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SUNNY SIDE SERIES.



Love and Rebellion

—A—
STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR
AND RECONSTRUCTION.

—BY—
MISS M. C. KELLER.

An illustration at the bottom of the cover showing a large seashell on the left, with several smaller shells and rocks scattered on the beach. To the right, a large, curling wave is depicted with dark, swirling lines, suggesting a storm or a turbulent sea.

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Love and Rebellion

A STORY OF THE CIVIL WAR AND
RECONSTRUCTION.

BY

MARTHA CAROLINE KELLER.

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LOVE AND REBELLION.

CHAPTER I.

THE PLANTATION IN LOUISIANA.

OUR story begins in the ante-bellum days. To the owners of Southern plantations life then typified elegance and a Sardanapalus-like luxury. In a wooded lawn of tall pecans, huge gnarled oaks, and magnificent cedars nestled a large brick building. The day sparkled with yellow sunlight, and the drowsy hum of bees filled the golden silence with a gentle lullaby. On the wide verandas, closed in by Venetian shutters, sat the master of these vast, fertile cotton-fields. Near to him were his mother, his wife, and four children.

A man of culture, a generous nature, brave and patient under all circumstances. Though the middle of December, it was one of those sweet spring-like days which sometimes come in our season of cold and sleet. Just beyond the lawn inclosure were the clean, snow-white quarters. In front of their neatly swept doors sat groups of slaves taking their Sabbath holiday in the open sunshine, while others were walking in a common flower-garden, gathering chrysanthemums to adorn their homes. Long rows of bee-hives stretched around the white fence, and a warm sunlight enticed the bees from their winter homes. Nowhere could be found so peaceful and lovely a landscape; nowhere could be found so happy and contented a race of people. With a kind master who supplied all their necessities, and kept them free from responsibilities, they were

light-hearted as children who gathered wild flowers from June woodlands.

In front of the broad cotton-fields flowed the wide Mississippi, silently, grandly sweeping toward the gulf. They watched a magnificent steamer slowly swing around to the landing; when she struck the bank a busy throng of roysterers rushed ashore, bringing boxes, barrels, and sundry parcels.

"Massa, 'pears like Chrisup times is soon har," said Uncle Ben, as Mr. Hargrove paused on the levee to watch the freight rolled ashore.

"Yes, Uncle Ben; we are all going to have nice presents. You all have been faithful, good servants, and I am going to reward you."

"Yes, indeed, massa; 'pears like you got nuf for ebery nigger on dis big plantation."

"I hope so, Aunt Susan," he replied, to the last speaker.

"Hurra for massa and mistiss too!" they shouted, tossing their hats in the air. "Hurra for dem, and dere chillens, and Chrisup time too."

The freight had been rolled into the warehouse, and the boat was again steaming far down the river. Mr. Hargrove, surrounded by a hundred slaves, walked toward his beautiful house. A bell rang out on the sunlit evening.

"Uncle Ben, bring them on, it is church-time now," said he.

"I will, massa."

They soon gathered in a mass under giant magnolias in front of the granite steps. All heads were uncovered, and there in open sunlight, beneath the vaulting dome of God's vast universal cathedral, master and slaves worshiped together. A minister preached to them a plain sermon, something to reach their simple understandings. Away down the river could still be heard the rush of waves as the

waters broke against the wheels and sides of the magnificent steamer.

A sand-bar gleamed white as sheets of burning silver, while swelling waves washed drift-wood upon sanded shores.

The distant moo of lowing herds and the slowly measured ker-ling-ker-lang, kerling, kerling of their bells as they plodded their way homeward made music for the evening service.

Lumps of sunlight lodged among the rustling magnolia leaves, and turned the bursting crimson burrs into glowing fire.

The flickering light of the dying day, and dark shadows flung downward from the swaying boughs, gathered upon the dusky faces beneath. The peace of evening brooded over the exquisite picture and God's benediction hung over all.

CHAPTER II.

PLANTATION LIFE BEFORE THE WAR.

It was a clear, sparkling, sun-flecked day. The great Mississippi flowed silently majestic, as if reflective by endeavoring to maintain perfect harmony with the quietness of the picturesque shores, and the tranquil beauty of the exquisite day. Michael Angelo, with his glorious genius, never dreamed of such a wonderful day; never imagined the exceedingly delicate tintings of this lovely sun-kissed day. A group of children stood upon the sanded rim of a golden river-bar; they stood peering at the steamer gliding swan-like and stately down the purpled and crimsoned water of the great, ocean-sweeping river. Here on both sides of the Mississippi stretched the most magnificent cotton-belt of the world.

To-day presented a busy scene on Mr. Hargrove's plantation. Hundreds of acres were green with heavy-bolled cotton and tasseling corn. The peculiar melodious voices

of a hundred slaves filled the sunlit tranquillity with that weird solemn music found nowhere so mournfully sweet as that of the negroes sung while working the Southern cotton-fields. It was a brilliant May evening. The day was creeping toward sunset. The plow-hands tramped steadily behind their mules plodding slowly up and down the cotton-rows. Their heads could just be seen above the tall stalks, as they slowly walked and sung "Give me Life on the Old Plantation."

This was the sweet, solemn work-song that echoed all over the wide fields as the laborers kept steadily hoeing and plowing. Now and then a gleam of a bright-polished hoe told that a hoe-hand had swung down the implement for a moment's rest. Their master was not severe, and they frequently paused, although the overseer sat on his horse in the near turn-row. Occasionally the sparkling sun flashed from the gleaming plow-share as the laborer reached the end of the row, and turning round, he started down another stretching across the fertile fields. The rows were several feet apart, yet to a distant observer the fields resembled a vast, swaying, boundless emerald sea. The sharp ring of the hoes striking the clodded earth made musical, rhythmic time with the mournful sunset chant of a hundred slaves. They have a peculiar dirge-like song the laborers sing at sunset—a parting requiem to the dying day. This evening chant now rose and fell upon the tranquil sunset stillness, making a plaintiveness so solemn that all nature seemed enrapturedly listening. It is a strange peculiarity of the negro character that while working the Southern cotton-fields he seldom sings rollicking songs. When quietly engaged in steady work he seems filled with serious reflections; these he expresses in a most peculiar dirge-like chant, heard nowhere else except while working in Southern fields, and under no other circumstances or labor but the plowing and hoeing of the cotton-fields.

The sun had reached his setting, the drowsy hum of in-

sects, the shrill rattle of the grasshopper, and the weird peculiar wah-ah, wah-ah, wah-ah of hundreds of katydids in the trees lining both sides of the long turn-row or field-road told that the day had expired, and that her half-sister, twilight, kept watch, until night with her sable pall had shrouded the dead one. The teamster unfastened his team, mounted his mule, and plodded homeward; and the hoe-hand shouldered his implement while the loud solemn tones of the plantation bell summoned the laborers from work, for the day was gone.

It was an impressive sight; that large caravan of workers, moving slowly homeward down a long, dusky, shaded and tree-lined avenue. Above huge boughs overlapped each other and formed a perfect arched canopy, while the setting sun threw long, slanting shafts of gold through the thick foliage, and lodged as quivering arrows upon the dusky caravan. When they had reached the barn-houses and stable-yard each laid away his implement and came toward the master.

"Well, how is our crop to-day?" he inquired of the nearest.

"Good, massa, good; we is gwine to make you an' mistiss heap ob money dis yar."

"You are all faithful workers, and I think our yield will be abundant. Our prospects are splendid."

"Dat dey is, massa."

"How do you like your new overseer?"

"Berry well, onliest he is not as good as massa. We know dat massa ain't gwine let him beat us, ef he dus massa will sho make him leab."

"He shall not treat any of you cruelly, but you must obey him."

"Massa, hab you seen de chillens?" inquired Aunt Susan.

She was not a field-hand. Her duty was to remain in the quarters, and take care of the children while the parents were at work.

"No, Susan; have they run off?"

"Mars Russell and missie cums, and whin I goes up to de house to see ole Lissus, dey takes ebbery little nigger an' goes off wid dem. Sometime dey goes down in de fields an' den rides back on de plow-mules, but I—I dun axed ebbery plow-nigger ef dey hab seen dem, an' dey sez no. Massa, you will hab to make Missie an' Mars Russell let dem little niggers lone; dey won't mind me whin missie tells dem come wid her."

"Go to the river, and I think you will find them."

"Yes, massa."

"Yah, yah, de old hen dun loss her chickens," they all laughed, as Aunt Susan moved off to the river. There she found them.

"Say har, missie, you can't cummed out dis far in de ribber," said Tom, who stood knee deep in the water.

"Course missie ain't gwine in dat water, you fool nigger."

"Why," he grinned.

"Caze she git wet; 'sides I iz tellin' her de Scriptor what ole missus tole granny, an' Granny Susan tole me, an' she wants to har it; don't you, missie?"

"Yes, I do, Ann; go on an' tell me more about the little boy."

"De one dey foun' in de ribber?"

"Yes."

"Well, berrily, berrily, I say unto you—Tom, you fule nigger, quit grinnin' at me. Dat's de way granny allers commence her Scriptor tales."

"I grin at you caze you is prutty-lookin', granny," said Tom, wading further into the water.

He was dressed in one garment, a loose, coarse blue-striped cotton shirt. It extended nearly to his heels, and now, it being saturated with water, it clung closely to him. He had a fishing-rod with a long cotton string tied to the end of the pole, and a huge piece of bacon fastened to the

end of the string. His success had been marvelous, for a large tub nearly filled with craw-fish sat on the edge of the water. He was as black as he could be, while the sun had burned his hair into a nappy-red. He went bareheaded even on the hottest August days. The others all wore bandannas on their heads. They sat in a group of twenty, listening to Ann, the story-teller. They had caught a piece of drift-wood for Miriam to sit upon, while they twisted and squirmed upon the sands, and gathering it in handfuls poured it upon their nappy heads.

"Missie, make Jim quit frowin' dat san' in my eyes!" yelled a little toddling negro.

"Jim, keep quiet."

"Yes, indeed," he said, burying his head in the sand, and piling it upon his neck.

"All keep still; now go on, Ann."

"While I kotch de fish," said Tom.

"Go on, Ann, and finish about the little boy."

"De one dey foun' in de ribber?"

"Yes."

"Wall, dat's me, missie, fur I is in de ribber," yelled Tom.

"Yah, yah!" they all laughed, uncovering their heads, and piling the sand upon them.

"Hush, Tom; hush, all of you. Go on, Ann."

"No, missie. I ain't gwine let nigger yellin' Tom flatter me dat way."

"Don't mind Tom; go on, Ann."

"Well, I'se tell you anudder Scriptor tale."

"Very well; commence."

"Berrily, berrily, I say unto you, dar was unce a big fish-fry, wid two little fishes—"

"Yah, yah, yah!" yelled Tom. "I'se in de Scriptor agin, caze I'se gwine beat dat fish-fry wid two little fishes."

"Dat you is, Tom, dat you is," they bellowed, pushing their heads further into the sand and piling it higher.

“Berrily, berrily, I say unto you—”

“Look har, Tom, I’s e koted a turkle,” said Jim, holding up a large river turtle; “an’ berrily, berrily, I say unto you I’s e gwine tie him to the end of my shirt, caze dar he sho’ will stay.”

“Look at him, how he pulls Jim’s shirt, tryin’ to git luse!” they shouted.

“Berrily, berrily, I say unto you,” cried Aunt Susan, “ef you don’t get back home I’ll war you outen.”

They jerked their nappy heads out of the sand and saw granny swooping down upon them with a large switch in her hand. They rolled, scuffled, and tumbled over each other in their efforts to escape. Many of them had been wading in the water, and their one garment being saturated with water, it clung close to them; but they ran with all possible speed. Jim rushed out of the river, his long coarse shirt sticking tight to his legs, while the turtle dangled from behind. Up the steep bank he scuffled, Aunt Susan furiously plying her switch across his back.

“Drat dis turkle!” yelled Jim, as its weight retarded his up-hill progress.

Tom had rushed further into the water, and losing his depth, he fell, and was now struggling for life.

“Mammy, mammy, Tom is drowning!” cried Miriam; and seizing a long fishing-rod she rushed into the river.

Aunt Susan wrung her hands and screamed for help; the negro children turned, rushed back, and gathered in a huddle to see Tom drown. They stood helpless as sheep.

“Po’ Tom, po’ Tom!” they screamed.

But no help came, because they were too far from the dwelling and quarters for the inmates to hear the screams.

Miriam was now up to her shoulders in water. One step more, and she could reach Tom’s outstretched hands; but that step might sink her beneath the waters of the great river. She stepped carefully forward, threw the pole into his hands, and drew him upon the shore. Aunt Susan put

Miriam upon Ann's back, caught Tom by the hand, and proceeded homeward.

"Lord, Lord! I will bress you furebber," murmured the grateful old creature. "Dey bof is safe; ef massa's chile had had drowned! Missie, hunny chile, don't you ebber go in dat ribber again. Ef fule Tom won't keep outen, you let him drown next time."

"Berrily, berrily, I say unto you, Granny Susan, dat ribber will nebber git hold on Tom agin," said Tom, looking solemnly up into Aunt Susan's face.

"An' you will nebber make fun ob Ann and de Scriptor tales agin?" solemnly asked Jim, walking beside Aunt Susan.

"Nebber, Jim, nebber agin, caze ef missie had hab not saved me, the debil would hab me now."

"What's dat you got swung dar to yer shurt, Jim?"

"A turkle, granny—a turkle. I kotchted him out in de ribber, an' tied him to the end of my shurt so he kain't get away."

"Cum now, children, kindle up a big fire, an' we will cook the turkle," said Aunt Susan.

They had now reached her cabin door.

"Make it our dar in de yard; hirry fas' so missie kin git dry."

"An' we kin cook our craw-fish long wid de turkle."

"Did yer bring de craw-fish?"

"Yes, indeed, Tom. When I seed missie pull you out ob de ribber, nigger Sal nabbed de tub, sot it on her head, an' here dey is."

It was a warm spring night. A huge fire was hurriedly built, above which swung a large kettle nearly filled with the craw-fish and turtle. Miriam's clothing soon became dry. The negro children seated themselves in a circle around the roaring fire, their countenances gleaming in the ruddy light.

"Now, granny, you tell us a Scriptor story," they begged.

"Yes, yes, granny," joined Tom.

"Will you keep quiet?"

"Yah, yah, sho' we will."

"Well, stop pokin' de fire, Sal; granny is gwine begin."

Sal dropped the poker, and granny commenced.

"Well, berrily, berrily, dar was once a bad boy named Jacup—"

"Har dat, Jake, granny sez dar was once a bad boy in de Scriptor named Jake."

Jake straightened up and listened with wide-opened eyes.

"Granny, was he named Jake?"

"Not prezactly; he was named Jacup."

"Is dat my name?"

"Yes."

"Den wot fur do yer call me Jake?"

"Caze Jake is short for Jacup."

"Was dat man me yer was tellin' bout?"

"No, yer fule! Was yer ebber in de Scriptor?"

"I dunno whar I bees fore I comed to dis worl ob sorrow an' trubulashums."

"Well, de Jacup I'se tellin' 'bout warn't yer. So don't yer bother me agin."

But Jake listened attentively.

"I say, berrily, Jacup was a bad une, caze he stole his brudder's—his brudder's—"

Aunt Susan paused as if recalling the correct word.

"What he steals from his brudders?" they inquired, their faces shining eagerly through the ruddy, flashing light. "What he steals from his brudders?" they repeated.

"His brudder's dinner," continued Aunt Susan, "an' de good Lord got mad wid Jacup, an' took arter Jacup, an' runned him outen de country."

"Did God kotch Jacup?" inquired Jake, while the

dusky negroes, sitting in a circle round the blazing, crackling fire, took their eyes off of the boiling pot, opened them wide, and with gaping mouths listened to Aunt Susan's answer.

"Jacup kep' gwine."

"God didn't kotch him."

"Hush, Jake, you fule, an' listen."

"Jacup kep' gwine; de gude Lord kep' arter him."

"But didn't kotch him?"

"Jake, you nappy-headed fule, hush, an' listen ter granny. Go on, granny."

"Jake bothers me so ontill I dun forgit whar was Jacup."

"You lef off—'Jacup kep' gwine from de Lord.'"

"Yes, I remembers now. Jacup kep' gwine ontill de Lord kotch up wid Jacup in de wildernus, an' said, 'Jacup, you mus' not steal, ef you does I will gib you to de debil, an' he will burn yer forever. You dun stole yer brudder's dinner an' his home, now yer mus' repent.'"

"What's dat?"

"It is to turn back from runnin' away from God, an' run to Him, an' tell Him dat yer is sorry fur de stealin', or lyin', or any bad things yer hab dun, an' God will put His arms roun' yer an' forgib yer an' lub yer. An' you will hate dat stealin', or lyin', or fightin', or any bad thing so hard dat yer nebber will steal, or lie, or fight agin."

Miriam sat near to the old negro, and listened attentively.

"Missie, chile, ef yer start down dat road, an' yer go piece de way an' fine dat it will carry yer de wrong way, repent means fur you to den turn round, an' start back an' leab dat road an' sarch fur de right one, an' don't stop ontill you hab found de right one, den git in it, an' stay in it forebber."

"Did Jacup do dat?" inquired Jake, with staring eyes.

"Yes, fur away in dat lunly wildernus Jacup got on his knees an' said to God, 'Jacup sorry, oh Lord, an' Jacup

will nebber steal agin.' Den Jacup felt dat God did not stay angry. So Jacup put a stone under his own head an' fixed fur to sleep, an' he seed a long ladder come outen hebbin, de angels pushed it outen de golden gates, an' some ob dem held on to one end, an' put de tudder end down to de groun', an' angels cumed outen hebbin, an' cumed down dat ladder an' tole Jacup to rise an' go on further, fur God had sarnt dem to show him de right road, an' he mus' nebber leave it agin. So you see, chillens, dat whin you try to fine de right road eben de angels will help you."

"Lord, granny, look dar, look dar!" they cried, in terrified tones.

"Hush, yer fules, keep still as def," returned Aunt Susan.

And the negro children crouched around her in abject terror, gazing at a stranger that had paused in front of a cabin door on the opposite side of the fire. It was neither their master nor the overseer. Tom had raised up to peep over the boiling pot at the stranger, and through chattering teeth the awe-stricken negro whispered hoarsely:

"Dar he stands wid de bull-whip; who he come fur ter git?"

Tom trembled as if a storm had struck him; his teeth chattered; his eyes looked as if they would pop out of their sockets; his knees, striking each other, seemed to keep time to his low muttering:

"Who he come fur ter git? who he come fur ter git? Dod granny, dat bull-whip, who he come fur ter git? Who he come fur ter git?"

As the stranger entered the cabin before which he had paused, Aunt Susan whispered:

"Now is yer time, chillens, cut an' run!"

They flew. Each was soon in his cabin, all except Tom; his feet seemed chained to the ground.

"Tom, dat is de patroler; he comed soon ter-nite; he is arter dat nigger Ike what comes here so often sneakin'

round in our cabin, tellin' de niggers to riz agin dere massas, and for all the niggers jine tergedder an' kill ebbery white pusson. Ike is bin a runaway fur mor'n a yer; he hides in de woods all day, den sneaks out at night an' steals sumfin' ter eat. He runs roun in de dark nights, goes ter de quarters, an' talks ter de bad niggers what he can ferduce to jine him. Den dey goes ter de sheep parster an' kills massa's sheep; dey git nearly ebbery lam. De patrolers is allus arter Ike, he is furebber stealin'. De debil wud not hab Ike, caze dat nigger would steal de debil's pitchfork, brimstone, fire and all, an' den set de little debils agin dere boss. De patrolers goes ter ebbery plantashum ebbery night—goes into de quarters ter kotch ebbery nigger wot don't b'long on dat place."

"What de patroler do wid de niggers?" whispered Tom, creeping nearer to Aunt Susan.

"Listen! Hear dat nigger howl, inside dat cabin whar de patroler went. He sun kotch Ike, and de bull-whip is got Ike too."

Tom crouched lower, while he became more terror-stricken at the wild yells of the runaway. The patrol was giving a severe whipping to the troublesome and dangerous negro.

"Susan, mistiss sez bring missie ter de house; yer orten hab kept her here so long, nohow," said Uncle Ben, coming up.

"Is mistiss mad, Ben?"

"Not prezactly; but hurry on, and take missie ter de house; dar bees awful things gwine happin in dis quarter ter—ter-night."

"What is it, Ben?"

"Dar is more dan one patroler har in dis nigger quarter, and dey will find sebberal of dem baddest runaway niggers dat is hid out in de woods fur more dan a yar. Dar is a hole band of dem runaways dat lib in de woods, an' dey keeps de sheep an' hogs nearly all killed clean up.

Massa is most stripped ob ebbery hog, pig an' sheep on dis place."

He had taken Miriam in his arms, and he and Aunt Susan were walking rapidly toward the house as he continued:

"Dem runaway niggers bin comin' here nite after nite, an' sum ob de niggers in dis quarter, some ob massa's berry niggers in dis berry quarter, bin keepin' dem runaways, an' gibbin' dem sumfin' to eat an' sacks full fer to take back into de woods, an' whin de patrolers would come, dese niggers would hide de runaways, but sho' God, eben ef dese niggers does b'long ter massa, dey will kotch de debil ter-night from der patroler. Tom, fur wot is yer sneakin' long behine us fur?"

"Caze, Uncle Ben, I bees skeered ter def ob dem patrolers, an' I wants ter git ter de house whar massa is."

"Dem patrolers ain't gwine hurt yer, dey is arter de runaways dat hab stealed out ob de woods, an' comed in de nigger quarters early ter-night. Yer cut an' run back ter yer cabin."

"I'se skeered!" wailed the boy.

"Go back, yer fule nigger; you sha'n't follow me ter massa."

"But de patroler will kotch me, an' kill me!" he howled.

"De patrolers nebber kills de nigger; de nigger is wuff ter much money; his massa won't let him be killed. De patroler onliest whips de nigger he kotched off ob dar plantashums without a pass from dere marsters. If de niggers was 'lowd ter run round dey wud go ebbery blessed night, an' den dey could not wurk next day, caze Mr. Nigger would go ter sleep hoein' or plowin'; but some niggers steals off an' visit de next plantashum anyhow, an' when de patrolers kotches dem, he gibs dem de bull-whip, an' some ob dem runaway niggers needs killin' stead whippin'."

"Hush, Ben. Po' things, eben ole mistiss is sorry fur

dem, an' she offen gibs dem sumfin' ter eat," said Aunt Susan.

"I knows she does, but some ob dem runaways sho' is worse dan de debil. Tom, yer fule, get back ter yer cabin, an' quit sneakin' arter me," cried Uncle Ben, turning round upon the frightened negro boy.

"I'se skeered! Oh, Lord, Tom is skeered ob dat patroler wid de bull-whip!"

"Tom, ef yer don't go back ter dat cabin I will kotch yer an' take yer right back ter dat patroler, an' git him ter whip yer," said Uncle Ben, jumping at Tom to catch him.

The threat had its desired effect, for Tom was soon rushing back to his cabin in the quarters. Soon after, a loud scream rent the still night air.

"Ben, dat is po' Tom. I bet he runned agin dat patroler, an' de po' nigger chile is skeered ter def."

"Well, ef he bees ded, we will berry him ter-morrow."

"Ben, yer hart is hard as ston. Po' Tom, ef yer ain't ded yer might as well be, fur yer will nebbber hab no mo' sense; de patroler hab dun skeered dat clean outen yer."

"Gib him some ob your sense; you kin spare him a bush'l."

"Ben, I ain't gwine teke yer flattery; wot bees de matter wid yer anyways? Susan will jump aboard yer, an' in a minit clean yer up," exclaimed his furious sister, shaking her fist at him.

"Come now, Susan, I warn't flattering yer, I was jist a-teasing yer. Make frens, an' don't be mad wid yer brudder."

"Well, den, don't yer flatter me agin."

"I won't, Susan; but sho', in truf, yer oughten in fax gib away some ob de Satan dat is in yer."

"Ben!"

"Hush now, Susan, yer gits mad at nuffin'; mistiss is allers tellin' yer 'bout yer debil temper."

"I won't go anudder step wid yer; yer mean despicable nigger! Nebber mind, Susan is gwine git eben wid yer, yer hateful black nigger!"

"Good-bye, Susan lam, ef yer calls dat gone," replied Uncle Ben, looking after his sister moving swiftly from him.

"Uncle Ben, what are patrolers?" inquired little Miriam, safely held in the strong arms of the faithful slave.

"Dey bees folks, hunny. Yer papa an' de udder marsters are all ob dem patrolers. Dey goes ebbery night, some ob de patrolers does, to ebbery quarter in dere neighborhood, an' goes inter de cabins an' whips ebbery stray nigger wot is dar widout a pass from his marster. De nigger sho' can't visit widout de paper from his marster sayin' dat he is willin' fur his nigger to visit dat certin quarter dat certin night. Den de patroler don't do nuffin' ter dat nigger, but dem what ain't got no paper, de patroler sho' does whip dem."

"Why don't the marster want their servants to visit each other?"

"Caze, hunny, ef yer let de niggers dey would run roun' ter ebbery plantashum dey could at night, an' steal jist fo' day; den yer sees dat nex' day Mr. Nig could do no good work, he would go ter sleep in de cotton feals; 'sides, bad niggers comes into our cabin an' steals. Nudder t'ing, dose bad niggers come an' puts debilment into udder nigger heds. Dat nigger Ike has bin comin' har, an' ebbery place in dis neighborhood, an' sneaks into de cabins an' tells de niffers ter meet him a certain night, an' dey will go an' kill ebbery white pusson, burn de towns, an' 'stroy all de white folks an' all dey hab. Ter prewent dis de patrolers makes ebbery nigger stay at his own quarter, an' wisit de cabins dar. 'Tain't ebbery nigger dat is got a good massa like ourn. Some ob de marsters beat dere niggers so like de nigger was a dog, dat de po' nig runs away. Ole mistiss always bees sorry fur dese po' niggers,

an' dey comes ter her, an' she gins dem sumfin' ter eat ebbery time. Den some ob de niggers just bees so mean dat dey runs away fur nuffin. Ike was an awful mean nigger; he kep' stealin' from ebbery one ob us until we 'plained ter massa. Den massa whipped Ike, an' Mister Ike tuck ter de woods. It tuck massa one yer fo' he koteded him. Den massa sarnd Ike ter de nigger-yard an' sole him. Massa won't keep bad niggers—dat is, berry bad niggers—do some ob dem would do awful t'ings but fur de patrolers; he keeps de bad niggers skeered mos' ter def."

By this time Uncle Ben had reached the house. Mr. Hargrove sat in his elegant library; his aged mother sat near him, while his beautiful wife was so close to him that his arm encircled her waist, and her head rested against his cheek. A picture of perfect love; each happy in sharing the other's existence. The children were grouped on the rich carpet, at the feet of their parents. The whole making a scene which God sanctioned as paradise. A bright fire of forest logs burned cheerfully in the wide-open chimney, and a delicate perfume from rare exotics blooming in the hot-house just adjoining the library came through the open doors and filled the room with fragrance.

The walls were hung with magnificent paintings from Raphael, the gentle, tender artist; here and there, too, were found the dark, rich tintings from the brush of the great genius, Rembrandt, and gleaming sculptures, copies from the fiery, volcanic brain of Michael Angelo, made the exquisite room seem like unto an art-gallery. A shaded student's lamp burned upon the table where Mr. Hargrove sat reading aloud to his family. As Uncle Ben paused in front of the crackling fire the master laid down his poem, and looking up into the face of the faithful slave, inquired:

"Well, Uncle Ben, is everything quiet in the quarters?"

"No, massa, no," he replied, setting Miriam in a low chair beside her grandmother; "no ondeed, massa; de pa-

trooler dun come an' kotched runaway Ike, an' seberal uder strange runaway niggers dat comed long wid Ike."

"Indeed, how did they happen to catch the runaways?"

"Yer see, massa, Ike comed soon ter-night. Yer knows dat de patroler allus comes late, an' Ike 'lowed dat by stealin' out of de woods he would come wid his gang an' leab fore de patroler come. But dey fooled Ike. De patrolers comed soon an' kotch Ike an' de whole gang."

"I am truly glad they are caught, for the whole gang of runaways is a band of robbers; they strip the pig- and sheep-pastures of every plantation in this section. What have the patrols done with the runaways?"

"Dey fuss whipped dem, den dey put hancuffs on dem, an' dey is now gwine ter 'liver dem ter de marsters ob dem runaways," Uncle Ben replied.

"Poor wretches!" exclaimed Mr. Hargrove. "God help them if any of them belong to Grey; he is cruel, and if they are his he will almost kill them. There should be a law to punish such a master. Do they belong to old Grey?"

"Yes, massa, ebbery one ob dem."

"Then God have mercy upon them."

"Mother," said Mr. Hargrove, "I met him in the field-road a short time since, and he made a furious attack upon me."

"For what?" inquired his mother.

"Because he says you feed and protect his runaway slaves."

"I would make a slave of him if I could, and treat him just as cruelly as he does his negroes," replied the old lady, with flashing eyes. "He is too cruel to be master of the devil. The patrols ought to scourge him instead of whipping his poor, unfortunate slaves."

"Mother, your indignation against him is just. You must remember, however, that there are good masters

with bad servants. On nearly every plantation there are scores of really dangerous negroes."

"Dat dey is, massa," cried Uncle Ben, who was a privileged character; "just as mean as dat ar ole Nat in Norf Carlino, dat 'cited de niggers to insurrection; an', mistiss, you was big 'nuff to 'members wot an awful killin' ob de white folks it was. Ole Nat come up from de outside ob de house till he got up to a winder, broke it open, an' stole down de star-steps inside, an' got into his marster's room, killed de marster, mistiss, an' all dere chillens, an' niggers ob dat ar same neighborhood killed lots ob de white folks dat night. Mistiss, you 'members dat awful time caze yer farder, ole massa, libed nere 'bout dar."

"Yes, I remember that terrible insurrection."

"If it were not for the vigilance of our patrols, the bad negroes of this community would incite a similar massacre."

"Dat dey would, massa."

"And their brute passions once roused they would destroy every white individual."

"Dat dey would, massa; I libe in de quarters long wid the niggers, an' I knows dat nearly all ob yer new niggers would jine in killin' white folks; but de ole set ob niggers, wot ole mistiss hab raised, dey would not."

"I do not think our slaves would hurt us," remarked young Mrs. Hargrove.

"Dem new niggers wot massa has lately boughten would; dey is treacherous an' mean; but de ole set wot ole mistiss raised dey is home-made niggers, an' dey will allers be true ter ole miss, her chillens, an' her granchillens."

"True, there are always faithful creatures like yourself, Ben, that reveal the plots of these turbulent, murderous negroes. Thus the strict watchfulness of patrols, and the fidelity of good slaves, suppress every dangerous scheme before it is executed."

"Mother, I wish you would not refuse to go with us to New Orleans," spoke young Mrs. Hargrove. "I fear to leave you alone; the negroes might attempt insurrection during our absence."

"Pshaw, my daughter, there is no danger; there has been nothing of the kind since I was a small girl. I want to remain at home and enjoy a quiet rest. It is just three months since we returned from Washington, and I am heartily tired of hotels, traveling and bustle, and noisy confusion. I will remain at home. The overseer will sleep here at the house, and Susan and Ben will be my bodyguards. Go on to the city, and do not feel uneasy about me."

"I really wish you would accompany us, mother," insisted her son.

"No, no, my boy. I had sufficient traveling during the winter. I am getting too old a woman to be running off with you children on every trip you choose to make. You are not alarmed at Ben's patrol talk?"

"No, mother, I am like you in thinking there is no danger."

"So the matter is then settled; I remain, and you all will start—when?"

"In a week."

CHAPTER III.

MUTTERINGS BEFORE THE STORM.

It was two weeks after her son's departure for New Orleans that old Mrs. Hargrove sat alone on the wide front veranda of her elegant house. It was a magnificent evening in late November. Three successive white frosts had sharpened the air, and after the heat and travel of summer the old lady enjoyed this tranquil, cool quiet of her home.

Her hands were folded on her lap as she sat and gazed

far as her eyes could sweep over the wide rich lands belonging to her and her son. Together they owned three large plantations, all their fertile fields, stretching in one solid body, comprising an immense estate. Each place was stocked with a hundred or more slaves. At this season, her extensive cotton crops swept far and wide, as almost limitless fields of snow. It was cotton-picking time, a season of the year that the negroes peculiarly loved. To them it was a time of revelry, and a kind of labor which they enjoyed above other employment. On two of the places the cotton had already been gathered, and now hundreds of slaves were concentrated on this homestead to house the crop before the winter rains. The old lady watched the busy fields thickly dotted with cotton-pickers, and listened to the wild, sweet melody of their songs echoing out upon the crisp autumn air. As an incentive to induce his slaves to faithful labor, Mr. Hargrove gave them a magnificent barbecue several times each cotton-gathering season. It was now approaching the time for one of these grand occasions, and to-day, in view of the great event, the slaves were unusually merry. The peculiar sweet melody of plantation negro songs echoed from the distant fields and quivered upon the evening stillness; and the mournful sweetness of that exquisite old song, "Massa's in de cold, cold ground," burst from the throats of more than three hundred slaves, rang over the wide fields, and rolled far back through the distant belt of heavy timber lands.

Her eyes filled with tears as she watched the beautiful scene. The sunlight was grandly golden, the fields were white as gleaming snow, and the laborers sung their sweetest and most solemn songs that brought unbidden tears to the eyes of their old mistress. Several acres comprised the extensive grounds surrounding the magnificent brick building. These broad inclosures were dense with forest oaks, magnolias, myrtles, pecans and walnuts. Statuary gleamed here and there among the century-marked trees. This

evening these parks were still in their russet-hued beauty, except for the occasional tinkle of a deer-bell, as a gentle herd browsed through the grounds. A group of squirrels were gathering the nuts and storing them away for rainy winter days, and the dropping of magnolia burrs, pecans, walnuts, and acorns, thrown down by a nibbling squirrel, broke the sunset quiet as they fell among rustling leaves. The old brick building, too, was silent. Its wide halls, and broad long galleries seemed deserted—an unusual, strange sight for this hospitable country residence.

Mr. Hargrove, his wife, and children were absent in New Orleans. Twice a year he visited the Southern metropolis. Now he was absent purchasing supplies, clothing and presents for his slaves. The return of "massa and mistiss" was a grand event in the lives of these negroes. They then received presents and a great banquet; hence the return of "massa and mistiss" was an occasion to them of revelry and pleasure.

To-day at the homestead residence the laborers were jubilant with anticipated mirth. But the great building was quiet. A large greyhound lay on the front steps, blinking at the lumps of sunshine as they slowly flickered across his nose. A huge magnolia grew near, and shrouded the front entrance in shadows, save where the autumn sunlight fell through the swaying boughs. The peace of twilight brooded over the exquisite scene; little birds sought their roost in the distant woodlands. The mournful "caw, caw" of a lone crow as he quitted the nut-trees and flew toward the far-off woods brought back to the old lady long-buried memories of a time when she too had been in the flush of childhood, wandering with her own brothers and sisters through the twilight stillness of these same forest parks. Here stood the giant trees under which she and her brother and sister playmates had romped in wild glee. She alone survived; in the neighboring church-yard they slept. Here she had married, given birth to a large generation, but hus-

band, and children, too, rested in the quiet grave-yard. She and one son alone survived. There in that shrouding gloom the old lady sat, oblivious of time and its events.

When the soul drifts backward, the present and future are dead—they lie buried. She did not heed the deep low growls of Jackson, the greyhound, as he crouched ready to spring upon a dark object moving forward under the trees. Nearer the person came, and as the dog bounded forward Aunt Susan exclaimed:

“Down, yer brute!”

Instantly the dog dropped whining at her feet; he, too, recognized the faithful slave.

“Mistiss, Ben sarnt me har ter tell yer awful t’ings,” she said, crouching near her mistress.

“Where is Ben?”

“Gone ter town ter tole de white folks dar. He sarnt me ter tell yer dat dar is a white man dat is dun got de niggers wot libs on massa’s tudder plantations to jine de udder bad niggers ob dis ’munity, an’ dey is gwine kill ebbery white pusson on the plantations, an’ den dey is all gwine git tergedder, an’ march ’gin de town an’ kill and burn ebbery libbin white t’ing. Dat is de plan ob dat white rascal!” and the moonlight falling on the dark features revealed her intense anxiety.

“Pshaw, Susan! I don’t believe a word you say.”

“Mistiss, it sho’ bees de truf dat I tell yer.”

“Susan, I know you think it is the truth; but I can not believe my slaves would harm me.”

“Mistiss, dey is gwine to kill ebbery white pusson ’cept one little baby.”

“Why are they going to spare it?”

“Caze de young nigger gal wot nusses it begged fur it ter lib; she lubs de chile.”

“How did Ben learn all this?”

“Dinah tole Ben; yer know de niggers on all ob massa’s plantations hab been pickin’ ter-day on dis place?”

"Yes."

"Well, Dinah, wot libs on one ob de tudder places, she heard dat bad man talk ter de niggers, an' read sumfin' bout po' ole Tom dey write an' put in a book; she an' Ben was pickin' side by side, an' she whispered it ter Ben. Yer know dat nigger lke wot dem patrolers kotched last spring?"

"Yes."

"Well, his massa has had him workin' ebber since wid a chain an' ball on his leg, so he can't run; he beats po' lke nearly ebbery day, an' splits de po' nigger's back wide open."

"The brute! Such a master ought to be burned."

"Well, mistiss, lke is at de head ob dis conserruction, an' he swars dat not a white face shall lib arter dis night, in dis here 'munity. Dis white man sneaks inter de cabins an' speeches ter de niggers ter not be slaves, but ter kill de white folks an' git free. He bin speechin' ter dem dat way so much ontill dey is gwine try and do dat ar t'ing. He tells de niggers dat de white folks at de Norf is awful mad wid de marsters down here, caze marsters is cruel ter de niggers; and he sez a big war is comin' an' de Norf is gwine whup de Souf, an' den de niggers is gwine be free. He reads ter dem outen dat book, an' speeches ter dem so much dat de niggers done turned clean fules, an' dey is like wile tigers, ready ter eat ebberyt'ing up; an' lke sez he is nebber gwine stop ontill ebbery white pusson is killed."

"I do not believe lke will hurt me; I have been good to him, have fed him, and shielded him from his brutal master; besides, I believe my slaves will protect me from other desperate negroes."

"De ole niggers wot you hab raised, mistiss, dey will fight fur yer, but dey bees few compared ter de tudder niggers; dem new niggers wot libs on de udder places, dey hab hardly ebber seed yer face, mistiss; dem won't fight fur yer, an' massa hab lots more of dem new niggers dan

he has ob de ole ones. Massa is good ter his niggers, but dar is doze mean marsters wot beats dere niggers an' runs dem down wid blood-houn's; it is dese niggers wot is gwine be so awful debils dis night."

"Well, I can not believe that things are so horrible as you relate."

"Mistiss, you know dat dese consurrections hab happened?"

"Yes, I remember old Nat's insurrection quite well."

"Mistiss, I 'members way back in Norf Carliner, de niggers crossed Tar Ribber one night, an' killed lots ob people. Dey stopped at a place an' went all frew de houses; de young mistiss was dar by herself, waitin' fur her husban' ter come home, fur he was gone away on bizness. De young mistiss run an' hid in de cellar, an' whin de niggers had left an' ebberyt'ing was quiet, she comed back ter her room, and dar foun her own body-maid drissed up in de young mistiss's fine clothes an' jewelry. She was struttin' fo' de big glass, an' seed de young mistiss frew dat glass. She tuck arter de young mistiss, kotched her, an' was draggin' de po' young creeter by de har down de steps ter git an axe an' cut off de head ob de young mistiss; but de massa comed an' killed dat gal right dar. I 'members dat clear as day. Mistiss, dis here new gal wot massa bought fur de dinin'-room she sho' is mean. You better watch her. Mistiss, ter-night de niggers blow three trumpets fur all ter c'lect on de place jining here. It will blow at midnight, an' blow three times."

"Well, my children are safe in New Orleans, and I can not believe the negroes will murder me."

A low growl from Jackson caused Aunt Susan to whisper:

"Mistiss, do yer see dat black object out dar under de trees? Oh, mistiss, fur God's sake run an' hide!"

"Keep quiet, Susan, I am not afraid of ten thousand black objects."

"Oh, Lord, mistiss, dey will kill yer sho'!"

"It is only Ben," said Mrs. Hargrove, as the faithful old negro came up the steps and uncovered his head before his mistress

"Mistiss, I'se got de carruge hitched up fur yer ter go an' stay in town dis night."

"Ben, you are a noble, faithful creature, but I think you are unnecessarily alarmed."

"Mistiss, fur God's sake go ter town whar de udder white folks is!"

"No, no, Ben; I can not believe the negroes will murder me. I am good to my slaves, and kind to even the run-aways. No, no, they will not butcher me."

"Mistiss, times bees awful now; dar is doze 'blishionests dat is all frew dis country tellin' de niggers ter kill, murder an' butcher ebbery white t'ing, an' not ter be skeered fur de Norf will protext de niggers, an' dat a big war is comin', fur de Norf is gwine fight ter free de niggers. Dar comes somebody now. Down, Jackson!"

"Hold the dog, Ben, for he will eat the stranger up."

"Good-evening, madame," said a tall bony man with sharp features, narrow but high head—just the physiognomy of a fanatic—a man that would reason falsely, but conscientiously believe himself right. His head was not broad enough for him to be either cautious or patient.

"Good-evening, sir. Can I serve you?"

"Yes, madame; I am a benighted traveler, and wish to secure shelter until morning."

"Certainly, sir; be seated. Ben, take the gentleman's hat and coat. Susan, ring for Sylvia to light the house and kindle the fires; and you prepare the gentleman's supper."

"Thank you, madame, I will rest a moment before taking refreshments."

"Would you like to be shown to your room, sir?"

"Thank you. I prefer to remain here."

Soon the house was brilliantly lighted with chandeliers and glowing fires. A group of little negroes came romping and chattering up the tree-lined walk. They seated themselves upon the front steps, and Tom said:

"Mistiss, Uncle Mose hab brought in his banjer ter play fur yer."

"All right, Uncle Mose; give me your sweetest music."

"I sho' will, mistiss," replied an old gray-haired negro.

Like Aunt Susan, his principal occupation was to take care of the "trash-gang" and to play the banjo; the latter he could do with wonderful skill. Jig after jig was played, and the little negroes cut the "pigeon-wing" high in the air. The stranger sat quietly in the shadows but seemed a close observer.

"Play 'The Old Hen Cackled,' Uncle Mose," cried Tom, as he paused in his dancing.

"Dat's de chune, dat's de gay chune we wants," they exclaimed in chorus, and again their feet flew up and down through the air, until they were nearly exhausted.

