, then stepped to the window, and with a quaking hand emptied both glass and bottle on the ground, as if he knew life depended on a silent tongue in a sober head.

And then he glanced once more at the letter, folded it, and let it slowly into his pocket.

"'Happy as a big sun-floweh,' is you? I ain't. I ain't no happier'n a pig on the ice. O it's mawnstus p'ecipitous! But it's gran'! It's mo'n gran'; it's muccurial! it's puffic'ly nocturnial!" With an exalted solemnity of face, half ardor, half anguish, he stiffened heroically and gulped out,

"I'll be thah!"

Friday came. John March and half-a-dozen other Rosemonters, a committee to furnish "greens" for garlanding the walls and doorways, hurried about in an expectancy and perturbation, now gay, now grave, that seemed quite excessive as the mere precursors of an evening dance. They gathered their greenery from the grove down beyond the old bridge and ravine, where the ground was an unbroken web of honeysuckle vines.

On this old bridge, at the late night hour fixed in the letter, Cornelius met a counterfeit, thickly-veiled Johanna, and swore to marry her.

"Black as you is? Yass! The blackeh the betteh! An' yit I'd marry you ef you wuz pyo white!—Colo' line!—I'll cross fifty colo' lines whenev' I feels like it!"

By midnight every Rosemonter at the ball had heard this speech repeated, and knew that it had hardly left the mulatto's throat before he had fled with shrieks of terror from the pretended ghosts of his earlier wives, and with the curses of a coward's rage from the vain clutches of his would-be captors.—But we go too fast.

XVIII.

THE PANGS OF COQUETRY

Night fell. The hotel shone. The veranda was gay with Chinese lanterns. The muffled girls were arriving. The musicians tuned up. There were three little fiddles, one big one, a flageolet, and a bassoon.

"Twinkling stars are laughing, love,Laughing on you and me"

—sang the flageolet and little fiddles, while the double bass and the bassoon grunted out their corroborative testimony with melodious unction. Presently the instruments changed their mood, the flageolet pretended to be a mocking-bird, all trills, the fiddles passionately declared they were dreaming now-ow of Hallie—tr-r-r-ee!—dear Hallie—tr-r-r-ee!—sweet Hallie—tr-r-r-ee! and the bassoon and double bass responded from the depths of their emotions, "Hmmh! hmmh! hm-hm-hmmh!"

Ravenel and his guests appeared on the floor; Major Garnet, too. He had been with them, here, yonder, all day. Barbara remained at home, although her gowns were the full length now, and she coiled her hair. General Halliday and Fannie arrived. Her dress, they said, was the prettiest in the room. Jeff-Jack introduced everybody to the Northerners. The women all asked them if Suez wasn't a beautiful city, and the guests praised the town, its site, its gardens, "its possibilities," its ladies—!—and its classic river.

Try to look busy or dignified as he might, all these things only harried John March. He kept apart from Fannie. Indeed, what man of any self-regard—he asked his mangled spirit—could penetrate the crowd that hovered about her, ducking, fawning, giggling, attitudinizing—listening over one another's shoulders, guffawing down each other's throats? It hurt him to see her show such indiscriminating amiability; but he felt sure he knew her best, and hoped she was saying to herself, "Oh, that these sycophants were gone, and only John and I and the twinkling stars remained to laugh together! Why does he stay away?"

"O my darling Nellie Gray, they have taken you away," wept the fiddles, and "Who? who? who-who-who?" inquired the basses in deep solicitude.

Well, the first dance would soon come, now; the second would shortly follow, and then he and Fannie could go out on the veranda and settle all doubts. With certainty established in that quarter, whether it should bring rapture or despair, he

hoped to command the magnanimity to hold over a terrified victim the lash of retribution, and then to pronounce upon him, untouched, at last, the sentence of exile. He spoke aloud, and looking up quickly to see if anyone had heard, beheld his image in a mirror. He knew it instantly, both by its frown and by the trick of clapping one hand on the front of the thigh with the arm twisted so as to show a large seal-ring bought by himself with money that should have purchased underclothes for his father. He jerked it away with a growl of self-scorn, and went to mingle with older men, to whom, he fancied, the world meant more than young women and old scores.

