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MAM' LYDDY'S RECOGNITION

By Thomas Nelson Page

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I

When Cabell Graeme was courting pretty Betty French up at the Château place, though he had many rivals and not a few obstacles to overcome, he had the good fortune to secure one valuable ally, whose friendship

stood him in good stead. She was of a rich chocolate tint, with good features, and long hair, possibly inherited from some Arab ancestor, bead-like black eyes, and a voice like a harp, but which on occasion could become a flame. Her figure was short and stocky; but more dignity was never compressed within the same number of cubic inches.

Mam' Lyddy had been in the French family all her life, as her mother and grandmother had been before her. She had rocked on her ample bosom the best part of three generations. And when Freedom came, however much she may have appreciated being free, she had much too high an estimate of the standing of the Frenches to descend to the level of the class she had always contemned as “free niggers.” She was a deep-dyed aristocrat.

The Frenches were generally esteemed to be among the oldest and best families in the county, and the Château plantation, with its wide fields and fine old mansion, was commonly reckoned one of the finest in that section. But no such comparative statement would have satisfied Mam' Lyddy. She firmly believed that the Frenches were the greatest people in the world, and it would have added nothing to her dignity had they been princes, because it could have added nothing to it to be told that she was a member of a royal house. Part mentor, part dependent, part domestic, she knew her position, and within her province her place was as unquestioned as was that of her mistress, and her advice was as carefully considered.

Caesar, her husband, a tall, ebony lath, with a bald head and meek eyes, had come out of another family and was treated with condescension. No one knew how often he was reminded of his lower estate; but it was often enough, for he was always in a somewhat humble and apologetic attitude.

The Frenches were known as a “likely” family, but Betty, with her oval face, soft eyes, and skin like a magnolia flower, was so undeniably the beauty that she was called “Pretty Betty.” She was equally undeniably the belle. And while the old woman, who idolized her, found far more pleasure than even her mother in her belleship, she was as watchful over her as Argus. Every young man of the many who haunted the old French mansion among its oaks and maples had to meet the scrutiny of those sharp, tack-like eyes. The least slip that one made was enough to prove his downfall. The old woman sifted them as surely as she sifted her meal, and branded them with an infallible instinct akin to that of a keen watchdog. Many a young man who passed that silent figure without a greeting, or spoke lightly of some one, unheeding her presence, wondered at his want of success and felt without knowing why that he was pulling against an unseen current.

“We must drop him—he ain't a gent'man,” she said of one. Of another: “Oh! Oh! honey, he won't do. He ain't our kind.” Or, “Betty, let him go, my Lamb. De Frenches don't pick up dat kine o' stick.”

Happily for Cabell Graeme, he had the old woman's approval. In the first place, he was related to the Frenches, and this in her eyes was a patent of gentility. Then, he had always been kind to little Betty and particularly civil to herself. He not only never omitted to ask after her health, but also inquired as to her pet ailments of “misery in her foot” and “whirlin' in her head,” with an interest which flattered her deeply. But it went further back than that Once, when Betty was a little girl, Cabell, then a well-grown boy of twelve, had found her and her mammy on the wrong side of a muddy road, and wading through, he had carried Betty across, and then wading back, had offered to carry Mam' Lyddy over, too.

“Go way f'om heah, boy, you can't carry me.”

“Yes, I can, Mam' Lyddy. You don't know how strong I am.” He squared himself for the feat.

She laughed at him, and with a flash in his gray eyes he suddenly grabbed her.

“I 'll show you.”

There was quite a scuffle. She was too heavy for him, but he won her friendship then and there, and as he grew up straight and sturdy, the friendship ripened. That he teased her and laughed at her did not in the least offend her. No one else could have taken such a liberty with her, but Cabell's references to old Caesar's declining health, and his innuendoes whenever she was “fixed up” that she was “looking around” in advance only amused her. It made no difference to her that he was poor, while several others of Betty's beaux were rich. He was “a gent'man,” and she was an aristocrat.

At times they had pitched battles, but each knew that the other was an ally.