"Play 'Run, Nigger, Run,' Uncle Mose," they chorused.

"I sho' kin cut dat chune wide open," exclaimed Tom.

Soon the banjo rang, and the evening quiet shook with its reveling melody and the clatter, clatter of their shuffling feet.

"Now, Tom, set ter me," exclaimed Ann.

"All right, git yer yaller hoofs ready and come on. Tom is gwine clean up de patch, an' leab yer in de wilderness," cried jubilant Tom.

The others stopped dancing, and cleared the wide pavement in front of the steps, to give Ann and Tom full opportunity to display dancing feats. Placing her arms akimbo, Ann sprung heroically into the jig to outdance Tom. The light from the hall chandelier fell full across the dancers. Sometimes the yellow soles of their feet were upturned high in air, then down they came, striking the

pavement with a furious clattering shuffle. Tom and Ann were the champion dancers in all this neighborhood, and the negro girl frequently danced him down. Seeing that he now lagged, the others cheered him by shouting:

"Set ter her, Tom; set ter her."

This rallied Tom for only an instant, then his force weakened, and the negro boys yelled:

"Don't yer let dat nigger gal beat yer, Tom; set ter her, set ter her," they continued, shoving their hands deeper into their pockets. But all in vain, Tom was gradually losing the race.

"Set ter me, yaller-nap Tom; come on, come on!" cried Ann.

Now rallying again, Tom danced furiously. Striking the pavement first with their toes, then their heels, they firmly planted the latter upon the bricks, and shuffled side by side over the pavement with that peculiar snake-like movement nowhere seen except in the negro jig. Tom now fell exhausted; a loud shout greeted Ann as victor.

"'Rah fur Ann, 'rah fur Ann!" they yelled, and the dance was ended. They gathered round Ann, the heroic, to them, and Jake shouted:

"Wull, zir, gentlemens, didn't she sho' clean him up?"

"Now, Susan, bring them a nice supper."

And soon the lower steps were covered with a bounteous repast. Uncle Mose took his share, and tying it up in his bandanna, placed it on the floor beside him. Aunt Susan passed dainties to "ole miss" and the gentleman.

"Sir, if you will walk into the dining-room, you will find supper."

"Thank you, madame. I now feel ready to enjoy refreshments."

Ben conducted the gentleman to the supper-table, and assisted Sylvia in serving him.

When the stranger was gone she called to the gray-haired banjo-player.

"Now, Uncle Mose, sing for ole miss."

His voice was full and most remarkably sweet. He sung "Aunt Clo," and the notes of deep pathos quivered through the moonlit air, and filled the old lady with sad memories. Brilliant fires were burning inside the house, and the large building was aglow with warmth and light. Still, Mrs. Hargrove, wrapped in shawls, lingered upon the moonlit gallery. The pickanniny negroes were noisily eating their meats, each gulping himself to near choking, fearing he would be cheated of his bountiful share. When the song was finished Uncle Mose took up his bandanna to eat his sweetmeats, but they had been stolen.

"Drat yer little niggers, yer is sho' bornd rogues!"

"Which one of you children took the cake from Uncle Mose?" inquired their mistress.

"Dun know, ole miss; me didn't," each individual shouted, while he still crammed his mouth to almost bursting.

"Mistiss, yer nebber seed such niggers; dey'li steal ef de debil was clawin' dem wid his huffs," said Uncle Mose.

Whereupon, the old lady delivered them a moral lecture about stealing, but as her talk was not filled with ghosts and superstition, it failed to be even heard.

"Susan, bring Uncle Mose some more cake."

When the old servant was bountifully supplied, he bade "ole miss" good-night, and carried his negro children back to their cabin-homes. The house was soon still. The stranger had been shown to his room. Aged Mrs. Hargrove sat in hers, a low fire burned on the hearth, and its smoldering light flickered over the dusky features of her two faithful guardians.

"Mistiss, I fears dat ar stranger is gwine do mischief har ter-night. I hab jist peeped in his winder, and seed him sittin' fore de fire; he was thinking hard, fur his head leaned on his hands, and he looked in de fire."

"I do not fear him, Ben. He is no peddler, and the

strangers that have done mischief among the negroes of this neighborhood have invariably been of a low type."

"Mistiss, listen; my God, did yer hear dat bugle?"

They became breathlessly still. One loud blast sounded clear and shrill, but the second and third were never blown. Uncle Ben and other faithful negroes had warned the white people; thus the attempted insurrections were almost invariably quelled before any harm was done.

CHAPTER IV.

LAST DAY AT HOME.

SEVERAL years had passed. The antagonism between the people of the North and South had increased until conflict was inevitable. The first gun had been fired at Fort Sumter, and the great rebellion had begun. The whole Southern country was in wild excitement; companies were constantly forming and departing to increase the ranks of the new Confederacy. On the plantations labor proceeded as usual.

"Lors-a-marcey, dese chillens is sho' gwine run me crazy!" exclaimed Aunt Susan, with her arms elbow deep in a huge tray of light-bread dough, while a dozen or more little negroes crowded around her pinching off pieces:

"Say, granny, give me some cake," they yelled.

"Drat yer, clean yersefs outen dis kitchum, else I'll call massa. How kin me an Sara git 'nuff cakes an' bread dun 'ginst dis evenin' fur dis big barbecue; an' God only knows whin dese plantations will ebber see sich times agin. De war hab cum, an' po' massa is fixin' ebbery day ter leab an' go fight fur—fur sumfin'—I dunno wot; but den he is gwine, caze I see po' ole miss an' prutty young mistiss a-packin' his close, an' all de time dere tears are fallin'; dey weeps so dat it 'pears like dey is diggin' his grabe. Good Lord, why can't folks lib widout fightin'; fightin' nebber did no good! Git out, git out, de whole pack ob

yer little niggers!" screamed Aunt Susan, in a rage of grief and anger.

But instead of leaving the kitchen, more crowded in, eager to watch the preparations for their last grand barbecue.

"We is bin cuckin' fur nearly a week, an' I 'clares 'fore hebbin dat ef I had ter cuck anudder day wi' dis trash-gang a-squeezin' an' pullin' arter ebberyt'ing dey see I'd jist go straight ter de aclunatic 'sylum. I nebber seed sich niggers in my life; dey yells, an' jumps, an' steals jist like dey nebber had no raisin', an' de Lord, He knows dat I tells dem de Scriptor, but I might jist as well preach ter de ole hens an' roosters. Sara, look at dem cakes in de stove; I knows dat dese jumpin' niggers dun made dem cakes fall six feet."

"Granny, granny, look! Tom dun stole de biggest cake outen de stove. Jist as Aunt Sara opened de stove-do' an' den turned roun from de stove, Tom stole de cake, an' cut an' runned."

Both cooks ran after Tom, but in vain. On their return not a child was in the kitchen.

"Lors-a-marcy, Sara, look!" exclaimed Aunt Susan, entering the kitchen; "cakes, bread, pies, chickens, an' eben my bread-dough is dun all clean gone."

"Drat dem niggers!" cried the angry Sarah, "drat dem niggers! Mammy, you knows wot I'd do wid dat ar rascally set."

"No, wot yer do wid dem?"

"Dey 'blongs ter yer in de day-time, while dere farders an' mudders bees in de fiels at work."

"Wull, wot would yer do ter dese thievin' chillens, Sara? I dun preached ter dem ontill I'm dun clean hollow frum preachin'."

"Wull, I'd quit preachin' an' whip dem; dat is wot dey needs. Preachin' don't do nigger no good. God Hissef moughten preach ter dem, an' niggers would steal frum

Him while He was preachin' ter dem. I'd tan dere hides dis night; sho' I would."

"Ole miss tells me not ter beat dem. She 'lows Susan preach ter dem, an' ebbery Sunday mornin' yer know dey sez dere catechism ter de white preacher wot massa hires ter teach dem an' ter preach ter us grown niggers."

"But, as I 'lowed, it don't do no good; nigger is sho' gwine be nigger, put him in a flour barrel, an' white him all ober, den take him outen, an' he sho' is nigger still. Nigger is nebber gwine be nuffin' but nigger still. God made him nigger, an' nigger sho' gwine stay nig. Dar comes massa now," continued Sarah.

"Whar," asked Aunt Susan.

"Dar, gettin' off ob his horse at de back steps; an' dar bees ale stealin' Tom runnin' to hold massa's horse, an' grinnin' at massa jist as ef dar nebber was no cake stole."

"Massa, massa, please, sar, come har," cried Aunt Susan.

"Well, mammy, what is the matter?" inquired her master, pausing on the kitchen floor.

"Dem dar nigger chillens dun bin in dis berry kitchin, an' dun stole de cakes an' chickens an' ebberyt'ing else wot me an' Sara dun cucked dis mornin'. Dey eben as much as dun stole my light-bread dough—tuck it right outen de tray; an' jist look yonder! dey hab absolukely built a fire out dar under de trees, an' is right now got skilluts an' cucking my bread-dough. Massa, dat bees ter much fur ole Susan ter stan'. I 'peals ter yer, an' yer muss protext me an' Sara agin dat ar trash-gang."

"All right, mammy, I will. Continue your cooking, and you shall not again be troubled," replied her master, smiling sadly, as he turned from the kitchen-door and entered the wide hall which extended through the house.

He loved his Southern home. It was his birthplace, and the halls of his ancestors were dear to him. To-morrow he would set out for distant battle-fields, and his heart was

heavy. Hanging his hat on the hall rack, he entered the parlor, where sat his beautiful wife. Her heart was breaking with sorrow, her head rested against her harp, and bitter tears dropped over its untouched strings. She did not know that he stood near until his arms encircled her. Their tears mingled together. Each had struggled hard to conceal from the other what was suffered; each sought to appear brave and courageous under this their heaviest burden; each strove to cheer and comfort the other. This was the first time that he had found her in tears. He knew that she had wept in secret, but to him she had appeared calmly resigned. Twining her arms around his neck, she sobbed violently. The flood-tide now burst, and she wept unrestrainedly. Years had only strengthened their love, until now it was riveted in chains unbreakable even by the giant hand of death.

"My darling, do you bid me desert my country?" he asked, pressing her passionately against him.

"No, a thousand times no, even if it rends my very heart. A traitor to your country! I would rather lay you in your grave than have you desert your country."

"Massa, de carrage is ready," said Uncle Ben, looking through the door.

"Very well, call the children and mother. Come, my darling, for a drive. It would not do to disappoint the negroes. They expect us as usual to witness their log-rolling."

The carriage dashed up to the door, drawn by two handsome dark bays. They stood champing their bits and pawing the ground, restless and impatient of restraint.

"Come, darling, for our last drive," he exclaimed, kissing away her tears.

What an effort she made to appear calm before her children, as they seated themselves in the carriage with her and their father. The three oldest children had been for several years under the instruction of a tutor. They were

at the period of childhood bordering on the mature understanding of life and its realities. This evening they were unusually sad. To-morrow their father and his oldest son, Russell, would leave them, perhaps forever. Miriam's heart was bitterly sad as she sat with her hand resting in the close clasp of Russell, the brother she loved better than life.

"Which road, massa?" inquired Uncle Ben as he shook the reins, and the proud, spirited bays sprung forward.

"The central field road."

"Massa, I b'leve dese brutes will run when dey sees dem big fires ob burnin' logs piled up like mountains. You know de fiel is full ob blazin' an' roarin' log-heaps. Mus' I go?"

"Yes, I think you can manage them."

"Ef the chillens warn't wid us, I wouldn't mine so much."

"Was your overseer very sick?" inquired Mrs. Hargrove, attempting to seem quiet, and to manifest an interest in plantation matters.

"No, dearest."

"Why did he send you such a message?"

"You remember Sylvia, the girl I purchased for our dining-room servant?"

"Yes."

"Well, I feared that she would become a dangerous negro, particularly for our children. I did not like to return her to the negro-yard, because she was valuable, and you remember that I sent her to my Belle Meade plantation."

"Yes."

"I thought by putting her under a rigid overseer that she would become subdued. She has been house-servant for his family, but a few days since he ordered her to work in the field. She felt degraded by such labor, and refused to go. He whipped her; but she still stubbornly

persisted, and he then whipped her severely. In return she attempted to poison him."

"How could she get the poison?"

"She put a scorpion head in the coffee-pot."

"Did any of his family drink the coffee?"

"No, old Dinah saw Sylvia kill the scorpion and cut it's head off. This appeared singular to Aunt Dinah, so she watched Sylvia, and saw her drop it in the coffee-pot. Aunt Dinah instantly related this to Mrs. Wall, and of course the coffee was not tasted. Mr. Wall commanded Sylvia to drink a cup, but she refused. He whipped her soundly, but she would not taste the coffee. They looked into the pot, and sure enough there was the scorpion head; whether it would have killed them or not I can not say, but she evidently thought it would."

"What will you do with her, papa?" inquired Miriam.

"I shipped her this morning to the negro-yard. She is too dangerous for me to leave her with you, my darlings."

Any mention of his coming departure brought tears to their eyes. They struggled bravely to crush down the rising sobs, and to appear happy on this their last evening together.

They had just entered the wide, tree-lined avenue leading through the central fields. In the distance the whole western woodlands seemed a mass of burning log-heaps. It was now spring, the time for clearing and putting new ground into cultivation. During the summer, when the crop did not require work, the men were kept occupied by cutting wood for winter. In this way acres of ground were cleared of heavy timbers. In the spring the remaining logs which were not consumed for fires on the plantations were piled in giant heaps and burned. Log-rolling was a great festival season. The men vied with each other by testing which could spike and carry the largest log. Usually four or six men worked in partnership, and the number successful were jubilant, and no prize-fighter or gladiator ever en-

tered the arena with greater heroic energy than did these negroes at their log-rollings. The wide fields rang with the fierce yells of more than three hundred slaves. The air shook with noise and wild confusion. The negroes loved such sport. Visitors were usually invited to witness the contest of strength, and negroes from adjoining places came in crowds to participate. The land bordering in a half circle upon miles of dense timber lands was to-day as a vast amphitheater on which strong African men wrestled in fiery endeavor to excel in brute strength. The air was rent with the furious shouts of the conquerors. The trash-gang, composed of women and large children, went behind the log-rollers, and gathered up limbs, sticks and chips. These were added to the log-heaps. Toward sunset the work was completed, the contest ended, and each mountainous log-heap was fired. It was a magnificent sight. Hundreds of slaves now gathered round their master's carriage, all gazing upon the terrific leaping and roaring of gigantic flames. The fields were an ocean of fire; and even the horizon seemed a madly surging conflagration.

The blooded bays became wild with terror. They reared and plunged, but strong hands seized the bits, and held them fast.

"Massa, dese horses bees dangerous," cried Uncle Henry, an old and faithful servant. "Better let us take dem out an' go ter de stable an' git ole Mike an' Sam. Dey bees like your ole niggers, good and faithful; dese new hosses bees like new niggers; dey needs tannin' wid de bull-whip."

"Uncle Ben can manage them, I think," Mr. Hargrove replied. "Turn them homeward."

"Massa, let me an' Jim lead dem down de road until dey gits away frum de fires," old Henry pleaded.

"Very well, Uncle Henry."

The negro laborers now leaving the fields soon reached

the residence and quarters. Each entered his cabin and dressed himself in his best clothing. The plantation-bell called them all to assemble under the park trees in front of their master's residence. Lanterns were thickly hung among the trees, making the grounds brilliant with light; long tables, covered with snowy linen, were spread as for a royal feast. At a signal from their master the slaves arranged themselves round the banquet tables, and from the front steps of the residence a blessing was invoked by the aged "ole miss." Their master then delivered them a short address, upon their energetic labor during the past year; told them of his coming departure, and requested their faithfulness to his mother, wife and children. Many of them dropped honest tears, and pledged him their fidelity. He gave the signal for supper to begin. For hours feasting and revelry reigned supreme. Hundreds laughed, screamed, joked and feasted until fully satisfied.

Baskets and handkerchiefs were filled with sweetmeats to carry home. Finally their supper was finished, and the long tables were moved out of the way. Uncle Mose with his banjo, Henry with a violin, and several others who were musicians, tuned their instruments, partners were selected, and the old-fashioned negro dance began. Wild laughs, screams, shouts, and quaint negro ejaculations made the air resound.

Mr. Hargrove and his family sat on the brilliantly lighted gallery, watching the negro revelers. Aunt Susan sat on the steps at the feet of "ole miss."

"What yer comin' back fur, Ben? Yer walk like yer was steppin' on aigs," she said, as the old man neared the entrance.

"Pshaw, nigger, mine yer bizniss!" he returned, and coming hurriedly up the steps, he whispered:

"Massa, dar is a strange white man outen dar talkin' ter some ob de niggers."

"Where is he?"

“Way down at de lawn gate what opens in de deer park.”

“Which negroes are talking to him?”

“Two, free—dem new niggers frum yer Belle Meade plantation. Dey is stanin’ way down nex’ de park gate, whar it is dark.”

“Did you hear what he said to them?”

“I stood close ’hind a big tree, an’ heard him tell dem, ‘de time hab come for yer to help free yerselfs.’ Dat Abraham Lincoln was ’lected president, an’ dat he was gwine free dem, dat de whole Norf was fitin’ ter free de niggers, an’ dat dey, de niggers, mus’ help by killin’ de white folk wharebber dey could. Dat God sed do it. He used ter hab de Esrulites kill de Gyptian slabe owners.”

In the times of slavery, the necessity of guarding against insurrection and crime was everywhere recognized. Where there were cruel owners there was often danger of this sort. Vagrant negroes and whites of an unscrupulous and fanatic temper were instrumental in producing disturbance. After the rise of the abolition movement, it was natural to attribute these things to their instigation; and all suspicious-acting white men were called “Abolitionists.” The raid of John Brown in Virginia, with the cognizance, if not the co-operation of prominent anti-slavery leaders, afforded plausibility to this prevalent opinion of Southern men. The term is used here, therefore, in accordance with that notion, rather than with reference to the individuals usually so called.

“Go back and listen, and watch which way he goes.”

“I will, massa,” said Uncle Ben, and went immediately away.

“Susan, don’t tell one word of what Uncle Ben has said. Go and find the overseer. He is out there in the crowd. Tell him to come at once. Hurry—be quick.”

“I will, massa,” she returned, and was soon lost in the multitude.

“What will you do with the man?” inquired his wife.

“Hang him! The entire country is full of these abolition scoundrels, sneaking and prowling among the negroes, inciting them to murder their masters. It is time to stop them infamous abolition dogs, and by the gods, if I catch him he shall be hanged!”

“He certainly deserves it; though I suppose he thinks he is right.”

“We Southerners are afraid to allow a strange traveler stop for a night under our roofs. If we shelter him he may return hospitality by trying to get our slaves to murder us. I will break the rascal’s neck if we catch him. They seem to consider it God’s work to come among us and incite the negroes to massacre men, women and children.”

The overseer came. They now armed themselves, and mingled in the multitude. The dancing still continued. When Mr. Hargrove and the others neared the park gate, they discovered a small group, and heard low whispers. Rushing swiftly upon the group, they captured and bound the negroes, but the white miscreant had the advantage because the high park fence was between him and his pursuers. The gate was securely locked, but they soon broke it down. The darkness, however, was so intense that they could discover no moving object. They followed the sound of his rushing feet, for cracking sticks betrayed his direction. The pursuit was hot. He heard them nearing him, and attempted to conceal himself in a clump of low, dense undergrowth, but there he ran upon a herd of resting deer, startled them, and they rushed off in terror. His pursuers surrounded the spot, and soon made him a prisoner. He was carried to the illuminated lawn, together with the negroes, and all were most severely scourged. It struck terror in the others, and each negro was soon locked in his cabin. The man was not hanged, but was driven from the country.

CHAPTER V.

EIGHTEEN HUNDRED AND SIXTY-TWO.

THE beautiful scene has now changed. The war-trumpet is sounding through the country. Devastation everywhere follows in the track of the armies, and desolation reigns in place of the former prosperity and abundance. Men distrust their neighbors, and peril is apprehended everywhere.

New Orleans has surrendered. Chains had been stretched across the Mississippi to obstruct the passage of the Federal fleet. The citizens, believing that the huge iron cables would be sufficient for the purpose, had felt secure. But they reposed under false hopes. The invading fleet had little difficulty with the obstructions; torpedoes were employed successfully to break the links, the chains sunk, and the gun-boats passed on to the fated city.

Knowing their danger, the inhabitants of New Orleans set themselves to destroying provisions and whatever might be seized by the Federal soldiers. Cotton and other staples were burned. Merchants rolled out barrels and emptied their contents into the streets. Ladies were compelled to wade through molasses over their shoe-tops. Along the river, likewise in the cotton-belts, the atmosphere was dense with smoke from burning store-houses. The inhabitants had generally abandoned their plantations, and refugees to the interior hill-parishes, or in Western Texas. They had left their gins filled with cotton, and the guerrillas burned them to prevent them from falling into the hands of the Federals. All along the river the huge conflagrations lighted up the sky, making day and night alike brilliant.

As yet, however, war had not defaced the exceeding beauty of the Hargrove home. Grant's gun-boats, coming down from Memphis, were now running the river; but the crews had not ventured to land there except just long

enough to rush ashore, seize poultry and other eatables, and hasten again on board. They never waited long in those days. Partisan warfare was at its height. As Sumter, Marion, and Light Horse Harry of the Revolution harassed the British troops that occupied and ravaged the Carolinas, so the fierce fire-eating guerrillas were now the terror of the river country.

The negroes had become dangerous and threatening to the few remaining white inhabitants. The sight of the iron gun-boats filled them with reckless audacity and fierce bitterness. The guerrilla was a terror to them, however, and the names of Lee, James, and Quantrell were often sufficient to deter them from perpetrating the horrible deeds which they contemplated.

Again and again, when totally unexpected, the daring adventurers would dash upon the turbulent negroes, and terrify them into desisting from their brutal purposes. Such was the condition in that region. Among the few that were still remaining upon their plantations, were the wife and family of Mr. Hargrove. They had hoped to be permitted to cultivate their fertile lands undisturbed. Their slaves were yet quiet, and all was apparently going on without disturbance. Yet in the midst of all there was uncertainty and a sense of impending peril.

The night was of exquisite loveliness. The moon shone brilliantly, and its beams flashed upon the statuary and fountains on the front lawn. Miriam Hargrove, the heroine of our story, sat there beside her mother, anxiously watching. At length she spoke.

"Mother," said she, "there is no alternative. We will have to abandon our home."

"I hope we can remain until the crop is gathered," her mother said.

"That is impossible," Miriam replied. "Besides, the cotton will do us no good. The Federals are certain to capture the 'Little Planter;' so that we shall have no op-

portunity to ship it to Vicksburg. And the guerrillas will burn it as soon as it is gathered."

"But," said Mrs. Hargrove, "if Grant continues to shell the back country, the guerrillas can not come to the river."

"True, mother, and this fact makes it exceedingly dangerous for us to remain longer. The negroes are becoming like ferocious brutes. The guerrillas are now the only restraint upon them, and our only protection."

"I do not think," said Mrs. Hargrove, "that Grant intends to land here and establish his head-quarters at this point. The shells which are thrown from his gun-boats will be at intervals as he continues running between this point and Vicksburg, and the guerrillas will have the same opportunity to make their raids on the river. I do not fear our own slaves."

"But, mother," pleaded Miriam, "there are hundreds on the neighboring plantations who are thirsting for the blood of every slave-owner, every white individual who has a negro. If the guerrillas shall be forced to remain in the hill-parishes, the negroes will become perfectly terrible."

"Talk low, and do not excite your grandmother and the younger children," said the anxious mother, glancing at the sleepers.

They all occupied one room, and it was most carefully locked. The two watchers sat closely together by the side of the beautiful carved table at the door, on which burned a shaded lamp. There came a low knock at the door. They both turned deathly white, and sat gazing into each other's countenances.

"Mother," said Miriam, "we must not open the door. Remember the murder of Mrs. Winston and her entire family. Some one knocked, and she, not thinking of harm, unlocked the door. Armed negroes rushed in and massacred every woman and child!"

Again a gentle tap.

"Mistiss—"

"Hush, mother, do not reply."

"It is one of our slaves."

"Possibly not. It may be a neighboring negro calling you mistiss in order to deceive you, that you may open the door."

"Mistiss, oh, mistiss, hurry an' let ole Ben in!"

"Miriam, it is our own faithful old Ben."

"Mother, keep still," cried the agonized daughter. "That hall may be filled with negroes, ready to leap in the moment the door opens."

"Oh, mistiss, mistiss," the voice repeated, "fur de sake ob yer libes let ole Ben in dat room!"

"Miriam, it is Ben," said Mrs. Hargrove.

"Keep still, mother; you must not open the door."

"Mistiss, mistiss," the speaker outside called again, "it is yo' ole nigger Ben; he won't hurt yer, he would die fur yer!"

"Miriam," said Mrs. Hargrove, "it is Ben. I recognize his voice."

"Mistiss, oh, mistiss," he cried again, "I'se got sum-fin' awful to tell yer! Let me in, oh, quick, let me in!"

"Miriam," said her mother, "we must let him come in."

"Stand back, mother," Miriam answered, "I will open the door."

With trembling hand and ghastly features she turned the key in the lock. The door was pushed furiously open at once, and Uncle Ben and Granny Susan rushed in.

"Lock de do' quick, missie, quick!" they exclaimed, in great alarm.

When it was securely fastened, Ben came and knelt by his young mistress.

"Hunny, de niggers gwine do awful things ter-night. Dey gwine sot your house on fire, an' burn you all up in it. Dey hab comed togedder fur an' near, an' dey gwine

get all roun' de house so whin yer all run out ob de fire dey will kotch you an' murder yer."

"My God, Uncle Ben! what shall we do?"

"Hunny, I'se dun wot I could, but you know how dey killed dat po' ooman an' all her chillens; dey gwine clean sweep de country dis night. Dey hab c'lected on ebbery plantation whar dey is white folks, an' ll murder dem all dis night. Dey is 'spectin' Grant's gun-boats to lan' har dis night, so dey is c'lected by de thousands right on your plantation dis minit, waitin' fur de gun-boats to lan', so dey can git ter de Yankees. Dey specks de Yankees to take de grillers wot is camped right below your house. Den de grillers can't cum upon de niggers whin dey is burnin' yo' house an' killin' yer."

"Do you say that the guerrillas are camped just below here?"

"Yes, mum, dey is waitin' fur de 'Little Planter' to come up from Vicksburg to bring dem guns. Dey ain't all ob dem got guns."

"When will the 'Little Planter' arrive?"

"Hunny, nobody kin tell; fur she has to slip her chances an' run up whin Grant's gun-boats is outen her way. She ain't bin up in a long time, fur Grant now keeps some ob his boats all de late time runnin' 'twixt har an' Vicksburg. He don't lan' anywhar 'cept a minit or two at de big plantations, an' let his soldiers run off to de shore an' steal de chickens an' sich like. Den he is gone 'fore de grillers kin git him. But de niggers got word dat he is gwine lan' har to-night. Dey sarnt him word dat de grillers is har, widout guns, an' he sarnt word 'at he would lan' an' capter de grillers. Dey got word, too, dat de 'Little Planter' is captered, an' ain't comin,' so dey plans fur de gun-boats to lan' an' capter de grillers, an' de niggers will clean sweep de white folks an' take possessun ob de big plantations. Po' fules; dey don't know dat de Yankees will do dat demselves. De nigger is gwine take

de plantations, so darfo' dey ain't gwine burn de houses onliest dem in which de white folks is locked up in. Den dey gwine burn de houses ter git de white folks."

"Uncle Ben, are you certain that the guerrillas have not enough guns?"

"Yes, mistiss; dat is what dey is waitin' fur; dey spec's de 'Little Planter' ter bring dem guns; but if she is captered she kain't git har. Mistiss, mistiss, I dunno wot ter do! You can't git outen dis house, fur it is surrounded wid niggers."

"Miriam, oh, merciful God!" cried Mrs. Hargrove, "our doom has come!"

They sat dumb-stricken, with agonized faces. The silence became so intense that they could hear the beating of their hearts.

"Miriam, my darling, there is only one thing left for us to do."

"What, mother?"

"To pray. We are helpless; but the God we trust is all-powerful."

They knelt down side by side with the two faithful negroes, and such a petition for help was never heard from human lips as came from the breaking heart of Mrs. Hargrove. When they rose they sat silently meditating upon their wretched condition.

"Mistiss," said the negro, "ole Ben b'leves dat God is gwine answer yer prayer. I b'leve He is gwine keep dem gun-boats from comin' har dis night. Ef dem gun-boats don't lan' an' stay befo' yer house, yer is safe, eben ef dar is hundreds of niggers standin' roun' yer house. Dey ain't gwine do any harm long as de grillers is close, an' ef de gun-boats don't come an' capter de grillers de niggers ain't gwine ter do dere debilment."

"Yes, Uncle Ben, you are correct. If the gun-boats do not land here we are safe."

"If they do we are doomed," said Miriam.

“Den ole Ben will go outen an’ watch ef dey comes.”
As he passed out he said, “Mistiss, if dey come, God alone
can save yer.”

Securely locking the door, they sat down in wretched
agony to wait their doom in case the gun-boats landed.

“Miriam,” said Mrs. Hargrove, “awaken your grand-
mother and sisters, and tell them to dress themselves. We
can do nothing else except to trust a merciful God for de-
liverance.”

It was a sad picture, that group of helpless women and
children huddled together, awaiting the awful doom of a
pitiless negro massacre. Their only hope was that Gen-
eral Grant’s gun-boats would not land that night; then
the next morning they would get the guerrillas to protect
them on the road to the hill-parishes. They had now de-
termined to abandon their home. The moments seemed
like eternities. A low tap was heard on the door.

“Mistiss, de gun-boats hab come.”

“Oh, my God! my God, deliver us!” groaned the
agonized mother.

“Dey is out in de ribber, jist front of yer winder. Put
out yer light, an’ keep berry still, fur God an ole Ben is
gwine ter sabe yer. Keep still, mistiss, keep still, an’
trus’ God an’ ole Ben; he dun begged yer own niggers to
stan’ by yer. Missie, yer come to de winder, an’ ef yer see
de gun-boats come to de shore, yer get ready ter do what
God tole ole Ben ter tell yer to do. Do yer onderstan’,
hunny?”

“Yes, Uncle Ben.”

“Den keep cule, hunny. Is yer light out?”

“Yes, the room is perfectly dark.”

“Den come ter de winder an’ watch, fur de moon is
shinin’ bright on dem iron bull-dogs wot is gwine tear us
to pieces.”

Following his instructions, she lifted the heavy damask
curtains, and knelt down with its thick folds dropping over

her. She pressed her face close to the window-pane and saw several huge gun-boats glide to the shore and land. Instantly a whole squadron of Federal troops covered the shore.

"Right, left, right, left," rang on the midnight stillness. Hundreds of negroes rushed through the beautiful front lawn. Following the Federal soldiers the black mass marched hurriedly to the guerrilla camp. Then came the artillery, and a solid phalanx of mounted cavalry on magnificent war-steeds. All moved furiously down the river-road to where gleamed the guerrilla camp-tents. The moon glittered brilliantly upon the flashing sabers and gleaming guns; cannon were rolled upon the levees, which formed a natural elevation for the iron lions.

"Keep quiet, missie, keep quiet—not yet, not yet," whispered Uncle Ben; "too many niggers is still roun' de house. Dey is waitin' ter see ef de grillers is captered. Dey won't git captered dis night. De grillers got too good a start on de Yankees. Jake runned down dar an' tole de grillers, an' dey left right den 'fore de gun-boats landed. Jake an' Jim, togedder wid Ann, hab runned to de Yankee officers an' tole dem 'bout yer danger, an' beg dem ter come an' help yer."

"Will they assist us, Uncle Ben?"

"In course dey will, hunny. Dey bees white gentlemen, an' dey ain't gwine let dese half-savages butcher helpless women an' chillens. Look dar, dey cross de fiel'."

She could see the Confederates in advance of their hotly pursuing enemies, the sabers of the latter flashing like thousands of steel scythes ready to mow down the flying guerrillas. Onward they rushed, until the distant belt of plantation woodland sheltered them. Many of the negroes followed, but now they were all returning toward the gun-boats, accompanied by the Federal soldiers. The cavalry dashed into the yard; the negroes rushed to hold their horses as they dismounted. The yard was soon filled with

negroes, magnificently dressed officers, war-chargers, superb in their animal strength, and blue-uniformed soldiers. It was a stirring scene. Soldiers rushed in every direction, pillaging store-rooms, corn-cribs, hen-houses, and every nook and corner of the premises where they thought to find plantation supplies. Chickens, turkeys, geese and guinea fowls made the night air ring with their squawks. The place was thoroughly searched, store-rooms, barns, and provision-houses were all emptied. Such was war.

For days the atmosphere had been filled with smoke from the burning cotton and gin-houses of adjoining plantations. Mrs. Hargrove's had not been destroyed. Miriam now saw the cotton rolled down the slope to the shore of the river, and then aboard a huge transport.

"Missie," said the faithful old man, "ole Ben is gwine 'member dat an' dis date; caze dey ain't got no right to take our cotton widout payin' us fur it. Hunny, look! Dar comes de officers; don't yer feel skeered! Dey gwine pro-text yer; dey is white gentlemuns."

A group of magnificently dressed soldiers came up the moonlit, shadow-flecked walk. Reaching the front entrance they paused on the upper step. The moon shone full upon their brilliant uniforms. One of them wore a long plume curling over his military hat. Uncle Ben welcomed them, and distinctly she heard his low pleading tones.

"Old man, no, a thousand times no. Do you think we are brutes come to massacre helpless women and children?" replied the officer with the drooping plume. "Open the door. I pledge you my honor we will protect them. We have already ordered the negroes not to burn or destroy any property. They have a mistaken notion about the kind of war we wage. Their ignorance and brute passions mislead them. They suppose that our warfare is like their own brute cruelty. They endow it with their idea of savage fighting; this idea is permeated with their own bad pas-

sions. I pledge you the honor of a soldier that we will protect your mistress and her family. The first soldier or negro who sets fire to this house, or in any way threatens its inmates, will be shot."

"De Lord bless you, massa!" cried ole Ben. "How it makes my ole soul happy ter har yer talk dat way. Come in, massa, come right in."

They walked into the wide, moonlit, picture-hung hall.

"Your mistress appears quite wealthy?"

"Yas, sir. Missie, hunny, open de do', light de lamp, an' let de gentlemuns in. Dey won't harm yer, my darlin' chile."

The faithful old negro seemed beside himself with ecstatic joy. The door opened, and the officers stood in the corridor, except the two that paused upon the threshold.

"Ladies, do not fear. We are Federal officers, but, also, we are gentlemen. I am General McPherson, this is my friend, Belmont Manning."

Old Mrs. Hargrove rose, tottered across the room, held her feeble hand before her eyes and closely scanned, nay, scrutinized his refined, manly face.

"Yes, it is my sister's child."

"Is this Mrs. Martha Hargrove?" the general inquired.

"It is."

"Then you are my mother's sister."

"I am."

"Will you welcome your Federal nephew?"

"I will."

"Where is your son?"

"Fighting for his country in Virginia."

"I am sorry that he is on the wrong side."

"Sir, I deplore that you are on the wrong side."

He smiled, replying:

"Each deemed his cause the right one; but are you not living under imminent peril? These negroes seem to be a mass of half barbarians."

"Yes, sir, the Southerners have made a mistake in not Christianizing their slaves. There can be no civilization without Christianity; the philosophy of history thunders this truth. Christianize the negro, and he then becomes the truest, most faithful creature to those who have thus elevated him."

"Dat dey will, mistiss; dat dey will!" cried old Ben.

"Is it easy to Christianize them?"

"Not in the deep, true sense of Christian purity and morality of character. Like other inferior races, superstition forms a strong element of their nature; whatever appeals to this becomes a forcible power to control them. Christianity is the strongest lever to lift the negro character from its miry degradation, and those negroes whose masters have been cruel in their treatment and neglectful of the African's moral education are to-day little improvement upon their dark, savage condition. We find the negro here upon this continent, and he is here to stay, and it behooves the white man for his own security to render every assistance in the elevation of the negro character; give him churches and schools, and bring him in forcible contact with every element of American civilization; he needs to imbibe the strong energy and combative principles of this bold, restless people. These characteristics are deficient in the negro nature; he finds them here in strong and more unyielding proportions than upon any other continent of the universe; contact with American civilization and American institutions will eventually elevate the negro nature; the evolution will surely be slow, but it will finally be the most marvelous in the history of nations."

"Madame," replied the general, "nothing can be evolved unless it is first involved. If the negro character have not inherent principles that can be developed during the evolution of ages, that race, like others, will become extinct. You can not develop in him a nature contrary to the embryonic traits and individualities of his being."

"True, sir; but there are dormant forces in every individual. Individuals compose races, and races make nations; hence personal development finally elevates a nation."

"That is, when the development is general?"

"Certainly. I would give the negro opportunities, and in the long, gradual evolution of his being, those that are incapable of being improved and have not the embryonic germ within them will drop out of the contest, and finally become extinct. Those that possess the inherent first principle that can be expanded, developed into further strength, will survive; the contest will develop the germ of their individualities, and again there will be Darwin's 'survival of the fittest,' and as in all ages religious civilization is the omnipotent power that develops character germs into race germs, and race germs into national germs, and national germs into a 'survival of the fittest.'"

"Madame, you seem to have a higher conception of the negro character than I supposed you Southerners possessed."

"Sir, were it not for the instigation of white scoundrels, there would be no attempted insurrections. True, where masters are remarkably cruel to their slaves there would occasionally be one slave or a few slaves that would attempt to murder them; but there would be no general uprisings in a community, such as we anticipated to-night."

"It must be exceedingly dangerous for you to reside among them unprotected," said the officer.

"Dat it is, massa," interrupted Uncle Ben; "bad white men can fool de niggers into doin' mos' anyt'ing; but me an' my sister Susan, dat yer see standin' hine her young mistiss, we is faithful, we is ready ter die fur our mistiss an' der chillens."

"Old man, you are an honor to your race," exclaimed the general, "your fidelity to your mistress makes me esteem you."

"Yas, sar, massa; much obleeged ter yer; but ole Ben

lubs his massa. He bees gone ter de war way up in Virginia. Whin he lef, massa sez ter me, 'Ole man, I b'leve yer is gwine be faithful ter yer mistiss an' her chillens; be dere farder.' Sez ole Ben, 'Massa, I'se gwine protext dem ef I gits killed fur doin' it.' An' now, massa, sence yer bees so gude, will yer let yer soldiers go long wid yer frien' dar an' 'scort mistiss, ole mistiss an' missie, an' de little chillens way from har in de mornin'?"

"Where do you intend going?" he inquired.

"We sho' mus' leab here," said ole Ben to Mrs. Hargrove.

"Certainly," she answered.

"Missie, hunny, whar mus' we go?" Uncle Ben asked.

"Out into a western hill-parish."

"Massa, we will need yer protextion fur onliest one day's journey. Den we reach de fus' hill-parish."

"Very well; get ready, ladies. Major Manning will select a squadron of our best soldiers, and escort you through one day's traveling." Then addressing the major, he said: "Belmont, will you make the necessary preparations?"

"Certainly. It will give me great pleasure to conduct these ladies into safety," responded the young officer, as his eyes rested earnestly upon the beautiful face of Miriam.

"Ladies," said the general, "in an hour we will return, expecting to find you prepared for your journey."

"We will be ready, and Uncle Ben will be our guide; he is thoroughly acquainted with the route."

As the officers walked from the threshold, the younger one remarked:

"General, they are elegant ladies. The daughter is the most beautiful creature that I ever beheld."

"She is a genuine Helen," replied the general, "clear waxen complexion, deep violet eyes, and exquisite golden hair. How Raphael would have painted her for his Madonna."

"She is wondrously beautiful. I wish destiny would bring our pathways frequently at cross-roads."

"Pshaw, Belmont, do not be so foolish! She will never again cross your pathway. You are a Union soldier, she a Confederate beauty."

The young officer's handsome face became grave, and they walked on in silence. At the time appointed he returned and conducted them through the day's journey until they were safe into the hill-districts. With manly consideration he avoided Miriam, and kept his horse beside her mother. The grandparent and younger children rode in the family carriage, while Miriam and her mother traveled on horseback. Uncle Ben went before and guided.

It was now evening, the sun was nearing his setting, and the time of separation had come. The party halted beneath a huge wide-branched oak thick with green rustling foliage.

"Sir," said Mrs. Hargrove, "we can never repay your considerate attentions."

"Madame, I deserve no thanks. I have simply performed a gentleman's duty; the protection a man should render to helpless ladies, whether he be Federal or Confederate."

He shook hands with the mother, and paused beside Miriam. Their eyes lingered in a searching glance. He held his hand toward her; she ungloved her fingers and placed them in a warm, clinging grasp. The strongest passions are those which strike the man dumb; the deepest emotions hold him speechless. After a moment he faltered.

"Good-bye. I trust chance will be merciful to me by again crossing the lines of our destiny." Still he lingered.

"Good-bye, may God protect you."

Then he rode away, praying that God would be merciful to him, and again throw them together as players in the same drama. Was he answered?

CHAPTER VI.

CONTRABAND TRADE.

A LONG caravan of wagons loaded with bales of cotton was moving slowly through a desolate country. Mrs. Hargrove had purchased that cotton in the western parishes of Louisiana, and was bringing it to a point near the river-belt which was now occupied by Federal troops and Unionist speculators. The Confederate forces of Louisiana were collected round Shreveport, now the capital of the state. The parishes bordering on the Mississippi were abandoned. All this rich territory, from the Arkansas line to the region in the vicinity of Vicksburg, was now in possession of the Federal Army. The plantations were cultivated by Unionist lessees and speculators.

Mrs. Hargrove was now carrying on an extensive traffic with these dealers. She purchased cotton in the western parishes to sell to them, and used the proceeds, whether in money or provisions, to aid the Confederate cause. It was more than suspected, likewise, that she procured valuable information surreptitiously which might be employed to advantage. That she devoted her means and energy to the promoting of the Confederate cause was generally known. Indeed, the Federal military authorities had given orders for her arrest. They regarded her as a dangerous spy and intrigante.

At the front of the procession of wagons rode a company of guerrillas to guard the valuable consignment. It was midwinter, a cold, dreary day. Heavy rains had made the roads almost impassable. Sometimes a wagon would sink into the stiff mud. It would require to be unloaded, pried out, and then loaded again before the party could resume their toilsome march.

The journey had been unusually long, and the two wom-

en, Mrs. Hargrove and Miriam, were nearly exhausted from cold and fatigue. The region through which they were now going was an unbroken swamp, stretching many miles. It was overrun by guerrillas, and the more notorious "lay-outs," as they were called. These latter consisted of ferocious desperadoes, like the "cow-boys" and "skinners" of the Revolution, who had deserted from both armies, but had made common cause in crime to murder and plunder.