He stopped in a part of the room where two Northerners were laughing at a keen skirmish of words between Garnet and Halliday. These two had gotten upon politics, and others were drawing near, full of eager but unplayful smiles.

"Never mind," said Garnet, in retort, "we've restored public credit and cut the rottenness out of our government."

The Northerners nodded approvingly, and the crowd packed close.

"Garnet," replied the general, with that superior smile which Garnet so hated, "States, like apples—and like men—have two sorts of rottenness. One begins at the surface and shows from the start; the other starts from the core, and doesn't show till the whole thing is rotten."

For some secret reason, Garnet reddened fiercely for an instant, and then, with a forced laugh, addressed his words to one of the guests.

Another of the strangers was interested in the severe attention a strong-eyed Rosemont boy seemed to give to Halliday's speech. But it was only John March, who was saying, in his heart:

"She's got a perfect right to take me or throw me, but she's no right to do both!"

Only the Northerners enjoyed Halliday. The Suez men turned away in disdain.

The music struck a quadrille, sweetly whining and hooting twice over before starting into doubtful history,

"In eighteen hundred and sixty-one—to the war! to the war!"

The dance springs out! Gray jackets and white trousers; tarlatan, flowers, and fans; here and there a touch of powder or rouge; some black broadcloth and much wrinkled doeskin. Jeff-Jack and Fannie move hand in hand, and despite the bassoon's contemptuous "pooh! pooh! poo-poo-pooh!" the fiddles declare, with petulant vehemence, that—

"In eighteen-hundred-and-sixty-one, the Yankees *they* the war *begun*, but we'll all! get! blind! drunk! when Johnnie comes marching home."

"You see we play the national—oh! no, I believe that's not one—but we do play them!" said a native.

John didn't march home, although when some one wanted a window open which had been decorated to stay shut, neither he nor his committee could be found. He came in, warm and anxious, just in time to claim Fannie for their schottische. At ten they walked out on the veranda and took seats at its dark end. She was radiant, and without a sign of the mild dismay that was in her bosom. When she said, "Now, tell me, John, why you're so sad," there was no way for him to see that she was secretly charging herself not to lie and not to cry.

"Miss Fannie," he replied, "you're breaking my heart."

"Aw, now, John, are you going to spoil our friendship this way?"

"Friendship!—Oh, Fannie!"

"Miss Fannie, if you please, Mister John."

"Ah! has it come to that? And do you hide that face?"—For Fannie had omitted to charge herself not to smile at the wrong time—"Have you forgotten the day we parted here five years ago?"

"Why, no. I don't remember what day of the week it was, but I—I remember it. Was it Friday? What day was it?"

"Fannie, you mock me! Ah! you thought me but a boy, then, but I loved you with a love beyond my years; and now as a man, I——"

"Oh! a man! Mr. March, there's an end to this bench. No! John, I don't mock you; I honor you; I've always been proud of you—Now—now, John, let go my hand! John, if you don't let go my hand I'll leave you; you naughty boy!—No, I won't answer a thing till you let me go! John March, let go my hand this instant! Now I shall sit here. You'll keep the bench, please. Yes, I do remember it all, and regret it!" She turned away in real dejection, saying, in her heart, "But I shall do no better till I die—or—or get married!"

She faced John again. "Oh, if I'd thought you'd remember it forty days it shouldn't have occurred! I saw in you just a brave, pure-hearted, sensible boy. I thought it would be pleasant, and even elevating—to you—while it lasted, and that you'd soon see how—how ineligible—indeed I did!" Both were silent.