Cabell won his final victory by an audacity which few would have dared venture on. Among his rivals was one Mr. Hereford, whom he particularly disliked, partly because he frequently “outsat” him, and partly because he thought Miss Betty favored his attentions too much, and whom Mammy Lyddy detested because he always ignored her. Cabell charged her with deserting his cause and going over to the side of Mr. Hereford, and threatened to carry off the prize in spite of her and her ally.

“You cyant cyah off nothin',” she said with a sniff of mock disdain. His eyes snapped. Without a word he seized her, and notwithstanding her resistance he lifted her, and flinging her over his shoulder, as if she had been a sack of corn, stalked up the steps and into the house, where he set her down abashed and vanquished before her astonished young mistress. The old woman pretended to be furious, but that day Cabell Graeme carried off more than Mam' Lyddy.

When Cabel and pretty Betty were married, Mam' Lyddy threw in her lot with “her lamb.”

Through all the evil days of carpet-bag rule, no white, not even Cabell Graeme himself, who was a leader of the young men, had looked with more burning contempt on the new-comers, or shown a sterner front to the miscreants who despoiled the country. And when Negro rule was at its worst, Mam' Lyddy was its most bitter reviler. Cabell Graeme was a captain among the young men who finally put down the evil element that had been running its riotous course. And during the fierce fight that was waged, he was much away from home; but he knew that in Mam' Lyddy he had left as redoubtable a guardian of his wife and babies as ever kept watch on a picket line.

Among the most obnoxious of the colored leaders was one Amos Brown, a young negro with some education, who to the gift of fluency added enough shrewdness to become a leader. He was while in power one of the most dangerous men in the State, and so long as he had backing enough, he staggered at nothing to keep the negroes stirred up. One of his schemes was to get money from the negroes with which to pay, as he claimed, ten per cent, for the best plantations in the State, after which, according to his account, the

Government was to give them the places. This scheme worked well enough till the day of reckoning came, but happily it came. Among those who were duped was old Caesar, who, unknown to Mam' Lyddy, invested all his little savings in Amos Brown's homestead-plan and was robbed. Partly in terror of Mam' Lyddy and partly in hopes of saving his money, the old man made a full disclosure of the scheme, and with the proof he furnished, Cabell Graeme and others succeeded in sending the statesman to the penitentiary.

What Caesar possibly had to endure from Mam' Lyddy, only those could imagine who knew her blistering tongue. From that time she took herself not only everything that she made, but every cent that old Caesar made.

“You keep 'dis for me, Marse Cab. I 'm never goin' to trust dat Caesar wid a cent long as I live. A nigger ain't got a bit o' sense about money.”

But though Caesar would gladly have paid all he made to purchase immunity from her revilings, it is probable that he heard of his error at least three times a day during the rest of his natural life.

II

As long as the old people lived, the French place was kept up; but the exactions of hereditary hospitality ate deeply into what the war had left, and after the death of old Colonel French and Mrs. French, and the division of the estate, there was little left but the land, and that was encumbered.

Happily, Cabell Graeme was sufficiently successful as a lawyer, not only to keep his little family in comfort, but to receive an offer of a connection in the North, which made it clearly to his interest to go there. One of the main obstacles in the way of the move was Mam' Lyddy. She would have gone with them, but for the combined influences of Old Caesar and a henhouse full of hens that were sitting. The old man was in his last illness, and a slow decline, and the chickens would soon be hatched. Since, however, it was apparent that old Cæsar would soon be gone, as that the chickens would soon be hatched, Graeme having arranged for Cæsar's comfort, took his family with him when he moved.

He knew that the breaking-up would be a wrench; but it was worse than he had expected, for their roots were deep in the old soil. Old friends, when they said good-by, wrung his hand with the faces men wear when they take a last look at a friend's face. The parting with the mammy was especially bitter. It brought the break-up home as few things had done. And when Mr. and Mrs. Graeme reached their new home with its strange surroundings, her absence made it all the stranger.

The change in the servants marked the change in the life. The family found it hard to reconcile themselves to it. Mrs. Graeme had always been accustomed to the old servants, who were like members of the family, and to find her domestics regarding her as an enemy or as their prey disturbed and distressed her.

“You are going to try colored servants?” asked one of her new friends in some surprise.

“Oh, yes, I am quite used to them.”

“Well.—Perhaps—but I doubt if you are used to these.”