Quantrell, the famous guerrilla chief, commanded the party. He now rode beside the two women. Presently he spoke:

"Madame," said he, "this must be great hardship both for you and your daughter."

"It is, indeed," she replied, "but it must be cheerfully borne. It enables me to serve the Confederate cause."

"You are truly its main prop in this region," said Quantrell. "But for the aid which you generously contribute the Confederate soldiers of this region would positively suffer. As it is, you keep us well furnished. You are of immense value to our cause. I would that your Unionist friends do not betray you."

"I make them believe that you guerrillas would revenge my betrayal by murdering every Unionist planter, merchant, and speculator within the river district," she replied.

"So we would," he exclaimed. "The day you fail to return to us shall measure the length of their graves."

"Stotts, the Unionist, to whom I shall sell this cotton, is more honorable than Harold. The latter cultivates my plantations. He is a consummate scoundrel. He owes me rent for my lands, and as yet I have been unable to force him into a complete settlement."

"How is it you receive rent for your plantation while other abandoned places are planted by Unionist speculators rent free?" asked the guerrilla.

"These Unionists can not cultivate the abandoned plan-

tations unless the Federals give protection to the farmers," Mrs. Hargrove replied. "You guerrillas would murder the Unionists, and compel the speculators to abandon their business."

"Yes."

"Well, Federal protection is necessary for the Unionist planter, merchant, and speculator."

"Certainly."

"General McPherson refused to protect Harold, unless Harold contracted to pay me rent."

"Why is McPherson so interested in you?"

"Because he is an honorable man, and knows that I have a large family to support; then, too, he is a cousin to my husband. Those Southerners who remain on the river, and take the oath of allegiance to the Union, receive rent for their lands and payment for all property destroyed by the Federals; but those who do not take the oath receive no protection. Hence they abandon their homes, and these plantations are soon occupied by Unionist planters. Harold pays no rent for these rich lands, and is making money rapidly. He is unmolested except when you guerrillas and lay-outs dash upon him and rob his fields."

"Which is done every chance we get," replied Quantrell. "A few days since we raided out there, and rushed hundreds of negroes out of the fields straight into the river, killed three of the richest speculators, and captured many valuable mules; some of them are now hauling your cotton."

"Well, I hope you will not murder Stotts," said Mrs. Hargrove. "He trades honorably with me; and it is through him I obtain clothing, ammunition and general supplies."

"I have assured him that he shall not be molested just so long as he thus befriends you and supplies your demands."

"He runs a great risk," Mrs. Hargrove answered. "If

the Federals detected him thus furnishing us, they would hang him."

"That is his business," said Quantrell. "If he refuses you provisions, we guerrillas would kill him. So he accepts the situation, makes money, and manages shrewdly. But see, your daughter seems nearly exhausted."

"Yes, sir; but she is a brave child, and positively refuses to remain at home. I have two sons; one is with his father, the other is too dissipated to give me any assistance. Ah! we are reaching our halting-place. I see the gin under which Stotts promised to meet me."

"He is punctual," remarked Quantrell. "There are his wagons loaded with supplies."

Reaching the gin, they dismounted. Mrs. Hargrove and Stotts stood apart from the others, and were figuring upon their settlements. Quantrell superintended the exchanging of the contents of the wagons. This required several hours of constant labor; but finally the wagons of Stotts were loaded with cotton, and the guerrilla wagons were filled with supplies. Mrs. Hargrove and Stotts now joined Quantrell, who inquired:

"Should the Federal meet you and see this cotton, what will prevent you from detection?"

"Oh, that is easy enough," said Stotts. "They seldom venture this far in the interior. When a few times they have thus found me out here, I made them believe that my cotton was taken from the abandoned gins of this neighborhood. They do not suspect that I buy it."

Mrs. Hargrove purchased cotton for twenty cents per pound and sold it to Stotts for fifty. He shipped and sold it for more than double the price it cost him, hence it was money-making for all parties. She purchased the cotton far in the interior, where the Federals did not penetrate, and we have seen how she usually conveyed it to a spot bordering on or near the river district occupied by the Federals.

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This was her constant occupation. To somewhat secure themselves from risk of detection, the negotiators never met and exchanged commodities twice at the same place.

Particulars having now been arranged, the wagons began their opposite journey; hers returning with Confederate supplies to the hill-countries occupied by Louisiana Confederates, and those of Stotts, loaded with cotton, set out toward the river-parishes, the stronghold of the Federal and Unionist speculators. Each plantation in this river-belt, once the home of Southerners, was now occupied and cultivated by the Union men. They paid no rent for these fertile fields, and as negroes were in abundance these planting speculators made money rapidly.

The time and place of their next meeting having been decided upon, the number of bales to be delivered, the amount of provisions required in exchange, and other business details having been completed, they separated, and were soon traveling in opposite directions.

It was nearing sunset. Jesse James, the fiercest of the guerrilla band, rode beside Mrs. Hargrove. Presently he spoke to her.

"Madame, you do not realize your danger in this expedition."

"Yes, I do; I am fully aware that this time every faculty must be on sleepless watch."

"Do you not know that a reward has been offered secretly for your capture?" he asked.

"Yes," she replied; "of course, when I reach the Federal head-quarters I must be more adroit and wary than ever. The information which I am required to obtain is of vast importance. In fact, the next movement of the Confederate Army in Louisiana depends upon a knowledge of certain operations. I am detailed to secure this information, and my capture just at this time would result in calamity to our cause. What I am charged to learn must be obtained from the Federal generals. In my last interview

with the governor, he charged me with this duty. It is vitally important, and I must succeed."

She paused, and then addressing Quantrell, continued:

"My terror is the lay-outs; they are desperadoes, brutal and cruel as tigers. They would rob me and Miriam. I dread them more than I do the Federals or the most ferocious of your guerrillas."

"Madame," said Quantrell, "my men will not molest you."

"Not while you or Jesse James or Lee is with them," Mrs. Hargrove replied; "but without you with them I would be in mortal terror were I to encounter them."

"If my men harm you," cried Quantrell, "they shall be shot like dogs. They know this, therefore you are perfectly safe from them."

"But the lay-outs?" she anxiously interrupted.

"Would butcher you like they would a comrade east."

"They are demons in human form united for plunder," she replied. "They care for neither Union nor Confederacy."

"Just now they must be on the river front," Quantrell remarked.

"One never knows where they are," said she. "They may spring upon us in a moment. Well, this is my way," she added, pointing to a bridle-path leading from the main road. "There is the tree I marked that I might recognize my direction."

Halting, they shook hands, and she continued:

"Quantrell, I thank you for the protection you have given me."

Then they took their different roads. The mother and daughter were now journeying alone through a desolate wild country. The sun was nearing his setting, and a flood of amber light fell over these lone travelers. They fully realized their danger and their countenances were grave; but neither face exhibited fear. They were serving

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their country without calculating the peril. They rode in silence, taking their supper as they went from a knapsack on Miriam's saddle. Presently the daughter spoke.

"Mother, if you could ship your cotton, instead of selling it to Stotts, you would more than double the money that he pays you; I have been calculating your loss."

"Yes, but it could not reach the market. I have no opportunity of shipping it. The river belongs to General Grant from Memphis to Vicksburg. Stotts pays me fifty cents per pound, and he sells the same cotton for more than a dollar. This section is wild with speculation; even the officers are busily engaged in it. Of course they do not themselves transact the business; they employ Stotts and other Unionists; hence Stotts knows his only danger is from the guerrillas, and he knows, too, that supplying me with materials for our friends secures his safety from the guerrillas."

"Look, mother—can that be Quantrell and his band?" exclaimed Miriam, pointing to a party of glittering blue-uniformed cavalymen advancing toward them.

"No; I think not," said her mother. "Guerrillas and Federals dress alike, therefore I can not decide which they are at this distance. The guerrillas, in order to deceive the Federals, have adopted the blue uniform."

"They are mounted on superb chargers," said Miriam; and the setting sun flashed from the brilliant uniforms and glittering sabers of the nearing horsemen.

"If they are guerrillas, and Quantrell, or Jesse James, or Lee is not accompanying them, this paper will secure our safety," said Mrs. Hargrove. "Here is a pass signed by these three commanders. If those soldiers coming are Federals, and this paper should be found in my possession, the names of the three guerrilla chiefs would most assuredly cause our capture. We would then be sent to a Northern prison and confined."

Just then the party dashed up.

"Halt! halt!"

The two women checked their horses, and were instantly surrounded by soldiers.

"Who are you?" inquired an officer.

"Citizens," replied Mrs. Hargrove.

"Federals or Confederates?"

"Confederates."

"Is your home in the guerrilla district?"

"It is."

"Do you know where Quantrell is?"

"I will not inform you."

"Have you passed him to-day?"

"I will not tell you."

"Madame, beware. I have had citizens shot for refusing me such information."

"Shoot, then; I will not inform you."

"Miss," said the officer, turning to Miriam, "if you value the life of yourself and companion, tell me, are the guerrillas near this spot?"

"I do not know their exact distance from here," she returned, calmly.

"Have you seen Quantrell this evening?"

"I will not inform you."

"But you shall tell me!"

Then addressing his men he cried:

"Soldiers, make ready."

His men leveled their weapons. The women neither trembled nor showed signs of fear.

"Hold! hold!" shouted an officer, at that moment riding up. It was Belmont Manning. At this moment he recognized the prisoners, and hastened to the side of Miriam. "You have no authority," he cried, "to threaten the lives of these women. They can be arrested, but not put to death."

"I only intended," replied the officer, "to frighten

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them into telling where Quantrell was. He has been in this neighborhood but lately."

Then, giving the word of command, the company marched on. Manning remained to guard the prisoners till they should return.

"Madame," said he, "I regret the rude treatment which you have received from my brother officers."

"Sir, such is war," she replied. "I am making one of my visits to the river to collect rent for my plantations."

"Do you know that there is a reward for your capture?"

"Yes."

"But General McPherson will treat you generously," he said.

"Yes," she sadly replied. "I know General McPherson is exceedingly benevolent, but separation from my family will surely be worse than any physical torture. Do you suppose that he will send me and my daughter to a Northern prison?"

"Madame, I can not tell. I am certain he will show you all the leniency in his power, but you must know that you are regarded as a dangerous spy. I will plead for mercy for you and your daughter. I would risk life to serve you," he added, as his dark eyes met those of Miriam.

"Does she love me?" he kept asking himself, while he searched her expressive countenance for some assurance that she did, and just in this upward glance he imagined the love-light gleamed.

It was now becoming dark, and icy winds almost froze them. Miriam trembled from fatigue and cold; Belmont drew nearer to her, and his noble face was full of pitying tenderness as he leaned toward her, saying:

"My heart aches because you suffer."

His voice trembled as he spoke.

"Sir, I believe I shall freeze before your soldiers return."

He had completely forgotten Mrs. Hargrove's presence.

His back was now turned toward her. He unstrapped a blanket from his saddle, and, drawing very near to Miriam, he offered to put it around her. She consented, and as his arm passed around her shoulders her hand touched his, his fingers closed over hers. He failed to notice that while his attention had been thus engaged, Mrs. Hargrove had made her escape.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CONFEDERATE SPY.

THE night was terrifically black. Caving is characteristic of the Mississippi, and in this particular spot the wash-out was a narrow deep cut extending far back into the shore. In this cave was lodged a small hut. It had not been erected there originally, but the floods had brought it to the spot. The sands and drift-wood had fastened it to the place where it now rested. This hut was hidden deep down in the cave. It would make a fitting rendezvous for lay-outs, guerrillas and robbers, but as yet they had not discovered it. A furious storm raged; the rain poured in torrents, and a cyclonic wind whipped the waves high against the rude structure. A wild, peculiar savage snort mingled with the shrieking wind and roaring storm. It came from a horse plunging madly with terror. Swift streaks of lightning cut like burning steel through the intense blackness, and revealed the calm white faces of two women sitting within the door of the hut, sheltered from the storm. Again the wild, mad neigh shrieked differently from the furious sweep of the storm. A young girl stood within the door-way, and with fragile, delicate hands grasped the reins of a bridled plunging horse.

"Mother, I fear Logan will die; do you suppose it is the storm or some wild animal prowling about here that so terrifies him?"

"I can not tell, my darling, he is extremely frightened."

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The girl leaned forward and caressingly patted the neck of the trembling brute.

Just then a bursting shell whizzed above them, cutting a flame-streak through the inky blackness.

"Grant's gun-boats are passing," remarked the mother.

"But we are safe," calmly replied Miriam.

"Yes, we are too near the gun-boats for the shells to strike us."

"I suppose he deems this a favorable night for the scouting lay-outs and guerrillas."

"So it is. They will bless this storm, and to-morrow's sun will reveal many ghastly countenances of Unionists that they have this night murdered. But tell me again, darling, how you escaped from the Federal officer."

"When it had become quite dark, and the soldiers had not returned, we set out in the direction of the river to reach the Federal camp. After we had journeyed together for some time, I dropped my blanket at a spot just favorable to my escape. It was bitterly cold, and he sprung down to recover the garment. I seized the bridle of his horse, and whipping the animal furiously, I compelled it to keep up with mine. Logan seemed to understand my purpose, and sped so swiftly that it strained the other horse to keep along. So you see my further escape was quite easy."

"What did you do with the Federal horse?" asked her mother.

"When I reached the river I turned him loose, and hurried to this hut, where I knew you would be. They will suppose that the other horse instinctively came back to the Federal head-quarters, and it will furnish no clew as to our hiding-place. The soldiers will think that we have wisely returned to our western home. They will never imagine that after making such a narrow escape we would have the temerity to venture into their immediate vicinity,

into the very center of their army—the gun-boats on one side and Federal soldiers on the other.”

“ Yes, darling, I believe we are safe, at least for a few hours; but daylight must find us far distant from here.”

“ Listen, mother; did you hear that noise?”

“ Yes; hush! It sounds different from the storm,” whispered the mother.

“ Do you suppose Harold has betrayed us?” asked Miriam.

“ Keep still as stone; if the lay-outs discover us our death is certain,” she whispered.

“ I fear Logan will betray us.”

“ No, no; the noble brute seems to comprehend that our security depends upon his immovable rigidity; he is perfectly quiet.”

Another flash of lightning revealed a man staggering through the darkness toward the hut.

“ Mother, do you suppose that is Harold coming?” whispered Miriam, in almost inaudible tones.

“ I can not tell, darling; but keep perfectly calm. If it is a lay-out we must kill him before he comes into the hut—”

The sentence was not finished. A deafening burst of thunder and a vivid flash revealed a tall man crouching under the shelter of the jutting bank just a few yards from the door.

“ That can not be Harold,” said Miriam. “ He would enter, and seek shelter in the hut.”

“ Keep still, darling; if it proves to be a lay-out I will shoot him before he can injure us.”

Another lurid flash disclosed a second form approaching the man that crouched under the projecting bank.

“ Mother, they are not lay-outs,” said Miriam.

“ No,” she replied; and, placing her hand upon Miriam’s shoulder, she continued: “ Darling, it is my business to learn what they are about. Take these papers, and if I am capt-

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ured tear them to pieces. Be sure and destroy them." And she turned to go toward them.

"Mother!"

"Hush, I am going to creep near enough to hear them; and you must keep absolutely quiet."

"But, mother, the danger!"

"A Confederate spy must fear nothing, my child."

She kissed her daughter, stepped out into the storm and rain, and crept carefully along the side of the ledge. Just beyond was the sweeping river, and a false step would plunge her into its dark waters. The storm now began to lull, and being close enough to touch them, she distinctly heard their dialogue.

"I tell you, general, you are wasting time. The floods will destroy your Delta canal scheme."

"Then I will attempt one at this point; I will cut from the river-bank into the lake, and run my gun-boats through the lake into the numerous bayous, and then finally reach the Mississippi."

"That scheme will be useless. I tell you I had an interview with Pemberton himself, and I am certain that he will not intercept your landing. Carry your soldiers down by land on this side of the river, let your boats and transports float by some night, when it is black like this, and landing them on the Louisiana side some miles below Vicksburg, you can put your soldiers on your transports and safely land them on the Mississippi side, a short distance below Vicksburg."

"But if Pemberton and Bowen should concentrate their forces near the point where my soldiers land on the Mississippi side, half my army could be easily captured. I can not convey my entire army all at one crossing to the Mississippi side. I would have to leave half on the Louisiana shore while I transported the other half to the Mississippi side; by a proper strategic movement Pemberton and Bowen could unite their forces and surely capture that portion

of my army just as it lands on the Mississippi shore; while the Confederate generals could combine their armies, and probably capture half of my soldiers remaining on the Louisiana bank. Kirby Smith and Joseph E. Johnston, I am sure, would strain every nerve to capture both divisions of my army in this way."

"True, but consider the situation of the Confederates on both sides of the river. Joseph E. Johnston is far distant, Pemberton will not leave Vicksburg, and the Confederate Army in this state is small, and in no condition to capture the part of your army left for a short time on this side. In fact there is no regular Confederate Army in this region of Louisiana. It has moved back to protect Shreveport, the heart and center of the Confederacy in Louisiana. The guerrillas and lay-outs are about the only enemies around here. They are small but desperate bands of plunderers. Your soldiers could march down on this side, and crossing over on your transports, reach their destined landing below Vicksburg."

"And once in the rear of Vicksburg, the destruction of the naval forces of the enemy in the Yazoo River will be easily accomplished."

"Certainly; and Pemberton once shut up in Vicksburg can be starved into a surrender."

After a few moments the general inquired:

"Do you know, Harold, where that Confederate spy is—that Belle Boyd of Louisiana?"

"She and her daughter were captured this evening, but they both made their escape."

"I will increase the reward fivefold to any person that will deliver her into my hands. Does she not sell cotton to you and the lessees?"

"Yes."

"Could you not manage to capture her?"

"Impossible, general; it would cost me my life to turn traitor to her. Jesse James, Lee or Quantrell would mur-

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der me the instant they knew that she was captured. My life depends upon her liberty."

"Well, I am determined that she shall be captured. To secure her I will endanger the life of every Unionist speculator in this river-belt."

"How much will you pay for her capture?" inquired Harold.

A roll of heavy thunder prevented her from hearing the reply.

"Better capture the daughter, too," Harold continued. "She is equally as dangerous as the mother, and they are both fearless as tigers."

"Certainly, it is necessary to have both. I am resolved upon their capture, and if you persist in your refusal to help you will have to protect yourself."

Striking a match, Harold looked at his watch.

"General," said he, "in exactly two hours I will hold an interview with her."

"Where?"

"In a hut just around this projecting bank. Let several resolute men be on hand, for she will fight like hell and all its legions. Let them come thoroughly prepared, and you can capture her."

"All right; without fail they shall arrive promptly."

The interview now terminated. Mrs. Hargrove crept hurriedly back to Miriam. The two women mounted and rode away in the pouring rain. After a short absence they returned. A light glimmered in the hut. They dismounted, and fastening their horses to a log in the side of the cabin, Miriam remained outside while her mother entered. Harold was waiting her arrival.

"Am I late, Mr. Harold?" Mrs. Hargrove asked.

"No, madame," said he, "you are an hour and a half earlier than I expected you."

"The dark night and pouring rain hastened me. Sir, to business; run down this figuring, and see whether it tal-

lies with yours. You know you have not entirely settled with me for the last consignments of cotton, and the sum you owe me in addition to my rents is considerable. To-night our settlement must be complete."

"Impossible, madame," said he, "the amount [is too large for immediate payment."

Harold was a small man with sharp, cunning eyes and shrewdness depicted upon each feature. A candle was set on a projecting board, and its dim radiance flickered over his sardonic countenance as he continued:

"Madame, your calculations are incorrect. It is absolutely impossible for me to pay what you demand."

"Sir, you shall pay every cent, and that instantly! You are playing a double game; I know your treachery. You have bargained to deliver me to the Federal authorities, and by so doing you expect to defraud me of several thousands. This and the purchase money which you are to receive for betraying me you imagine will pay you better than cotton speculations. I am now about to return to Quantrell's rendezvous. Betray me, you scoundrel dog, and you shall be butchered by that guerrilla band!"

Her countenance was pale and resolute. Her eyes gleamed like bright steel. He scanned her face, and then addressed her:

"Madame, I have agreed to deliver you to a Federal officer, but I am willing to compromise."

"How?"

"By your canceling the sum owed you."

"Never! I will have a complete settlement."

"Madame, you can not terrify me," said he. "I appointed this meeting in this unknown hut because guerrillas and lay-outs are not cognizant of its existence. They will not molest me here."

He endeavored to appear deliberately calm, but her keen eyes penetrated his attempt, and she realized that he feared her.

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"Sir! Scoundrel," said she, "I give you ten minutes. At their expiration you shall pay me or die!"

"Ha! your hands are dainty for killing."

She fixed her eyes on him and she saw him tremble. She moved backward to the door, and, in an audible whisper, said:

"Jesse James, come in and finish your work."

A dark form sprung in, disguised in a black mask, long cloak, and wide guerrilla hat. Instantly cold gleaming steel was at Harold's throat. Heavy rolls of greenbacks he yielded at once. Taking them from his bosom, he gave them to Mrs. Hargrove. She carefully counted the money, secured it in a belt under her riding-dress, and left the hut at once, saying to him as she went out:

"Kind remembrance to the Federal officer when he arrives, and sincere wishes that our next interview may be more pleasant."

The two rode hurriedly away. For some time neither of them spoke. Then the mother said:

"Miriam, my brave darling, you outdid Jesse James himself. All would have been lost if you had faltered."

"Do you think so, mother?"

"Yes. He was endeavoring to detain me until the Federal force should arrive."

They rode in silence, each thinking intently. Reaching a negro cabin, once a cotton-house in the old slavery times, they dismounted. The inhabitants were absent, though a bed and other pieces of furniture indicated occupancy.

"Mother," Miriam asked, "do you suppose that Ann still lives here?"

"Perhaps the lay-outs have murdered the poor creature," her mother answered. "See, Miriam, here is her clothing. Put on this ragged dress, and rub this blacking carefully over your hands and face. Child, our most arduous task is yet to be accomplished."

"Mother, I dread this disguise."

"Why?"

"Our features are delicate; you never saw a negro nose slender and high. Theirs are flat and broad, their lips thick and heavy; ours are thin and refined."

"True, Miriam, and no negress ever possessed your features; but may be General McPherson is not an acute physiognomist."

"With these exceptions our disguise is perfect. You are as black as tar," said Miriam, holding the flickering candle near her mother's face.

"Tie this bandanna round your head, negro fashion, to conceal your hair, and we will also wear these old ragged sun-bonnets to somewhat hide our features."

"But, mother, if the general employs us as servants we can not wear these bonnets every day."

"Look there, Miriam!"

A plank in the floor moved; they watched it narrowly.

"Mother, can it be that the lay-outs are concealed underneath the puncheons?" whispered Miriam.

"No, I think it is the occupants," her mother replied.

"Each negro has dug him a deep hole in the ground under his cabin floor, and when he believes the lay-outs and guerrillas are coming he lifts up the loosened plank over this hole, and, dropping into this deep round well, deems himself secure. No doubt the occupants here have thus concealed themselves, thinking us to be guerrillas. However, we will not remain to discover them."

Again upon their horses, the two weary women traveled toward the Federal head-quarters. This was no other than Miriam's old home—the Hargrove mansion. When the two travelers arrived there they dismounted at the extremity of the deer-park, turned their horses loose to graze, and walked up to the wide front lawn. This they found filled with Federal tents and camp-fires. They addressed a group of soldiers sitting round a blazing fire.

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"Who comes there?" inquired a soldier.

"Two po' lone oomans dat wants ter see de general," returned Mrs. Hargrove.

"The general is busy; he can not be bothered by two such looking rag-bundles as you are. Get on, get on, you scarecrows!"

"Massa, we desires ter intervou de general 'bout very purgent biziness."

"Well, what do you desire to tell him?"

"Massa, our biziness bees privut-like."

"Is your business actually urgent?" inquired the soldier, scanning them minutely.

"Yes, sar, massa, dat it is!"

"Well, I will go and ascertain if the general will permit your entrance."

"Massa, kin we come ter de fire an' warm while yer bees gone ter de general? We is wet an' freezin' cole; please, sar, massa, let two po' nigger oomans warm by yer fire."

"Certainly, old woman, you can thaw yourself; you are pitiable objects."

The women crouched before the fire. The men sitting round it scarcely observed the shivering creatures. The soldier soon returned, and conducted them to General McPherson. He sat before a warm fire in their elegant library. A large table was drawn up, and he seemed intently occupied with his writing. His hand moved rapidly and he only glanced up as they entered. Belmont Manning sat before the fire, his eyes fastened upon a magnificent portrait of Miriam hanging just above the low marble mantel. He did not notice the two women crouching in the opposite chimney-corner. His superb features betokened magnetic absorption; consciousness seemed buried to all temporal things save the marvelously beautiful face of the portrait; it exerted a kind of fascination for him that seemed uncontrollable.

"Well, auntie, what do you want?" inquired the general, throwing down his pen.

"You dun furgit me, hab yer, ginerel?"

"I don't remember you distinctly."

"Don't you 'members dat po' ole creeter what yer sabed frum dem grillers dat evening, when dey was gwine ter 'sassinate me an' my po' darter here? We was two oomans libbin' wid my husban'. He went ter de war. He jined Ginerel Grant's army, an' left me an' my po' darter 'lone in dis big worl'. Well, we hired ouse'fs ter Mister Harold what libs here in dis house wid yer, an' plants dis plantation. You knows de nigger men dun all jined Ginerel Grant's army, an' de po' oomans an' chillens what is lef' behin' dey makes a libbin' by workin' dese big plantations what de Federal gentlemuns plants. An' yer knows de grillers? Oh, my God! dem debils what calls demse'fs grillers! You seed dese debils, ginerel?"

"Yes."

"But dey bees anguls 'sides dem lay-outs; you knows we niggers hab each one dun digged us a hole, a way-deep hole under de floor ob our cabins, an' whin we bees wurkin' de fiel's we keeps lookin' an' lookin' fur de grillers, an', good Lor', whin ennybody hollers, 'de grillers is comin'!' we po' nigs, oh, my Lor', how we jist flies; we nebber stops till we gits in our holes!"

General McPherson could not refrain from smiling at the old creature's fear. She acted as if she thought the guerrillas were now about to murder her.

"Yer laughs, ginerel; but, my God, dem grillers an' lay-outs dey duz butcher de po' nigs, ugh!" she continued, shuddering. "I kain't nebber agin work in de fiel's, so I hab comed ter beg yer ter hire me an' my darter here ter cook, an' clean dis big house, an' do sich-like jobbin' fur yer ginerals."

"Are you a good cook?"

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ners for my pruddy, sweet mistiss dat libed right in dis berry house. Mistiss used ter 'vite de quality folks ter dine wid her, an' de biggust dinners I used ter cook! Massa-dem sho' was good times!"

"Was your mistress kind to you?"

"Lor' bless her! yes, ondeed, ginerol. Massa's nigs was heap better off dan dey is now. Ef dis is wot yer calls freedom, I'se dun got 'nuff 'ready. I duzn't want no more freedom!"

"Did you love your master's children?"

"Yes, ondeed, I lubed ebbery one ob dem, particulars Miss Mirum; wot a sweet, pruddy chile she was. Ebbery one ob us niggers sho' did lub dat sweet young girl. Ginerol, dey tells me dat she an' her mudder hab dun jined de grillers, but I don't b'leve it, do I knows dey nebber was skeery, an' ole miss she sho' would fight too."

During this talk Miriam noticed that Belmont Manning sat quietly listening.

"Your mistress frequently comes out to the river front; do you ever see her?"

"No, sar; but I sho' would most break my neck ter see her."

"Come in," exclaimed General McPherson, in answer to a low knock. The door opened and Harold entered.

"General, the guerrillas are close here, and also that rebel spy."

"How do you know?"

"I had a scheme arranged to capture her, but she brought Jesse James with her and defeated my plans. She compelled me to make a final full settlement with her, and then escaped. If I could have detained her one hour longer, her seizure would have been inevitable. But she knew my scheme. How she learned it I can not imagine; but she did, and I narrowly escaped with my life."

"How long has she been gone?"

"One hour."

"Why didn't you convey us immediate information?" said General McPherson.

"I feared to venture out; I believed the guerrillas were scouting in this neighborhood, and I dreaded to encounter them," replied Harold.

"Well, we must endeavor to capture them," said General McPherson, rising and leaving the room, followed by Harold.

Belmont was soon abstractedly silent; his magnificent face was sad, and his head drooped upon his hand. Mrs. Hargrove arose noiselessly to the table where the general had been writing.

She searched carefully among the papers, quietly took such as she desired, concealing them in her ragged bosom. Then she went back and crouched in the corner beside Miriam. Minutes now passed, and the handsome Federal seemed totally unconscious of their presence.

"Massa," said Mrs. Hargrove, "kin me an' my darter stay wid de cook ter-night?"

"Yes, auntie," said Manning.

"Kin we stay roun' de premissus, an' do sich wurk as we kin fin'?"

"Yes."

"Thank yer, massa; an' I hopes de day will soon come whin dis war bees ended, an' you will stay Souf, an' marry a nice good girl like my sweet young Miss Mirum."

His face crimsoned, and he replied:

"Thank you for your kind wishes, auntie."

"Good-night, massa."

"Good-night."

They passed quietly out among the soldiers, unnoticed and unmolested. Again in the saddle, they were soon miles distant. The night was inky black, and losing their way, they allowed their horses to instinctively seek the right direction. The rain still poured in torrents. For hours they

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traveled, until their horses, nearly exhausted, determinedly stopped, refusing to proceed further.

"Mother," said Miriam, "I believe we have stumbled upon a house."

"I hope so," said her mother, "for then we can have shelter until daylight."

"Mother, may be the lay-outs are hiding here. Are you not afraid?"

"My child," replied her mother, "our constitutions are not iron. I am utterly exhausted from mental strain and bodily fatigue. I must rest."

Dismounting, they left their horses under a shed, and entered the house. Stumbling through perfect darkness they could discover nothing of their surroundings. They stretched themselves upon the cold floor, and Miriam was soon asleep. Her head was pillowed upon her mother's arm; and through the silent night that mother watched while the young girl slumbered. Once she fancied that she detected the tramp of hurried feet, but instantly quiet prevailed, and she supposed that her overstrained imagination was at fault. The ring of swords striking against each other struck her listening ear.

"Miriam, awake, darling!" she cried to her child.

"What is it?" she cried, springing up.

"I fear we are occupying the den of the lay-outs."

"If so, God have mercy on us!"

"Come, we must hasten from here."

They left the building by the same door which they had entered. It was yet dark. A faint glimmering light shone through a crack outside. Through this opening they peeped and discovered several lay-outs, men with malignant faces indicative of diabolical natures.

Harold was sitting there, bound hand and foot. Three men were counting a pile of money on the head of a barrel; the others stood eagerly gazing on; and Harold seemed

to know that his minutes were numbered. When the count was finished one of them said with an execration:

“ You hound, this is not all the money! You have hidden it.”

“ Upon my honor, sir, you have every cent.”

The lay-outs struck him across the head with a sharp sword, and the blood spurted over his face.

“ You can kill me, but I have no more money,” he cried out, in agony. “ Oh, spare me, spare me!” prayed the doomed wretch.

“ You shall die,” answered the ruffian, “ but first tell me where is that Confederate spy and her daughter?”

“ They had just left three hours before you captured me.”

“ By God!” cried the lay-outs, “ we came near getting McPherson and his little band. Ha! the fight was glorious! Did the woman have money?”

“ Yes, many thousands.”

“ Which way did she go?”

“ I do not know.”

“ By God, they shall be ours, they and their money!”

Immediately their six sharp blades pierced Harold through and through; his life-blood spurted red as jets of a fountain.

“ Merciful God!” moaned Miriam.

“ Come, darling,” said her mother.

Springing into their saddles, they hurried away.

CHAPTER VIII.

CUTHBERT ELLERY.

It was a lone, desolate country, a level barren stretch devoid of any living thing save two travel-worn women. Shading their eyes from the long amber-hued rays of the sinking sun, they peered into the blue distance unbrokenly treeless. They seemed to be expecting some one.

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"Do you see anything, Miriam?" asked the older of the two.

"No, mother," she replied, anxiously. "Suppose he fails to come?"

They looked at each other.

"Darling, he will come," said the mother. "His business is too urgent; he will not fail."

Again they journeyed in undisturbed stillness. Each countenance was mournfully thoughtful. The wind swept drearily by, bending the withered prairie-grass and chilling the travelers. Constitutionally strong, they had unflinchingly borne hardships severely exhausting, but even their iron nerves were now overstrained. Looking at her mother's drooping frame and travel-worn countenance, Miriam realized that the magnificent features were sharpened to statue-like rigidity, and the body had thinned to skeleton attenuation.

The unnumbing soul was invincibly courageous and peerlessly stern in unyielding, determined constancy to the cause of the Confederacy. There was no shrinking of the brave spirit, no wearying of the tireless energy. The long slanting rays of the setting sun fell in broad belts over the sojourners, and threw their figures into bold relief against the wild trackless waste stretching around them in limitless distance. The level sunset light fell full into their eyes with blinding splendor. Again shading them with their hands, they swept the blue-lined horizon; but no moving thing was visible. Then they watched the sunset.

"Mother, how mercifully loving is God to make His sun shine so benignly over all this beautiful world; just now it illuminates our far-away home and our little darlings, and precious old grandmother may be watching it this moment. Our treasured ones, distant on Virginia battlefields, may too be watching it, and thinking of us, their idolized beings. How good is God to let His sun shine upon us all, enveloping us as in a glorious mantle."

The mother made no reply. Miriam noticed two large tears roll down the hollow cheeks. After awhile she said:

“My child, it may be setting upon a sadder scene. It may be wrapping the bodies of our loved ones in their last long, unbroken sleep. It may be covering their ghastly faces in a winding-sheet of its setting magnificence. It may be sinking upon a battle-field thick with dead and dying, and its level rays may be their drapery—their shrouds of burial!”

Looking into the sad, tenderly mournful countenance, Miriam exclaimed:

“No, no, mother; let us hope in the mercy of God and believe at this moment that His hand guides our dear ones, even upon the bloody battle-fields, and that this instant His sun is setting gloriously upon a camp-ground of soldiers among whom are my father and brother in the vigor of strength. This lonely barrenness has depressed you, I fear.”

“May be it has, darling. Any way, I will endeavor to see the picture which you have drawn instead of my dismally sketched one.”

“Ha! there comes our cavalier,” exclaimed Miriam. With her hand lifted to her eyes she watched a tiny speck moving toward them. Looking into her face, Mrs. Hargrove remarked:

“Stonewall Jackson regards this young officer as among his ablest and noblest patriots. He is now on a secret mission to Mexico. He has been sent by Confederate authorities, and I too have been detailed out there. He was instructed to meet us here, and we are to travel in his company.”

The officer now drew near. Lifting his hat, he saluted them with the easy dignity of a courtier of St. Cloud. Wheeling his spirited charger, he rode beside Mrs. Hargrove, and they were soon in earnest conversation.

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"Look, mother! what is that?" inquired Miriam, pointing to a long line of moving objects in the distance.

"A caravan of sugar-wagons," he replied, and looking into her beautiful eyes continued: "As I was going to Mexico upon important business, Governor — sent this sugar along to be sold. Once in Mexico, it will bring a handsome sum for our cause. Louisiana is rich in sugar and cotton. The trouble is that we have no opportunities for reaching the market except through this tedious, perilous route."

His eyes had not wandered from hers, and he continued:

"This is a long, dangerous journey for you and your mother."

"Not more so than others we have taken," Miriam said.

"Some day history will record the deeds of our brave Confederate women. It will tell the coming generation of the stern, enduring heroism of yourself and mother."

"Our names will never be stamped upon the pages of history. We prefer to conceal our identity. Our only wish is to serve our country."

"You have assuredly served the Confederacy most faithfully and successfully. I heard a high Confederate authority declare that the services which your mother had rendered the cause in Louisiana could not be too highly estimated. The recent capture of certain papers will result in vast benefit. The commission on which I am now going into Mexico is to counteract a project which those documents explained."

"Fortune surely favored me in their capture," remarked Mrs. Hargrove. "I had schemed and reasoned until my brain staggered. I had been commissioned to discover the facts which those papers contained. The attempt at a plan to accomplish this had almost maddened me. At last I struck upon a scheme that appeared my only way of success. It was successful; the papers were obtained at General McPherson's head-quarters, and we were able to make

our escape. Mounting our horses, we fled through the darkness. We traveled days and nights until we reached Shreveport, and delivered the documents to the authorities. What was revealed you know."

The sun had now sunk below the horizon. Night was falling thickly and heavily around them, and they halted for rest. Building a huge fire, the wagons were driven so as to form a circle around it, the mules fed and fastened inside the circle. The travelers, negroes and all gathered around the fire, and the faithful Africans were soon sleeping.

Miriam's head was pillowed upon her mother's lap, and the exhausted girl slept. Mrs. Hargrove and the Confederate officer were engaged in close conversation.

"You see," she said, "that these men whom I am to ferret out are concealing their identity. The difficulty will be to unmask them, to discover them, and to make no mistake in identifying them. If of a surety I find them, I can manage to procure their arrest. They were sent into Mexico upon a diplomatic mission similar to yours. They too went overland with large quantities of sugar to be sold, and the money set apart to the Confederacy. They disposed of the sugar for fabulous prices, pocketed the gold, and invested it in speculation. They buy up the sugar sent to the border-line between Texas and Mexico; of course they have their agents to purchase the sugar, for they dare not cross into Texas themselves, even under their concealed identity. In this way they realize immense profits. Thus, you see, they have organized a system of robbery by which they are becoming nabobs in wealth. They control the sugar-market; keep it at low prices until they are ready to sell; and in this way the Confederacy is robbed. I am to detect them; to be unerring in my identification of them; to entice them to cross the Rio Grande, and then procure their arrest. One of them is a Polish Jew, so says the description: dark, large, strong physiognomy; prominent

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features; coarse, bristling hair; hawk-like nose; small, cunning eyes; height medium; heavy set, broad shoulders and a herculean muscular frame. His true name is Wienawski, but he speculates under that of Wizinski. The other is a Southern man and a traitor to the Confederacy. I know him quite accurately, and think I shall recognize him even through his disguise."

The ruddy light flickered over her pallid countenance. Observing its look of utter weariness, he said:

"Madame, you must sleep; you can rest in perfect security, for I will keep strict watch."

"Thank you, sir," she replied; and bending down she kissed Miriam tenderly, and throwing herself beside the young girl they slumbered.

The night crept silently on, the wind moaned drearily, the fire burned low, but all were unheeded by that lone sentinel. His head drooped while his eyes seldom wandered from the face of the young girl. Quietly he spread a warm blanket over the two. The smoldering fire-light flickered over her exquisite features, and he thought, "She is the loveliest creature human eyes ever beheld; would she were mine; and if God spares my life until this war is over, I will win her if possible."

CHAPTER IX.

A NIGHT ATTACK.

OUR travelers reached their destination—a town on the Rio Grande. Just across the river in Mexico was another town. In this latter place Mrs. Hargrove expected to find the two speculators. Miriam and the Confederate officer remained in the town on the Texas shore, while Mrs. Hargrove crossed to the one in Mexico.

She undertook to discover the men, make sure of their identity, and then entice them to cross into Texas.

She was absent for several days. Miriam became anxious

concerning her safety. Finally a letter came, but it revealed nothing of either success or failure. It briefly gave news that she was well, and ordered a banquet for several distinguished officials and individuals that she wished to honor with a dinner.

While we leave Miriam and the Confederate officer at the hotel of the Texas town we will follow the mother into Mexico. We will enter a large commercial building, and going into a private business department we find three individuals seated at a tall, long desk. They are earnestly engaged in calculations and settlements. After casting up a column of figures, and a careful examination of the calculations, Mrs. Hargrove looked up, saying:

"Gentlemen, it grows late. I must return to my hotel. To-night I will meet you promptly at the wharf on the river; there the sugar will be delivered to you. Be punctual, gentlemen. I wish to cross into Texas before night-fall."

"Madame, we will be prompt and not detain you."

"Thank you, gentlemen," she replied. "While I have been staying in Mexico I have formed the acquaintance of several distinguished friends of the Confederacy—among them yourselves. I wish to honor these individuals by giving them a banquet. I have ordered one for to-night at Hotel Dieu in R—, on the Texas side. Will you please me by attending my reception of friends to-night?"

Quickly the two men exchanged glances; the Jew became nervous, but the American coolly replied:

"You honor us greatly, madame, but it is impossible for us to accept your courtesy."

"Very well," she returned, unconcernedly. "Be punctual to meet me at the wharf. I can not be detained."

"Certainly, madame, we will be as prompt as you desire," replied the Southerner, affably.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," said she.

"Good-afternoon, madame," they replied.

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She walked along the streets of the Mexican city. She had found the two men; of that she was certain. The Southerner had not recognized her; but she had little difficulty in penetrating his disguise. It was the man Grey, whose plantations had bordered upon her own estate. She knew him to have been the cruelest slave-owner in all that region. He had changed his name, and now speculated under that of Jones. She was anxiously thinking how to induce them across the Rio Grande.

She did not observe that she had lost her way, and was now in a narrow dusky alley, a fitting street for the hiding dens of outlaws. The place was filled with bar-rooms and gambling-houses, the homes of ruffians. She did not know that three men were sneaking behind her, following her with soft inaudible tread, until tiger-like they could spring upon her. They were Mexican ruffians. Just at the moment, fortunately she stumbled against the projecting edge of a building, and the shock roused her from her reverie. Glancing around, she perceived the Mexicans. They paused, and she held out her pocket-book. This proceeding seemed to please them, and they approached her.

"I am a rich woman," said she, "I will give you all my gold if you will assist me in arresting two men whom I desire to carry across the river. I am not afraid of you. If you were to kill me you would get no more money than there is in this pocket-book. You can have it and much more, if you will help me. Will you?" she inquired, looking unwaveringly into their dark, diabolical countenances.

"State your plans and terms," one of them responded, as he scowled at her. He had taken her pocket-book, and was now examining the contents.

"You must follow me this evening, and notice the two men that will accompany me. We will walk to the crossing on the river; there we will have business transactions. When they are concluded I will step into a boat to cross to the Texas side. You must seize the two men, bind them,

and put them into the boat with me. I will pay you ten times the money in that pocket-book. Is it a bargain?"

"Yes," they replied.

"Without fail?"

"We will not fail."

And they did not. It was almost dark when the sugar was finally carried across into Mexico, and as it required an hour to complete calculations and settlements, it was night before Mrs. Hargrove was ready for departure. The Jew, the more cunning and avaricious of the two speculators, had not hesitated to accompany Mrs. Hargrove to the river-crossing. But the American was on the alert, and seemed suspicious of her. They stood near the river-bank, and were finishing their computations by the light of a lantern placed upon the head of a sugar-barrel. Suddenly the light was out—the two men seized. The Southerner escaped, but the Jew was gagged, bound, and put into the boat. The desperadoes were promptly paid, and skulked off through the dark. When the boat reached the Texas shore the Jew was delivered to the proper authorities, and Mrs. Hargrove was again with her daughter.