"Fannie Halliday," said John at last, standing before her as slim and rank as a sapling, but in the dignity of injured trust, "when year after year you saw I loved you, why did you still play me false!"

"Now, Mr. March, you're cruel."

"Miss Fannie Halliday, have you been kind?"

"I meant to be! I never meant to cheat you! I kept hoping you'd understand! Sometimes I tried to make you understand, didn't I? I'm very sorry, John. I know I've done wrong. But I—I meant well. I really did!"

The youth waved an arm. "You've wrecked my life. Oh, Fannie, I'm no mere sentimentalist. I can say in perfect command of these wild emotions, 'Enchantress, fare thee well!'"

"Oh, fare thee fiddlesticks!" Fannie rose abruptly. "No, no, I didn't mean that, John, but—aw! now, I didn't *mean* to smile! Oh, let's forget the past—oh! now, yes, you can! Let's just be simple, true friends! And one of these days you'll love some sweet, true girl, and she'll love you and I'll love her, and—" she took his arm. He looked down on her.

"*I* love again!—*I*—? Ah! how little you women understand men! Oh, Fannie! to love twice is never to have loved. You are my first—my last!"

"Oh, no, I'm not," said Fannie, blithely and aloud, as they reëntered the room. Then softly, behind her fan, "I've a better one in store for you, now!"

"Two!" groaned the bass viol and bassoon. "Two! two! two-to-to-two!" and with a propitiative smile on John's open anguish, Fannie, gayer in speech and readier in laughter, but not lighter in heart, let a partner waltz her away. As John turned, one of his committee seized his arm and showed a watch.

XIX.

MR. RAVENEL SHOWS A "MORE EXCELLENT WAY"

Urged by all sorts and on all sides, the Northerners lingered a day or two more, visiting battle-fields and things. At Turkey Creek Halliday was talkative, Garnet overflowed with information, Captains Champion and Shotwell were boyish, and Colonel Proudfit got tight. They ate cold fried chicken and drank—

"Whew!—stop, stop!—I can't take—Why, half that would"—etc.

"Where's Mr. Ravenel?"

"Who, Jeff-Jack? Oh, he's over yonder pickin' blackberries—no, he seldom ever touches—he has to be careful how he—Yes, sometimes he disremembers."

In town again, Halliday led the way to the public grammar and high schools. Garnet mentioned Montrose boastfully more than once.

"Why don't we go there?" asked one of the projectors, innocently.

"Oh—ah—wha'd you say, Colonel Proudfit? Yess, that's so, we pass right by it on ow way to Rosemont"—and they did, to the sweet satisfaction of the Misses Kinsington, who were resolved no railroad should come to Suez if they could prevent it.

At Rosemont Mr. Dinwiddie Pettigrew told each Northerner, as soon as he could get him from Mrs. Garnet's presence, that Virginia was the Mother of Presidents; that the first slaves ever brought to this country came in Yankee ships; that Northern envy of Southern opulence and refinement had been the mainspring of the abolition movement; and—with a smile of almost womanly heroism—that he—or his father at least—had lost all his slaves in the war.

At Widewood, whither Garnet and Ravenel led, the travelers saw only Judge March and the scenery. He brought them water to the fence in a piggin, and with a wavering hand served it out in a gourd.

"I could 'a' served it in a glass, gentlemen, but we Southe'ne's think it's sweeteh drank fum a gode."

"We met your son at the cotillion," said one, and the father lighted up with such confident expectation of a compliment that the stranger added, cordially, "He's quite noted," though he had not heard of the affair with Leggett.

On the way back Garnet praised everything and everybody. He wished they could have seen Daphne Dalrymple! If it were not for the Northern prejudice against Southern writers, her poems would—"See that fox—ah! he's hid, now."

But the wariest game was less coy than the poetess. She wrote, that day,

"O! hide me from the Northron's eye!Let me not hear his fawning voice,I heard the Southland matron sighAnd saw the piteous tear that" ...