Mrs. Graeme soon discovered her mistake. One after another was tried and discarded. Those who knew nothing remained until they had learned enough to be useful and then departed, while those who knew a little thought they knew everything and brooked no direction. And all were insolent. With or without notice the dusky procession passed through the house, each out-goer taking with her some memento of her transient stay.

“I do not know what is the matter,” sighed Mrs. Graeme. “I always thought I could get along with colored people; but somehow these are different. Why is it, Cabell!”

“Spoiled,” said her husband, laconically. “The mistake was in the emancipation proclamation. *Domestic* servants ought to have been excepted.”

His humor, however, did not appeal to his wife. The case was too serious.

“The last one I had told me, that if I did not like what she called coffee—and which I really thought was tea—I 'd better cook for myself. And that other maid, after wearing one of my best dresses, walked off with a brand-new waist. I am only standing the present one till Mammy comes. She says she likes to be called 'Miss Johnson.'”

“*I* paid twenty dollars last week for the privilege of chucking a dusky gentleman down the steps; but I did not begrudge it,” said her husband, cheerfully. “The justice who imposed the fine said to me afterward that the only mistake I had made was in not breaking his neck.”

At last, old Caesar was gathered to his dusky fathers, and the chickens having been mainly disposed of, Mr. Graeme went down and brought the old mammy on.

He had written the old woman to come by a certain train to Washington where he would meet her, and true to his appointment he met that train. But in the motley throng that filed through the gate was no Mam' Lyddy, and inquiring of the train men showed that no one answering to her description could have been on the train.

Just as Graeme was turning away to go to the telegraph desk, one of the gray-clad colored porters, a stout, middle-aged man with a pleasant voice, and the address of a gentleman, approached him,

“Were you looking for some one, sir?”

“Yes, for an old colored woman, my wife's old mammy.”

“Well, I think you may find her in the inner waiting-room. There is an old lady in there, who has been waiting there all day. She came in on the morning train, and said she was expecting you. If you will come with me, I will show you.”

“She 's been there all day,” the porter said, with a laugh, as they walked along. “I asked who she was waiting for; but she wouldn't tell me. She said it was none of my business.”

“I fancy that 's she,” said Graeme.

“Yes, sir, that 's she, sure.”

Graeme thanked him. With a chuckle he led the way to where ensconced in a corner, surrounded by bundles and baskets and clad in the deepest black, and with a flaming red bow at her throat, sat Mammy Lyddy.

“Here 's the gentleman you were looking for,” said the porter kindly.

At sight of Graeme she rose so hastily that many of her bundles rolled on the floor.

“Why, Mammy! Why did n't you come on the train I wrote you to come on?” enquired Graeme.

“Well, you tole me to come to-day, and I thought I would like to be on time, so I came this morning.”

“Now, if you will let me have your tickets, I will attend to everything for you,” said the porter to Graeme.

The old woman gave him a swift glance, and then seeing Graeme hand him his ticket, she turned her back, and began to fish in some mysterious recess in her garments, and after a long exploration brought out a small bag containing her ticket.

“Is he one of your servants!” she asked Graeme in an undertone.

Graeme smiled. “Well, I think he is—he is everybody's servant and friend.”

“I did n't know. He comes roun' inquirin' 'bout my business so officious I thought sure he was one o' dese Gov'ment folks, and I done had 'nough to do wid dat kind.”

“Like Amos Brown, Caesar's friend.”

It was a sore subject with the old woman.

“Well, I did n't know—I thought he was one o' dese perliss. So I sent him 'long 'bout he own business. But if you know him it 's all right.”

The passengers who streamed through the great station the evening of her arrival, were surprised to see a pudgy old black woman escorted by a gentleman who, loaded down with her bundles and baskets, was guiding her through the throng as respectfully as if she had been the first lady in the land. At the gate a lady and several children were awaiting her, and at sight of her a cry of joy went up. Dropping her bundles, the old woman threw herself into the lady's arms and kissed her again and again, after which she received a multitude of kisses from the children.

“Well, I never saw anything like that,” said a stranger to another.

“She is their mammy,” said the other one simply, with a pleasant light in his eyes.