Next morning they departed homeward. Fearing that the Mexican thieves might follow them, the Confederate officer accompanied them a day's travel to where the wagons were filled with sacks of salt. The gold which she was conveying to the Confederate head-quarters was deposited inside of two or three of the sacks. Here, too, they found a Confederate gentleman returning to Louisiana. Consigning them to his protection, Cuthbert Ellery bid them adieu, and proceeded on his mission.

Miriam and her mother, the negroes and gentleman journeyed homeward. For three days they traveled without molestation. The country was wild and desolate. On the night of the third day the travelers were exceedingly weary, and they camped for rest. The wagons were driven in a circle around a large fire; the teams were fastened se-

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curely in this circle, and each individual was soon sleeping soundly, save Mrs. Hargrove. She did not fear the negro drivers; they were faithful. Nor did she fear the Confederate citizen under whose protection she was traveling. The wagon containing the gold was in the center of the circle, and negroes sleeping within the wagon to guard its contents.

Her anxiety was caused from anticipating an attack from the Mexican freebooters. She lay close to the side of her daughter. Suddenly a shadow fell across the young girl's features. Mrs. Hargrove glanced up, and instantly a poniard gleamed above her. The Mexican ruffians had seized their first opportunity. She did not scream, but receiving the descending knife upon her left arm, she fired unerringly.

The bullet did its fatal work. Mrs. Hargrove and Miriam sprung to their feet. Their escort was dying. One of the assassins, coming stealthily upon him, had stabbed him as he slept. The attack was desperate, and the women fought with the fury of despair. The negroes were well armed, and obeyed their orders. Mrs. Hargrove coolly and deliberately commanded them to make a breastwork of salt-sacks while she and Miriam kept back the assailants with their unerring fire. This was successfully done, and all were speedily sheltered behind the entrenchment.

They were now comparatively secure, but she commanded them to fire upon every approaching object. The attacking Mexicans now seemed to have skulked off. They did not return; daylight revealed several of them killed. After burying the Confederate citizen, the travelers pursued their journey without further molestation.

CHAPTER X.

MANNING WOUNDED.

THE Confederate cause in Louisiana was becoming desperate. The Federal troops were stationed at various points along the western bank of the Mississippi; and the gun-boats held possession from Memphis to the Gulf of Mexico, except at Port Hudson and Vicksburg. The latter was the strongest and best defended port on the river. General Grant, in order to divide the Confederacy in two, was incessantly maneuvering to gain possession of these two strongholds.

The State of Louisiana produced cotton and sugar in abundance, but now that shipment had closed its great source of wealth was dried up. As importation of foreign commodities was impossible, articles that had been before regarded as absolute necessities became unattainable luxuries. Supplies became more and more scanty, till not only severe privation, but positive suffering ensued.

Such was the condition of affairs in the earlier months of 1863.

At the same time the fertile lands of the plantations from the Arkansas line southward were cultivated by Unionists. Women and children were numerous, and they labored in those with greater energy than many of them had ever worked while in servitude. The guerrillas and lay-outs, who still harassed the region, often murdered them savagely.

This terror was nevertheless a wholesome restraint. It kept the dangerous negroes overawed; as otherwise they would have massacred every solitary Southerner yet remaining in the river district.

The whole region had become engaged in the wildest and most extensive cotton speculations. The Federal troops,

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now located at various points along the Louisiana side of the Mississippi, protected the Unionist speculators. Mrs. Hargrove, as we have already seen, was herself engaged in transporting cotton from the interior of the State to the neighborhood of the river districts. She conveyed it to a place within safe limits, where Stotts, a Federal speculator, would receive it from her, and by shipping it to market always realized more than double the price he had paid. Along the banks of the Mississippi there runs a fertile belt occupied by the cotton-fields. It extends twenty-five or thirty miles back from the river, parallel to it the entire length of the State. It was under high cultivation. Between this belt and the western hill-parishes is an almost roadless swamp. We have already remarked that Mrs. Hargrove and her family had abandoned their home by the Mississippi and became refugees in the interior of the State. The Federal troops were occupying the river front, and the inhabitants generally had emigrated to the hill districts. The Union soldiers seldom penetrated so far. Quantrell and his guerrillas were in this region. They would make raids to the river, dash unexpectedly upon the plantations, drive the negroes in terror from the fields, take mules, burn cotton, destroy growing crops, engage in skirmishes with Union troops, and secure ammunition and other necessary articles. Mrs. Hargrove had received information from Stotts, the lessee, that her favorite son had been seen by her former servant, Ann, in the vicinity of their river home. Instantly she determined to go to him. Quantrell, having gone on one of these raids, Lee and Jesse James set out to join him. Mrs. Hargrove took advantage of this opportunity to secure their protection.

It was a brilliant spring day. The whisper of the rustling leaves was in strong contrast to the boom of distant cannons which was distinctly heard; for Grant was then bombarding Vicksburg, and some of his boats were running up and down the river, throwing shells into the back

region in order to deter the guerrillas from attacking the Federal troops and Unionist planters. The heavy roar of cannon and the scream of bursting shells told of their proximity. A party of horsemen, with two ladies, were cantering through the lonely, dismal swamp. The ladies were Miriam and her mother. The erect, stately figure of Lee was conspicuous in advance of the small cavalcade. Miriam rode between her mother and Jesse James. Presently Lee paused and waited for them to come up with him. Though a stern, fearless warrior, the presence of ladies embarrassed him almost to timidity. His face crimsoned as he lifted his hat to Mrs. Hargrove and her daughter. In a moment he spoke diffidently:

"I hear firing in that direction," pointing toward the river, "I think McPherson has encountered Quantrell."

"If so," said James, inquiringly, "these ladies must remain here."

"Yes," said Lee, "and we will leave five men to protect them."

"Do you think it safe for us to encamp here in this dense swamp?" asked Mrs. Hargrove.

"I do," replied the commander. "A guerrilla fight is a dangerous thing for ladies to encounter."

"I do not like to remain in this wild region," said she;

"I prefer to go with you."

"Madame, you will be safer here. The night is warm, and you can build fires to keep off wolves and other wild animals."

"But the swamp is dense. I prefer to be captured or to be shot in the battle rather than be devoured by ferocious beasts."

"I will leave five men to protect you," replied the commander. "Let me entreat you and your daughter to go back to your place of refuge in the hill-country. Go back to your children, and do not attempt to reach your river home."

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"I am going to meet my son, sir," said Mrs. Hargrove. "One of my old servants sent me word that my boy-soldier had been captured and brought here. He went to the war with his father, and I have heard nothing from them for two years. They were with Stonewall Jackson in Virginia when I last received a letter from them. My old servant sent me word that she had seen my son, and assured me that she had made no mistake in recognizing him."

"Madame," pleaded the guerrilla chief, "we can not protect you on the battle-field. I must urge you to remain here."

"Sir," she replied, "I will find my boy. I must reach the river."

"Good-evening, madame; I must hasten to Quantrell's relief."

"Sir, if you are captured, my daughter and I will also risk a capture."

"Madame, a guerrilla never surrenders. Again I entreat you to remain here. The firing increases, and I must hurry. Good-evening."

Then giving the command "Forward," he rode furiously away. The troops were soon lost in the dense woods.

Mrs. Hargrove and her daughter were splendid riders, and their steeds were swift and powerful. Jesse James and his little band rode at their side, following close behind Lee and his force as they swept forward with furious speed. Huge semi-tropical trees grew thickly in a wild tangled mass, and a dense undergrowth of bamboo and swamp-cane concealed any object only a few feet distant. Rank, luxuriant creepers trailed to the tops of the giant trees, then curled and drooped earthward, swinging in long garlands down to the thick, wild-tangled ground foliage. The towering trees, thus festooned, shut out the cerulean sky. The riders bent low to avoid being snatched from their horses.

On they rushed. Lee was furious to reach Quantrell. They could hear the bullets and see the smoke, but the densely growing trees shut out the field of conflict from their sight. Lee paused again.

“Ladies, I entreat you to remain even here. That solid belt of timber alone separates you from the firing, and will shelter you from the bullets. The fighting is stubborn. Quantrell will never surrender. If we retreat we will probably go this way, and you can join us.”

They accordingly concealed themselves in the thick wood, while the guerrillas hurried to the fray. The bullets rattled in the dense foliage, scattering forest leaves upon the ground. The boom of guns, the shrieks of the wounded and dying, and the fierce tumult of the strife filled them both with terror. Their horses reared and plunged so desperately that Miriam alighted and assisted her mother in dismounting. They could now hear Quantrell urging his men to charge. Then came a terrific roar of artillery which silenced the very inhabitants of the forest and deadened the fearful noise of the charging guerrillas. Now they in turn were swept backward, and forced to flee. On, with the swiftness of a hurricane, they sped through the forest, with Federals in furious pursuit.

The two women were now left in a desperate condition. Their horses, maddened and unmanageable, tore away from them, and ran after the flying guerrillas. Miriam saw Lee hastening toward them, but when he found them dismounted and himself in danger of immediate capture, he turned his horse, and followed rapidly after his associates. “Halt, halt, you rebels!” thundered through the wild forest. But no halting from Quantrell, Lee or James. If ever captured, it must be with a bullet. The thunder and boom swept by and rolled softened in the distance, then died away, and deep, unbroken silence followed.

A heavy groan at this instant caused Miriam to look downward. There upon the greensward lay two soldiers,

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one dead, the other apparently dying. In the cool, sweet hush of the forest stillness, where the spring flowers sprinkle the green velvety earth, and the winds and birds murmur their dreamy song, who lies so still in the rustling grass? His dead cheek pressed upon a cluster of swamp-lilies, he slept where the lights and shadows crossed through the swaying boughs and rustling creepers. Who lies so still, so dead, in the whispering grass? A soldier clad in the Confederate gray. A light-haired man with lips apart, one hand thrown over his dead face, the other clutching his pulseless heart, lies here in the forest shadows, cool and dim, his musket caught in a trailing bough. Here he sleeps with a careless grace in each quiet limb, and a wound on his manly brow. "A wound, alas! whence the warm blood drips upon the rustling grass." There they lay, two soldiers, the arms of the one yet living intertwining the lifeless form of the other. Both so handsome, peerless, grand, twin-brothers, a Federal and a Confederate, had met for the last time. The wounded Federal was twining his arms around his dead Confederate brother. Ah, death, no matter whose is the victory, Federal or Confederate, you are triumphant!

Miriam and her mother knelt beside the soldiers. They did not disturb the dead one; he would slumber on till a louder summons should awaken him. The young girl raised the hand of the living one. A spasm of pain contorted his features, and she rested his head upon her lap. At once she recognized that face. How the features had sharpened and thinned since she had seen him weary months ago.

"Where the violets peer from their dusky beds,
 With a tearful dew in their great, pure eyes;
 The lilies quiver their shining heads,
 Their pale lips full of a sad surprise,
 And the lizard darts through the glistening fern,
 And the squirrels rustle the branches hoary,

Strange birds fly out with a cry, to bathe
 Their wings in the sunset glory,
 While the shadows pass
 O'er the dying face and quiet grass.

“God pity the girl who waits on him,
 With his lily cheeks and violet eyes,
 Dreaming the sweet old dreams of love,
 While her lover is entering paradise;
 God strengthen her heart as the days go by,
 And the long, drear nights of her vigils follow,
 Nor bird, nor moon, nor whispering wind,
 May breathe the tale of the hollow:
 Alas, alas!
 The secret is safe with the woodland grass.”

Miriam still bowed over the fainting soldier. The blood streamed from a wound in his side; he was weak and ghastly from its loss. Mrs. Hargrove held the lips of the wound together, but it did not check the flow. Finally Miriam gathered up a handful of soft marshy earth and pressed it into the gaping wound. They untwined his arms from the dead brother, their tears flowing in sad commiseration.

“Ah, my child!” exclaimed Mrs. Hargrove, “what a sad, sad thing is war. Here are twin-brothers, the counterpart of each other—only twins could so closely resemble—one a Confederate, the other a Federal. They meet upon the battle-field, the strangeness of carnage brings them here to die together. Each dies for the cause that he believes right. Death ends their animosity, conquers their differences, and brings back their old undying love. When these were little boys, bending around their mother’s knees, how little they dreamed of the great conflict which would separate them until death should unite them on the battle-field. Their great life-drama is ended; divided in time, united in eternity; enemies in life, brothers in death.”

Mrs. Hargrove bent over the Confederate dead, and

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thoughts of her own loved ones made the tears fall swiftly upon the face so cold, so deathly tranquil. She took his pulseless hand and placed it on that of his brother. There seemed a magnetism in the touch of the dead fingers, for the soldier in blue opened his eyes, and gazing upon the cold rigid face of the other, murmuring brokenly:

“Oh, mother, mother, our idol is dead, shot by a brother’s hand!”

The unutterable anguish of this sad wail seemed to echo through the stillness of the grand old forest.

“Dead, dead, shot by a brother’s hand!”

The sighing wind seemed to repeat this mournful wail; the rustling grasses softly whispered the sad, sad story; the forest stillness guarded it forever and forever.

“Miriam,” said her mother, “the wild animals will scent this human gore, and hurry to their feast upon the battlefield. Already—listen—” and their blood seemed to freeze as the wild scream of a panther shook the dusky forest stillness.

“Come, mother,” cried Miriam, “we must get out of this wilderness.”

They were brave women; but their imminent danger blanched their cheeks and chilled their blood.

“Come,” said the mother, “we can not benefit the dead, but we must not leave this wounded man a helpless victim to ferocious animals.”

Imminent peril fires every energy of noble natures, and inspires them as with supernatural strength. The women lifted the wounded man, and, with his own feeble efforts, they hurried from the darkening swamp, which stretched in unbroken dreariness between the hill districts and river parishes. Again the wild blood-curdling scream of a panther sounding nearer through the gathering darkness seemed to freeze their breath; but they kept on with their burden. Fortunately the wounded man was not a heavy

form. He was only of medium height, and thin almost to emaciation.

His strength continued to fail, compelling them to carry him outright. Dense inky darkness had now closed in around them, and the terrific howl of a flock of wolves filled them with new alarm. Finally they came to the outskirts of the fearful swamp. At once appeared the distant glimmer of camp-fires.

It was now a twofold peril. To turn back or even remain where they were was certain death from wild beasts. They must seek such protection as their enemies would afford them. They had served their country with unfaltering purpose, and were marked characters for whose capture a reward had been offered. Yet they had no alternative. They must surrender.

As they approached the camp-fires they witnessed a woful spectacle. The survivors of the battle were burying the dead. The men looked wonderingly at the women as they came up with their burden. The story was soon told, and they were immediately taken to a cabin at some distance. The Federal troops were encamped around this building, while the wounded were sheltered inside.

Presently General McPherson entered, accompanied by a surgeon. The latter, addressing a negro, said commandingly:

"Here, Jake, lift this man."

"My God, Howells!" exclaimed the general, "that is Belmont Manning. I did not know that he was wounded."

"Yes," replied the other. "These two women dragged him in from the swamp, where he would certainly have perished. He owes his preservation to them."

The general's face saddened.

"I fear that we did not find all who were wounded," said he. "The wilderness was so dense and dark that many of them may have been missed. I gave orders that the dead should be gathered, brought out to the clear field,

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and buried; but I now fear that many remained undiscovered in the low thick undergrowth."

"Lors-a-marcey, ef har ain't mistiss an' Miss Miriam!" exclaimed Jake, rushing up to Mrs. Hargrove. "I neber 'spected ter see yer agin; mistiss, is mammy wid yer?"

"No; Miriam and I are alone; we are now prisoners, and I do not know when we can return to her and my family."

"Whar is dey?"

"Out in the hills beyond the swamp."

"De night we runned off an' went to de Yankees, we begged mammy and Uncle Ben ter come too; but dey sed dey would die fo' dey wud leab mistiss, ole mistiss, an' de chillens. Mistiss, do yer ebber har frum massa?"

"Only twice since the war began. He was wounded at Seven Pines. That was the last I heard of him."

"Lors-a-marcey, mistiss, how I wish dat dis war ha' neber comed! How I wish dat we all was back on de ole plantashum, wid massa, an' mistiss, an' de chillens. I'd gib my life ter be dar agin like dem times on de ole plantashum;" and he wiped the tears from his eyes. "Wot made de white folks go ter fitin' each udder anyhow, mistiss?"

"The Yankees say to free you negroes."

"Dat's wot dey tole me de night I runned off frum hum. Mistiss, I stole back ter de ole place ter look at de dear ole hum, mistiss, an' I sot down on de pile ob bricks, mistiss, whar de bressed ole house used to stan', an', mistiss, my heart mos' busted caze de tears could not git out fas' nuff. It looked so lonesome wid massa, mistiss, ole mistiss, de chillens, and mammy an' Uncle Ben, an' eben de bressed dear ole house dun all gone, dun all gone. De cabins, an' stabuls, an' gin, an' ebbery house dun burnt ter de ground. Nuffin' dar now but de wind in de dead trees, an' de owls an' ghosteses dat hides in dem too."

"Come, Jake, and lift this poor fellow," said the surgeon.

"Yas, sar, massa. Mistiss—" he continued as he lingered, hating to leave.

"Come on quick, you black imp."

"Yas, sar, massa," and he made a brisk movement as if he intended to start instantly. "Mistiss, is yer gwine stay wid de Yankees?"

"I do not know what will be done with me, Jake."

"Come on quick, this instant, you imp of midnight," shouted the surgeon.

Miriam stepped quickly forward and held the arm he was splintering.

"Do you think he will die?" she inquired, anxiously.

"Certainly, miss. The wound in his arm is not dangerous, but the one in his side I think is mortal."

He looked into her face as he spoke, and noting its intense solicitude he continued, kindly:

"Good nursing may save him. McPherson loves him tenderly as a woman; he would give his own life to save him. Is he your relative?"

"The general is."

"I mean the wounded man."

"No, sir."

The surgeon wondered to himself at her anguished, compassionate interest. He likewise noticed that she never left Manning that night. Tenderly she bathed his burning brow; gently she cooled his parched lips. Most tenderly and compassionately she watched him through the dangerous night, General McPherson assisting.

"Missie, I'se seed him offen," said Jake, standing by her as she nursed the man that she had rescued. "He is de bestest man dat ebber libed, 'cept massa."

"How do you know?"

"Caze he is gude ter wunded soldiers, an' 'specially ter de wunded rebil. De ginerax ed him wun day wot

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made him so kine ter de Federates? He said, 'Gineral, I hab a twin-brudder in de Federate Army.'"

The young girl remembered the dead soldier left to be the prey of wild animals. Sad, sad thoughts crowded her brain, and her tears fell upon the face of the wounded officer. His long lashes quivered, and his mournful blue eyes gazed into hers. His lips parted and she bent low to catch his whisperings, touching his face with the pearly rim of her ears. The touch seemed to send life through his body, and his gaze became riveted upon her. She laid her hand gently upon his, and his fingers twined themselves around hers. He lay upon a pallet in a corner of the room, and she sat on the floor beside him. Her mother and Jake were busily occupied in nursing the other wounded soldiers that were placed thickly upon the cabin floor. It was beyond the noon of a starry night. Outside the camp-fires burned brightly, and their flickering light fell through the cabin door, and lay in their golden beauty across the marble countenance of the sufferer.

Again his pallid lips murmured:

"Do not leave me."

"I will nurse you as long as possible," she replied. "Rest assured I will remain with you while I may."

"But to-morrow you leave me?"

"I can not tell; my mother and I are prisoners; we can not guess what disposition will be made of us."

"He is a noble, honorable man, and will treat you generously."

General McPherson carefully regarded the beautiful girl's face as she continued her kind offices to the wounded man. Manning moaned and then quietly raised his head. He had been sleeping, and now awoke greatly refreshed.

"Belmont, how are you now?" the general asked.

"I feel much better, thank you."

"You certainly have a faithful nurse," replied McPherson, with a smile.

"Yes, general, and I must entreat you not to deprive me of her services."

"Ay," replied the general. "I understand the situation. I will be merciful. She will remain in charge of you."

"Thank you, general."

"Keep quiet, Belmont; this excitement will not do. Your recovery depends upon rest and quiet as well as careful attention."

The wounded man was well satisfied. He closed his eyes and reposed quietly.

So he continued many days.

CHAPTER XI.

SCENES IN LIFE AS PRISONERS.

GENERAL MCPHERSON changed his head-quarters to the village near the lake. The Delta canal had proved a failure, and the Federal soldiers were employed to cut a second channel from the Mississippi. The waters of the river pouring through into Lake Providence, passed thence into the bayou streams beyond, would deepen them sufficiently to render them navigable. The boats would be able to readily pass the Mississippi to the lake, and into the back country. The region, formally a garden, has since become a desolate swamp, grown over with forest and inhabited by wild beasts.

Mrs. Hargrove and Miriam were occupying a pleasant room in the large building. Lessee Stotts also lived there. The two women assisted at nursing the wounded soldiers. General McPherson kept his word with Belmont Manning. The life of the young officer was in deadly peril.

Severe inflammation had set in, and it required incessant care. In his wild delirium he would entreat his young nurse not to desert him, and the sound of her gentle voice

never failed to quiet him. She and her mother together took charge of him.

"Mother," said Miriam one day to her, "I think we have been deceived. Russell can not be here. Stotts must have been misinformed."

"He wrote that Ann recognized her young master, though he was in disguise."

"She must have been mistaken. He has had opportunity to see us and speak to us."

As they were thus discussing, the negro Jake came to the room.

"Mistiss," said he, "I'se got sumfin' ter tell yer."

"What is it, Jake?"

"Yer 'member Ann an' all yer udder niggers?"

"Yes."

"Well, dey is har dyin' like po' dogs. De small-pox is killin' dem fas'. Dey bin moved away off ter demselves ter keep de small-pox frum spreadin' 'mong de soljurs. No-body goes near dese po' sick creeters, an' dey is jis dyin' fas'. Ann sez, 'Jake, go beg mistiss ter come an' see her po' dyin' nigger.' Mistiss, she kain't lib long, an' wants ter see yer."

"Very well, I will go," said Mrs. Hargrove.

"Mother, mother!" cried Miriam, "you must not run such a risk."

"I do not fear it, and the poor creature is dying. I will return soon."

"Mother, please don't go," pleaded the daughter.

"Mistiss, Ann is gwine tell yer sumfin' bout young massa."

"Where is he Jake; oh, where is he?"

"I wish I knew, mistiss; but come quick and see ef Ann knows."

Mrs. Hargrove found her servant near death, lying on the hard ground with a chunk under her head. The sight was most pitiable. The spacious inclosure had once been

a stable-yard. It was here covered with negroes sick with small-pox and cholera. They had been put into this inclosure like lepers to prevent their contact with others. From all the parishes the negro women and children had flocked to the Federal head-quarters. Here the gun-boats landed; the men had been mustered into the Federal Army, and their women and children had collected in crowds at General McPherson's head-quarters. He was a humane soldier, but, under the circumstances, deemed it best to have the sufferers isolated to prevent the pestilence from spreading among his army. They lay upon the ground dying like stricken sheep, without proper medicines, nursing, shelter or even sufficient food, suffering and dying in a fearful condition.

"Mistiss, oh, mistiss, you comed!" wailed the wretched creature, as Mrs. Hargrove bent over her.

"Yes, Ann; Jake said you wanted to see me."

"Yas, gude mistiss, I am dyin'."

"Ann, have you anything to tell me about your young master?" asked the eager mother.

"I wish I did hab sumfin' ter tell yer. Two weeks ago he was har, an' I talked wid him."

"Oh, where is he? where is he?"

"De lay-outs got arter him, thinkin' he was a deserter, an' I think he went back ter Vicksburg."

"They did not murder him?"

"No, mistiss; I seed him escape across de ribber; dey did not git him."

"I thank the merciful God!" exclaimed the anxious mother.

"Mistiss, I'se got sumfin' awful ter tell yer. Can yer stan' it, po' mistiss?"

"Tell me quick, quick; what is it?"

"Massa is dead."

Mrs. Hargrove fell to the ground as if a bullet had struck her a mortal blow.

"Po' mistiss, po' mistiss. Jake, take her back ter mis-sie. I wish I hab died fo' I tole her dat massa is dead."

Jake lifted his mistress up, and in a few moments she recovered.

"Oh, mistiss, mistiss, dis war is awful; death hab got me too. Ef I meets massa, way up in dat gude worl', I will tell him how it mos' killed yer ter know he is dead. Oh, mistiss, I wish dis war had not comed, an' massa, an' all ob us was back on de ole plantashum. Mistiss, I ain't got long ter lib. Tell my mammy dat she was de wisest fur ter stay wid yer an' ole mistiss."

"Poor creature, I wish I could relieve you," said Mrs. Hargrove, her tears falling rapidly.

"Mistiss, oh, mistiss, don't leab me ter die alone!"

"Poor creature, I will remain, but I am helpless."

"Mistiss, talk ter me 'bout de gude Saviour dat ole mis-tiss an' mammy used ter tell us little niggers 'bout on dem happy Sunday evenin's."

"He is the only one that can help you through the lonely valley. Put your dying thoughts on Him, and His loving tenderness will hold you up, and lift you above the dark billows. Through death He will walk with you, and you will not go in the shadowy gloom alone. He will lead you into light. He loves you as well as me. He never forsakes those who love and trust Him. Human love, like other human passions, often, nay, most frequently, forsake us, but His love beats strong and steady for those who trust and love Him. Those that love Him feel His arms around them. Those who do not love Him have not this proof. I know when my heart beats with love for human creatures. I know when my heart throbs with love for my Lord. These truths are felt. I know when I suffer; and all argument that I do not experience pain is the talk of idiots. I know when I feel love for my Lord unlike human feeling. His spirit encircles us, giving us sure proof that He is more than human. With our eyes we see physical objects; we

see the trees and all other surrounding objects; with the spiritual sight we realize the Divine."

Mrs. Hargrove seemed rapt as in communion with her interior self. She forgot that she was talking to an uneducated listener. But the dusky features shone with a glow of light.

"Mistiss, I understan'. I know wot yer mean. His arms are roun' me, I am not afeer' ter die."

Then, calmly as a child dropping into slumber, the poor creature passed away.

Mrs. Hargrove waited upon General McPherson, and secured a decent burial for her servant. She then returned to Miriam.

She had now composed herself, and bore her agony of soul patiently. Her daughter, however, read the quiet countenance, and knew that her mother's heart was writhing in dumb anguish. They sat beside Manning. His fever was still raging, and he required constant attention.

Lessee Stotts came in to share their vigils. As he seated himself by Mrs. Hargrove he whispered:

"Did you find your servant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Did she give you definite information?"

"She thinks my boy left here to escape being murdered by the lay-outs."

"They are desperate brigands," said he, "deserters from both armies that have organized themselves to steal, rob and murder. They murder Federal, Confederate, lessee or citizen. Any brutality they will commit for booty."

"Yes, sir," said she, "and your own life is in imminent danger."

He turned ghastly pale as he asked:

"Mrs. Hargrove, why do they suspect me?"

"They think you are a Federal spy; besides, they believe you keep money in this house."

Just at this moment a sharp knock at the hall-door arrested their attention.

"It is General McPherson," said Stotts. "He promised to come down to-night."

"Sir, it is safer for you to remain here," Mrs. Hargrove replied. "I will go and open the door."

Mrs. Hargrove proceeded down the corridor, followed by Stotts.

"Sir, you had better not come," said she again.

"Mrs. Hargrove," said he, "I am sure it is McPherson. There is no danger to-night. The lay-outs are not in this neighborhood."

"You never know where they are, until their bullets strike you."

She had reached the hall-door. Before opening it she cautiously peeped through the glass transom on the right side. A pistol-shot passed at the side of her nose, and the glass shattered in her face. The flash scorched her.

Stotts fell, pierced by the bullet. He had followed immediately behind her, and had stooped also to peep through the transom.

"Lock that door," said Mrs. Hargrove. "They will murder him too."

Miriam locked the door, and returned to her mother as the corridor and room became crowded with depraved wretches. They robbed the dying lessee while Mrs. Hargrove and Miriam were washing the blood from his face. They rifled his pockets, taking his watch and the sleeve-buttons from under Miriam's fingers while she held his dying hand.

"Mother, mother!" murmured the dying man; then he was dead.

They next searched every corner of the room, and plundered every department of the building. They were about to break open the door of Manning's room.

"Mother, mother, they will murder him!" said Miriam, in agony.

"Keep quiet, Miriam," her mother answered, in a low voice. "I believe I recognize Jesse James, even through his disguise.

"Which one, mother?"

"The one with the black plume in his hat."

Instantly Miriam went to the door, where stood a gang of the ruffians disguised in black masks, with broad-brimmed black hats shading their hideous countenances. Placing her hand upon his arm, she whispered:

"Jesse James"—he started as if a viper had stung him—"Jesse James, will you allow them to go in there and murder my brother?"

She saw his eyes flash through the opening of his midnight-black mask.

"My brother is a Confederate soldier," said she. "He is true as steel to the South. So are you. I have always regarded you as loyal to the Confederacy. Oh, you can not, you will not murder my brother!"

"Halt there, you bandit dogs!" he shouted.

The door had been broken open, and they had rushed into the room like a pack of hungry wolves. At the fierce tones of their leader they paused. Miriam hurried to the side of Belmont, and concealed his features with her bended body. Jesse James had seen him at other times, and she had good cause to fear. But almost instantly the room was cleared. She heard the firing of the guerrillas as they poured through the yard.

Next morning the dead bodies of five negroes were found on the floor.

CHAPTER XII.

AN INTERVIEW WITH GENERAL GRANT.

"MIRIAM, my child, what shall we do?"

"Be patient and wait. We are still prisoners, but I deeply rejoice that our case is not worse. I have dreaded lest we should be taken to a Northern prison."

"My darling, we have not passed that danger. The Federal authorities may yet send us thither. I have wondered that they let us remain here so long; but I am certain that they will finally remove us to the North."

After the recovery of their patient, the two speakers had been transferred to the house where General McPherson now had his head-quarters, and were closely confined in a room in the second story of the building. Mrs. Hargrove was sitting before the closed window, her head drooping wearily. Miriam restlessly walked the floor.

"If I could only hear from my dear ones at home," continued Mrs. Hargrove.

"Do not worry about them, mother," said Miriam. "Uncle Ben will protect them though it cost him his life; besides, Quantrell and his guerrillas are friendly to the inhabitants of the hill districts. You have served the Confederate cause in Western Louisiana, and have also aided these guerrillas."

"I am sure that they will not molest my family. It is only on the river front that the guerrillas murder Confederates."

"Yes, they suspect these river Confederates as not being loyal."

Deep silence followed. Miriam still continued to walk the floor, and the long level rays of sunshine slanting through the window-panes fell in quivering belts across her white face. Her lips were tightly compressed; her brow

was terribly drawn and corded. Her whole physiognomy betokened repressed but deep and concentrated thought. Glancing up, she paused beside her mother, and kneeling at her feet, she whispered:

“Mother, mother, we can make our escape.”

The girl's eyes flashed.

“Hush, my darling, the sentinel is nearing our door.”

Springing to her feet, she resumed her walk.

The sentinel glanced in, saw nothing suspicious, and closing the door, locked it.

“If I only knew when General Grant would have this canal completed?” she said inquiringly of her mother.

“It will be finished very soon; probably in a day or two. From this window I can see the soldiers steadily at work. Why do you desire to know?” whispered the mother.

“I will tell you to-night when we are more secure from intrusion. This canal scheme will be like his Delta canal, utterly useless for his purpose. The entire swamp is inundated, and Grant thinks that this inundation has deepened the lakes and bayous that make a connected chain to the Washita; the Washita runs into the Red River and the Red into the Mississippi. He thinks by cutting this canal he will make a passage from the Mississippi into this lake; and that his gun-boats, having once passed through this canal and into Lake Providence, will have sure channels running into the Washita.”

“Child, those gun-boats will never reach Washita that way; these gun-boats will find themselves securely anchored among century-old timbers. That swamp is so dense that it will be an utter impossibility for these huge heavy gun-boats to get through.”

“I sincerely hope Grant will not learn this fact until too late for a remedy.”

“So do I. Of course, we know that he has not explored that route very far; otherwise he would have seen his error.”

"He may yet learn it, and abandon that scheme."

"True; but even in that case this canal will have served him two good purposes. It has kept his soldiers occupied so that they could not desert and escape through Arkansas into Missouri and Kansas. Many of his soldiers are Kansas men, and it being easy to reach their homes, they would surely desert. But the greatest benefit to him is that the water let into the back country through this canal will unite with the inundated districts from the Delta canal. Thus, the two floods uniting, will sweep in one almost continuous ocean from the Arkansas line to Red River, entirely preventing the Confederates of Western Louisiana from marching to the river front and intercepting or even annoying him while he conducts his army down by land on the narrow belt of ground immediately on the Mississippi River."

"He has rolled the spring floods between his army and that of Western Louisiana."

"He has, or at least will have done so when this canal will become finished. The guerrillas, unless they come to-day or to-morrow, will have no opportunities of raiding upon the river. The lessees and negroes will be unmolested by them. I can not believe that Grant will attempt to convey his gun-boats through that swamp."

"I think he intends to march his soldiers down by land on this side the river."

"But his gun-boats?"

"Will float by Vicksburg under the cover of darkness."

"His soldiers having reached a point below Vicksburg on this side the river, they will catch the transports and cross to the opposite side?" inquired Miriam, standing very near her mother, and with eager eyes gazing into her upraised countenance.

"Yes, child; that will become Grant's most feasible way of getting into the rear of Vicksburg. He will not go up the Yazoo, because the Confederates are stationed at a point

on that river, and they would endanger his safe passage to the rear of Vicksburg."

"Mother, mother," cried the enthusiastic girl, "what a grand opportunity Pemberton and Bowen will have to capture that part of Grant's immense army that first crosses the river and lands on the opposite shore."

"True; because he will have to divide his army; he can not cross it all at the same time; part will be in Louisiana while the others will land upon the Mississippi side."

"Listen, mother, the guerrillas must be near," said Miriam, as a dreadful boom shook the house, rattling the window-panes, and bursting shells screamed above the roof.

"No, I think not. Grant keeps up this bombardment to prevent the guerrillas from surprising his soldiers while they are cutting this canal. He bombards whether the guerrillas are seen or not, because he never knows their proximity."

The screaming shells, together with the distant boom from Vicksburg, made an awful gloom for these two.

The sentinel's knock on the outside of the door warned them that visitors approached for admittance. The door opened, and General Grant entered, accompanied by General McPherson and Belmont Manning. The latter soon obtained permission to escort Miriam for a walk on the front lawn.

"Well, madame," said the general, "I have come to question you about the lakes and bayous running from the Mississippi at this point back through that swamp extending between here and the bill-parishes. Do these bayous and lakes extend in an unbroken chain to the Washita?" he inquired, while he scanned her calm features.

"General Grant, haven't you explored that swamp?" she inquired, composedly.

"Madame, I am not here for cross-questioning; will you answer me unequivocally?" he continued, as he keenly scrutinized her countenance.

"When the war is ended, will you not marry me then?"

"No, sir; destiny divides us. We are severed far as the North stretches from the South."

His agony seemed unbearable. Long slanting rays of golden sunshine fell through the myrtle boughs and lingered upon his countenance. His dark, magnetic eyes looked steadily into hers, and thrilled her heart with emotion which she could not disguise.

"Miriam," said the Federal, "time and battle-fields and war prejudices shall not divide us. I will be so unflinchingly steadfast to you that your own heart will plead for me, and you will relent. You love me; you are merciless to yourself, as well as to me. I understand how true, how unflinchingly true, you will be to me; but, too, I know how unyielding you will be to your country and your sentiment of honor. After the conflict is ended, and the war guns have hushed their thunderings, can not I come back to you?"

She made no answer, but shook her head.

At that moment the negro women and children came running and screaming, "De grillers, de grillers!"

"We must hurry to my mother," she exclaimed, in alarm.

"They will not molest her," he replied.

"You never know what deeds they will commit. They pass as friends of the Confederacy, but they frequently murder Confederate citizens."

"Only when these citizens are suspected of having Union tendencies, or Union money with which to purchase cotton from the Confederate hill-districts."

"This latter reason may cause them to murder my mother."

The negroes ran, yelling as if Satan himself was pursuing them. Many of them did not pause until the Mississippi banks sheltered them from guerrilla bullets.

Miriam and Manning hastened into the house.

Securing his pistols, and seeing that escape was impossible, he squared himself against the room wall to die rather than surrender to these human tigers. The house was soon filled. The guerrillas had taken this advantage of the temporary absence of General McPherson and his command. They were now desperate to complete their work before he returned. Ever on the alert, they seized this opportunity to rob and murder such Federals and moneyed Unionists as they would find upon the plantations. The hall-way was now filled with both guerrillas and lay-outs, for upon desperate expeditions they frequently united their squads.

"He ran into the room," they yelled. "Shoot him, shoot him; no quarter to the Federal dog!"

But there stood Miriam in the center of the door-passage, firmly planted.

"Jesse James, you know me, and the first man who enters this room must pass over my dead body."

Her eyes flashed, and her features were rigidly set.

"Miss Hargrove, you must stand back. He is our prisoner."

She did not flinch.

"What is this Federal dog to you?"

She made no reply.

"Miss Hargrove, you compel me to handle you roughly. I regret to force you from the door-way;" thinking to frighten her from the entrance.

"Jesse James, I defy you to touch me!"

He, the human tiger, looked at her, and for an instant felt awe-stricken by her heroic fearlessness.

"Miss Hargrove, we will give you one minute to move; if you will not your blood be upon your own head," but not really intending to hurt her.

Still she did not flinch, not a muscle of her countenance quivered.

"She thinks you are frightening her, and don't intend to fire."

"I'll be damned if she does; she intends to die right in the door-way."

"Quantrell, what shall we do?"

"Push her back, enter the room, and kill the Federal hound!"

"Sir, I will shoot the first one that touches me."

They halted, not intimidated; but there flashed a gleaming fire from her eyes which filled them with awe.

"The minute has sped; get ready, and one, two, fire!" commanded Quantrell.

But no bullet whistle broke the silence. There she stood calm and immovable as a marble statue.

"Miss Hargrove, stand back, or I will fire on you myself!" shouted Jesse James, the fiercest among the human demons.

She smiled but did not flinch. Hearing this last threat, and knowing the character of the desperate man, in an agony of dread lest she should be slain, Manning sprung to her. A swift succession of pistol shots followed; the smoke cleared away, but swifter than bullets she had thrown her arms around his head, and with her body as a shield had entirely protected him from their shots.

Did she escape? No; Belmont Manning felt her heart beat against his, and knew that she was terribly wounded.

"Oh, my God, you have murdered my child!" screamed Mrs. Hargrove, who had now entered the room. "Lee, Quantrell is this the way you return my fidelity. I have risked my life to serve you, and you murder my child."

"Down with your pistol, Jesse James!" cried Quantrell. "If you raise your tiger claw, I will shoot you. You can not kill him unless the bullets pass through their bodies. If you fire, I will shoot you."

The desperado had taken aim, but now he dropped his pistol. While this was occurring, another tragedy was acted at the distant end of the hall. The lessee, who had succeeded Stotts, was now swinging from a rope that was

pulled across the top of the door-facing. The transom had been shattered to allow the rope to pass. Three strong men held it so that it could not slip. The lessee struggled, and caught at the sides of the door-way, all to no purpose. Then the rope was slackened, and they let him down.

"Give up your money, old dog!"

"I have none; upon my honor, gentlemen, I have none."

"Swing him up again."

The rope was pulled down, and the gray-haired man dangled in the passage-way. He was held there until the blood spurted from his nose and ears.

"Let him down; now he will tell where his money is hid."

When he struck the floor he gasped:

"Gentlemen, I have no money. I would give it up to save my life."

"Swing him up again."

Soon the old man swung to and fro in the door-way.

"The old Southern hound will tell this time when he gets down. He is a traitor, and a Southern lessee. This Union dog succeeded Stotts, thinking we would spare him because he is a native Southerner who would not be suspected of being a Unionist."

The scene soon changed in a way that had not been expected. General McPherson and his soldiers had returned and attacked them with fury. The guerrillas fought in turn with their usual ferocity.

Meanwhile, Manning and Mrs. Hargrove had placed Miriam upon a bed, and Dr. Howell was dressing her wounds. They knew that the conflict was furious, but could not guess which side would be victorious. Finally the guerrillas retreated. The struggle had been terrific, and resulted in the capture of several guerrillas. The others, however, made their escape.

That night Miriam lay in a heavy stupor, and the agon-

ized mother believed her mortally wounded. Manning sat with his head bowed low upon her pillow. Agony—oh, there were no words to measure his agony! A shaded lamp threw a mellow glow over the calm features, so still, so restfully tranquil that they seemed angel-kissed.

General McPherson entered, stood and looked mournfully upon the scene. The surgeon sat beside her eagerly noting the effects of his remedies; while the broken-hearted mother knelt beside the bed. The sad picture brought tears to the eyes of the brave warrior. The surgeon moved to a distant corner and motioned the general to follow.

“Will you change your head-quarters in the morning?”

“Not if it perils the life of our young heroine. Grant orders me to remain here until further instructed.”

“That is well; you are a Christian man, general. She is at the crisis; if she survives to-night I will hope for her recovery. Belmont is desperate with grief.”

“Yes, she is his idol. Though a brave soldier, true and steadfast as steel to the Union, I almost fear that he would forsake it for her.”

“If she suspected such a thing she would scorn him.”

“I think so; her character is grandly and compactly woven of magnificent material. If she recovers, however, she and her mother will probably be sent North.”

“What will become of them if General Grant should liberate them?”

“They spoke of going back to their old plantation,” replied the general.

“Times are still too unsettled for them to occupy their home. The dwelling house was burned; there is but one cabin left. Well, I am a Federal surgeon, but I will befriend those women, or my name is not Howells.”

He kept this resolution, and that night sleeplessly watched the patient sufferer. His untiring attentions were the means God used to save her life. God ever makes use of such persons for his merciful purposes.

CHAPTER XIV.

PLEDGES.

SOME time has passed since the events of our last chapter.

For days Miriam's life had hung suspended as if by a gossamer web; but the professional skill of Dr. Howells, together with the watchful care of her devoted mother, saved her life. She was now convalescing, but weak. She and her mother again sat within their room. The sentinel still guarded their door, and no person entered without his knowledge. They sat in gloomy silence, for they felt certain that incarceration in a Northern prison awaited them.