Thus it ended; "as if," said Garnet to John, who with restrained pride showed him the manuscript, "as if grief for the past choked utterance—for the present. There's a wonderful eloquence in that silence, March, tell her to leave it as it is; dry so."

John would have done this had he not become extremely preoccupied. The affair at the old bridge was everybody's burning secret till the prospectors were gone. But the day after they left it was everybody's blazing news. Oddly enough, not what anybody had done, but what Leggett had said—in contempt of the color line—was the microscopic germ of all the fever. From window to window, and from porch to porch, women fed alarm with rumor and rumor with alarm, while on every sidewalk men collaborated in the invention of plans for defensive vengeance.

"Well, they've caught him—pulled him out of a dry well in Libertyville."

"I beg your pardon, he crossed the Ohio this morning at daylight."

John March was light-headed with much drinking of praise for having made it practicable to "smash this unutterable horror in the egg!"

Ravenel, near the *Courier* office, stopped at the beckon of Lazarus Graves and Charlie Champion. John was with them, laboring under the impression that they were with him. They wanted to consult Ravenel about the miscreant, and the "steps proper to be taken against him."

"When found," suggested Ravenel, and they pleasantly assented.

"Oh, yes," he said again, as the four presently moved out of the hot sun, "but if the color line hadn't been crossed already there wouldn't be any Leggett."

"But he threatens to cross it from the wrong side," replied John, posing sturdily.

Ravenel's smile broadened. "Most any man, Mr. March, could be enticed across."

The mouth of the enticer opened, but his tongue failed.

"A coat of tah and feathers will show him he mustn't even be enticed across," rejoined Lazarus.

Ravenel said something humorous about the new Dixie and a peace policy, and John's face began to show misgivings; but Captain Champion explained that the affair would be strictly select—best citizens—no liquor—no brawl—no life-taking, unless violent resistance compelled it; in fact, no individual act; but——

"Yes, I know," said Ravenel, "you mean one of those irresistable eruptions of a whole people's righteous indignation, that sweeps before it the whining hyper-criticisms of effeminated civilizations," and the smile went round.

"Gentlemen, there's an easier way to get rid of Cornelius; one, Captain, that won't hurt more by the recoil than by the discharge."

They were all silent. John folded his arms. Presently Graves said, meditatively,

"We don't care to hang him, just at——"

"This juncture," said Ravenel; "no, better give him ten years in the penitentiary—for bigamy."

Sunshine broke on Mr. Graves's face, and he murmured, "Go 'way!"

Champion, too, was radiant. "Hu-u-ush!" he said, "who'll get us the evidence?"

"Old Uncle Leviticus."

The more questions they asked the more pleased with the plan were John's two companions. "Why didn't you think of that?" asked each of the other in mock contempt. The youth felt his growing insignificance reach completeness as Ravenel said,

"In that case you'll not need Mr. March any longer."

"No, of course not," said John, quickly. "I was"—he forced a cough.

The other two waved good-by, and he turned to go with them, but was stopped.

"Don't you want to see me about something else, Mr. March?" said Ravenel, to detain him.

"No, sir," replied John, innocently. "Oh, no, I was——"

There came between them, homeward bound, an open parasol, a mist of muslin as sweet as a blossoming tree, a bow to Mr. Ravenel, and then a kinder one to John.

"Go," said Ravenel, softly. "Didn't you see? She wants you."

John overtook the dainty figure, lifted his military cap, and slackened his pace.

"Miss Fannie?" he caught step with her.

"Oh!—why good morning." She was delightfully cordial.

"Did you want to see me?" he asked. "Mr. Ravenel thought you did."

Fannie raised her brows and laughed.

"Why, really, Mr. Ravenel oughtn't to carry his thinking to such an excess. Still, I'm not sorry for the mistake—unless you are." She glanced at him archly. "Come on," she softly added, "I do want to see you."