The old woman's presence seemed to transform the house. She was no sooner installed than she took possession. That very morning she established her position, after a sharp but decisive battle with the airy “colored lady,” who for some days had been dawdling about the house. The mammy had gauged her as soon as her sharp eyes fell on her.

“What does yo' call yo'self?” she asked her.

“What is my name? I am called 'Miss Johnson—Miss Selina Johnson.'”

The old woman gave a sniff.

“Yo' is! Well, what does yo' call you'self doin' heah?”

“You mean what is my employment! I am the help—one of the help.”

“Yo' is!” Mam' Lyddy tightened her apron-strings about her stout waist. “Well, 'Miss Johnson,' you git holt of that mat-trass and help me meek up dis heah bed so it 'll be fit for you' mistis to sleep on it.” With a jerk she turned up the mattress. The maid was so taken aback for a moment that she did not speak. Then she drew herself up.

“I know I ain' gwine to tetch it. I done made it up onct to-day. An' I ain't got no mistis.”

The mammy turned on her.

“Umh'm! I thought so! I knows jest yo' kind. Well, de sooner you git out o' dis room de better for you. 'Cause if I lay my han' 'pon you I won't let you go till I'se done what yo' mammy ought to 'a' done to you ev'y day o' yo' life.”

She moved toward her with so dangerous a gleam in her sharp little eyes that “Miss Johnson” deemed it safest to beat a hasty retreat, and before bedtime had disappeared from the premises entirely.

In the kitchen the old woman had been equally strenuous. She had shown the cook in one evening that she knew more about cooking than that well-satisfied person had ever dreamed any one knew. She had taught the other maid that she knew by instinct every lurking place of dirt, however skilfully hidden, and, withal, she had inspired them both with so much dread of her two-edged tongue that they were doing their best to conciliate her by a zeal and civility they had never shown before.

For the first time the Graemes knew what comfort was in their new home.

“Well, this is something like home,” said Mrs. Graeme that evening as she sat by the lamp. “Why, I feel like little Ben. He said to-night, 'Mamma, Mammy brought old times with her.'”

“May she live forever!” said Graeme.

In time, however, Mrs. Graeme began to feel that the old woman was confining herself too closely to the house. She needed some recreation. She had not even been to church, and Mrs. Graeme knew that this was her chief delight.

Yes, she would like to go to church, she said, but she did not know “about dese fine chutches.” She did not like much to go on the streets. “Dere was too many strange folks around for her. Dey did n't keer nuthin' for her ner she for dem.” And it was “de same way, she reckoned, with de chutches. Dey wuz new niggers, and she did n't had no use for dem, nor dey for her.”

Mrs. Graeme, however, was insistent. Not far off, she had learned, was a colored church, “Mount Salem,” over which the Reverend Amos Johnson presided with much show of broadcloth and silk hat. He had considerable reputation as a speaker, and from time to time appeared in the newspapers as a rather ranting writer on matters with a political coloring. Mrs. Graeme explained to the old woman that she need have no more to do with the people than she wished, and the following Sunday she went herself with her to the door of the church. Before leaving her she gave her a half-dollar to put in the plate, and asked a solemn-looking usher to show her a good seat.

When the old woman returned she was interested, but critical. “I'se been used to chutch all my life,” she declared, “but I never saw no fixin's like dat. Br'er George Wash'n'ton Thomas of Mount Zion was de fancies' one I ever seen; but he could n't tetch dat man. Why, dey outdoes white folks!”

“Were n't they nice to you!” asked her mistress.

“Nor 'm', none too nice. Dat one what you spoke to for me wuz gwine to give me a seat; but a uppish young yaller one stopped him an' made him teck me back and stick me in a corner behind a pillar. But he did n't stick me so fur back 't dey did n't fine me when dey tecked up de money. When I put in dat fif'-cent you gi' me, he jumped like a pin had stick him. I dropped 't in so 't would soun', I tell you!”

This gave Mrs. Graeme an idea, and she encouraged her to go again the following Sunday, and this time gave her a dollar to put in the plate.

“Be sure and drop it in so it will sound,” she said to her.

“I 'm gwine to.”

“Well, how did you come out to-dayf” she asked her on her return.