The evening sunshine streaming through the closely fastened windows fell over pallid countenances. Miriam was sitting upon a low stool at her mother's feet. The girl's features had wasted almost to emaciation; but this evening an unnatural excitement seemed to fire her with a restless, impatient energy.

"Mother, mother! I can not endure the thought of going to a distant region. Do not restrain me, but listen. We must escape."

"Impossible, impossible while in your enfeebled condition," replied Mrs. Hargrove.

"Mother, desperation gives me strength; the dread of separating from you, and a long imprisonment, nerves my soul with a supernatural energy. We must make our escape."

"We probably would have done so, if you had not been wounded. Jesse James did not intend to shoot you; he aimed at Belmont Manning, and you in your madness, periled your life to save his. Oh, Miriam, my daughter, you must uproot his image from your heart. You, a

Southern patriot, must be true to your country; you can not wed a Federal officer.

"Mother, he will not be my husband."

Her features quivered from the intensity of her renunciation.

"My brave, noble father fighting on Virginia battle-fields will never be dishonored by the conduct of his daughter."

Her sad face turned westward, and the mother looking into her violet eyes, saw a wide deep world of suffering in their depths. The girl had not heard that her father was dead. Even Mrs. Hargrove still hoped the story was untrue. At first, the blow had struck her as with lightning, but upon reflection she believed that Ann was mistaken.

Some one resembling, perhaps personating Russell Hargrove, she thought, had imposed upon the poor negro's credulity. She might be mistaken in this conjecture, but the more she reflected upon the whole matter, the firmer she became in the belief that her husband was not dead, and that the credulous negro had been duped.

They had not heard Belmont Manning's entrance, and did not know of his approach until he spoke. Seating himself near them, he seemed so remarkably sad that Mrs. Hargrove inquired the cause.

"Dear madame, I have the heaviest news to tell you."

"Are we so soon to set out for the North?" she inquired.

"To-morrow morning."

These words fell upon the silence like the bursting of a shell, then all were deeply, solemnly still. His eyes were riveted to Miriam's face. It was pallid to ghastliness, but he failed to read the unfaltering resolution to effect her escape, the desperation that nerved her to peril life in the effort. To him the thought would have seemed mere madness, for they were rigidly guarded, and nearly every rod around the building was covered with tents.

Mrs. Hargrove's head drooped upon her hands.

"Dearest mother, do not despond."

"Oh, Miriam, my daughter! if I could only hear from my children at home, only once before a long and may be an eternal separation from them. If I could only hear from my little babe, my tiny, lisping Lillian."

She buried her face in her hands, and bitter tears rolled through her slender fingers. Mother's love was strong in the breast of the brave woman. She had believed herself able to bear any grief, but Achilles-like, this arrow had struck home to the mark, and had pierced her in her vulnerable spot. Throwing her arms around her, Miriam kissed her mother repeatedly. Manning, looking up, sadly remarked:

"Madame, we have two guerrilla prisoners, just captured. I inquired of them concerning your children, your family in the hills, but they had not recently seen any of them."

"They told you nothing about my darlings?" she inquired, eagerly.

"Nothing, dear madame."

"May I see these guerrillas?"

"Impossible, madame. They are to be shot between midnight and sunrise."

Untwining Miriam's arms from about her, Mrs. Hargrove rose, and walked into the adjoining room. Glad of the opportunity of once again being alone with Miriam, Manning approached, and seated himself beside her.

"Miriam, if it might be, I would bear your sentence of imprisonment, and you should remain free."

She made no reply. Putting his arms around her, he lifted her drooping face upward, and gazed long and tenderly into her eyes, and his lips faltered.

"After to-morrow, I may never see you again."

"Are you going to be moved, too? Will Grant set out to-morrow on his march to Vicksburg?"

"He will, and once parted from you, oh, my God! I tremble lest I may never again see you."

She closed her eyes, and leaned her head against his shoulder, while his lips pressed hers with the agony of breaking hearts that are dividing for all time.

"My darling, if you and I survive the horror and danger of this war, I vow, calling upon God to witness that oath—I solemnly vow that nothing shall divide us. You love me; I feel it; and with an unfaltering faith in your constancy I will seek you and win you when this war is ended. I owe you my life. When falling in battle, you rescued me at your deadly peril. Weeks ago Jesse James would have murdered me, but for you. No human being could have stronger proof of love."

She was excessively weak and faint from her tedious illness and long confinement. She had been convalescing for several days, but it seemed as if her strength returned slowly. He felt her tremble, and thought it from exhaustion. She was resolved, however, to attempt her escape that night; and fully realizing her shattered condition, she was quivering from dread.

"And this will be our last meeting?" she inquired.

"It may be; God alone knows."

The door opened, and the sentinel called:

"Major Manning, General Grant desires your presence."

When he was gone, Miriam staggered into the adjoining room.

"Mother, oh, mother," she cried, "if I were stronger! But we must escape."

"Miriam," said Mrs. Hargrove, "the thought is madness. The swamp is filled with water; it is utterly impossible to reach our home; and even if we should escape from this house you could not endure the exposure and fatigue.

Your constitution is shattered, and you must not further risk your life. Besides, I believe General Grant is not yet

going to begin his march to Vicksburg. I believe he will move a few miles down the river, and encamp there."

"Why do you think so, mother?"

"I believe this is a scheme to capture Quantrell."

"How?"

"Quantrell has not been able to return to the hills. Grant's canal, I think, inundated the swamp before he could go. He and his men are hiding somewhere near about in this narrow river-belt. Grant imagines that by pretending to begin his march to Vicksburg, he will deceive them; and that they will leave their hiding-place, and supposing that he has gone, they will raid to this exact spot to plunder and murder the negroes and lessees. Thus, he will be able to capture them. We shall not set out to-morrow for the North. I have reflected upon the matter, and have reached this conclusion. At first, I believed we would go to-morrow, but the capturing of these guerrillas makes Grant certain that there are others near. He knows that they can not reach the hills."

CHAPTER XV.

THE ESCAPE.

MRS. HARGROVE had judged correctly. General Grant had not actually begun his march to Vicksburg. He had only changed his head-quarters. For several weeks he had been stationed some miles further down the river.

The guerrillas had been unable to reach the hill-districts, and were confined within the narrow belt of land bordering upon the river. Skirmishing was almost of daily occurrence. The guerrillas were now reduced to a small band; never surrendering. Quantrell and James were believed to have been killed.

Miriam and her mother were still carefully guarded, but they had not been removed or separated. There was an apparent reluctance to adopt such an extreme measure.

Belmont Manning continued his devotion to Miriam. She had regained her health and strength, but the young soldier was still assiduous, and she did not repel him.

It was almost dark. She expected him to accompany her as usual upon an evening walk. He now rode into the yard accompanied by a body of soldiers. Dismounting, he entered the house, and she knew that he would soon be with her. Hearing a step, she turned and saw him. Bending low toward her, he said:

"Our parting hour has this time indeed come. Tomorrow you and your mother go North, while I will begin marching to Vicksburg."

"Are you positively certain?"

"I am."

He saw her features blanch, and believed it was from regret at their coming separation. So it was; but, too, she knew that the hour had come for her to attempt her escape.

"We have about captured the last of the guerrillas," he continued. "Quantrell and Jesse James were caught this evening, and they will be shot after midnight."

"I think you must be mistaken," she answered. "Quantrell and James never surrender. Are they the men directly over my room?"

"Yes, and I am positive that we captured them."

"To-night your wounding will be avenged."

"James did not intend to hurt me," she replied. "He was firing at you, and I sprung between."

"I know. You periled your life to save mine."

We will not linger upon this parting scene; one vowing eternal fidelity, the other compressing her lips as if to keep back the love which she did not speak. Finally he left, and for a few moments her fortitude threatened to give way. Then she remembered the fate of which Manning had apprised her; and tenderness gave way to grim resolutions.

She would now escape.

That night, an unbroken stillness seemed to be all over the Federal camp. The soldiers were sleeping—dreaming perhaps of the morrow—but the sentinels kept watch. If all were sleeping in death, the silence could not have been profounder.

Miriam and her mother had dressed themselves in their best clothing preparatory to the attempt for liberty. They tore their sheets into strips, and twisted them into rope. This they fastened securely to a heavy piece of furniture which had been pushed against the window. The sash had been noiselessly removed, and their preparations were complete. One must go down at a time.

"You first, mother," whispered Miriam.

"Hush, child!" exclaimed her mother, in alarm. "Did you not hear that noise?"

A low, distant, grating sound was heard.

Miriam's heart almost stopped beating.

"Merciful God!" she thought; "are we detected?"

Then, following the direction of the sound, she looked up to the ceiling. She saw a plank move slowly, and a strong masculine hand reached through. The plank was removed; then another, and another; then the feet and limbs of a man appeared. The aperture was just above her bed, and Jesse James dropped upon it, followed by two others. For a moment the guerrillas looked upon Miriam and her mother.

"Merciful God!" exclaimed the latter.

"Madame, keep quiet; make the slightest noise, and we will murder you!" hissed Jesse James.

"Do not fear," returned Miriam. "We are trying to make our own escape."

"Then leap through, quick! quick!" he whispered.

Soon Miriam and her mother were on the ground, being instantly followed by the guerrillas. The cracking of sticks alarmed them, but the stillness was again unbroken.

Making their way to a spot where they had seen horses fastened that evening, the party hastily mounted, and rode silently out of hearing, the guerrillas in one direction, the ladies in another. Miriam first broke the silence.

"Mother, if we are captured now, we will be shot; Grant will believe that we assisted those guerrillas to escape. They must have known that our room was beneath theirs."

The two fugitives followed the trend of the river-road leading to Delta, their destination being Vicksburg. They rode in this way for a long time, neither speaking.

About one in the morning, the tramp of clattering hoofs was heard behind them; and they urged their horses faster, but nearer rang the pursuing gallop.

"Mother, I fear our doom has come. I pray God they will spare you," hoarsely whispered Miriam.

Nearer and nearer came the ringing hoofs. Faster and faster their horses flew, stretching themselves almost level to the ground. Desperate energy maddened beasts and riders, and they tore onward with their utmost swiftness. But nearer came the pursuers; the speed of their own animals seemed to slacken. Miriam's horse reeled, staggered, then plunged forward only to fall dying. Quickly she sprung behind her mother. Nearer and nearer came the pursuer, until at last he reached their side.

"Miriam, do not fear me," said a voice that she well knew.

"I have followed to ransom your life with mine, my darling! To you I am no traitor."

They had followed the trend of the river levee, and its long, dark shadow somewhat concealed them.

Manning now rode beside them, saying:

"Before dawn you must be safely in Vicksburg."

"Does General Grant know of the escape of his prisoners?"

"Yes, and his soldiers are scouring the surrounding country both for you and the others. He did not suppose

that you would be so bold as to take the public road to Vicksburg; but I knew you better. Do you know at what point on the river those lights are glimmering?"

"Certainly, that is Delta, and just opposite, across the river from Delta, is Vicksburg."

"We must not go nearer."

They dismounted, and searching the river shores for a water-craft, they secured one from a fisherman's hut anchored to the steep bluff.

"Miriam, you must be courageous. The river is miles wide, and rough; but careful steering will land you in Vicksburg. I can not follow you further. This may be our last meeting on earth. Good-bye, my darling, may God protect you!"

His arms clasped her for a moment in farewell, then she followed her mother into the rocking craft, and he stood at the water's edge by the boat, holding her hand for an instant.

"Good-bye, my darling."

"God bless you," she murmured; and touching her lip to his brow, seated herself, and took the oars in her hands.

He pushed the boat from the shore, and she shoved out upon the wide, rough waters. Far out upon the dark, wide river, she saw him still standing in the full light pouring from the fisherman's hut; he stood and watched the small craft drift far, far beyond sight upon the dark waters, while all the surrounding country lay in deep gloom, and the stars up above kept watch over them. The little bark was soon lost in the silent, inky distance. With it went all that made life to him; and as it drifted beyond the fisherman's light, midnight gloom shrouded his future, and a great hope died like the setting of the sun. He left the river road, struck across the dark, silent country, back in pursuit of the escaped desperadoes.

Grant's canal schemes had proved failures. Delta is situated on a point in Louisiana just opposite Vicksburg.

Grant had attempted to dig through the neck, and force the channel of the river through the canal. The natural channel of the Mississippi set to the Vicksburg side; therefore, in following this natural channel, his gun-boats and transports would be brought in close proximity to the Confederate batteries at Vicksburg; hence he had attempted to cut a channel through the neck upon which Delta is situated, thus making an artificial canal through which to transport his boats below Vicksburg. This accomplished, he would land his army on the Vicksburg side, and march to its rear. But the floods destroyed this canal by sweeping the Mississippi out of its banks, and rolling the river in oceanic breadth over the surrounding Louisiana country. Abandoning this scheme, he carried his soldiers to Lake Providence, a most beautiful lake about seventy-five miles above Delta. Here he cut a canal letting the Mississippi water into the lake, the lake running into Tensas, this stream into others, making a connected chain to the Red River, and this river flowing into the Mississippi would put his boats below Vicksburg. The floods, too, defeated this scheme. He now determined to float his gun-boats and transports below Vicksburg. His army ammunition and supplies would go by land to a point below Vicksburg, on the Louisiana side.

This he did the eventful night upon which Miriam and her mother, in their frail bark, had crossed the Mississippi. The little craft drifted at the mercy of the wind and current. Fortunately the latter set toward the Vicksburg shore. Their only hope was that a merciful tide would anchor them at the Confederate bulwark.

"Look, mother!" whispered Miriam; "look at those iron monsters."

"That must be Grant's fleet, left to drift with the current down the river."

"They are gun-boats and transports floating in a long imposing line; moving silently by through the intense dark-

ness. It is a sublime sight, indeed; but it means death to the Confederacy. Look! look! how silently, grandly, and leisurely the whole dark line moves, and the old river holds her breath in awe."

The huge mass drifted onward beyond the silent hills guarding the river at this point—safely beyond the Vicksburg batteries.

"Good-bye," said Miriam, sadly pointing to the huge drifting dark mass, "good-bye, dear old Confederacy; you are doomed; these iron monsters will devour you!"

"I think not, Miriam," said her mother; "if we can reach Vicksburg in time to warn Generals Pemberton and Bowen, so they can vigilantly watch for an opportunity to attack that part of Grant's army which he first lands upon the Mississippi soil. It is impossible for him to transport his entire army across at the same time; part of his eighty thousand soldiers will be on the Mississippi shore while the others are waiting their turn in Louisiana."

"It will be a grand opportunity for the Confederate forces to capture part of this huge army; and probably General Grant, too, will be captured."

They bent to their oars with renewed energy; but the distance was yet long. The dark mass was out of sight, completely lost in river darkness. The night was so intensely black that they repeatedly lost their way, and would find themselves pulling up stream. Finally, they resolved to drift just as the gun-boats had done. For in the southward distance a huge light blazed over all the boundless waters; it was so brilliant that it illuminated the almost limitless expanse of the great river in front of Vicksburg.

"What means that conflagration?" Miriam asked.

"Can it be that Vicksburg is burning?"

"No," said her mother. "I think it is the bonfires they frequently build at the river's edge to throw a light across the Mississippi so that the Federal gun-boats may not glide by in the darkness."

One hour ago, how different would have been the results, if that fire had been kindled. How the destiny of nations is sometimes turned by the swinging of one hour, ay, one minute!

"See, mother!" said Miriam, a few minutes later. "The light streams across the river, clear to the Delta side. How dark and still the waters are outside of the light-belt."

"It is certainly a most sublime spectacle."

"Listen to the crash of the timber, mother; it sounds as if houses were burning. Hear that noise, as if heavy roofs were falling."

They were now near enough to hear the roar of the crackling flames, and deemed correctly. A house was burning; an old warehouse, just on the brink of the river, had been fired to light up the darkness; but only too late to accomplish its purpose.

"Miriam, be careful; keep a steady hand upon the rudder. If our boat gets into the trough of these waves, undoubtedly we will perish."

"Mother, do not fear; I will steer it safely upon the crests?"

"We will now ride the waves in safety to the Vicksburg shore. The wind has risen, and the waves begin to run high! Steadily, Miriam! Steer into that belt of light."

"Why?"

"Because if we strike upon dark shores, it may be at a dangerous inaccessible steep bluff. Where the bonfire burns is a sloping, sanded shore."

"Vicksburg," thought Miriam, "you grand, old Confederate bulwark, how sublime you slumber, secure in your fortified strength! Those rock-ribbed hills encircle you in magnificent strength; and you, the proud Southern Gibraltar, lie sleeping in their eternal arms. Vicksburg! Vicksburg! you mighty omnipotent stronghold, how you bellow defiance to your enemies!"

"Look! Miriam," cried her mother, "we are nearing our landing. Do you see those soldiers standing in a group near the bonfire?"

"Yes, mother."

"Look at the young soldier with the bugle."

"I see him."

"Miriam, that is your brother."

"Oh, mother! can it be?"

"Yes, yes; make your landing there."

"See! mother, he lifts the bugle to his lips."

The solemn sweet tones of the warrior-bugle sounded far and wide across the silent, almost boundless waters and echoed from hill to hill through the surrounding country.

"How many times those young lips have given the alarm for great battles. They made the signal for the last charge of his father."

"No, no, dear mother; my father still lives."

"No, child; not so," replied the mother. "Our boy would never have left him. Your father was killed at Seven Pines, and your brother captured. I believed my husband lived, until now that I see my boy."

Again the mournful bugle-notes woke wild echoes from the dark silent hills encircling the city like a vast amphitheater.

"Slowly, child; round in there at his feet."

The frail craft rose and fell on the crests of swelling waves as a reed washed upon the billows of ocean.

"Mother, he sounded his bugle to guide us to this landing!"

"There, at his feet, my child—make the landing there."

The wave-rocked craft struck the glittering sands, and a wild cry broke from the bugler as he caught his mother to his breast.

"Russell, my boy, where is your father?"

"Dead; buried on the battle-field of Malvern Hill; only your boy has returned."

He felt a long quiver shake her exhausted body; he placed her gently upon the sands, close to the fire. She lay with her head upon his shoulder. It was a sad picture; the ghastly face gleaming in the fire-light, and a group of rough, fearless soldiers dressed in the Confederate gray standing in the background, but brought into bold relief by the flickering flames.

"Sister, sister! is our mother dead?" cried the young man. "Have I suffered, and marched long weary days, and weeks, and months, only to clasp my mother in death?"

"No, no, Russell, she is not dead; she is exhausted. We have just escaped from mortal peril. This, together with your sad news, has overpowered her. See her lashes quiver; she is recovering."

She opened her eyes and gazed tenderly into his. He kissed her, and attempted to soothe her grief.

"Mother, you are indeed alive. I thank God that I have returned hither, and found my sister and mother!"

"Yes, my son; but you went with your father, and you return alone."

"Were you with him when he was shot?" asked Miriam.

"Yes, sister; fighting side by side. We were never separated until death divided us. A succession of battles, the most desperate ever fought on this continent, took place during the seven days from the twenty-fifth of June to the first of July. At the last one, Malvern Hill, our father was shot. During seven days he had fought bravely as a lion; never pausing, or flinching from bullets; but, at the close of the last stubborn battle, one pierced him. I saw him stagger, and caught him in my arms. He looked into my eyes and said, 'My boy, death has struck me!'

"I carried him from the thickest of the battle, and concealed him behind a cluster of thick undergrowth. There

I held his head, until his spirit fled to its Maker. These were his dying words:

“ My brave boy, tell your mother that I died firm in the Christian faith. Tell her that the silent influence of my great, heroic chief, Jackson, made me a Christian. That his calm, uncomplaining resignation to God’s will filled me with awe and reverence, and made me feel that there is power in religion. Tell your mother that my perfect faith gives me complete assurance.”

“ These were his last words. I buried him there in that wilderness of lonely whispering pines. I was afterward captured, and imprisoned at Elmira, New York. I lingered a long time in prison; finally, with twenty others, tunneled out, escaped into Canada, thence made my way homeward. I joined General Joseph E. Johnston’s army, secured a furlough, and went to the old home in search of my loved ones. Not finding them, I returned to Vicksburg, intending to make another effort to reach you. One of the old servants recognized me one day while wandering through the ruins of our home. I gave her a message for you, and left immediately, fearing recognition from other slaves that might betray me.”

“ Mother,” said Miriam, “ we have forgotten to tell these soldiers that the Federal gun-boats and transports have all just floated by.”

“ Impossible!” exclaimed the group, moving nearer. “ We have kept the fires burning every night.”

“ They drifted by to-night, before you kindled your bonfire.”

They stood for an instant as if petrified.

“ Of course,” she added, “ Grant has moved his entire army, supplies and all, by land to a point below Vicksburg, and now intends crossing to the Mississippi side.”

CHAPTER XVI.

FALL OF VICKSBURG.

GENERAL GRANT did cross the Mississippi. General Bowen sent couriers to General Pemberton, explaining the situation, and urging General Pemberton to march to him.

They could attack Grant at disadvantage while he was landing part of his army on the Mississippi shore. Pemberton, however, adhered to the notion that he must not leave Vicksburg undefended. General Bowen then besought him to send a division to increase his little handful of six thousand against the thirty thousand which Grant had landed. Pemberton refused. General Joseph E. Johnston added his authority, directing Pemberton to cooperate with General Bowen, in the endeavor to capture the troops of Grant. He still refused. General Bowen then attacked him alone. His entire force consisted of six thousand Missourians, brave men all of them. The conflict was a stubborn one. They knew their commander to be cool and daring, as well as endowed with a perception in military matters almost infallible.

They fought with such desperate energy that at one time Grant supposed himself defeated. The tide of the battle then turned, and General Bowen was compelled to retreat.

General Johnston had set out to the relief of Pemberton, and ordered the latter not to intrench his army at Vicksburg, but to march to him. But Pemberton clung obstinately to the notion that he must hold Vicksburg, and refused to join General Johnston. Accordingly, General Grant brought his remaining forces, fifty thousand men, over the river, encountered Pemberton in the rear of Vicksburg, defeated him, and drove him into that stronghold. The refusal of the latter to join Johnston had given Grant

every advantage. If he had joined General Bowen where Grant was crossing, the scheme was morally certain of defeat, and Grant would probably have been captured. General Johnston had not time to reach Bowen before the Federal troops had all crossed. Grant knew well that he could not cope successfully with them there, and encountered them one by one. Pemberton, he shrewdly divined, would not leave Vicksburg to join General Bowen. The latter was too sagacious to unite his forces with Pemberton, and incur the risk of being driven into Vicksburg, but set out immediately after his defeat to join General Johnston.

General Pemberton moved all the time as Grant anticipated, and just as he desired. The latter had succeeded because he knew all three men with whom he was contending on the checker-board of war. He had made his final move carefully, on purpose to drive Pemberton into Vicksburg, and thus checkmate him.

The long, long, awful siege began. General Grant invested the place. Pemberton dug a trench, beginning at the river on one side of Vicksburg, and running it round the city to the river on the other side. Grant did likewise, the entire circle, with his army. From the first of May till the fourth of July Pemberton's soldiers occupied that trench, fighting by day and night. Grant's charges were furious, but they were always successfully repelled. At no point were the Confederate breast-works surprised and carried.

It was noon. The fighting had ceased for a few minutes. Pemberton's soldiers lay in the trench. The sun was beating furiously upon them, and they were famishing for water. Only breast-works divided the two armies.

They were but a few feet apart, with the bank of earth between, and could easily talk together.

"Say, Yank, give me a drink of water," called out Russell Hargrove, as he saw the head of a Federal soldier peep over the top of the breast-work, then drop suddenly back.

A short time afterward, a note wrapped round a clod of earth, fell at his feet. He opened it, and read:

"If you are the brother of Miriam Hargrove, tell her that I am wounded. With my sinking breath I bless her.
"BELMONT MANNING."

This note Russell sent to his sister. The Confederates could hear the Federals digging under the dividing breast-work; and knew that their trench and parapet must soon be blown up. In the city, the inhabitants had abandoned their homes, and dug caves in the sides of the hills, to secure themselves from the constantly falling cannon-balls and bursting shells. Some of the citizens fared comfortably; but those who had not a supply of provisions when the siege began, suffered fearfully before the city surrendered.

Among those were Miriam and her mother. They now sat in their barren, dusky cave.

"Oh, my child! will this long siege never terminate?"

"Patience, dear mother; it may end by Pemberton's surrender."

"I hope he never will," said the now feeble, emaciated mother.

"He will have to do it, mother. Pemberton made a great mistake in not joining General Bowen; their united forces would have captured Grant himself, and the thirty thousand men that crossed over the river. It seems almost like stupidity that Pemberton did not see this, and kept stubbornly refusing to obey Johnston's telegrams: 'Move your army to re-enforce General Bowen, at the point where Grant crossed the river.'"

"His retreat into Vicksburg is what Grant desired."

"Certainly, for Grant will succeed in taking Vicksburg and Pemberton's army, too; when, if Pemberton had done like General Bowen, and had marched to General Johnston, who was then coming to meet Pemberton, the Con-

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federacy would have lost Vicksburg, but would still have Pemberton's army. As it is, Pemberton will soon surrender, and the Federals will have the city, and the Confederates, too; just what Grant schemed to accomplish."

"I hope Pemberton will not surrender."

"He will be compelled to do this. His army is now suffering; their mule-meat is almost exhausted, and the soldiers kill every dog that prowls around. For your sake, I wish Pemberton would soon capitulate; he is compelled to do it, and by surrendering now it will save his soldiers great suffering."

"I am so weary of this wretched cave. Look out, Miriam, and see if any shells are passing."

"Yes, mother; but they are going in an opposite direction, and we can walk toward the river."

Miriam supported her mother, who was gradually sinking under the long confinement and hunger.

"Look! mother; there goes a shell!"

"Yes, yes; but I must have a little fresh air, even if the shell bursts upon me. Oh, if I could take you and Russell, and securely reach my hill-home. Every cannon-boom fills my soul with terror, lest it has killed him."

"Down in the trench he is out of the range of cannon."

"Unless the balls strike the top of the breast-work, and bury the Confederates alive in that trench."

"Grant's position is on a sloping elevation; his parapets are above the Confederate breast-works, and his cannon-balls pass over the intrenchment."

"The Confederates have the advantage in position."

"True; but Vicksburg will surrender. It is doomed. Grant's army encircles us; we are doomed to slow starvation, then a surrender."

"May be Johnston will march to our relief."

"If he should attack Grant's army in the rear, Pemberton might cut through and join him. He should have

joined Johnston when he had the opportunity, and not have retreated into Vicksburg. The thing is impossible now. There goes another shell."

They looked up at the whirling iron, with hopeless indifference.

"See! it has shattered the top of that roof."

"I suppose the house is unoccupied."

"Yes, most of the dwellings are empty; the occupants have taken refuge in the caves. Really, mother, if Pemberton does not soon surrender, some awful disease will break out among us; his soldiers will die like sheep. Day and night they live in that trench, with half rations, water whenever they can secure it, and the burning sun pouring upon them."

"If I were Pemberton I would never surrender. Like the Spartan three hundred, every individual should perish. Not a soldier should survive to tell the story."

They stood looking far across the wide, wide river.

"Mother, if we could only reach the Louisiana shore, and make our way back to our distant home."

"Miriam, I understand your anxiety about me. I know why you are so anxious for Pemberton to surrender."

"Why, of course you do, mother. Are you not weary of this awful siege; weary of this continual boom, bursting, shells, and constant fighting?"

"Go on," said her mother, as Miriam paused.

"Are you not weary of this hunger and confinement?"

"Yes, but my child, you have a more painful reason."

"No, mother, no."

"Be quiet, child, you can not deceive me. You are patriotic, and would suffer external starvation yourself; but you desire Pemberton's surrender because you think that by leaving here my life might be saved."

"Mother, you are not ill enough to die."

"Miriam, we might as well look calmly at this matter.

Death is creeping upon me. You will soon become an orphan."

"Oh, no, mother, no!"

"Grief, hunger, suffering and confinement are digging the grave for me as they are for many others."

Miriam wept so bitterly that she could make no reply, and her mother continued:

"To your hands I consign my younger children. I know you will fill my place to them."

"Oh, mother! mother!"

"Be patient, and listen. Your brother George will never be of any assistance to you. He was born to be a drunkard. Oh, child! child! deal patiently with him; the curse is upon him. If Russell survives this slaughter, he will be your unbreaking support; if he is killed, you must be guided by faithful old Ben; trust him fully, for he is genuine gold. Take good care of your aged grandmother, her life was peaceful until heavy storm-clouds now darken the setting of her days. Dear, patient old mother, if I could see you once again; but I will wait for you in that other country."

She paused awhile, then continued:

"Miriam, I desire to speak freely to you."

"Go on, dear mother."

"I know you love Belmont Manning; he is a Federal soldier, and to you, therefore, a stranger."

"Mother, I shall never marry any one. How can I desert the sacred charge you have given me?"

"My child, it is a severe sacrifice, thus with the hands of duty to dig a grave and bury your happiness."

"Mother, I will never complain. If you are taken, I will be a sister-mother to your children; I love my aged grandparent, and will cheerfully labor for her."

"I know you will, my darling, and faith in your reliant heroic nature gives me comfort, even while death shadows me with his wings."

Miriam's tears fell swiftly as she held her mother in her arms. At length she said:

"Come, mother; we must return."

"Not yet; it seems as if this will be the last sunset I shall ever behold."

"Cheer up, dear mother, I believe I see Russell coming to meet us."

"No, that is not our boy."

"Is this Miss Hargrove?" inquired the soldier, lifting his cap.

"It is," replied Miriam.

"General Pemberton sent me into town, and your brother requested me to deliver this note."

"Is my boy well?"

"Yes, madame, and ever in the thickest charging. Grant's efforts all having failed to capture our breast-works, he is now digging underneath them, to blow them up; when the gap is made there will be desperate fighting to keep the Federals out of our intrenchment. We are making every preparation to keep them from coming in through this gap when it is made," said the soldier, raising his cap, and hurrying on.

A dog slunk near; the Confederate killed it, threw it across his shoulder, and soon disappeared. Miriam read her brother's note, and exclaimed:

"Russell will come to-night when the charging ceases; he has permission to visit us."

"Thank God!" murmured the mother, while Miriam opened Belmont Manning's note, which had been inclosed in her brother's. She hurriedly perused its contents, reeled as if she would fall, murmuring sadly:

"Mother, oh, mother, Belmont is wounded!"

That night Miriam sat by the pallet of her mother. A tallow-candle burned dimly, throwing fitful, grotesque shadows upon the sides of the cave. It was far into the night; the boom and terrific roar told that Grant was still

charging the breast-works, and the Confederates were furiously repulsing him.

"Oh, if my boy would come!"

"He will, mother; he will when the firing ceases."

"Go to the door and listen, dear Miriam."

Miriam lay across the dark door-way, and looked out. The night was ebony black, the purple dome was studded with brilliant stars.

"Do you hear him coming?"

"No, mother."

"Child, draw my pallet near the door-way, that I may catch a breath of air."

Miriam did so, and placed herself by her mother in the cave opening.

"The stars are very beautiful," murmured the feeble woman. "Sometimes I think Christ has thrown wide the gates of heaven, and those glittering worlds are the brilliant jewels in the crowns of His saints."

"Look at that shell, mother, whirling majestically upward, as if it would lodge in the battlements of the sky. See its blazing fuse, like a trailing comet!"

"Is the night very dark?"

"Yes, mother, though the sky is sprinkled with brilliant burning stars; but a dense smoke envelops the city. The continual firing keeps it from clearing away, and the atmosphere seems too heavy for it to ascend high."

"Mother, this night air is not healthy," said Miriam, again after a long pause. "I must move your pallet back."

"Oh, if my boy would come!" moaned the sinking woman.

But the night dragged onward, and he came not. Miriam's heart was almost bursting with anguish, but attracted by her mother's strange breathing, she peered into the tranquil countenance. It was rigid and ghastly.

"Oh, mother, mother! is this death?" she wailed. But only the dismal cave echoed, "Death, death."

In that gloomy solitude, she was alone with her dead. Death had quietly closed the calm eyes, stilled the flickering pulses, and set the hollowed features forever in tranquil beauty. Miriam held the candle close to the peaceful countenance; there was no lingering trace of pain. She had dropped into serene slumber, from which she would waken on the resurrection morn. Miriam set the candle beside the pallet, and lay down. Hours flew; she took no notice of time. The candle burned low and threw its weird shadows across the tranquil countenance. Miriam lay motionless as if buried under the ruins of her wrecked hopes. The candle flickered in its socket, then went out, leaving the cave in total darkness. Directly, she became conscious of some one's presence.

"Mother, Miriam, do not fear—it is Russell."

"Oh, Russell, our mother is dead!"

"Dead, sister, dead!" was the heart-rending wail which the cave whispered back.

"Dead! dead!"

Creeping to her side, they twined their arms around the still form as if their loving clasp would bring back life.

"Oh, brother! brother! would we were all dead and safe in eternity with our father and mother!"

The two mourners sat there long in silence.

After awhile he said brokenly:

"Sister, I will go and bring our neighbors."

"No, brother, no; you and I will bury our dead. We are strangers to our cave neighbors; and our own hands must bury our dead!"

Taking a match from his pocket, the youth struck it, and by the flickering glimmer he saw for the last time that hallowed face.

"Sister," said he, "I would rather bring your neighbors, and let them shroud her."

"No, no, brother; she is too sacred for the touch of strange hands."

"Make her ready while I go and dig the grave."

When left alone, Miriam shrouded the body in a long white robe, then clasped it in her arms. Thus they found her when, at day-break, Russell returned with three strange ladies and several officers. There on the hill-side, under the thundering boom of cannon, they buried their dead. The flickering torch-light quivered across the rough soldiers' faces; death was a common occurrence to them, but here, with an awe-stricken, reverential sadness, they performed the last office for the dead. When they returned into the cave, and their grim countenances saddened from the thoughts of Miriam's loneliness, one of them exclaimed:

"Russell, you are only a youth; stay with your sister."

"And desert his army?" inquired Miriam, sadly.

"It will not be desertion; you need protection."

"Sister, shall I remain with you?"

"No, no; go back! our country requires you. I will accept the invitation of one of these ladies, and live with her. To-day I will remain alone in my cave; when night comes I will leave it."

"God protect you, my sister!" said Russell, as he stooped and kissed her tenderly.

She put her arms around his neck, drew him close to her, and gazed lovingly into his face, as one saying farewell.

"Russell," said she, "we shall never meet again on earth. This is our last parting."

They both seemed to feel this. One of the soldiers said to him:

"Comrade, if I survive you, I pledge you my honor to be a brother to your sister."

Russell held out his hand toward his comrade, unable to speak, and they left the cave.

Miriam crouched in a dark corner. Life stood before her only as a statue draped in mourning. How long, how

nearly endless appeared the dreary future. Yet she must live. A sacred charge rested upon her. At dusk she went to the abode of her neighbor, and remained there until Vicksburg surrendered.

The next day witnessed the most obstinate conflict of the entire siege. The parapet and breast-works were blown up; a wide gap was made in the earth-wall. Through this opening charged the Federals, while the Confederates, standing like a group of lions, leveled the Union soldiers to the ground. The gap would be instantly refilled only to be cut down again. Grant's army was nearly one hundred thousand. Pemberton's about thirty thousand. The charging was desperate. Grant was determined to win, and constantly refilled his fallen ranks. The Confederates were not allowed time to rest. They had no reserve force to replace them. The same soldiers stood at the opening, and charged the Federals. The sight was awful, the slaughter immense. Dead Federals lay deep in the gap, where they had charged furiously, until night closed the scene of carnage. In the silence the Federals withdrew. The Confederates rebuilt their breast-works.

Among those who fell was Russell Hargrove. It was a strange, sad picture that night. A fire burned at the bottom of the trench, the dead were scattered around. Some of the soldiers were cooking their suppers, while others were digging a ditch in which to pile the dead. They were buried in a heap, except young Hargrove. A comrade took up his body tenderly, carried it away, and laid it in a separate grave. It rests there still.

Vicksburg surrendered. Grant's soldiers found provisions in plenty in the cellars of some of the merchants, but the soldiers of General Pemberton had suffered from famine.

Belmont Manning was not killed. He had been again fearfully wounded. He was sent to an hospital, and afterward permitted to go to his Northern home.

The war finally came to an end. The South entered upon a new, trying, often terrible experience.

CHAPTER XVII.

FEARFUL DAYS.

THERE is one page in the history of the South that remains unwritten. It is the purpose of the author to set forth the correct view. The brief but decisive period that followed the days of "reconstruction" was characterized by occurrences of which but little seems to be definitely known. The accounts which were published at the time were partial, and more or less suppressed or disguised the truth.

The war ended, the Fourteenth Amendment promulgated, the restoration of the Southern States accomplished, the fortunes of the people of the South were left in a shattered condition. Accustomed as they had been to the luxury which money commands, they felt keenly the privations and hardships that poverty entails. The act enfranchising the slaves set free four million dependents, most of whom were in the States bordering upon the lower Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. Many of them went to work, as before, upon the plantations of their former masters. If this arrangement had continued undisturbed, and the negro had been permitted to work at the problem before him, as he was best able, he would have developed into a useful citizen, prosperity would have speedily been restored to the impoverished States, and good-will between whites and blacks would have prevailed. All this was prevented, however, by the interference of political schemers seeking to use the opportunity to promote their own ends.

Two classes of adventurers, powerful for mischief and ready to defeat every wholesome measure for the benefit of the emancipated race, infested the country. The first of these came from the North, and were familiarly known as

"carpet-baggers." They were generally characterized by ambition, greed and rapacity. Some were politicians who had failed of success at home, either from lack of merit or some other disqualification. If not from the hoodlum population, they were at least sharpers from political circles. Others were needy adventurers in quest of gain, and by no means scrupulous about the methods by which it might be acquired. They were little encumbered with luggage, and could come and go with little difficulty. From the fact that their wealth appeared to be contained in their gripsacks, they soon received the opprobrious designation of "carpet-baggers." They figured for a season in Southern politics, till they were threatened by the general uprising against them; then, like the hordes of Asia, they struck their tents and stole away.

The second class was known all over the South as "scalawags." They were at once despised and hated. They had fought in the Confederate Army, but not from principle or conviction. Some of them held commissions, and were men of unquestionable courage and unrelenting purpose.

Many were bankrupt politicians. They all wanted money, and were indifferent as to how it was procured. They were determined to rebuild their fortunes at all hazards, irrespective of right, law or decency, the welfare of the country or the safety of life.

An alliance was soon formed between the two. They had a common object, and each could perform a part which would be useful to the other. The carpet-bagger was from the North, where the Republican party was in the ascendant; and, as a matter of course, he had affiliated with it as being the party in power in the country. He furnished the arguments required; that the Republicans had freed the negro, and that the latter owed a debt of everlasting gratitude for the boon. The promise of social as well as political equality was also up as an incentive; and the bestowment of "forty acres of land and a mule," as well as

a place to feed from the Government crib, was another inducement which these irresponsible adventurers offered to their credulous supporters. The scalawags had been reared among the negroes, and knew how to take advantage of their points of character. They had enjoyed respect for former services and possessed great influence over other disaffected men as well as among their own friends and relations. Hence they were indispensable from the first to their new political associates, and enabled them to carry on their purposes to success.

Under this arrangement it required only the support and countenance of the Federal Government to secure their ascendancy at the polls. These were afforded. The Republican party, the professed friend and champion of the negro, was in power, and the control of the election machinery was unhesitatingly given to its unscrupulous representatives in the South, with only the implied condition that the States should be returned in the Republican column. It was not difficult to perform that condition. Federal soldiers, when desired, were placed at the ballot-boxes. In some districts there were seven negroes to one white man, and the negro vote was certain to elect any ticket, no matter if that ticket contained the names of the most vile and depraved human beings. In several of the States, every office, from governor to constable, was filled by vagabond scalawags, carpet-baggers, and negroes. Men of honor belonging to the Republican party knowing that they would have to hold political relations with men whom they could not respect, and that this would involve ignominy, and even crime, declined to become candidates. Thus the white population was completely at the mercy of the others, and of their leaders. Louisiana was bankrupted. Her chief executive speculated in her bonds. In her legislative halls scenes were enacted that beggar all power of description.

Bribery was too common to assume the garb of secrecy.

Party fealty was the only recognized law, and its demand at that time opened every avenue to speculation, embezzlement, forgery, and villainy of the most atrocious character.

This was not the end of the matter, but only the beginning. The contamination pervaded all executive, judicial and municipal authority, depressing the monetary system, bankrupting the people already impoverished, and wresting from them their very means of subsistence. Theft, robbery, brutal outrage and murder were common, and the public officials made no serious attempt to bring the perpetrators to justice. Full latitude seemed to be extended for every crime.

The negro population participated in the general lawlessness which prevailed over the State.

A significant fact here presents itself. The Africans whose ancestors had lived under the white man's supremacy, whose forefathers had been slaves through generations, having been thus for centuries under the refining and moral influence of the Caucasian race, had become more or less influenced by the ideas and principles which dominated their owners. They had been faithful before the war, and now continued so. They prized their newly acquired liberties with others, but they received with it the quickened sense of duty and responsibility.

When peace was restored, they went back to their former owners, and resumed their former places. For this fidelity they were contemptuously termed by others, "the white man's niggers." If they had not been disturbed in this loyalty by the intermeddling and misrepresentations of the scalawags and disaffected negroes, they and their former masters would have lived peacefully together, and prospered under the new relations. Even the best of them, however, can be easily duped, and when the carpet-baggers first came South they had little difficulty in misleading very many of the well-disposed negroes.

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detect the sinister purposes of their villainous associates. The attempt was made in many instances to persuade them to murder their former owners. At this their nature would revolt; and, instead of executing the infamous propositions, they would see to it that their masters were duly warned of the danger. Still, they believed that the Republican party had carried on the war on purpose to liberate them, and therefore, from a sense of obligation and gratitude, they generally voted the Republican ticket, and aided to keep the carpet-baggers and their scalawag negro allies in office.

The lawless negroes were in the ascendant. They consisted of the younger portion, who had grown up without restraint, and more particularly of the descendants of those more recently brought from Africa. They had all the fierce and brutal passions, as well as superstitious notions, which characterized the wild tribes of the Dark Continent. They stole, murdered, and committed with a fiendish delight every species of crime. The scalawag found them his ready tool. They thronged the political meetings, and were swayed at will by their unprincipled leaders. Protected as they were by the public authorities, they roved over the country, perpetrating crime with impunity. Life, property, everything, was at their mercy, and till the atrocity of their acts roused the Southern white men to organize for their suppression, a reign of terror, outrage and lawlessness existed over the State.

Miriam had come back to the old plantation. Hers was the saddest heart that throbbed in a human breast. Her father had given up his life on a Virginia battle-field, her mother and brother were sleeping in Vicksburg. She, with two sisters, their brother, their grandmother, and the two faithful old servants, Ben and Aunt Susan, had returned to a desolate home. Where the splendid house had stood, was now a pile of burned brick and ashes. When the Federal soldiers set fire to the house and negro quarters, the conflagration was so vast that the grand trees, century-

marked, caught fire, and so the ruin was complete. Only one house was left on the plantation. It had escaped because it stood outside of the levee, and was hidden away under a deep, lonely belt of forest-trees. Weeds and grass of rank growth covered the broad fields.

Again it is evening. A thin line of smoke curls upward above the trees, marking the spot where the cabin stands. The young girl, beautiful as Angelo's sleeping "Evening," stood and looked upon the heaps of ashes, where her luxurious home had been. Her long lashes drooped, and were weighted with unshed tears, as she murmured aloud to herself:

"Father, you and all Southern manhood fought bravely, but you went down with the 'Lost Cause,' and your child's inheritance is ashes."

So intense was her grief that for some time she forgot the danger of being alone and unprotected. A stick, cracking behind her, reminded her of everything to be dreaded. She turned and saw a herculean negro. With the fleetness of a wild deer, she fled to her cabin-home.

"Dam de white gal!" cried the baffled miscreant. "I'se gwine git yer dis night. We is got de gubbernment into our hands; Grant dun sarnt his soldiers down here to keep de gubbernment in our hands, an' I'll hab a white gal fur my wife 'fore many days."

Then he went his way.

It is now dusk. Inside the cottage, the inmates were huddled closely together. The doors were locked, yet the grandmother, her four children and a faithful old negress, sat crouched together with terrified faces. Miriam had not told them of her danger, but they were alarmed because they were helpless. They knew that the negroes all over the State were rising to deeds of violence.

"Mistiss," said old Susan, "'pears like Ben stays long time arter a load ob wood."

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She and old Uncle Ben were almost the only two faithful ones out of their hundreds of well-treated slaves.

"May be he had to go far into the woods."

Aunt Susan looked sharply into the anxious face of her old mistress, then into Miriam's. It betrayed no fear, and as the old negress watched it, she thought:

"In some way she is going to protect us."

"Hist! hear dat, missy?" said Aunt Susan.

"Mammy, it's only the wind howling through the trees. I do not think they will come to-night."

"Hunny, chile, you don't know how treachus dey is."

"God protect us!" and the skeleton hands trembled in their efforts to push the needle through thick rough sewing.

"Grandmother darling, put up your work; it is too dark; you will ruin your eyes."

"My child, I need the money which I will get for the sewing, to pay your brother's tuition for this month."

"You might just as well throw the money into the fire," murmured Miriam, as she twined her arms around her young sister Lilian. "He will never be any account."

A heavy fall against the outside of the door made them draw more closely together.

"Oh, my Lord! dey will kill us!" moaned Aunt Susan, as she and her old mistress dropped on their knees, believing that their dying hour had come. Miriam sprung forward, and now stood over her grandparent.

"No, no hunny! Dey hates me becaze I am faithful to ole missus and you chillens. Dey calls me white folk's nigger."

"Grandmother darling, they will have to kill me before they can harm you!"

"Child, your strength is nothing compared to that of a hundred furious negroes."

"Mistiss, hunny, we might as well 'spect mercy frum wild tigers."

Another heavy knock was heard, and Aunt Susan drop-

ped upon the floor in terror. Miriam threw her arms around her grandmother, and through set teeth, murmured:

"God have mercy upon us! Lilian, Ethel come and stand behind me, keep close to the wall, hold on to grandmother, and I will fight as long as breath lasts; then we will kill ourselves. Death is infinitely better than to fall into the hands of these brutes!"

Meanwhile, the knocking had become loud and continuous.

"Merciful God deliver us!" prayed Miriam, as she placed her hand upon a weapon concealed in the belt of her dress. Then she spoke.

"Mammy, get up quick and follow me. Lilian, Ethel, come fast as lightning!" she cried, as she snatched up her grandmother, and rushed up a narrow stair-way, made out of a large ladder which extended from the floor to the loft.

In a few seconds they had all ascended, and Miriam, her sisters and Aunt Susan then pulled the ladder into the loft, and closed down the door.

"Climb through, quick! quick!" cried Miriam, pointing to a wooden window, against which pressed a large limb growing from a tree outside.

Soon they were all lodged in the tree, and concealed by its thick foliage. The wooden-shutter was securely closed so as to afford no signs of their escape. The night was intensely dark, but Miriam could see the savage multitude, and hear their words.

"Nigger," said one of them, "I tells yer I fastened ole Ben and fixed George Hargrove so dey can't git har dis night!"

"George is dead drunk," said another; "he no git har fo' day."

"Brake de do' down!" cried another.

"Hush, yer fule! dat young gal sho' shoot yer fo' de do' is sho' broke open!"

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"Stop dat, yer fule; don't set de house on fire, and burn dem white gals up. We want dem."

"Yah! yah!" laughed the fiendish mob in concert.

"I'se gwine to hab the puttiest one. Niggers can hab white wives now. Grant's done sarnt his solges down har to protect us; no matter what we do de 'publicans gwine to stick to de nigger."

"Brake de do' down!" shouted several.

"Wait till de general comes," answered one who seemed to be a leader. "He gin orders fur us to keep quiet until he comed. He is 'er coming now; har him comin' like de wind!"

"Halt!" they cried, as the rider reined in his steed.

"Well, my brave lads!" said he, "have you obeyed orders?"

"Yes, general; we is waitin' fur you."

"All right. Set to work in earnest," said a clear voice, plainly that of a white man. "Break the door down."

"General, one dem gals in dar she is plucky; she sho' shoots de fust nigger dat enters dat do'."

"Break it down!" he commanded.

"Yah, yah; and I will settle de gal's hash, when I gits in!"

But no one ventured. All were afraid of the plucky girl inside.

"You cowardly dogs, burst that door open!" cried the threatening voice of their leader. "To-night, all over this parish the whites are to be killed. This is my part of the work, to destroy these, then those within the town of —, just three miles from here. You scoundrels, am I to fail because of your cowardice? Break that door open!"

"Dat's what I say, general," said a huge, burly black negro.

"Do it yerself den!"

"Set the house on fire, an' dey'll come out."

"Do it then, quick!" the white leader commanded.

The torch was applied to the house, and several began to kindle the fire. Their commander attempted to break open the door. At that instant a bullet whistled, and he fell to the ground, pierced through the brain. Fearful of impending vengeance, the other assassins fled, taking his body with them.

One remained behind. Miriam, to her joyful surprise, saw faithful old Ben. Without waiting, he hastened to put out the fire, which was just ready to burst into a blaze.

That time the danger was passed.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE SPECTER FROM PANDEMONIUM.

"THEY had fastened me to a tree in de woods, so I couldn't get back in time. Dere rope was little, an' I 'nawed an' 'nawed, till I got loose. Den I flew, an' got har jist in time"—here old Ben paused, and looked round him, and whispered, "you know wot?" Then turning to grandmother, he added:

"Oh, mistiss, don't be skeered! De gude Lor' will protect us. Dis ole Ben will die fur his ole mistiss. Go to bed now, you, Miss Lilian, and Miss Ethel. Susan an' me will sit up till daylight. Dey won't come agin dis night."

After her grandmother and sisters had gone to bed, Miriam came and sat down between the two old servants.

"Uncle Ben," said she; "we must get away from this place to-morrow."

"Certainly, missie," he replied. "Dis is our fus' day since we moved har, an' it will be de last one we stay. We'll hab to go back to town; an' me an' Susan will do de bes' we kin to mak' ole mistiss an' de chillens a libin'. Old Ben did tink it bes' to come out har, whar he an' Aunt Susan could plant a crop of corn; but he hab made a mistake. De times is too unsettled for us to lib so far frum

udder white people, so we is gwine to gone back as soon as day breaks."

"And I will get a school to teach," said Miriam.

"You cain't git no school frum de 'publicans. Dey gibbs de schools to de nigger teachers wot don't know cat, an' de white folks won't sarnt dere chillens to a nigger teacher. 'Sides, de white chillens hab ter either stay at hum or go ter de nigger school; 'publicans won't hab separate schools fur de white chillens, an' you ain't gwine ter teach niggers! I know my massa's chile is 'bove dat. Dey would gib you a school quick, or any udder Southern white lady, who would come down to nigger 'quality."

"But, in some way," said Miriam, "I will help you and Mammy make our living."

"No you won't, hunny. Ole Ben ain't gwine to disgrace his dead massa by lettin dese chillens work. Me an' Susan can make de libbin'. We will do dat sho'. 'Tain't dat which boddors me half so much as Mars George. Ef he would onliest stay sober during dese awful times. Ter-night, when he oughter bin har ter protext you alls, wot he do but git dead drunk, an' dey shut him up in de s'loon."

At this reminder, the tears dropped fast and thick over Miriam's pale cheeks.

"Don't cry, hunny. De gude Lord knows dat dis ole nigger will try ter be your farder and brudder bof."

"Yes, hunny; an' ole Mammy Susan will be yer sho' 'nuff mudder," continued Aunt Susan, gently stroking Miriam's hand.

A low muffled knocking at the door arrested their attention.

"Lord, dey's comed back!" said Aunt Susan, with a shudder.

"Hush, mammy!" said Miriam. "You will alarm grandmother. It is brother George. I know his knock."

"True, missie; and I'll go roun' tother side, an' open de do' an' let him in dat way."

After Uncle Ben had been gone for a few moments he returned, saying:

"It is onliest Mars George."

"Is he hurt?" asked Miriam.

"No, missie; but yer come an' see him!"

When they had reached her brother's room, she saw him lying in a heavy drunken stupor.

"Missie, can't yer gin him sumfin' to make him sober?"

Miriam only shook her head, while her tears fell fast.

"Lord! Lord! what shall I do?"

"Gude Lor', show me wot to do!" moaned the old man.

"Tell me, Uncle Ben, what is the matter?"

"Missie, de niggers am gwine to burn de village dis night, an' kill ebbery white pusson dar."

For only an instant was Miriam speechless. Then she asked:

"How do you know?"

"I stole under de church whar dey hel' dere metin', an' oberhear' dem. Dey say dat de white man ob de vilage is dun gone down ter help de white folks in — whar de niggers are killin' de white folks awfully. Dese niggers up har is gwine ter kill ebbery chile an' 'ooman dis night."

"What time?"

"Jist fo' day. Ef we kin git Mars George sober, so he kin protext you. I'se gwine ter town like de wind, an' tell Doctor Howells."

"No, you stay and I will go, Uncle Ben."

"Oh, my gude, dear chile; no, no, nebber! nebber!"

"Yes, Uncle Ben; you can do more good here, and I will go."

"You sho' determuned, missie?"

"Yes, come quick! and dress me like one of their devils, and there will be no danger."

Her toilet was made. Its grotesqueness startled the old man.

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"Dey sho' will run when dey see yer arter I git done fixin' yer."

"If grandmother asks for me, tell her that I am with brother George."

"Missie, oh chile, don't you go!"

"Uncle Ben, be easy. You know they will fly as soon as they see me. Satan himself would run."

"Yes, hunny; I made dis fur myself; it represents de debil."

"It certainly looks more like him than he does himself," she said, looking into the mirror.

"Come now; saddle Logan."

"Not him, missie?"

"Yes. I want him because he is wild, and they can never hold him, even if they should catch him."

"He is dangerous, missie."

"But he flies. Come, come; saddle Logan!"

By this time they stood in the rudely built stable-door. When she had mounted, Uncle Ben held Logan, giving his last instructions.

"De place whar yer'll find dem is Bethel Church, at de cross-roads. Dey will 'semble dar by de hundreds, an' when Logan smells dem, he will sho' leab dis earth. Now den, missie, keep a steady han'. I'se done strapped de saddle so it cain't come off. Logan, you har? bring my young mistiss back. God bress you, hunny, an' come back soon."

He let go of the bridle, and Logan plunged through the blackness. Onward he dashed. Nothing broke the stillness, except the ring of his hoofs, as they struck sparks from the flinty, cold ground. In the distance, she could hear the rush of the river. All else was very still. She looked upward, but there were no stars in the wide vault above. As if realizing what depended on his flight, the noble brute flew onward with storm-like speed.

Now and then she passed dark objects, but nothing halted her; yet she knew that she was nearing Bethel Church.

In the distance, she saw a huge bonfire, and she wondered what is portended. Logan plunged still faster, until within sight of a dense black mass. Miriam saw that they were digging a grave, and also a coffin was beside the grave. The keen sense of the horse appraised him of danger, and with the ferocity of a wild beast, he plunged into the midst of the black multitude that had gathered across the road.

"Halt!" cried a voice; and many hands grasped the bridle.

Logan was a powerful animal, black as midnight. He reared, and pawed them with his iron-shod feet.

"Who are you?" demanded the leader.

They were now beside the open grave, and the fire-light fell upon the horse and his rider, creating general dismay.

"Joe B——," was the answer, in a sepulchral voice. "I am your leader who was shot a few hours ago. I am just back from hell, and have come to warn you. You are going to be killed if you stay here!"

Blue flames were now seen coming from the mouth of the specter, as the horse dashed toward the negroes. Did they run? Rather they flew. The noise of their heavy feet resounded on the earth like the boom of a coming storm.

Logan rushed onward, and it was with difficulty that Miriam checked him in front of Howells's residence. Dis-mounting, she hurries into the house.

"What in the devil is this?" thundered a gentleman, in amazement, as he beheld the strange figure.

"You, Mr. Ellery; I am glad to see you!" she replied. "Is Doctor Howells at home?"

"No," he replied; "but who—what are you?"

"What shall I do?" she cried, in utter hopelessness, as she threw off her singular habiliments.

Ellery looked at her as if petrified with amazement.

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"Do you not remember me?" she asked, extending her hand.

"Miss Hargrove," he replied, as he clasped the offered hand, "I can never forget you. Can I serve you?"

"Yes, you can render the most important of services. I wish to inform Doctor Howells that the negroes have planned to burn this village to-night, and to massacre the inhabitants. "Good-evening, Herbert," she added, addressing a youth that had just come into the room. "I am anxious to see your father. When do you expect him home?"

"He is absent on a professional call, and I can not tell his exact return; I will try, however, and fill his place if I can assist you, Miss Miriam," returned the youth.

She knew him well; he was trustworthy and reliable.

"Herbert, you must go instantly and warn the inhabitants of this village. The negroes intend burning it, and murdering every man, woman and child!"

"I will!" he replied. His eyes flashed as he continued.

"The negroes would never attempt such a crime were it not for scoundrelly white men. I for one am anxious to help swing these white villains to the gallows!"

The door closed after the impetuous youth. Miriam, too, moved toward the door, saying:

"I must return home immediately. Grandmother will be alarmed at my absence."

"It is unsafe for you to go alone; permit me to accompany you."

Soon they were cantering toward her home. She was exceedingly sad, and the tears dropped over her cheeks. He noticed her grief, and was conscious that she associated him with the memory of her mother; that she was recalling the time when they had made their Mexican expedition together. How his heart sympathized with the young girl bereft of father, mother and brother.

Approaching her home, she calmed her grief, and remarked:

“Mr. Ellery, once I could have invited you into a palatial residence, but now my home is a hut; and even the plantations once of incalculable value, are now almost worthless. The canal which Grant cut above here, let in the water, and inundations render our once fertile fields profitless. Only a few acres bordering immediately upon the river can be cultivated; and even these will soon be in the river, for its Louisiana shore is caving rapidly in front of my house.”

In the morning, the Hargroves left this place and removed into the village.

CHAPTER XIX.

DAGONET AND LAMMIKIN.

THE steamer “Pargoud” was puffing, rushing, and tearing apart the waters of the Mississippi. The magnificent vessel was crowded with passengers. The ladies’ cabin was full.

It was now evening, and Miriam Hargrove stood alone upon the guards, watching the silent sweep of waters. She was now on her way home. She lived almost constantly in the sad by-gone. A deep melancholy had settled upon her young face, and even strangers would turn and gaze wistfully, their hearts touched by its mournfulness. She recalled to mind that awful night when she and her mother had made their escape into Vicksburg, the death of her parent, and the sad fate of her brother. Her tears fell bitterly. She thought, too, of Belmont Manning, so manly, noble and true. She had seen his name mentioned in a Northern journal. Then he had not died. He would return; how often he had declared it; and would seek her out. The war was over. Her heart had not wandered, though her lips had spoken no word.

A fearful discouragement was now bearing upon her. She had been down the river to secure the position of governess in a Southern family, and was too late.

In the present condition of affairs, it was not possible for her to obtain a situation in a public school. Only negroes or individuals in sympathy with the dominant party were eligible. The public offices with large salaries had been grasped by the carpet-baggers and scalawags, leaving only minor positions to the negroes. In this way, the schools were filled with negro teachers, many of them unable to write, or perhaps even read. The egotistic fools felt this to be glory enough. As school-teachers, they were superior persons in general estimation, and their associates felt themselves exalted by their elevation. This policy of placing negroes as teachers in the public schools, was a strong link in the chain that bound them to their white leaders. It also seemed to intensify their hate to the Southern people. There were no separate schools, and white children had no choice except to attend those or remain at home. The latter alternative was generally followed. Thus, during the ten years that this state of affairs continued, many grew up illiterate. The feeling which was engendered in this way between the races, furnished political capital for the unprincipled men who were controlling the politics of the State.

As the twilight was disappearing, Miriam sat disconsolate, her head drooping upon her hands. A familiar voice addressed her.

"I hope, Miss Hargrove, that I am not intruding?"

"No, Mr. Ellery; I am glad to see you!"

"I thank you," he replied; and seating himself near to her, he continued, by asking, "did you meet with success in your application for governess?"

"No sir; the situation was filled."

"Do not be discouraged; I have secured a position for you in Jackson, Louisiana."

She looked into his face. He observed that her lips quivered before she could express her gratitude. He resumed:

"I corresponded with friends in Jackson, and had no trouble in obtaining the situation for you. Your grandmother and sisters will be safer down there. The negro population is not so dense as in this parish. Desperate struggles are coming in this region that will have no parallel in history, and I desire to see you safely away from the scene."

"I can not imagine how it can become worse than it now is."

"True. The negroes are desperately lawless, and rigidly protected by the public authorities. Doctor Howells and I endeavored to trace the theft of your rental cotton. Uncle Ben says that he contracted with the negro for fifteen bales. I believe you signed the contract?"

"Yes sir; I had to give my signature to make the contract binding, as the land rented did not belong to Uncle Ben. The negro stole the cotton, and I have not received one bale, though Doctor Howells drew up the contract, and it was legally binding. Even the mules that the negro owned could be seized for the rent, if the law was justly executed. But all is in the power of the Republican officers. When I appealed to the sheriff to seize the mules, he positively refused. While you and Doctor Howells went to investigate the matter, the team and cotton were both stolen, and run off. The officers of the law protect the negro no matter what may be the crime or the evidence of the crime.

"Since Federal bayonets, too, are shielding the negro, he has become daringly outrageous. He no longer attempts concealment even of the most villainous deeds. The example is set by office-holders. A few evenings since, a certain prominent politician, hired a brutal negro to assassinate Lawyer Winter, of Bayou Sara, Louisiana, and the deed was committed in the lawyer's residence. Mr. Win-

ter was sitting at his own hearth-stone, instructing his child, when he received a shot through an open window, producing immediate death.

“Although the assassin was well known, no effort was made by the Republican officials to bring the perpetrator to justice. Mr. Emory Curtis of East Feliciana, a gentleman of good standing, likewise, became involved in a difficulty with a negro, and turned to leave, when the negro stabbed him in the back, cutting between the vertebrae, and severing all but the smallest thread of the spinal cord. The unfortunate man lingered a few days, and died a most terrible death. The officials made no effort to bring the murderer to justice. The negroes believe that they will be protected, though their crimes are brutal and desperate. Federal bayonets sustain them in the perpetration of the most outrageous deeds.

“Our legislative halls are now filled with Federal troops, stationed there to sustain the Republican usurper called governor. Can this condition of things endure long? Is Louisiana to be forever bound in this tyrannical enslavement? Sir, were I a strong man, I would strike for the liberty of my State!”

“What way?” he inquired, eagerly, gazing into her flashing eyes.

“I would select the bravest men; men of true nerve; men that would not shrink before bayonets, and uniting them in a close organization, we would disguise ourselves, and guerrilla-like, attack these tyrants and assassins. Open warfare could not reach them. Louisiana is conquered; but, like Sumter, Marion, and Light Horse Harry of the Revolution, I would spring stealthily upon the negroes, and redeem this State from their rule.”

“The mass of negroes would be harmless, were it not for the carpet-bagger and Southern scalawag—the latter a Southern traitor more vile than Satan himself. They keep the negroes excited to incendiary and murderous deeds.”

"Then the blow should be made at these scoundrels; it must come; it is inevitable!"

"True; and the sooner the better. I would advise prosecution of the negro that has defrauded you of the rent which he contracted to pay for your land; but Doctor Howells and I have both concluded it is better for you not to do so, as the negro would in all probability sneak up, and fire your house in the night."

"More than likely. I believe this is my landing," she said, rising.

As he walked down the ladies' cabin beside her, he inquired again:

"Miss Miriam, will you accept the situation that I have secured for you?"

"Yes, sir; with the warmest gratitude."

At this moment, loud swearing and fierce denunciations, proceeding from the bar-room at the front of the boat, compelled them to pause. Several men were drinking at the steamboat bar, and two were swearing furiously. One struck the other; pistols were produced, and whistling bullets caused passengers to run in terror. Each was an unscrupulous scalawag. Both had been candidates for the same office, and the defeated one had now attacked the other. Shots were fired in quick succession; chandeliers were shattered; women ran screaming into the state-rooms, and the panic was general. Finally, one of the combatants named Dagonet was wounded. Almost before Miriam was aware, he had run behind her to screen himself from his pursuer. She had rushed upon the guards, and he followed to place her between himself and the bullets. Her life was in instant danger. The pursuer kept firing, regardless of whom was killed. The clerk, captain, and Cuthbert Ellery sprung behind the antagonist, seized his arms, and took away his weapon. Their indignation was so great that they came near murdering him on the spot.

Miriam hurried ashore, and Cuthbert Ellery drove her home.

That night, as she sat conversing with her sister and her grandmother, Uncle Ben hurried in, exclaiming:

"Missie, de niggers hab c'lected by de hundreds, an' am marchin' ter town ter burn it. Dagonet got off ob de boat 'bove har, an' drove roun' frough de neighborhood, an' hab c'lected de niggers, an' he is marchin' at dere hed, bringin' dem har ter 'sassinate ebbery white passon, an' ter burn de town, too!"

"Uncle Ben," she replied, "these citizens have done nothing to him. They took no part in the contest between him and Lammikin."

"True, missie; but Lammikin, an' a few 'publicans s'porters ob Lammikin, lib in dis town, an' Dagonet is gwine burn it ter git wengance on dem. Listin! De drums keeps comin' closer; dey is sho' comin', an' missie, dey will git shot down by de dozen. Doctor Howells, his nefew, an' lots of de white gentlemens is ready wid dere guns."

The negroes came marching into town. Dagonet was not in front of them; he was securely in the rear. They were met by a band of armed citizens. Dr. Howells stepped forward, and addressed them, explaining to the negroes that they, the citizens, had taken no part in the quarrel between Lammikin and Dagonet, and closed by giving them ten minutes to disband and return home. He could hear them muttering in an undertone, until one of them broke into audible swearing.

"Demm de traiter Howells; he sez he is 'publican, but he lies. He no fren' ter de nigger; he never pervites us ter his house, like de honorable Mr. Dagonet duz."

"Don't back down, my brave lad!" shouted Dagonet from the rear.

"In five minutes more, if you remain here, we will kill you like dogs!" said Dr. Howells.

When the five minutes had expired, nearly every negro

was gone. The few that remained, left upon the firing of the first gun.

“Missie, ole Ben ’lowed it would be dis way, or dat de nigger would run when de fus’ gun fired; de fus’ bullet skeers dem ter def. Po’ fules; dey b’leves any ting dem scalawags tells dem. Tudder day dar wuz lots ob clocks dat come to de warf-boat; dey wuz fur a clock-agunt dat wuz sellin’ clocks frough de country. Two or free niggers saw de clocks piled up in de ware-house, an’ axed who dese clocks wuz fur; somebody tole dese niggers dat de clocks ha’ bin sarnt by Grant as present fur ebbery ’publican nigger. Ebber since de fule niggers hab bin flockin’ to de ware-house ter git dere clocks; ob course, de ware-house man would not gib dem up; so mister nigger gits mad, calls a perlitical meetin’, an’ plans a scheme ter burn dis town. Dagonet knows dis, so when he gits inter dis shooten scrape, he tells Mr. Nigger ’bout dem bein’ cheated out ob dere presents wot Grant had sarnt dem; an’ dey c’lect, an’ he marches dem har.”

“Ben, are they still such simpletons?” grandmother asked.

“Yes, ole mistiss; dey ain’t got no gude sense, dey bees full ob ghosts. Ebbery night dey goes out in de graveyards, an’ stays dar till ’most day, prayin’ fur Farder Abraham Lincoll ter come down from hebbin, an’ help dem kill dese white folks. Las’ night, I wrapped myself up in a sheet, dug me a deep hole, right ’mong de graves, cubbered up de hole, ontill night. Den I got down in it, put a loose cubberin’ on de top, an’ waited. Presently, dey come in herds, knelt all ’mong de graves, an’ sich moanin’ an’ howlin’ yer nebber heer’d. Dey howled an’ prayed, ‘Oh, Farder Abraham, do come an’ help us ter kill dese awful mean white folks.’

“‘Yes, my chillens; I is comin’,’ I said, creepin’ out ob my grabe. Missie, dem niggers hushed; dey was skeered ter breathe! ‘Yes, chillens, Farder Abraham hab

come,' I said, jumpin' clean out ob de grave. Lor', mis-sie, how dem niggers flew; dey cleaned up de deadnin'; dey tore de cotton fiel's, an' made de stalks fly! Dey will neber agin ax Farder Abraham ter come an' help dem kill de white folks."

CHAPTER XX.

LOUIS MURRAY.

THE Hargoves now made their home in Jackson. Miriam was busily engaged with her school. The number of scholars rapidly increased, and her sister Ethel helped her. Unfortunately their own education was far from thorough; the war had interfered, just as they were of the proper age. They were now diligent students, however, and their lamp burned late into the night. They studied the lessons in advance of their classes. In this way, they managed to get through their work each day acceptably. Miriam also wrote articles, which she forwarded to Northern publishers. Sometimes they were accepted. Now, a girl of fourteen, Lilian, the youngest sister, attended the school. Uncle Ben and Aunt Susan had accompanied them to Jackson, and did such work as could be procured.

George Hargrove, their only surviving male relative, was induced to attend the college for young men; the sisters paying the fees for tuition. He was an idle fellow, and debased by drink till he had become capable of any mean action. He had made the pretense of attending college, solely in order to get possession of the money which his two sisters contributed to pay for his instruction.

Miriam usually put it into his hands when it became due each month, not suspecting that he was not honorable enough to deliver it to the president of the college. This he did not do. The president was a generous man, and sympathized with the two sisters in their endeavors to gain an honorable support, as well as to redeem their brother.

Hence, he omitted to ask them for the unpaid sums; and as they, on their part, supposed the bills to have been paid, the institution was defrauded.

This was not all. Hargrove observed his sister opening a letter which contained a bank-note. He afterward frequented the post-office, and inquired for her letters, which he did not scruple to open, rob and destroy.

Belmont Manning had written to Miriam, and her brother intercepted the letters. He used the knowledge treacherously which he had thus obtained, as will be related on another page. Miriam knew nothing of this, and the saddest distrust was thereby created. Manning had displayed the most passionate affection; had manifested a devotion perfectly heroic, and heeding no denial, had persistently avowed his purpose to come for her when the war had ended. She knew that he was alive, and that his name appeared frequently in the newspapers. His talents were acknowledged, and he had been elected to Congress. His first speech had been copied and extensively distributed. Yet, she had received no token of his remembrance, and could not divine the reason of such inconstancy. The silent agony wore upon her spirits, and made her eyes look weary and sad.

How our destinies are sometimes changed by the acts of others, and our lives are caused to drift into channels where we did not pilot them!

Cuthbert Ellery also made his home in Jackson, where he rose to prominence in the profession of law. He was a frequent visitor of the Hargroves, and rendered them timely assistance in their studies. He was several years older than Miriam, and had been able, before the war, to acquire a superior education. He recognized the fact that she entertained no expectation of marrying, at least for the present, and supposed that it was because she was too entirely absorbed in the effort to support her family, and to educate her sister and brother.

One night the three sisters were sitting with the grandmother, around a warm fire in their neat but scantily furnished parlor. Presently Lilian twined her arms around the aged woman, and addressed her beseechingly:

"Grandmother, darling, do not work any more; you will ruin your eyes."

Habitually industrious, Mrs. Hargrove even now labored to contribute some little part toward the sustaining of the family. She did knitting and plain sewing as she could, and toiled in this way almost incessantly. She returned the gentle girl's caress.

"In one moment, dear. I have almost finished this button-hole; then I will rest. I love to work, my child. Your sisters are heavily burdened, and I desire to help what I can; besides, employment keeps me from painful thinking."

"Of what, grandmother?" asked Miriam, looking up from the problem in geometry which she was endeavoring to solve.

"Of the past, my darling—the desolate past. Of your dead parents and your brother Russell. Sometimes it seems as if my heart would burst; and, indeed, if it were not for you, I would welcome a rest in my grave!"

Her voice quivered as she spoke, and her hands trembled. Laying down their books, Miriam and Ethel came to her side.

"Grandmother, precious to us!" they cried; "separation from our dead ones will not be eternal, if we do our part well. God will surely guide us."

"True, my noble children," the old lady replied. "It is ill to repine; but, oh, that awful—awful war that desolated our home, and sent us forth as paupers into the world! It grieves me to see you two struggling to carry a burden that almost crushes you. My child, you look ten years older; you take little rest, and your cheeks are becoming hollow; your eyes are weary looking."

Miriam did not reply. She thought of Belmont Manning and his unexplained silence, which was oppressing her with anxiety.

"Mistiss, mistiss!" cried Aunt Susan, coming into the room; "look at dem blinds wide open! Missie, chile, neber do dat agin; be sartin an' shut de windy-blinds fo' dark comes. Ef yer leabes dem blinds open many times, I'se skeered ter stay at my work late ob ebenin's; caze I'll be thinkin' some nigger might be sneakin' up ter shute my mistiss or de chillens."

During all this talk, the cautious old creature had raised the window and closed the shutters.

As she left the room, Cuthbert Ellery and Louis Murray entered. The latter was a young minister, whose devotion to Ethel was evident.

"Miss Hargrove," said Ellery, "I have sad news. You, of course, remember Herbert—Doctor Howells's son."

"Distinctly. He was a most excellent young man, and like his father, possessed high principles. They represent that class of Northern men making their homes in the South, who apprehend the enormities of "carpet-bag" rule, and have identified themselves with the better class of Southern people. Has anything happened to him?"

"A negro shot him, day before yesterday. The lawless negroes all over the State, have been stealing horses, mules, and cattle to such an extent, that in some districts the white owners are perfectly stripped. They steal hogs, sheep and cattle for their political barbecues, as well as for their own consumption; and take the horses and mules into another State or district, to sell. This is the practice everywhere. Doctor Howells's last horse was stolen. Herbert traced it, and unmistakably implicated the thief. The sheriff refused to arrest him. In the dispute which followed, the sheriff and the negro both fired upon the young man. He died almost instantly!"

After a few moments of mournful reflection, Ellery continued:

"The negroes have extended their depredations to the seed-cotton. Many of them work at picking it during the day, and conceal a part till night, when they carry it off to sell in that condition. In other instances the owners of the cotton at sunset on each day pay each negro picker by the hundred pounds gathered during the day. The seed-cotton is then locked up in houses, which are placed at convenient places in the fields. The negroes now break open these houses nightly, take out the cotton, and sell it. The merchants who purchase it in that condition, unginned, know that it must have been stolen. They abet the negroes in doing so. They are men who have little capital, but also who are unscrupulous about the character of their transactions. Every plantation is now robbed in this way. Those negroes, too, who are cultivating land on their own account, sell their cotton in the same way, thus defrauding the owners of the land out of their rent, and cheating the merchants who have furnished them with supplies during the season on credit."

"It now must have become a matter of life and death," said Miriam. "A general famine among the white population will be the inevitable result."

"It undoubtedly will," Ellery replied. "Already the farms are in the most dilapidated condition."

"Then, it becomes necessary to call a halt," remarked Louis Murray, in quiet suppressed tones, that spoke a calm, inflexible resolve, as his dark-gray eyes gleamed.

"What do you propose to do?" inquired Miriam.

"We will not suffer the continuation of such acts!" replied the young minister. "We must incur the grave responsibility, justifiable only as a last resort of taking the law into our own hands. So far, we have submitted, as the fortune of war to superior power. We have been lashed, insulted and ruled by unscrupulous adventurers; equalized

with ignorant and utterly lawless negroes. Every public office in Louisiana is filled by them; and while an offense against a negro or republican partisan is punished without hesitation, crimes against white people are committed with impunity. The situation is desperate, but death itself is preferable to existence under such conditions."

"Listen!" exclaimed Ethel.

The loud, continued beat of drums was distinctly heard.

The negroes of the district had gathered on the outskirts of the village, several hundred in number, and were firing guns, cursing, and beating drums furiously. There was no reason for this, except that they supposed it would intimidate the white population. Their white leaders, who had been reared in the South and understood the negro character, knew that these savages gloried in such blustering demonstrations. Hence they instigated them to come together nightly for this, if for no other purpose.

The discordant sounds now were heard nearer by. The young men listened intently, their eyes gleaming as with desperate resolve. Finally, Ellery spoke assuringly:

"It is only one of their usual gatherings," said he.

Then for a few moments he sat down by Miriam, to assist her in the solution of a problem, while Louis Murray engaged in conversation in a low tone with Ethel.

They soon afterward took their leave.

Almost immediately after their departing, Uncle Ben appeared at the door.

"Missie, kin I come in?" he asked.

"Certainly; what is the matter?"

"Well, hunny; I jist wan' to tole you 'bout de awful times in Bayou Sara. Dem young men did not want to 'larm you, an' so would not tole you. De bad niggers planned ter enter de town, set it on fire, kill de men dat opposed dem, 'buse de ladies, an' steal ebbery ting. Dere plot was revealed a few hours befo' de time; an' fifteen or twenty white gentlemans hid demselbes in de bushes 'long

side de road, a mile frum town. De niggers was comin' by de hundreds, an' brough wagons to carry off de plunder. When de nigger come close ter whar de white men whar hid, de gentlemans fired all at once. Seben niggers wuz killed, an' some wuz wounded. De udders jist flew. Bill Hammer, de Confederate scout, wuz wid de white men; he fired away at de nigger, too, an' he help de white men lots; he's an 'onorable nigger. Dar is one ob my race dat's got some sense. But, missie," the old nigger continued, "it's dem scalawag Soufern men dat set on dese mean niggers to de blackest debiltry. De carpet-baggers are sneaks, but de scalawags is ten times meaner dan de carpet-bagger. If I was a white gentleman, I would kill de scalawags. It will hab to be done. You know a white lady darn't be lef' 'lone. Whin she goes in de streets, gentlemen kin folks or friends must be dar to protext her. Soon as de sun begins ter set, I leab my blacksmith shop, and strike for hum, fearin' dat old mistiss or my young chillens might be 'lone. Dey all know dat ole Ben would shoot de fus' nigger dat enter dis house. Ef de white gentlemans would do so, dey would soon skeer de niggers away, an' make de carpet-baggers leab. Dey's no account, but de Soufern scalawags keeps up dese awful times."

As the old man finished his harangue, he placed his earning for the week in his young mistress's lap.

"No, Uncle Ben," said she, holding the money toward him; "do not give all your earnings. Keep some of this money."

"No, no, hunny!" the old man replied. "De day my good massa lef' fo' de war, he says, 'Ole man, I knows yer will be faithful ter my chillens.' An ole Ben 'lows ter, ef he dies tryin'."

The mention of her son always caused the aged mother to weep unrestrainedly, and now she bent down her face, and sobbed piteously.

The granddaughters knelt round her, soothing and



tain a clique of office-holders, who violated their most sacred obligations, neglected their duties, and of whom every man almost, from the governor to the lowest negro constable, was a thief and instigator of crime?

He did install the Republican governor, Legislature and other officials in Louisiana, by the power of the army. The Congressional reports were partisan productions, which carefully concealed the true condition. The absolute necessity for the white population to protect their lives, the virtue of their women, and their property, was in no way attended to. If there is a man on God's round earth that will die to guard the sacredness of his home, his wife, his mother, his sister, and his daughter, that man is the Southerner.

General Grant was, nevertheless, not a sympathizer with lawlessness, injustice, or willful wrong-doing. When he learned the state of facts actually existing, he refused to employ the army a second time to uphold the enormities of the Federal office-holders; and he also proclaimed to his republican supporters that the Southern scalawag factions were barnacles which must be removed from the ship.

The cotton crop that year had been abundant. As is well known, cotton is the very life of Southern productive industry. The staple is not ready for the market till it has been ginned, and so separated from its seed.

Having already stripped the country of horses, mules, and other domestic animals, the negroes next turned their attention to stealing the seed-cotton. They were paid wages at the rate of seventy-five cents to a dollar a hundred pounds, for picking; after which they would take it by night from the houses in which it had been stored, and sell it for five cents a pound, to dishonest purchasers. This made a lucrative business for both the thieves and the receivers of the stolen property. The latter, paying but five cents a pound for the cotton, then caused it to be ginned, and found no difficulty in obtaining twenty cents a

attention to stealing the seed-cotton. They were paid wages at the rate of seventy-five cents to a dollar a hundred pounds, for picking; after which they would take it by night from the houses in which it had been stored, and

pound for his lint, while the seed would bring from ten to fifteen dollars a ton.

For the land-owners, however, and honorable merchants, under such a state of affairs, there could be only bankruptcy. They might not attempt an investigation, or endeavor to secure their rights; a bullet would speedily end the matter. Upheld, as the guilty individuals were, by the civil authorities, there was no check adequate to restrain their lawlessness.

The Hargrove family had assembled as usual around their fireside. Ethel and Miriam were diligently engaged in study, each bending over her book. Lilian was sitting beside her grandmother. It seemed as if the gentle girl regarded it as her place to love and caress this aged relative, so affectionate was she, so amiable, so tenacious in respect to whomever she loved. She was the idol of the household; and she returned the devotion of the others with a warmth and earnestness that a casual physiognomist would hardly suspect to exist in her yielding nature.

Finally, the grandmother retired, the gentle girl accompanying her. The two sisters were still engaged by their studies. Suddenly, Ethel closed her book, and addressed her sister:

"Miriam, the last dishonor has come. Have you not heard—have you never suspected that George Hargrove had become a scalawag politician?"

Miriam turned pale, and the muscles of her face quivered.

"Yes," said she; "I knew it, but I would not tell. At the last election, he voted that ticket. They obtained his vote with whisky. He would scruple at nothing that would gratify his desire for liquor."

She had risen in her excitement, and was now restlessly walking the floor. Ethel wept bitterly, but Miriam's eyes were dry. They glittered with fierce scorn. She felt the degradation of her brother, as an infliction worse than

death. His desertion of the principles which her family had cherished now added a more bitter ingredient to the cup.

"I had never imagined," she exclaimed, "that I would live to bless the day that my parents and own noble brother Russell died! They were true to their convictions, and to their country. I thank my God now that they died before they knew one of our number was a traitor and a knave!"

There were Southern families with such unworthy members, and the feeling toward them was intensely bitter. The carpet-baggers were disliked, from the character of the adventurers coming South to enrich themselves, with little regard to the means of doing so. But, when a Southern-born man made common cause with them, the deepest indignation was the result.

The most opprobrious epithets were applied to him. In every instance he did his full part to deserve the imputation.

His countenance and encouragement emboldened the negroes to perpetrate the most horrible crimes.

The brutal atrocity of the crimes committed in Louisiana, at this time, surpasses common belief. If any reader doubts these statements, the writer can furnish undeniable evidence. I refer them, likewise, to any individual who lived in Jackson, Louisiana, at that period.

A heavy sob from Ethel, caused her sister to pause. Tenderly embracing her, Miriam continued:

"Upon you and me rests the honor of our family. You, I trust, will soon be sheltered under the name of an honorable husband. Louis Murray loves you warmly, and I apprehend that you are delaying your marriage because you are unwilling to leave me burdened with the support of our family. Tell me—is it not so?"

"Miriam," said her sister, "the burden would be too heavy for you to bear alone. I would not for worlds desert you."

"Ethel, my sister!" replied Miriam. "Labor is not a burden to me, when it is for those whom I love. Life gives me no greater delight than that. It is only disgrace that makes death desirable"—and her features were vividly expressive of scorn. After a moment she went on:

"Uncle Ben, Aunt Susan, and our grandmother are failing day by day. They can not work much longer. I most earnestly desire to see you securely settled in life. The man of your choice is all that I can wish. He is honorable, high-principled and energetic—a worthy Christian man. We need a protector, a head to our family to fill the place which George has forfeited by recreancy. When the prestige of a falling family rests upon the shoulders of women, the burden is a heavy one; and for that consideration alone, I entreat that you will no longer postpone your wedding."

Ethel Hargrove looked into the earnest eyes that were gazing tenderly upon her.

"Sister," said she; "do you really think that my marriage would help in this way to retrieve the credit of our family?"

"I do," replied Miriam. "Louis Murray belongs to one of the oldest Southern families. You will make me far happier by marrying him, and firmly establishing our ancestral prestige, than by remaining single to help me in procuring a livelihood."

"But you, my sister!" Ethel rejoined. "You yourself can elevate our family even above its ancestral distinction."
Miriam did not reply.

"Cuthbert Ellery is pre-eminently distinguished—morally, socially, intellectually, and ancestrally. The place which he so grandly filled under the Confederate Government, has exalted his name, and the South regards him as among her noblest sons. He loves you with perfect devotedness, and would most gladly take your burden and

responsibility upon himself. Why do you put aside the advice which you give me?"

"Because," answered Miriam, "you love your betrothed. I would not desire you to marry the emperor of the world, if you did not love him. This is the only foundation upon which permanent conjugal happiness can be built. Admiration and friendship can not fill a vacant life, made empty by the absence of love. As well expect the eagle to swoop down from the lofty crag and be content with an existence in the low barren desert, as to imagine me to find happiness without the soul's crowning glory of love!"

"I can not understand," said Ethel, "why you do not love him. With a peerless name and character, with just the heroic traits that I believed would attack you, and satisfy your lofty demands, he possesses every principle that you honor, and every quality that you would exact. I can not comprehend it."

"Then do not try."

"But, I can not refrain from pleading the advantages of your marriage with him. You would be relieved from the necessity of laboring; you would be the idolized queen of his home. Grandmother, Lilian, and our two faithful old servants would be cared for, generously supported and protected."

"Sister!" cried Miriam. "I would work till I dropped into my grave, before I would dishonor myself by marrying from the motive to secure a home and maintenance. Life, true marriage, means infinitely more than that."

"You do not understand me," said Ethel. "I do not ask you to marry Cuthbert Ellery, if you can not love him; but, I am certain that if you would allow yourself you could and would love him intensely. I know that you struggle against his influence. You have some hidden reason for this resistance. What the motive is, I can not divine; unless it be the notion that it would be unworthy in you to burden him with helpless dependents. Nothing, I am cer-

tain, influences you, but that which is honorable. I beseech you to give up this struggle against him. Remember how true he has been to you; how faithful. He would risk his life for you or yours."

The look of bitter scorn which was upon Miriam's countenance as she contemplated her brother's recent conduct, had now passed away. She walked the floor slowly and thoughtfully. Her face was mournful beyond expression. She was thinking now of Belmont Manning, for whom she had periled her life, and who had periled all for her. He had been her king, crowned by her most loyal devotion. He had vowed to her his undying fidelity. Now, his apparent faithlessness was torturing her with a living death. Her heart ached; but no human being knew her suffering. She had hidden it even from loving eyes. The memory of what he had been to her she cherished as sacred; and she contemplated it with that mournfulness with which we look upon the face of the dead. She had made a grave for him deep down in her heart, and laid him there to be mourned, but not forgotten. She felt that she must cling to him, even though he was to her as one sleeping in the earth.

She had struggled to annihilate this feeling but it had refused to die. She now reflected upon his silence, unbroken by any sound. If he could live in the same world without her, she, too, would master her own heart. It should now become a machine, to do her bidding, to love whom and when her will directed. So she resolved.

Her sister, meanwhile, had quietly left the room.

A low knock arrested her attention. It was not yet late, and she could readily conjecture who was the caller.

"Come in," she answered.

"Good-evening, Miss Hargrove."

"Good-evening, Mr. Ellery," she replied, offering him a chair.

As he sat some moments without speaking, she contem-

plated his appearance. He was just in middle age, dignified and easy in manners, and of regal bearing. He seemed to be deeply reflecting. He was not impetuous, and never adopted any line of action without having carefully pondered it; but, when once determined upon his course, he would not change or swerve. At length he spoke:

"I have come, to-night, upon a peculiar errand," said he. "I am about to intrust you with secrets, which may become dangerous to know."

She made no reply, and he expected none. He went on:

"I have resolved to die or rid Louisiana of her oppressors."

"How?" she asked.

"I am about to organize a Kuklux Klan," Ellery replied. "It shall be a secret, oath-bound society. Its purpose is to deliver Louisiana from the domination of negroes, carpet-baggers, and scalawags. This shall be done," he added, "though blood flows through the State from Arkansas to the Gulf. Am I right?" he sharply interrogated?

"You are!" she answered. "Southern men have submitted too long to a state of affairs more oppressive than even military rule, and more humiliating than the yoke of a tyrant. I would make a white man of principle governor of Louisiana, or die in the attempt!"

"The die is cast," Ellery replied. "Here in Jackson, Louisiana, four men of unflinching courage have united under my leadership. We began the work this very night, by seizing one Joe Johnson, in the parish of East Feliciana, in the act of selling stolen cotton. He was taken to a convenient place and shot. To-morrow morning, his body will be found lying on his back, under a pine-tree."

Miriam was about to speak, when Uncle Ben came rushing into the room.

"Run, massa!" cried he; "run an' hide my young

chillens. Yer one lone man cain't protext 'em 'gainst hundreds."

Mrs. Hargrove and the two granddaughters were roused by Ben's cries of terror, and came rushing into the room.

"I hain't got no time," cried the old man, "ter tole yer wot awful murder is done! Run, old mistiss, you an' de chillens. Oh, merciful God! sabe dem from dem nigger beasts. Run! run! ebbery 'ooman an' chile is flyin' ter de woods. Oh, massa, massa; put down dat gun, an' go wid dem; yer cain't fight hundreds!"

Ask the people of Jackson whether they remember that awful night—that night when women and children forsook their homes in mortal terror, fled to the woods, and remained there, not daring to return. The panic was general. The Hargrove sisters and their aged grandmother, without waiting to dress themselves in comfortable clothing, hurried into the street, then across the cotton-fields to the woods. Mr. Ellery accompanied them in their flight, assisting Mrs. Hargrove till they had reached a place where they could be securely sheltered. He then left them, and returned to ascertain the cause of the panic. He found the streets, so lately thronged by the terrified inhabitants, now entirely deserted. Not a woman or child was remaining behind in the town.

The origin of the general consternation was the perpetration of a brutal murder. A party of ten or twelve negroes had carried a quantity of stolen cotton to the storehouse of a Jew trader. After he had paid them, they picked a quarrel with him, and finished it by putting him to death, in a manner too horrible to describe. They then held revel over the corpse, and finally fired the building to cover their crime. The conflagration served as a beacon to bring together all the negroes of the vicinity. Hundreds of them were thus collected, and like wild beasts maddened by the scent of blood, they soon became wildly furious. The terror that night surpassed anything even

in the most dreadful times of the civil war. There was no safety for any one; the inhabitants abandoned their houses, the women and children in panic-fright, hiding for safety in the woods. Their male relations, now exasperated beyond the pitch of further endurance, had resolved to unite in the most effective form to put an end to this cycle of murder and lawless outrage.

That night, in a vacant house in the most obscure outskirts of the town, several white men had assembled. The original five that had previously organized at nightfall, was now largely increased in numbers. The time had come when it was absolutely necessary to act decisively; and with the emergency, the men also came. It was for them a matter of life and death. In the little group now assembled were gray-haired men and ministers of the Gospel, hoary with age and faithful service to God. The peace and safety of the community were at stake, and they periled their own lives to rescue the State from assassins and robbers.

At this first meeting of the Kuklux Klan, Cuthbert Elery, the acknowledged leader as we already know, did not preside. His place was taken by an aged man with hair white as the snows of winter. The room was small and without furniture, except a small table upon which burned a candle, throwing its dim flickering light upon the faces of those present. They stood silent, listening to the directions of their presiding officer. The men were so completely disguised that no one was able to distinguish another. There was no possible way to know who was a member of the order, except by means of a secret sign known to members only.

The organization was but a few hours old, and no one outside knew of its existence. The plan for making prisoners of the negroes that had murdered the Jew having been completed, the meeting was adjourned. The Kuklux band, armed to the teeth, repaired immediately to the scene

of action. They found the negroes still assembled. George Hargrove, and a yellow man named John Gair, had been haranguing them. The purpose of the negroes was to take advantage of the absence of the inhabitants and burn the town.

They were not yet over their debauch; and Hargrove was the most inebriated of them all. Anticipating no opposition, they set out in a solid body. As they approached the town, they came upon the band of Kuklux, standing immovable, in a line across the street. They halted at once, and before they could recover from their surprise, the Kuklux company began firing upon them. Several fell dead, and the others, standing a moment confounded, turned and fled in every direction.

For several days they were pursued. Others, however, came to their assistance. They proceeded then to intrench themselves at a favorable spot, and prepared for battle. About five hundred of them were collected there. It was necessary for their assailants to be cautious in attacking them. Finally, however, the negroes were dispersed, with a loss of sixty to eighty.

The whole affair was described in the report made to Congress. It was there stated that the Kuklux, a band of barbarous assassins, had murdered the negroes, to put down radical rule and negro suffrage.

That the negroes were killed by the Kuklux, no one will deny; but, under the circumstances, the killing was justifiable.

CHAPTER XXII.

GEORGE HARGROVE AND THE KUKLUX KLAN.

THERE were two classes of scalawags in the South, as there were also of carpet-baggers. Of the latter, one class were directly from the slums and lower orders of society, and had emigrated South as mere adventurers, in quest of

whatever opportunity might come in their way. The other consisted of politicians and men of ability, who had not met with success at home, and had come to the South to recruit their fortunes, and gain a standing which they had failed to attain. Both these classes disappeared soon after the general uprising.

The scalawags also consisted of the more intelligent class and the lower. The former were generally men of polished manners and education, belonging to the better families of the South. Mr. Dagonet represented this class. After he had lost his foothold in East Carroll, and suffered defeat by the division in his own party, he made his residence in Jackson. He was medium-sized, with sharp, cunning eyes, and a high broad forehead; but, in those regions of the brain where the domestic faculties are located, there was utter shrinkage, while conscientiousness seemed to have been eradicated by low cunning, cautiousness, and acquisitiveness. He dressed exquisitely; his manners were princely, suave and agreeable. He was sober, and free from the grosser vices of his associates; but cowardly, artful and unscrupulous. Hence he became their recognized leader, while they were his pliant tools.

George Hargrove was a type of the lower class. Drink and debasing habits had sunk him to that inferior level. His family was patrician, and highly esteemed; in his home were three peerless sisters, and an aged grandmother, as saintly a woman as ever trod the path of life. His parents had been noble exemplars of uprightness and probity; his young brother was patriotic and elevated in soul. But in him it seemed as if all the unworthiness which had existed in his ancestors for generations had been concentrated, and he was emphatically "the black sheep of the family." His baseness and perfidy toward his sisters has been already shown. He subsisted upon their earnings, he had not scrupled to open and rob their letters; and he answered pleadings and remonstrances with vile abuse. He was

coarse, unpolished, and almost ruffianly; but, unlike his scalawag preceptor, he was in no sense a coward. Indeed, he was ready to perpetrate any atrocious deed; only requiring a little money, or some insignificant political office and abundance of drink.

The two men fittingly represented their respective classes. The negroes of that district were controlled by their influence. Mr. Dagonet, however, did not appear in public as their leader. George Hargrove enjoyed this distinction. We have seen that he was the principal speaker, that terrible night in Jackson, inciting the savage multitude to violence and outrage. He was their commander when they used to congregate of nights for their noisy parades, and other public demonstrations. Mr. Dagonet was careful not to appear on such occasions. Although he was the secret power behind, the projector of their satanic undertakings, no overt act could be traced to him. Secure in his elegant home, he escaped alike the danger of loss of prestige from undue familiarity with his negro followers, and of summary punishment at the hands of injured citizens.

The time for holding the State and parish elections was now near at hand. Mr. Dagonet was the candidate for the lucrative office of sheriff and collector of taxes.

George Hargrove had been nominated for a place of far less importance. Indeed the Republican ticket was composed entirely of bad white men and ambitious negroes. It could hardly be otherwise. Republicans of principle and character refused to become candidates, and such men would not have been acceptable to the brutish voters.

Those only of the baser sort had any chance. There was an occasional negro on the ticket, who in certain characteristics, strikingly resembled the polished scalawag. This class of yellow negroes exerted a powerful influence over the others, and Mr. Dagonet knew it well. He was very diligent in courting their favor.

One night a "mass-meeting" was held in the North

Star Church. A dense crowd assembled. Mr. Dagonet himself, George Hargrove and yellow negro Gair, made speeches. Mr. Dagonet considered this a good opportunity for making an impressive demonstration. Taking Gair by the arm, with the air of a courtier, he conducted him through the dense crowd, to his carriage. Then holding his hand as daintily as could be imagined, he said, in a distinct voice which attracted general attention:

“Permit me, Mr. Gair, to seat you in my carriage.”

The two drove off in superb style. It was an exhibition of that social equality which is the fond ambition of the negro heart. A deafening shout burst forth from the admiring spectators, and the welkin rang with their yells of delight.

George Hargrove had received instructions from his principal to imitate this example. The multitude had dispersed, all but the political leaders, black and yellow, who now stood at the door of the church. Hargrove was drunk, and so was every other one in the group. Each had a bottle in his pocket, and as he drank would “pass the bottle to George” as they familiarly called him. They were all political managers, shrewd, sensual and insolent.

It was necessary for their white associates to secure the favor of these negro leaders.

This was the game which George Hargrove undertook to play.

“Come, gentlemen,” said he, staggering as he spoke; “come to my house. Come spend the evening with me.” They were the “local leaders.”

“I say, George, hain’t yer got young ladies at yer house?” inquired a huge Hercules, slapping him familiarly upon the shoulder.

“Yes,” replied Hargrove; “they are my sisters, and by damn they shall treat you—”

The sentence was never finished, for staggering against

a tree, George Hargrove fell to the ground. He was too beastly drunk to be aware of what he had said.

If he had been sober, he never would have spoken these words. However, they infuriated the daring Hercules.

"See har, comruds, we will leab him har, while we gentlemens ob color will go to his house," hiccoughed the drunken brute.

"Yas, yas, dat we will; but what will de white sweethearts ob dem young ladies say ter our gwine dar?"

"Damn de sweethearts!" said the Hercules; "George dar is massa in dat house; he is de head."

"But he is so drunk dat he cain't go."

So they left him, helplessly drunk, lying on the ground under the tree.

What the negro had said was true. He was the head of the Hargrove establishment. His sisters paid the rent, bought the provisions, and with the aid of faithful old Ben's earnings, paid all the expenses of the family, even settling the debts for liquor, incurred by George himself.

When these were not paid, the supply of whisky would be cut off, and then he would rave and curse, threatening his sisters, if his debts were not settled at once.

"Is yer gwine dar, 'megiately?" another huge negro inquired of the Hercules.

"No; I is fus' gwine hum, an' fixes up my twolight a leetle."

"Yah! yah!" they laughed coarsely.

"You know a gentleman wants to look han'some when he is fus' produced to young an' beautiful ladies," the negro leeringly replied.

We will return to the Hargrove family.

It was the supper hour. The white-haired grandmother occupied the mother's seat. Miriam sat near. The father's seat was left for George. Basely as he had behaved, these women were still mindful to treat him with respect and kindness. The younger sisters were in their seats.

Aunt Susan stood respectfully behind the chair of "ole mistiss." This aged negress, though now free, served this family just as she had done in the days of slavery. Faithful in the discharge of her duties, she voluntarily devoted herself to "ole mistiss" and the children.

Hearing the noisy tramp of many feet coming down the hall, Aunt Susan opened the door of the dining-room.

The Hercules came staggering in, accompanied by his guests.

"Gentlemans, be seated," he drunkenly stammered.

Miriam and her sister had sprung to their feet, and now stood clustered around their grandmother.

"Ole 'ooman, arrange plates at de table for dese gentlemans," stammered the drunken negro.

"Nebber! nebber!" yelled Aunt Susan; "an' so help me God! ef one ob yer black debils sets down dar, I will git him killed!" screamed Aunt Susan, in a terrific rage.

The negro glared, and addressed her:

"Dem days is ober. Dis is de time of social equality. I hab come ter see dese pretty young ladies, an' sho' am not gwine be 'sulted by sich ole hags as yer is!" he thundered, in terrific fury.

"My God! my God!" moaned old Mrs. Hargrove.

The African reeling up to Miriam, hiccoughed:

"Dese am my frens, an' yer mus' treat dem like gentlemans. Do yer har me? I order yer to git supper ready fo' dem. Do yer har?"

"I will die fus'!" the old woman answered; "I will die fus'!"

Miriam stood aghast and trembling. One of the negroes approached the group, and held his hand to Lilian. Her sister at once sprung forward, as if pierced with a bullet.

"Stand back!" she cried, roused into terrific passion.

Awed by her fury, the negro paused, and then pushing by Miriam, was in the act of seizing Lilian's hand, when Aunt Susan hurled upon him a shovelful of red-hot coals.

The scene which followed beggars description. Miriam, her grandmother and sisters escaped from the room, and Aunt Susan, rushing through a back door, met Uncle Ben.

"Oh, my God! what awful things happen' jist now!"

Hastily relating what had occurred, the old negress moaned:

"Wot shall us do, what shall us do; dey is right now in de dinin'-rum?"

"Susan, so help me God!" said the old man, furiously, "I will make George Hargrove answer fo' dis night's work. Ef he won't protext his sisters, I will. Yer go down ter Massa Ellery's office, an' tell him ter come quick. I will go roun' de frunt way, an' protext my young missuses."

"Dey ain't in de house; dey is dun clean run off an' hid."

"Go quick, Susan; quick!"

And she did. When Cuthbert Ellery returned, he was accompanied by several well-armed gentlemen. Though they entered the house cautiously, the negroes seated around the parlor fire heard them, and escaped. Mrs. Hargrove and her grandchildren returned. In the group that had now gathered about the fire there were too gentlemen whom I wish the reader to particularly notice. One was an aged patriarch; in fact so aged that his hair was white as winter snow. He was a native of Western New York. His brothers and other relatives still lived in that State, and some of them were prominent in politics. His features were large and handsome; the eyes betokened one of the kindest hearts that ever throbbed. The height of his forehead indexed a most lofty and splendid intellect; the width and extreme height of head indicated a grand nature. He was a local minister and college professor in Jackson; and a nobler human being never drew the breath of life. He had no affinity for that class of Northern adventurers that had come to Louisiana to grow rich from plundering and

wrecking the State. He is slowly walking the floor, with his hands folded behind.

Cuthbert Ellery is sitting beside Miriam, and they are conversing in earnest low tones. The other gentlemen have left; the grandmother has retired to her room, and Lilian and Ethel are with her. The old man's head droops very low; a habit he has acquired when in deep concentrated reflection. He was the aged mentor, the counselor for the young men of that place; his swift, cutting intellect penetrated many a hard political problem, and severed many a firmly-bound scheme of the local scalawags.

To him, the young and old went for guidance. His step was measured and slow, but stately and firm; so were his thoughts. He had arrived at a conclusion, and lifting his head, he said, clearly:

"Ellery, it must be; it is absolutely inevitable."

Cuthbert Ellery watched that grand, strong countenance of the old patriarch, fathomed his meaning, and repeated:

"Yes, sir; it must be done though it costs Louisiana her best—her noblest blood!"

"It will, Ellery; it will. But no matter the cost, this State must be wrenched from negro-rule; must be torn from unhallowed hands!"

Again his head drooped and he resumed his walk.

An hour then passed in unbroken silence. There came a low tap on the front-door of the house. Ellery hastened to the door, and returned the tap on the inside. The signal was repeated, and he opened the door without further delay. Thirty-seven men entered, so disguised that one might not recognize another. They were members of the Kuklux organization. Immediately they ranged themselves in the center of the room, around their white-haired chief.

"Miss Hargrove," said the old man, "we are present here to hold a meeting in your parlor." Then addressing the assembled group, he added, "Comrades, she is true.

In other times of mortal trial, she gave proof of unexampled fortitude and fidelity. I pledge myself to you all, in her behalf, that she will never divulge what takes place in this meeting."

Then, turning to Ellery, he said:

"Will you go outside and reconnoiter? There may be some one listening."

The profoundest silence was maintained till he had returned with the information that no one was lurking near.

A committee that had been employed upon certain investigations now reported what they had done.

Immediately seven of the masked men came forward, and placed six skulls upon the table, by which stood their aged chief. To Miriam this was unintelligible, but to the others it was profoundly significant.

Three sentinels were now stationed on the outside of the house. The others searched the adjoining rooms, but finding no lone listening, returned to the parlor. All preliminaries having been thus completed, the trial of certain obnoxious individuals was begun.

First among these accused was the scalawag leader, Dagonet. The chief called the case, and stated the charges which were pending against him. The committee that had been appointed to make inquiry, reported to the tribunal the facts which were in their possession. They set forth the murderous projects which he had instigated, and which George Hargrove had executed under his direction. It was there shown that eleven worthy citizens had been secretly assassinated, for whose death Dagonet was accountable. The murderers had been carefully and diligently traced, proving Dagonet to have been the instigator, and certain negroes the perpetrators.

Other crimes had likewise been investigated, and traced to him beyond question.

His guilt was undeniable; of that no doubt existed.

Each of his offenses was minutely set forth. The evidence in every case was deliberately weighed.

Then a vote was taken. It was unanimous: Death.

Other cases were tried there in like form that night; but no sentence of death was rendered, except where the proof of guilt had been undeniable.

In one instance, the venerable old chief did not utter the name. When the ballot was taken, Miriam perceived that every eye for a moment was fixed upon her. That time, no sentence of death was decreed. This case, she felt instinctively, had been that of George Hargrove. It was so; her presence there had saved his life.

A committee was appointed to procure the execution of these sentences. The other members remained till those named should return. A little before day they came, and reported what had been accomplished. Several had been found and shot, while certain others escaped. The association then adjourned. The chief and Cuthbert Ellery, however, did not go. That night they guarded the house.

CHAPTER XXIII.

BETROTHAL.

“MR. ELLERY, was not that the reason why that meeting last night, was held in this parlor?” she asked, her lips quivering with emotion.

“It was, Miss Hargrove,” he replied. “Our chief and I managed to secure the holding of the meeting here, in your presence, so that sympathy for you might sway our comrades, and they might not vote death for your brother. Last night these men were particularly enraged against him; and only your presence saved his life. He and those negroes that had escaped us, were found concealed in a house on the outskirts of the town. Miss Hargrove, your brother is a dangerous man. He is bold, and desperate

enough for any atrocity. He would murder his grandmother and sisters, if he saw the occasion!"

"My God, not that!" cried she, in terror.

"Yes, that!" said Ellery. "I know that it seems cruel for me to say this; but the safety of you all—yourself, your grandmother and sisters—demands that you fully comprehend the matter. The shameful occurrence here; the insult to your young sister, came of his procurement. When he is drunk, he is brutal and reckless enough for any enormity. You had become unable to pay the debts which he incurred, and his supplies were cut off. He then joined the political rabble, to which he now belongs, heart and soul, and has ever since been ready to carry out the directions of the men who are plundering and dishonoring our State. He is a brave man; but that fact increases the danger."

It was the next evening after the holding of the meeting in the Hargrove parlor. Mr. Ellery was there to protect the family from further outrage. He finished speaking, and Miriam making no reply, now walked the floor. No misfortune had pierced her soul like this unworthiness of her brother.

She realized what he had become—dangerous to the community; a mere tool for the villainous schemes of the cowardly scoundrel Dagonet. Eleven honorable citizens had been murdered in cold blood, at that man's instigation, because they had opposed his projects. Hargrove and two negroes had committed the crimes. He would murder when, where and whom that leader directed; and had the boldest, vilest of the negroes to help him. How gladly that sister felt in that woful conviction; she could lay him in the grave, rejoicing that death had rendered him powerless for further guilt. She despaired of his reformation as she never did before. Now she could almost pray that he might be stopped before the committing of more crimes.

Glancing up, she met the searching gaze of Cuthbert

Ellery. He was standing on the hearth, his hands folded behind him. He was there that night because it was not safe for any house to be left unprotected. Many nights had Ellery been there; frequently others were with him to guard that home.

The remembrance of all this flashed through her mind. Deeply, bitterly, she realized that a protector was needed for herself and her loved ones. She thought of her Federal lover; his evident estrangement and forgetting of his own solemn promises; his forsaking of her in this terrible season of danger and misfortune. Any other woman would have cast him off, and gladly accepted the love and devotion of the man now standing there. Why not she?

Did not duty to herself, to him who cared so generously for all whom she loved, require this at her hand? Miriam pondered; the moment was critical; she was sorely perplexed. Her countenance revealed her suffering.

"Will you not sit down?" said Ellery, offering a chair as she passed near him. "You look exceedingly weary," he continued, taking a seat by her.

"Yes," she answered; "my soul is burdened—burdened. Would to God that I could fold my sisters and my grandmother in my arms, and we all lie down in our graves, hidden safe from this disgrace!"

Bitter tears now interrupted her speech. She repressed them and continued:

"I can bear labor and poverty, and the severest hardships, but, Mr. Ellery, this baseness of my brother crushes me with the deepest agony!"

Ellery could forbear no longer. He had admired this woman when he saw her, a brave young girl, the companion of her mother, on that perilous expedition in the Civil War. He venerated her self-abnegation as she sustained the burden of her family's support and uttered no sigh of complaint. She had by no word or sign exhibited any affection for him, except as a comrade in a common noble cause.

He had watched over her safety, assisted her with delicacy that disturbed not the acutest sensitiveness, and served her in ways innumerable.

He now laid his hand upon her slender fingers, and after a moment spoke:

"Miriam, give me the legal right to protect you. I will devote every energy to make you happy. I love you with a devotion which is seldom bestowed upon woman. I entreat you to hallow my life with your love!"

She made no reply.

"I have risen in my profession," he continued, "and my means are ample to provide for those whom you have so devotedly cherished. I have a beautiful home, but to me, without you, it is desolate. Will you come?"

All the sad memories, the blighted hopes, the terrible experiences of the past, rushed swiftly through her mind. Her decision was made. With pale cheeks but a resolute purpose, she would cast aside her dreams and air-castles, and accept the life which now was offered her.

"Yes!"

The monosyllable trembled on her lips. It was little more than a whisper, and he felt rather than heard it uttered.

"I thank Thee, merciful God!" he reverently exclaimed.

A few minutes later, Uncle Ben came into the room.

"Massa Ellery," said he, "dey tole me ter han' yer dis note."

Ellery read the missive hurriedly. Then, addressing the old man, he said, anxiously:

"Uncle Ben, you must remain here and guard this house till I come back."

Then turning to Miriam, he continued:

"I will return to you as soon as possible. My comrades need me upon urgent business."

After he left, Miriam remained seated, her head resting upon her hand, in deep reflection. She took no thought

of time, and the hours sped on. Suddenly a noise aroused her from her reverie.

Her brother was standing over her. He appeared less intoxicated than usual; but the expression of his face was vindictive.

“So you hope to marry Cuthbert Ellery!” he hissed in her ears, adding an epithet too vile to write or utter.

She fixed her eyes steadily upon him, but made no reply.

“I have heard as much,” he continued, in the same tone of voice. “But it will never take place. He shall be killed before your wedding-day comes. I can promise you that. You will never be his wife! Do you hear?” he hissed, seizing her by the shoulder and shaking her madly.

She still was silent, but looked fearlessly into his eyes.

“But for you, and for him, I would have been elected. My friends came here last night, and you insulted them. Social recognition is the political lever with the negroes, and they will support the man that invites them to his home and entertains them pleasantly. My name was on the ticket; but to-day, at a big political meeting, they scratched it off, because their leaders were last night insulted within my house, and by my sisters. This is not the worst; last night, six of those leaders were murdered by the Kuklux. But we will avenge those deaths; this day, at our convention, we made a report of the negroes killed in this community, and sent it to Washington.”

He paused, but she still made no reply.

“If you had treated my friends civilly, pleasantly, had talked and laughed with them, played songs for them, my name would now be on their ticket, and my election to office a certainty. But you insulted them, and by damn, you and that meek Lilian shall answer for this. She, Miss Lilian”—he sneered derisively—“was so angel-like that she could not touch their black hands. By God! she shall answer for my name being off that ticket. I will make her—”

“George Hargrove!” exclaimed Miriam, springing to

her feet as if struck with a bullet, "by the mother that bore us, if you lift your hand against her, I will have you put into your grave!"

She stood before him, ghastly with rage. Her threat seemed to rouse all the demon in him. He was a short, stout, powerful man. Grinding his teeth in rage, he sprung at her throat. But before he reached her, a strong hand dashed him to the floor. Cuthbert Ellery pinioned him down.

"Brute, your life shall answer for this!"

"Do not kill him!" interceded Miriam; for Ellery looked as if he intended to execute his threat.

"I have no intention of doing so now; but I warn him that if ever he threatens you or any of this household that he shall pay the penalty!"

Pushing him from the room, Ellery locked the door and turned to Miriam, asking:

"Do you think he will go and molest your grandmother and sisters?"

"No, sir; they are safe within this room," she said, stepping into the open door-way leading into an adjoining apartment.

For a moment she stood and listened to their low breathings, and then returned to him at the fireside. As she walked across the floor she stepped upon something, and looking down she discovered it to be an open letter addressed to her.

She paused beside her betrothed and said, wonderingly:

"How came this there, and from whom can it be?"

Taking it from the envelope, she glanced at the signature; it was signed "your faithful, steadfast Belmont."

She reeled as if she would fall; her countenance became of an ashen hue. He put his arm around her, and kept her from dropping to the floor.

"Merciful God, tell me what is in that letter!"

She opened it, and standing under the lamp-light with

his arm around her, together they read the contents. It was thus:

“MY DARLING, MY IDOL,—Years have passed since the siege of Vicksburg—long, weary, intensely bitter years—because of your coolness to me. Though you never promised to become my wife, yet I know that you loved me. Being wounded at Vicksburg, I was carried to a hospital, and after months of suffering, helpless and a cripple, I returned home. There I wrote to you repeatedly, but received not one line in reply. Being a man of poverty, I plunged into hard labor; toiled day and night to win a fortune with which to bless you, my darling; still I hoped that you would eventually listen to the pleadings of your loving heart, and write to me; but, alas! years went by, during which I so frequently wrote, but in return received only silence and coldness. Twice I started southward to find you; but the maddening fear that I might see you the caressed, dutiful wife of another drove me back to my home a lonely, heart-broken man. The letters which I have posted to you have not, in a single instance, been returned; hence I know they reached their destination. Oh! if you knew how faithful, how unfalteringly constant your Federal lover has ever been to you, my idol, your heart would relent and return its old devotion! If you are not the wife or the betrothed of another, I pray you by all that is merciful and compassionate in your noble heart, to listen to my pleadings. May God bless you, even if you are the wife of another, is the prayer of your faithful, steadfast

“BELMONT.”

“Did you love him?” he asked.

She felt his heart beat in dull, heavy throbs against her, and he repeated, vehemently:

“Miriam, as you hold your soul sacred, answer me truthfully: Did you love him?”

“Yes!” she replied, unflinchingly.

A spasm of pain convulsed his features, and his heart seemed to have ceased beating. "Do you now love him?" was the question that sprung to his trembling lips; but it died unspoken. There was a long pause; the stately form of the haughty, proud man shook as would a child's; still he held her hands as if in an iron clasp; still his burning eyes gazed into hers as if they would search the secret depths of her soul. His very lips became white and quivering, and big drops of intense though internal suffering stood on his tightly drawn brow. Miriam could not witness this agony unmoved; he noted the pitying, compassionate look in her eyes. He felt her hands shake in his; and then, laying one trembling hand upon her drooped head, he spoke:

"Miriam, my love, my all, look up, dearest! Your happiness is more precious to me than life; I would peril time and eternity to secure it. If you love him too well to be happy as my wife, I release you from your troth!"

The agony that quivered in his voice seemed so deep, so vast that it filled the world.

"Could you find happiness in my home?" he asked, intently.

"Yes."

This answer made his heart throb wildly.

"Do you want back your troth?"

"No."

Tenderly he rested his head against hers, and she heard him murmur:

"My God, I thank Thee!"

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE CONFLICT OF 1872.

THE Democrats, likewise, were making a desperate effort to elect a ticket in Louisiana. It was, indeed, a struggle for life against death. Every honorable man, Republican as well as Democrat, Northerner as well as Southerner,

realized the stern necessity to rescue the State from the robber-band that held supreme control. They felt that it was no time for overnicety; the conditions were those of war and anarchy, and the measures to put an end to them must also be high-handed and vigorous.

The Kuklux organization was a powerful factor in this conflict. Its members met in the dead of night, in some deserted house or solitary place in the woods, near the scene of operations. They did not, however, have their meetings twice in the same place. There was no written constitution of the order; but the members were sworn to sustain and defend each other to the extent of their lives.

A "council" would be held, the cause decided, the plan of action formulated, and persons detailed to execute it, the body remaining in session till the work had been performed, and the success reported. The members would then quickly disperse.

The utmost secrecy was required, as the country was in such a condition that betrayal would have touched off a magazine, the explosion of which would have resulted in the death of hundreds.

No one ever made application to be admitted into the Kuklux Klan. It was never known to whom, or when, or where to do so. Candidates were proposed at the assembled council. They would not know of it; but a shrewd individual of the order would visit them, and investigate their fitness. If he reported them to be of the true mettle, they would be received as members; but if he found them unsatisfactory, they were rejected, never knowing anything of the matter.

The carpet-baggers had generally disappeared from Southern politics. Occasionally, a daring one remained. The scalawags were now the Republican leaders. They were still able to rally to their support the numerous class of negroes who had come to their majority since the Civil War. These had acquired none of the orderly, industrious

ways of the older ones, but were alive to any mischief. These were also the bestial ruffians who always furnished the white adventurers their readiest tools and assistants. They thronged the political gatherings, as before, and did the bidding of the leaders. The Kuklux leaders appreciated the importance of arresting these proceedings.

It became usual when the negroes had assembled, to attack them; and very generally some of the worst ones would be killed. One result was, that many quit attending the nightly meetings. They voted the Republican ticket out of gratitude for their freedom; and, perhaps, because they thought it necessary to do so in order to preserve it. But they realized that they were only tools of unprincipled white men, and that they incurred danger without deriving any good.

Accordingly, such negroes, after this, remained steadily at work and seemed disposed to molest no one.

The purpose had now been formed to wrest the State from misrule. The struggle between the parties was bitter, and characterized by violence. Only those familiar with the peculiar ways in pioneer settlements, where regulators, vigilance committees, and the most rigorous measures are required to suppress lawlessness, are competent to apprehend intelligently the condition of affairs in Louisiana. The State was rent from center to circumference. Deeds done during this time were too horrid to be described. The "bull-dozers," "regulators," and Kuklux slaughtered the negroes in the silence of the night; but those killed in this way were devils incarnate for whose death the world was the better. There were many hundreds of these, and hundreds were slain, each death ridding the State of a beastly fiend. The scalawag leaders were conscious of their peril. They must crush the powerful organization that threatened them or be ground to powder themselves, as between the upper and nether mill-stones. The alarm was everywhere given, and "Strike for the Kuklux! strike

for the Kuklux!" became the war-cry at every political gathering. But the negroes were alarmed; the name of Kuklux was sufficient to paralyze the boldest of them.

Dr. Howells, also, had removed to Jackson. He had not recovered from the shock of his son's untimely death; but in his grief he realized the stern necessity for every honorable man to put forth his energies to redeem the State. He was from the North, as we are aware, and had served in the Federal Army. But he was a man of honor, and awake to the fearful condition of affairs. Recognizing that the election of the Democratic candidates meant the restoration of order, peace, and prosperity to Louisiana, he threw his whole energies into the campaign for their success.

George Hargrove was indefatigable in his efforts to regain lost favor with his negro followers. The aversion which his sisters had exhibited toward those who had gone to his home that eventful night had enraged them against him as well as against them. He now rode from place to place where gatherings were held, and to visit those who were likely to take the place of such as had been put to death. Personal revenge was now superadded to cupidity and ambition. From that night, he had vowed to take the life of Cuthbert Ellery. The death of a leader like him would go far to appease the rage of the negroes, as well as to further his own opportunities for being placed again upon the parish ticket.

The conflict was now carried on with the most bitter animosity. Every night political assemblages were held by the negroes, and ever and anon they were attacked and broken up. The "bull-dozer" now became a characteristic personage in Louisiana politics. Both sides were now armed, and every one knew that it was an issue of life or death.

Two men were sitting one night upon the steps of an old house near the highway. They were concealed by the

shadow of the building, and were anxiously waiting for others. Across the road, directly in front of them, was a blacksmith's shop inclosed by a high plank fence. The scalawag leaders were aware of a Kuklux demonstration, and had placed an ambush of negroes in the place. The two men were conscious of their danger. They could distinctly hear the negroes moving in the inclosure.

"I can not imagine," whispered Cuthbert Ellery, "what detains our men. They knew that it was necessary to be prompt!"

"Do you suppose," asked Dr. Howells, "that these negroes know that we are here?"

"They evidently expect that there will be a Kuklux assemblage somewhere in this neighborhood," Ellery replied. "We can not get away without being seen. I am very certain now that our comrades are detained elsewhere, and are not going to come."

"Our situation is desperate!" the doctor remarked.

"It is," replied Ellery. "We must get away as best we can!"

"What shall we do?"

The negroes were again heard.

"I have it," said Ellery. "Let us whistle the 'Bonnie Blue Flag!'"

They were brave men, bold and heroic in that hour of extreme peril. They whistled loudly and merrily.

"Well, boys!" exclaimed Ellery, speaking as if addressing a large company, "you have been an age in coming. We almost believed that you had been captured. Now you come whistling as if there was no work to be done. Tonight there is business before us. The negroes are to come out, and we must give them no quarter. I have marked one out already; let me but catch him, and he will die. Let us go across the road, and hide in that yard. We can climb the fence, and hide, till Scalawag Dagonet comes.

There are enough of us now to kill every black wretch that shows himself. Come on! let us leap the fence!"

"Look there!—look!" whispered Dr. Howells.

The negroes had heard every word. They were in a terrible panic. Not daring to look, they clambered over the fence in the utmost disorder, overthrowing one another in their fright, and fled in every direction.

Ellery, on his way homeward, passed by the house where the Hargroves lived. A light glimmered in Miriam's room. She was not studying a lesson to-night; he could see her, through a partly unclosed shutter, at her desk, bending over a manuscript. Her countenance showed her interest in her work. She was writing rapidly, her thoughts coming as fast as she could put them on the paper. Presently she laid down her pen, rose to her feet, and walked the floor. Her face was pale; her compressed lips and glowing eyes revealed her absorption of mind and purpose. Ellery gazed a few moments, and then went on his way.

Miriam had resumed her walk. She continued her writing till the manuscript was finished.

A low tap at the door, and a gentle voice inquired:

"May I come in?"

"Yes," said Miriam, pausing.

Ethel and Lilian entered; beautiful Lilian, pure and lovely as ever human eyes gazed upon—a young girl just entering womanhood. She sat between her sisters, and instantly Miriam's arms intertwined her.

"Is grandmother asleep?" she asked.

"No, sister; she is reading the Bible to mammy and Uncle Ben. Sister, sometimes I think that if our parents had made Christians out of all their servants, all the slaves would have been faithful."

"I can not answer that exactly, my lamb; but mammy and Uncle Ben are certainly filled with the noblest Christian principles that ever exalted human nature!"

"They are so true and devoted to us. Every cent they earn they give it to grandmother."

"My children, come to our evening prayer!" called a voice.

They looked up, and saw their aged grandmother standing in their door-way; they rose and followed her into the adjoining room. There they seated themselves beside her, she sitting between Ethel and Miriam. Lilian occupied a stool at her grandmother's feet. It was a holy picture, those three young Christians encircling that aged saint, while the two faithful servants sat each one in a corner of the fire-place. In all history there is but one fitting symbol typifying the fidelity of these two devoted creatures. That symbol is of the "Swiss Guards" which protected the throne of France.

Its monarch was surrounded by traitors, and could not trust even those whom he had the right to expect would be steadfast and true to him. The "Swiss Guards" were hired to protect the throne. They fought with a heroism that the world now venerates, when it looks upon the marble lion which symbolizes that heroism. The last one of the "Swiss Guards" died fighting to defend the royal family. Their symbol is buried in its side, its paws rest upon the shield of France—a noble symbol of their fidelity.

The aged grandparent sat near a shaded lamp; the time-seamed face was serene; the snows of winter sorrows had frosted her hair into a beautiful silver, but the face was divinely calm.

In a low, feeble tone she read the chapter in the Bible. The mellowed light from the lamp fell upon her features.

At this moment a step was heard. The aged woman paused and waited. She knew too well who was coming. Her grandson entered the room. The sisters looked up with anguish. His swollen face, his blood-shot eyes and reeling gait, told the whole story.

The grandmother rose from her chair, went up to him, and took his hand.

"I am glad, my boy, that you have come to join us in our evening prayer!"

He made no reply; but, pulling away his hand, he struck her a savage blow in the face. She fell, stunned, to the floor. Uttering an execration, he turned and left the house.

The sisters hastened to her side and lifted her up, and placed her in bed. Uncle Ben went immediately for Dr. Howells, who hurried to the house, accompanied by his friend, Cuthbert Ellery.

It was in very truth the house of mourning. The injured woman lay upon the bed. Miriam sat by her, bathing her bruised and swollen face. The others knelt at the bedside, weeping as if their hearts would burst. Ellery was almost furious with indignation, as he looked upon the blackened countenance. He restrained himself, however, in the presence of the grieving family, while Dr. Howells, unable to restrain his emotion, bathed the swelling with a soothing lotion. He was finally successful in alleviating the pain, and the suffering woman slept. The younger sisters then retired, and the kind-hearted doctor also went home. Ellery remained to protect the house. Miriam was still holding her grandmother's head. Though in an uncomfortable position, she did not move, for fear of awaking the sufferer.

Ellery watched her as she sat. He wondered at her devotedness to those dependent upon her. She charmed him by her self-abnegation, her inflexible courage, her warmth of affection. But did she really love him; or was her heart still going out to the Federal lover? Was it in her nature to love twice? There were few whose fidelity, whose constancy in such trials would prove unyielding. How was it with her? He reflected that she had regarded him from the first as only a fellow-worker in the same cause,

and had accepted his service in all these years in the same way as she herself bestowed kind offices on others.

It was only after long waiting on his part that she had accepted his wooing; it must be that his affection was reciprocated, however undemonstrative she appeared.

As he watched her countenance, he observed its ghastly pallor. She appeared as if about to faint. He hastened to support her in his arms, lest she should fall.

"Miriam!" he exclaimed, "you are taxing your endurance."

"I will be better in a moment," she replied.

Her tone of voice expressed weariness almost to exhaustion.

"Rest yourself against me," he pleaded.

"I thank you; but I may not move, or I will awaken her."

He placed himself behind her, and drew her toward him so gradually as not to disturb the sleeper. This change of position was restful, and she continued her vigil.

Ellery, bending his head down to hers, whispered softly: "Miriam, my dear one, I love you as no other can!"

Her head dropped, but she made no reply. The grandmother presently moaned, and then turned feebly from her arms. Miriam rose, and, taking a chair, sat down at a little distance from him.

There was a meeting of the scalawags and their besotted followers at the Bethel Church. It was a dark night, and lurid clouds were gathering in the west.

There was an intense silence. It was as if nature had paused to collect her forces for furious conflict. George Hargrove and a party of negroes were riding together to the place of meeting. As they passed through a dark wood they talked together in low tones. It had been planned to assassinate Cuthbert Ellery and others who belonged to the Kuklux Klan. The conspirators were devising the means of accomplishing this purpose.

Bethel Church was a negro meeting-house standing about a mile from the public highway. Close by was a rude cabin, hidden from sight by dense large trees. It was a lonely place. The Kuklux organization had already assembled here. It was usual for them to convene at places in the neighborhood of the negro assemblages. They had, as is already known, determined upon the death of the scalawag leader, when for sympathy with the Hargroves they had refrained from passing a similar sentence upon the brother. Dagonet, being a wary, cautious man, had thus far successfully eluded them. In fact he seldom left his home. To-night, however, a greater public demonstration than usual was to be made, and he was announced to be present. It was determined, accordingly, to make a desperate effort to capture him.

The building was packed. Reader, if you desire to witness a strange, blood-curdling, hideous spectacle, you have only to be present at a negro Republican meeting in a Southern State. The cries, the responses, the howling, can neither be described nor even imagined. The delineation which Milton gives of Pandemonium somewhat resembles such a scene; but if the great poet had witnessed one of these political gatherings he would have felt that the reality had infinitely exceeded the hell that he had but dreamed about.

There were to be four speakers, two of them white men—Mr. Dagonet and another. Both had been guerrillas in the Civil War; they were traitors now, cursing the South with their baleful influence, the nefarious crimes which they instigated. They were of the very class which the Kuklux organization had been formed to suppress.

Outside, the tempest was fast gathering. Dark clouds covered the sky, the wind shrieked in the tops of the trees, and peals of thunder began to be heard in the distance. The speaker was now about to begin his address. The most terrific howls greeted his appearance; and as he gave

utterance to the most atrocious sentiments, the cheers and responses interrupted him. He began by the customary fawning preliminary language:

"Friends, brothers, and colored gentlemen:—I am too well known to you to need any introduction. You know how zealously, how faithfully, I have served your cause."

"Dat's so; dat's a fac'!" was heard on all sides.

"I have risked my life for you!" continued the speaker; "you know how I have worked to keep our party in power."

"So yer hab, kunnel," was the response. "We is gwine to put yer in Congress fo' it; don't yer fergit dat!"

"Thank you, my friends, my noble brothers; I shall never forget it."

He continued to harangue them after this manner:

"God beheld your oppressions, and delivered you from your masters. The great party to which we all belong has broken your chains, and will now make you the rulers of the land."

"Hurrah! hurrah!" was screamed on every side, and it was some time before the speaker was able to resume.

"The times are changed; the situation has been reversed. The white master governed the black man, but now the black man shall be greater than ever was the white master. The wall of class and race will be broken down, and the former slave shall be an equal socially, as well as politically, with the white master and mistress. No house in the land, no family shall be permitted to close its doors against the free colored citizen!"

"Hurrah! hurrah, kunnel! yer is gettin' dar sho'. We'll be de massars now; we'll set in dere parlors; we'll drink dere wine; we'll marry dere daughters. Go on! go on!" cried the tumultuous group.

The orator proceeded with his remarks and exhortations.

"Be firm; be brave. Do not let the white men, the

bull-dozers, drive you from the polls. Carry your pistols, every man of you, and use them if you are interfered with!"

"We sho' will—we sho' will!" resounded from the whole audience.

"We must carry the election, at all hazards. The day is near when the master shall be the servant and the slave shall become the master. When that time comes, the white men will beg and implore you to spare their lives!"

"We won't dun it!" cried the multitude.

"Yes!" cried Dagonet, "you will!"

"No—no—we won't; we nebber will!"

"Oh, yes! They will work the plantations for you, and make the crops!"

"Dat's so; dat's so!"

"You will elect a governor of your own kind, and he will have power to protect you."

"Dat's so; nigger will stick to nigger, and 'publicans to 'publicans."

"Listen, my friends," continued Dagonet. "One week from to-night the election will take place. We must strike a final blow for our rights and power. If we elect the Republican ticket in this State, it will put an end forever to the supreme dominion of the white man!"

"'Cept yer, an' our udder frens har?"

"Oh, yes; of course!" replied Dagonet; "but we count ourselves as of you. I invite you to my house; I entertain you in my parlor; I seat you at my table as belonging to the same family. You see, I count myself as belonging with you!"

He then proceeded to unfold his plan of action. It embraced the most desperate measures, stopping at nothing short of lawless anarchy and crime.

"Our scheme," he added, in a lowered, impressive voice, "must be kept strictly secret. Every one must now swear to keep it hidden like murder, and still as death. Those who will take this oath will now hold up his hand!"

Up went every hand.

"Swear that whosoever shall break this oath you will kill without mercy!"

"We swar!" cried the whole assembly, now wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement.

Just at this moment the thunder exploded and the storm tore down upon Bethel Church. Superstitious to imbecility, they gazed at each other in utter amazement. A terrific peal of thunder rocked the frail building like drift-wood out in ocean storms.

"My friends, you see God is with us! For when we just begin to talk of the white man's cruelty to you, His long-oppressed and down-trodden race, He grows angry at them, and sends His thunder to tell us He is furiously mad with the white man."

This cunning speech reassured them, and they deafeningly shouted:

"God is wid us!"

"Listen, now; keep quiet, so we can hasten the meeting, and adjourn before the storm comes. Our plan is to burn every village from one end of the State to the other. Kill every white man and boy, but spare the girls and women, and—"

A terrific peal drowned the unfinished sentence. They gazed at each other with terror in their eyes, and a low murmur ran through the assemblage:

"We is 'scovered; some one is listening!" they whispered among themselves.

"Pshaw! we are safe."

"'Peared like I seed eyes peepin' frough that crack!" whispered one of them to the speaker.

"Pshaw! the storm has frightened you. The Kuklux won't come this night. We have kept this meeting a profound secret."

"But dat ole white-folks' nigger Ben is allus prowlin' roun'!"

"Well, to make certain that we are not overheard, five of you, my brave boys, go and reconnoiter."

"Wot's dat; wot yer do to 'connoiter?"

"I mean that five of you go out and search under the trees, to see if any one is eavesdropping on us."

No one moved.

"Go, five of you, my brave boys!" urged the cowardly Dagonet.

But the "brave boys" did not stir. Another heavy thunder-clap caused them to huddle closely as packed beasts, terror-stricken to dumbness. Sure enough, Uncle Ben had overheard their scheme, and, fearing detection, had hurried off to inform the Kuklux that now was the time to capture the two white men.

It was intensely dark, and in his swiftness he frequently ran against trees. Onward he rushed, occasionally stumbling full-length, over roots and undergrowth. At last he reached the high-road; then he proceeded more leisurely, while he talked to himself.

"Dey calls me 'white-folks' nigger,' but I'se dere bes' fren'. Po' fules, dey cain't see dat dem scalawags is gwine ter run at de fus' crack ob de guns, an' de fulish nigger is lef' ter stan' de racket. Lord, good Lord! open de eyes ob my po' blin'-folded race. De Soufern white gentlemans ain't gwine stan' sich nigger 'quality, an' sich tings wot dem scalawags is promisin'. Lord, de trubble dat is comin', all becaze ob dem scalawags wot fules de po' nigger, to git de nigger's vote! My sweet, young missuses de wives ob niggers! Lord! Lord! de trubble dat is comin'; fo' dat should happen dese white men will make nigger-blood run deep—deep frum one end ob de State to de tudder. Dem scalawags knows dat, but dey tell it ter de niggers 'caze dey thinks dat is wot de nigger wants ter har. White gentlemans is white gentlemans all the worl' ober; fur dar is Doctor Howells, he is 'publican, but he is squar' aginst all dis; but den dar ain't many ob dem kine ob

'publicans down in de Souf. Mos' ob dem white 'publicans is scalawags an' carpet-baggers; but dem few wot is honorable, sho' is aginst dis nigger rule. So dat white gentlemans is white gentlemans whar ever de worl' fines dem!"

By this time, he had reached the Kuklux rendezvous. He had been their scout, and most faithfully did he always serve them. Reaching the hut, and making the Kuklux signal, the aged counselor admitted Uncle Ben, inquiringly:

"Has the time come old Night Hawk?"

"Now is de minit to strike!"

A number having been detailed to do the work, the body of older men remained in session until the detailed ones should return. It was an impressive scene. That body of aged men, sitting there in that dimly-lighted room; the dark lanterns threw a dull red glimmer over the wrinkled countenances of those heroic old patriarchs assembled to counsel and guide the younger men, in the blows they were striking to redeem their State. The storm howled in the giant trees surrounding the hut; but all was still as death within. The Kuklux party had now reached Bethel Church. The meeting was continuing; the rain poured in torrents. There were several cracks through which they heard the speaker. He was the negro dandy that had visited the Hargrove home, that night, and had cursed gentle, sweet Lilian, because she had shrunk from touching his hand. He had escaped his doom.

"I tell yer, my brudders, we sho' mus' 'lect our straight ticket frum gub'ner down. Our ticket is deposed mos'y ob black men; dat is a straight ticket. We hab a few white gentlemans on our ticket; but den dey is jist de same as ourselbs; dey is wid us; dey work fur us, an' we sho' kin 'lect our ticket, 'caze we got ten votes all ober de State to dere one!"

"But dey kin count us out!" shouted a negro in the crowd.

"But we is gwine take our guns, an' see dat de count is straight!"

"Let me explain that!" said the last speaker on the programme of the evening.

He was a mulatto; a bright copper-colored man.

"If they count in their governor, legislators and officers of the parishes, we will install our governor, and every other officer. Grant will send the United States troops and sustain us. He will recognize the Republican legislature. The Government is in our hands, the power belongs to us from the President down. Grant has sustained us with the soldiers, and he will force the Democrats to yield."

The speaker was educated, and wielded immense power over the ignorant negroes. Being a mulatto and educated, and making speeches which were printed in the papers, were qualities and circumstances that caused them to regard him as a superior individual. They were wax in his hands. They sat gazing upon him, as if he was a marvel of wonder. In fact, he had greater influence over them than even their white leaders.

"My boys!" continued he; "I have served our country before this. I have been a member of your Legislature. You must not be content with sending men of your own color to the Legislature; it is too small a place. Let me go to Congress, and you will be proud to have one of your own color so grand—so honored. I am sure of your votes and certain of reaching Congress. The great men of the nation will invite me to their receptions. I shall visit at their homes, sit in their drawing-rooms, and be entertained by them at dinner. I am an unmarried gentleman; but I intend soon to win me a beautiful white bride, whose father and brothers will be proud to claim the relationship. Such is the good time that is coming. Our distinguished candidate for the Senate, entertains me in his parlors, and has introduced me to his wife and lovely daughters. Mr. Dag-

onet here, who is at the head of your parish ticket, invites me to his splendid home, and his beautiful sisters sing and play the piano for my diversion. This is the kind of equal rights that we desire; the kind that we are determined to secure; the kind that we will have one week after to-night. Then we will strike the final blow. We will spare the women; but no white man must be left!"

He was continuing in this extravagant manner, and inflaming the passions of his audience to the highest pitch. Just then the door opened and old Ben, drenched with rain, was seen standing on the threshold. The assemblage gazed upon him with terror-stricken stupor. That he was the forerunner of evil to them, they well apprehended.

"Colored men!" he cried; "I want's ter tell yer, dese men hab filled yer wid lies. Ef yer mind dem, an' undertak' ter do de debilment dey hab planned, yer will sho'ly gib yer carcasses ter de buzzards. I pity yer, ter be so fuled, an' warn yer dat, if yer keeps wid em, an' do dere wicked work, ebbery one ob yer will swing ter de gal-lows. De Kuklux sho' will mak' yer ruste in de forust trees!"

By this time, the multitude had roused from the surprise which old Ben's appearance had created.

"Kill de white-folks' nigger!" was shouted all over the house, and then strong men seized him.

"Stan' back, yer black dogs!" cried the old man at the top of his voice. "Stan' back, or yer get killed. Yer don't skeer me!"

A fearful scene ensued. The Kuklux regulators rushed into the house, and began a frightful conflict. The negroes in mortal terror, yelling and howling, kicked the boards from the sides of the building, and ran like wild cattle over the field. One of the white leaders, and the mulatto orator, were captured in the general stampede; and passers-by saw their bodies, the next morning, hanging on a tree by

the road-side. The black speaker was caught, and his life spared on condition of leaving the State.

Dagonet, the most unprincipled of them all, escaped among the first of the fugitives; and was able, for years afterward, to excite the negroes to insurrection.

Finally, in the contest between Nichols and Warmouth, he was detected in an attempt to stir up the negroes against the white population, and was driven from the State. He went to Kansas, where in a long communication to the Chicago "Inter-Ocean," he gave his own version of affairs in Louisiana.

George Hargrove made no attempt to escape when the Kuklux forces entered the church. He fought them furiously, aiming his pistol at every one of the disguised men that he suspected might be Cuthbert Ellery. Finding, at last, that he was in danger of falling into their hands, he turned, and made his way through the darkness to a place of safety.

Such was the condition of affairs throughout Louisiana. The campaign was intensely bitter; personal violence and the blackest deeds were committed. Each side resorted to the extremest measures, for the conflict involved the future of both parties.

The world knows the result. William P. Kellogg was declared governor-elect by a Republican Returning Board, and the rival candidate by a Democratic Returning Board. Two Legislatures met and organized, and two State governments were formed. On the 22d of May, 1874, President Grant issued his proclamation recognizing Governor Kellogg.

The audacity of the lawless part of the population now exceeded all bounds. Louisiana became a charnel.

No pen can adequately describe that dark period. Life was nowhere secure; women required constant protection from fiendish brutality. It was a continual round of crime.

The contest finally came to open conflict on the 14th of

September. That day a fierce engagement took place in the streets of New Orleans. Twenty-six persons were killed. Governor Kellogg was driven to seek refuge in the custom house on Canal Street. He was subsequently reinstated by the Federal authority, but was able to hold power only by aid of United States troops. These were quartered in the legislative chambers, and sent as garrisons to such places as the scalawag political leaders required.

The next January, the conflict was renewed. General Sheridan had dispersed the Democratic Legislature, and the cry of reprobation was echoed over all the North. Indeed, the State elections had already changed the political majority in the coming House of Representatives. It was time to call a halt. A committee, headed by the Honorable William A. Wheeler, was sent from Washington, and succeeded in effecting a temporary adjustment, which for a time restored tranquillity to the State.

Again, however, the next year, the result of the elections was disputed. Each party vehemently accused the other. The general Government was again called upon to interpose its authority. The President refused. General Grant had ascertained somewhat of the actual condition of affairs, and his sympathies went to that struggling band of Southern citizens that resisted the enormities which had been perpetrated in Louisiana by the lowest of the population under the name of the Republican party. It was at this time that he made the significant declaration to the leading Republicans of the country, that the barnacles which had become attached to the ship must be removed.

After this declaration, Southern emancipation was only a question of time.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE LAST CRIME.

THE events recorded in this chapter took place substantially as they are here related, during that terrible period in 1874.

Lilian Hargrove was spending the Sunday with her sister Ethel. The latter had been for several months, the wife of Louis Murray. The grandmother and elder sister were at church.

Miriam was not yet married; but the wedding was soon to take place. She had observed, when reading the intercepted letter from Belmont Manning, that it bore an old date; and she reasoned to herself, that as he had made no attempt to find her, he had probably become cold and indifferent toward her. Having plighted her troth to Cuthbert Ellery, she would keep her word. She knew that she would never love him with the glowing sentiment with which she had regarded her Federal lover, for whom she had by a spontaneous impulse periled her life, by interposing her own body to shield him from the guerrilla bullets. These, she now reasoned to herself, were the sweet, wild days of long ago. Resolutely she put these memories aside. She honored Cuthbert Ellery above other men, and gratitude bound her firmly to him.

He had been true and loyal to herself and those whom she loved. He would be a protector to her and them.

In time, she thought, admiring and esteeming him as she did, she would sincerely love him.

When Miriam and her grandmother, attended by Cuthbert Ellery, returned from church that day, Aunt Susan was sunning herself on the front steps.

“Has Lilian come home?” Miriam inquired.

“No, hunny,” replied the old servant; “but Ben has

gone ter fetch her. I argured wid him till he went arter her. Yew knows dar can't be too much pertexion in dese times!"

Uncle Ben met Lilian coming along in company with her brother-in-law and sister. They 'now kissed her good-bye, charging the old man to go immediately home.

They knew his devotion and fidelity, and believed that Lilian was abundantly secure. Besides, it was still day, and the streets were filled with people.

The young girl was going quietly along with the faithful old servant, when cries of distress were heard.

"Listen, Uncle Ben!" exclaimed Lilian.

"Yes, hunny; it is some passon in trubble. Come, let us go hum', an' git safe under our own roof."

"Look!" Lilian responded; "it is a poor helpless child!"

At that moment, a little ragged girl had turned the corner.

Lilian went back to speak to her.

"Miss Lilian, hunny!" cried Uncle Ben, anxiously; der yer please come on hum' an' let de po' creater alone."

"Uncle Ben," said Lilian, reproachfully, "I thought you had a kinder heart. No; I will not go till I have spoken to the child!"

It had thrown itself upon the ground, and was sobbing bitterly. Lilian went to her, and stooping over her pityingly, she gently inquired:

"Little girl, what troubles you?"

"Oh, my poor mamma—my poor mamma is dying, and nobody to help her!" the child replied.

"Show me the way to your house," said Lilian, "and I will go to her."

"Oh, Miss Lilian, hunny chile!" cried Uncle Ben, in horror; "fo' yer grandmudder's sake, come on an' go hum'."

"Uncle Ben!" she replied, "your heart is certainly stone. My little girl, show me the way."

The house was in a lonely, deserted part of the town, and near the wood-land. Old Ben observed a party of horsemen in the distance.

"Thank God!" said he to himself, "de Kuklux is in dis neighborhood. Dey bees huntin' dem perdition niggers dat 'scaped dem. I hope dey will fine em an' hang em, scalawags an' all!"

The horsemen came cantering up. One of them reined in his steed.

"Miss Lilian," he asked, "where are you going?"

"To see a poor sick woman dying in that hut!"

"Do not remain long," said he. "Be sure and return home before sunset."

"I will," she replied.

They rode rapidly away. They were deeply disguised, but Lilian had no difficulty in recognizing the voice that addressed her. It was the man who afterward redeemed Louisiana from misrule and outrage.

Entering the hut, Lilian found the old woman shivering, and almost dying from the cold.

"Uncle Ben," said she, "go and cut some wood. Do not go far!"

"Miss Lilian," the old man pleaded, "I rudder stay wid yer."

"Do not be so heartless; she is nearly frozen!"

"I rudder not go," said the old man, despairingly.

"Then I will!"

"Yer cut de wood?"

"If you do not, I certainly will!" said Lilian.

In a corner were two little children huddled together.

"Poor creature!" murmured Lilian, lifting her dying head; "you will soon journey into that land free from trouble."

Then, bowing her head over the brow of the sinking woman, she knelt down and prayed with fervency.

There was a slight noise in the cabin; but she did not interrupt her supplication. Then a rough hand seized her. It was that same negro who had insulted her on that dreadful night. Placing his hand over her mouth, he dragged her forcibly from the hut, and away into a dark lonely nook of the woods. The hapless girl was utterly helpless to resist his brutal violence. Once, however, his hand slipped from her mouth, and a wild shriek pierced the sky.

That cry was heard. The party of horsemen that had passed her that afternoon, was then patrolling in that quarter, and every one knew well the import of that awful sound. They rushed to the spot. The negro heard their coming, and seizing her in his hands, beat her head against a tree. Then he turned and fled into the the thick forest.

They found the body of the gentle Lilian lying there, but recently dead; her brains scattered over the dry leaves, her blood staining the ground. For a moment they were speechless, filled with horror. Their strong bodies shook with emotion, and tears streamed down their faces.

Then, as if inspired by a common impulse, they uncovered their heads, and in low, suppressed voices, repeated the oath as uttered by their leader:

“Comrades, to avenge this crime, we pledge ourselves ‘to wrap this State in revolution from the Gulf to the Arkansas line!’”

That oath was kept to the letter. The blood of Lilian Hargrove cried to God from the earth, and manifold was the vengeance which was taken for its shedding. Negroes were slaughtered by tens and hundreds. The Congressional report described them as innocent, harmless individuals, murdered by the Kuklux band of assassins. Even Senator Conkling declared, in a speech at the Cooper Institute in New York, that the offense and the cause of the death of these negroes, consisted in the fact that they were

Republicans, and that for this alone they had been murdered. Far—far—very far from the truth. They were not killed because of being Republicans, but for their diabolical acts.

There were a few honorable men from the Northern States, Republicans at home, who had settled in the South. They sympathized, and even assisted in this work.

Part of that company of horsemen took up the body of Lilian, to carry it home. The rest hastened after the fiend that had perpetrated the outrage. He was captured and justly punished. They chained him to a tree and burned him alive. This instance was duly reported as the murder of an unoffending man who had been put to death because of his great influence.

The scalawags gloated over these occurrences. They cared little about the men killed, but exulted that each death afforded them opportunity to make political capital. In this way, Northern men, reading the reports, were induced to believe that the Kuklux organization consisted of lawless assassins, capable of any atrocity.

Tenderly, those strong men bore the body of the murdered Lilian to her home. Nor had she perished thus cruelly, alone. Faithful old Ben had seen the wretch going to his fell errand, and had died fighting to protect his young mistress. They carried his corpse in the sad procession, a few days afterward.

It was now dark. Mrs. Hargrove was sitting by a small table, reading the Bible. Miriam sat near, anxious and fearful because her sister did not return. Heavy footsteps were now heard. She rose hastily, and looking out, saw a group of men carrying a burden. They paused, and one of them came forward. He endeavored to speak, but his voice failed him, and he only uttered an inaudible husky whisper.

Miriam, now dreading the worst, pressed forward, and her eyes fell upon the ghastly features of the murdered

Lilian—that young baby-sister that she had solemnly promised her mother to guard. With a wild shriek, she fell to the ground, as if struck by a mortal blow.

The men now took up the body and carried it into the room where sat the venerable grandmother. Hearing Miriam's shriek, Mrs. Hargrove seemed utterly paralyzed. As the men set down their burden, she rose and tottered to them. For a moment she stood and looked upon the dead face; then, stretching her arms forward, her hands clutched the air spasmodically, and she fell dead upon the body of her murdered grandchild.

The next evening, at sunset, the last offices were performed. Side by side in the same grave, were placed the remains of the aged grandmother and her young granddaughter. Near by was the grave of the faithful, heroic old Ben, as though, even in death, he still was guarding them. Truly, like the last of the brave "Swiss Guards," he had given his life in defending his charge.

Miriam was carried to Ethel's home. From the moment of that terrible shock she had remained unconscious. For days it seemed as if life itself would ebb away.

To Ethel, too, the blow had been a heavy one. She, however, kept up, and was able to minister to her suffering sister. Dr. Howells was assiduous in his attentions. Their care was finally rewarded. Their patient began to rally; and a long convalescence now followed.

CHAPTER XXVI.

WHAT BEFEL CUTHBERT ELLERY.

THE community was wild with rage. The excitement shook the State from center to circumference. Men that had never taken part in the Kuklux movement no longer hesitated. People talked of nothing else than the tragic fate of that young innocent girl, and the likelihood that other families would be the scene of similar occurrences.

To a man, the white population resolved to deliver Louisiana, or die in the attempt.

The negroes had likewise, in their turn, determined to avenge their comrade, whose crime created this excitement. According to their notion, it was nothing culpable to desire a young white wife. They would have done the same thing. The presence of the Federal troops encouraged them, and they became, if possible, more diabolical in their audacity than ever. They armed themselves, and plotted to attack the town of Jackson, sack it, and burn the dwellings.

The white citizens, however, were beforehand with them. They advanced upon the negroes, and defeated them before they reached the town. The negroes retreated into a swamp, where they were rapidly reinforced in such numbers that the whites, on overtaking them, feared their own force was vastly disproportionate. Desperate fighting ensued; several of the principal scalawag leaders were killed as well as a large number of negroes. The survivors were utterly demoralized and fled, leaving the citizens victorious. The subjugation seemed complete.

The Kuklux regulators patroled the country every night. If one of the bad negroes was found by them, he was promptly put out of the way. Others fled the country, as fast as the means to escape could be had.

The eyes of the whole country became fixed upon Louisiana. Northern men visited the South, that they might ascertain correctly the situation of affairs; others came officially to investigate the matter. Among the number was Belmont Manning.

Miriam Hargrove slowly returned to health. She and Aunt Susan had become inmates of her sister's house. Of her brother, she knew nothing. He had been proscribed by the Kuklux organization, but he had not been seen or heard from since the recent conflict. She knew that he had not been killed, and it was generally believed that he

had left the district, and perhaps the State. She now dragged on a cheerless, weary existence. The fate of her sister weighed upon her spirits, and saddened her life. So the winter had passed.

It was now a beautiful spring evening. The sweet balmy air stole through the open window and fanned her white brow. Her countenance was the saddest that human eyes ever gazed upon. Tranquillity had been partially restored, and Cuthbert Ellery was more at leisure. He was now sitting beside her, and striving to sooth her with encouraging assurances. Her hand lay passively and languidly in his warm, manly clasp.

"Miriam, my darling, it breaks my heart to witness your sadness."

"May be as years drift by, I will feel happier; but now life seems dead—dead!" she said, mournfully; and with her eyes resting sadly upon his face, she continued, "Were it not for you and Ethel and Aunt Susan, I could most gladly lie down in my grave!"

He drew her gently toward him and caressingly leaned his head against hers.

"Do not think of the past, my darling; let your thoughts linger on that beautiful future, when you will have become my wife; when my home will be sacred because of your presence. Think of that time, and know that Cuthbert Ellery, your husband, will labor untiringly to promote your happiness. Will you think of that future?" he inquired, touchingly.

"Yes," she murmured, softly.

The door-bell rang. He rose and opened it.

A boy delivered a note for Miss Hargrove, saying he was instructed to await the reply. Closing the door, Ellery went back to Miriam, and gave her the letter. Breaking the seal, she perused the contents. It was a formal note from Belmont Manning, stating that he was in Jackson, and would like to call. Ellery, watching her features,

noticed that their pallor increased. She placed the open letter into his hands and said quietly:

"Please read it."

He did so, and then glanced searchingly into her mournful face.

"What answer must I return?" she inquired.

"Whatever you desire, darling," said he.

She penned a reply, and gave it to him for his perusal. He sealed the letter, without reading it, and delivered it to the messenger.

"I desired you to read it," she said, quietly, as he again seated himself beside her. After a moment, she continued, "I did not grant his request."

"Were you afraid to trust yourself?" he eagerly inquired; then continued, "Miriam, if I thought you were marrying me with regrets—"

"Hush!" she said, wearily, interrupting him. "Nothing but death will keep me from becoming your wife!"

Taking her face between his hands, he kissed her tenderly.

After he had gone, she sat and mused upon what he had done and was; how he had given her his greatest devotion, periling his life for the safety of those most dear to her, and to avenge the death of her loved Lilian. He had led the citizens in that desperate conflict, and been in the hottest of the firing. Honor, she conceived, now bound her to him with its strongest rivets.

Ethel came in; the lamps were lighted, and a bright fire glowed in the fire-place. The two sisters sat, and held discourse together.

Cuthbert Ellery, having taken leave of Miriam for the evening, walked up the principal street of the town. He entered a store, where he met a party of gentlemen, and engaged in conversation. He was about to leave, and had just turned away, when Louis Murray, Ethel's husband, called out in alarm:

“Look out, Ellery!”

Too late. Standing in the full glare of the light, with their guns leveled at him, were George Hargrove and thirteen negroes. They fired simultaneously and ran, all but Hargrove. Their victim had fallen, almost literally riddled with their bullets. Fourteen missiles had sped home. Hargrove continued firing into the group that had surrounded the body of Ellery. Two of them returned his fire. He fell; but still kept up the firing when unable to rise from the ground.

So ended the career of the two men; one, noble, worthy and great of soul; the other, debased, ignoble, and vile.

All that night, Miriam Hargrove kept watch over the dead. Debilitated as she was, and exhausted by this terrible shock, no entreaty could induce her to take repose. The gentle breeze quietly swayed the folds of the pall that covered the limbs of him who lay there “like a warrior taking his rest.”

Outside, the little birds were singing joyously in the early spring morning; the spider was weaving her web in the sunshine, for the frail creatures born for a summer's span; life was jubilant. Inside was deep grief—death had robbed the world of one of its noblest.

Ethel sat beside her sister; her arms encircled Miriam.

A gentleman was standing at the side of the body.

Belmont Manning had come to pay his sad tribute. His eyes were fixed upon the mourner. Knowing why she grieved; loving her tenderly as in the old time, his heart ached for her. He looked upon the calm face of the dead, grand in its outline, and wept. Miriam looked up, and their eyes met. She saw his tears, and at once held her hand to him, across the body of Ellery. For the moment their hands were clasped, and Manning spoke in a soft, subdued voice:

“God knows that for your sake I would give you back your dead!”

The assassination of Cuthbert Ellery kindled anew the general excitement. A force of citizens set out at once in pursuit of the thirteen negroes. There was no attempt now to interpose, as on former occasions. The negroes, who had before been the terror of the region, were completely overawed.

The murderers were promptly captured, and it was agreed to let them have a trial before a legal tribunal.

When, however, their cases were called, their counsel interposed the plea that, owing to the prejudice existing against them, his clients could not have a fair trial in that parish; and accordingly presented their petition for a change of venue. This was granted, and the trial took place in an adjoining parish. Here it proved to be the merest travesty of justice. The judge was an emigrant from the Bay State, the sheriff a negro, and the deputies all negroes, except one. The prisoners were placed on trial together. Each of them had the right to challenge twelve jurymen peremptorily, making one hundred and fifty-six challenges in all. This, of course, exhausted the panel and talesmen; and finally twelve negroes from the parish to which the prisoners belonged were selected as a jury to try the case. It was ascertained that the twelve had been brought there for the purpose. The prisoners were acquitted. The regulators immediately took the case in hand. Shots were fired at the jurymen, wounding one of them; and also at the sheriff, who had been instrumental in securing the acquittal of the negroes. He took to the woods, and has not since returned to that parish.

The judge appealed to the citizens for protection.

This was assured to him on the condition that he should never return to exercise his office in the parish. He asked for a guard and "safe conduct." These also were granted him. They also gave him a shot-gun with which to protect himself. To his utter dismay, one of the guards assigned to him, was one of the five original organizers of the

Kuklux Klan, and notoriously also one of the fiercest "bull-dozers." He certainly did not pass a happy night. He "dined and wined" his guards with a profuse liberality, and they in their turn guarded him till morning, permitting him to take an early train. He returned afterward to his own State, and never again came South in any official capacity.

The occurrences which have been here described actually took place in a narrow region of the State, and many more can be adduced of similar terror. In many places the condition of things was far worse. It was the prevalence of crime, outrages and abuses of administration like these which culminated in open warfare and bloodshed in New Orleans, on that dreadful fourteenth of September.

Again was General Grant called upon to interfere. The election had been once more disputed, and Louisiana had again two governors: Nichols, Democratic; and Packard, Republican. The President this time refused. Then the "visiting statesmen" came to the State, and a compromise was the result, by which the electoral vote was awarded to the Republicans, enabling them to secure their candidate for President of the United States, and the title of Governor Nichols was recognized by the general government.

Since that time all the governors of Louisiana have been Democratic.

CHAPTER XXVII.

IN EVENT-TIME LIGHT.

SEVERAL years have elapsed since the events of the last chapter. Time mellows all grief.

Though Miriam and Ethel mourned long for the death of their loved ones, the bitterness of the first anguish was gradually softened.

Miriam became the wife of Belmont Manning. In the

love of her husband and two children, her life was sweetened with that supreme bliss which so seldom falls to human beings. Their home is in the South, and the sisters live near each other. Their children play together, and they visit each other almost daily, except when Manning is called to Washington by his duties in Congress. Then his wife accompanies him.

It is now evening, and autumn. Golden and crimson leaves are drifting upon gentle whispering winds. The setting sun floods the world with brilliant splendor. Miriam is sitting beside her husband upon the low steps of their Southern home.

Ethel had been spending the day with her, and the two children, after walking part of the way home with her and her little ones, now came bounding through the gate and up the walk to the spot where sat their parents.

Their arms soon encircled both mother and father, and the sun now seemed to linger over the picture with caressing tenderness. Taking the younger one in her arms, Miriam kissed it fondly; it was the very likeness of its father, a tiny baby-girl, with violet eyes and golden curls. No pleasure on earth surpasses that which springs unsullied from the love and companionship of innocent children.

Aunt Susan came hobbling up the walk. She was still living with the "chillens." She was now extremely feeble, and Miriam bestowed upon the faithful old negress the tenderest care. She sat down at the feet of Miriam.

"I'se losin' my strength, hunny," she said. "Dem sweet chillens lef' me fur behin'. I went a piece ob de way wid Miss Ethel, an' whin we turned an' started back, dem precious anguls ob yourn outrun me, an' got hum' fus'. Well, ole Susan hab bin in dis worl' a long time, an' I guess it is time she was a-gwine slow."

"You have seen the sunshine and the shadows, old mammy!"

"Yas, hunny, an' de storms too; but God, I know, is

gude, an' will at las' anchor me wid ole mistiss an' my brudder Ben. I hab darlin's in bofe worl's, an' it don't matter much which worl' I lib in," continued the old woman, tears bursting from her eyes. "Dear old mistiss taught me de truf, an' I libed by it an' am ready ter die by dat same truf. Dear ole mistiss," she added musingly, as her dim eyes contemplated the westering sun, "it carried yer safe into God's hum', an' it will bring ole Susan dar too. Ole mistiss, sometimes Susan gets tired waitin' fur God ter call me whar yer an' brudder Ben is. I want to see yer awful much, an' it don't seem like it is libin' here widout yer. Nebber since she was borned was ole Susan away from yer, ontill dat sad day whin yer lef' me becaze yer speerit went wid de murdered darlin'. Since den it hasn't been libin; it 'pears like ole Susan hab jist stopped an' set down by de road-side a-waitin' fur God ter call her to His hum'."

Bitter tears flowed down Miriam's cheeks at this plaintive recalling of the woful fate of Lillian. Her husband tenderly put his arm around her, and the children, nestling close to her, kissed away her tears.

The Southern question remains the unsolved problem of American politics. It will not always do to leave it as a football for aspiring politicians. To dispose of it finally and successfully will require dispassionate judgment and the wisest statesmanship. The present stage is only transitional, but it continues under the stress of an imperious necessity.

After the government of Louisiana had come into the hands of her white citizens, the Kuklux organization, which had been so effective in bringing about a better state of things, was disbanded. The policy now adopted was no longer that of suppression by force. The votes of the negroes are counted for the Democratic candidates. This is an unfortunate condition of affairs, but it is the lesser

evil. The negro majority is sufficient to overturn the present rule under which the State is regaining her former prosperity, and to restore the odious domination which succeeded the Civil War and brought the community to the verge of utter bankruptcy. Their leaders make attempts to recover their lost power, and, failing, then promulgate the complaint anew of a corrupt ballot and a fraudulent counting.

As an abstract question of ethics, such a count is not just. But as an eminent public man has said upon another subject, it is a condition before us, not a theory. The evil which is thus prevented would be a thousand-fold greater than the one committed. The experience of people of the State has unequivocally demonstrated this. So long, therefore, as negro supremacy is involved in political issues, the South, by the instinct of self-preservation, must necessarily be solidly Democratic, as parties now stand.

True, there are other questions of local interest and economies upon which the people would naturally divide. The South is developing into a manufacturing country, and from that fact would naturally become in time the stronghold of the protective policy of the Republicans. The State of Louisiana used to give large majorities that way. But all such considerations are overshadowed by the paramount necessity to protect the safety of life and the sanctity of home.

It is not pretended in these pages, or even insinuated, that the Southern negroes, as a whole, are thus malignant and brutal. The acts of the faithful and devoted ones, like Uncle Ben and Aunt Susan, we would abundantly praise. Another class may likewise be mentioned with favor. We find them diligent and industrious—tilling the soil, accumulating property, sending their children to school, and developing into moderately good citizens. They are not politicians, and hence are not named as candidates for office. But, from romantic considerations of gratitude, they gen-

erally support the Republican party. The ticket being thus made up from the objectionable class, nevertheless derives a certain air of respectability from their votes and favor.

Intellectual culture does not afford a sufficient guarantee. The experience of other races proves this conclusively, and the negro is no exception. John Gair possessed remarkable talent and was a powerful orator; but he was the more dangerous for his superior ability. He was one of the shrewdest of the yellow negroes, and endowed with the disposition and daring to commit any crime. He was a candidate for the Senate of Louisiana, but a counter-movement divided the Republican vote, and a Democrat was elected.

Dr. James Saunders of Clinton, a prominent citizen, took an active part in securing Gair's defeat. Babe Matthews, a sister of Gair's, was employed by the doctor at the time, as a cook. At her brother's instigation she put poison in the food. The doctor soon observed the peculiar symptoms, and by speedily swallowing antidotes recovered.

The woman became frightened at her failure, and, upon being questioned, confessed her guilt. She was afterward hanged to a tree in the court-house yard. John attempted to escape, but was overtaken and captured by a posse of men dispatched after him by the authorities. They were conveying him back to Clinton, when they were set upon by a body of men lying in ambush, who took the prisoner, and executed him at once.

The individual known as Dagonet was one of the most murderous and villainous, and at the same time cowardly, of all the white Southern men who instigated the negroes to crime. He narrowly escaped the regulators of the district in which he lived, and took up his residence in a distant part of the State. Here he again attempted like operations, and was in imminent peril. He persisted, year after year, at every election, to regain his former power by

means of the negro vote. Finally, in 1888, by his incendiary speeches in East Carroll parish, the negroes were inflamed to a high pitch of excitement. The white inhabitants, fearing a repetition of former atrocities, drove him from the region. He then left the State and went to Kansas. From that point, he wrote a communication upon the state of affairs in Louisiana, vilifying the white citizens, and portraying what he styled the corruption of the ballot-box. It was widely published, and had powerful influence on Northern sentiment.

The necessity of eliminating the negro from American politics is apparent to every thoughtful mind. Their manifest incapacity to deal properly with governmental affairs is indisputable. True, there are a few advanced minds that stand pre-eminent above their race, but the great majority are but the ignorant dupes of artful, unprincipled leaders.

Many of our own people in Northern and Western States are urgent to prevent the immigration of Chinese laborers. The Federal courts have already taken the matter by the throat, and refused to admit them to citizenship. Every argument that applies to that question with any legitimate moral force is far more conclusive in the case of the negro in America. There is no room for doubt that if the entire colored population should be removed from this country, the remaining white inhabitants would be better off. Yet, at the same time, no fact is plainer in modern history than that the negro deteriorates when isolated from contact with other races. Undoubtedly there have been a Providence and Divinity in this bringing of them together. Stern and even cruel as has been the discipline, it has been necessary, and has yielded its benefits. In many respects, after all, both races have been the gainers.

An eminent writer has declared the same sentiment:

“No facts stand clearer in American history than that the steady and directed toil of the Southern slave first placed the United States among the great commercial na-

tions of the world; and that the systematic training bestowed upon him during his period of servitude, and his contact with higher intelligence, have given to the negro an impulse to civilization that neither his inherent inclination nor his native environment would of themselves have bestowed."

Must there, then, be a colonization which will be likely to result eventually in a deterioration of the negroes into their former savage condition, or are they to remain here a perpetual fire-brand in American society? Are they to abide here, forcing a condition of domestic and political affairs in the Southern States which compels the Southern men to culpable measures, if not to violence outright, in order to assure the safety of their lives, the sacredness of their homes, the peace and prosperity of their country?

These are the propositions for which the answer is required. Neither menace nor recrimination is a proper means of solution. The situation, as it now is, demands to be candidly considered.

THE END.

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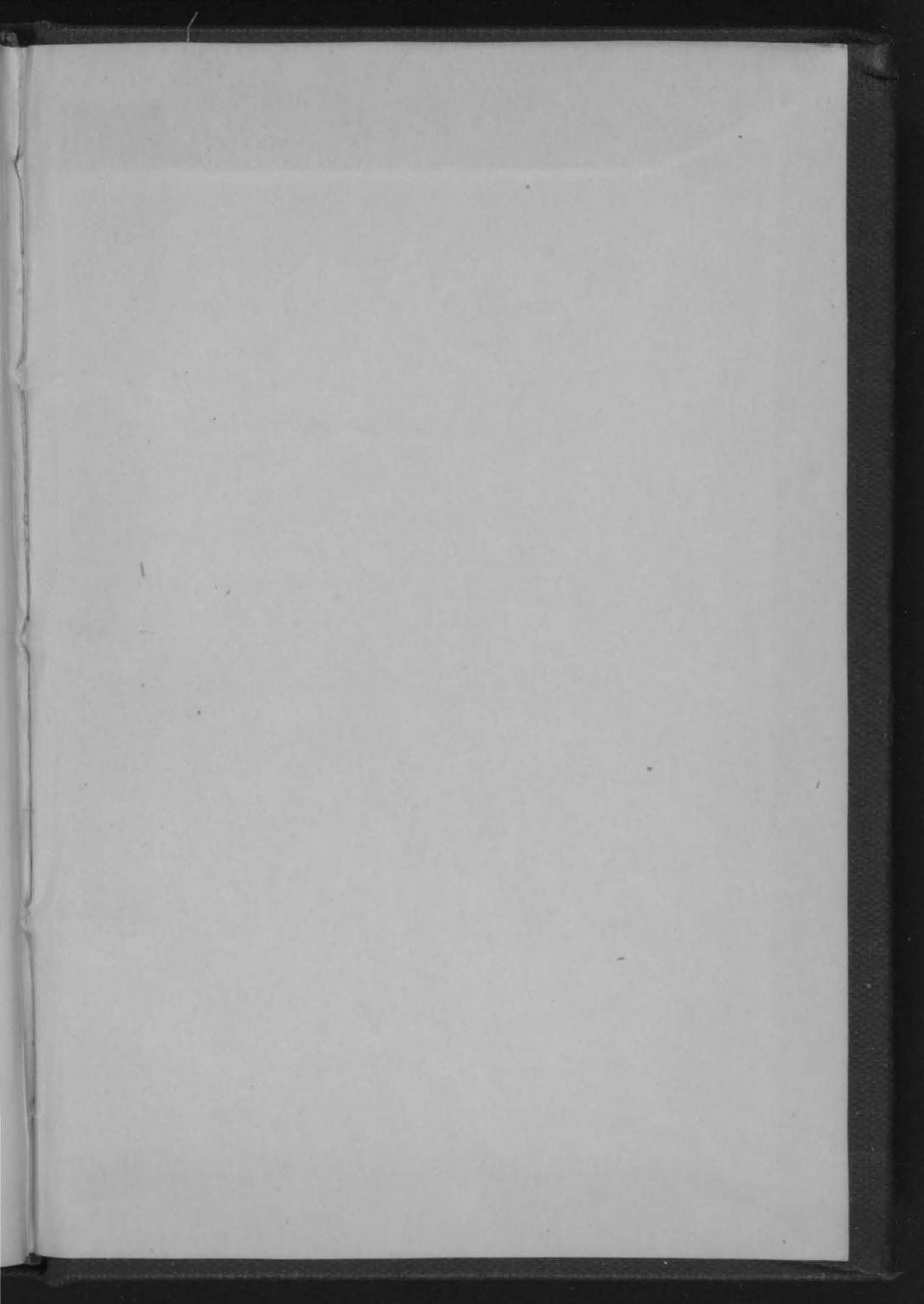
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