“Right well. Dey did n't stick me quite so fur back, and when I drap de dollar in dey wuz several on 'em lookin', and when de chutch was over dey come runnin' arter me, an', tell me ef I come next time dey 'll have a good seat for me. I 'm gwine agin, but fust thing dey know I 'm gwine to fool 'em. I ain't gwine put a dollar in agin, I know.”

Mrs. Graeme laughed. “Oh! you must pay for being in society. We all do.”

“I know *I* ain't,” declared the old woman, “and I don't reckon you gwine to gi' me a dollar ev 'y Sunday.”

“I certainly am not. I am only getting you launched.”

The following week Mrs. Graeme said to her husband, “I think Mammy is launched. The preacher came to the front door to-day and asked to see Mrs. Quivers. At first I did not know whom he meant. Then he said it was 'a colored lady.' You never saw any one so gotten up—silk hat, kid gloves, and ebony cane. And Mammy was quite set up by it. She says the preacher is from home and knew Caesar. She was really airy afterward.”

Mr. Graeme uttered an objurgation. “You will ruin that old woman, and with her the best old negro that ever was.”

“Oh, no,” said Mrs. Graeme, “there is no danger of that. You could n't spoil her.”

A few weeks later she said: “Yes, Mammy is launched. She told me to-day she wanted to join the club, and when I asked, what club, she said, 'the Colored Ladies Siciety Club.'” “I should say she was launched,” sniffed Mr. Graeme. “She told me she wanted her money to invest it herself. The old fool! They will rob her of it.”

III

The weeks that followed, and Mam' Lyddy's immersion in “Siciety” began apparently to justify Mr. Graeme's prophecy. A marked change had taken place in the old woman's dress, and no less a change had taken place in herself. She began to go out a good deal, and her manner was quite new. She was what a few weeks before she would have derided as “citified and airified.” At length Mrs. Graeme could not conceal it from herself any longer.

One evening as her husband on his return from his office threw himself on his chair with the evening paper, she brought up the subject.

“Cabell, it is true; you have noticed the change!”

“What? I have no doubt I have.” He glanced at his wife to see if she had on a new dress or had changed the mode of wearing her hair, then gazed about him rather uneasily to see if the furniture had been shifted about, or if the pictures had been changed; points on which his wife was inclined to be particular.

“The change in Mammy! Why, I should never know her for the same person.”

“Of course, I have. I have noticed nothing else. Why, she is dressed as fine as a fiddle. She is 'taking notice.' She 'll be giving Old Caesar a successor. Then what will you do? I thought that fat darky I have seen going in at the back gate with a silk hat and a long-tailed coat looked like a preacher. You 'd better look out for him. You know she was always stuck on preachers. He is a preacher, sure.”

“He is,” observed the small boy on the floor. “That 's the Reverend Mr. Johnson. And, oh! He certainly can blow beautiful smoke-rings. He can blow a whole dozen and make 'em go through each other. You just ought to see him, papa.”

His father glanced casually at the cigar box on the table.

“I think I will some day,” said he, half grimly.

“I never would know her for the same person. Why, she is so changed!” pursued Mrs. Graeme. “She goes out half the time, and this morning she was so cross! She says she is as good as I am if she is black. She is getting like these others up here.”

Mr. Graeme flung down the paper he was reading.

“It is these Northern negroes who have upset her, and the fools like the editor of that paper who have upset them.”

Mrs. Graeme looked reflective.

“That preacher has been coming here a good deal lately. I wonder if that could have anything to do with it!” she said, slowly.

Her husband sniffed.

“I will find out.”

At that moment the door opened and in walked Mam' Lyddy and a small boy in all the glory of five years, and all the pride of his first pair of breeches. The old woman's face wore an expression of glumness wholly new to her, and Mr. Graeme's mouth tightened. His wife had only time to whisper: “Now, don't you say a word to her.” But she was too late. Mam' Lyddy's expression drove him to disobedience. He gave her a keen glance, and then said, half jocularly: “Old woman, what is the matter with you lately!”

Mam' Lyddy did not answer immediately. She looked away, then said: “Wid me? Ain't nuttin' de matter wid me.”

“Oh, yes, there is. What is it? Do you want to go home?”

She appeared half startled for an instant, then answered more sharply: “Nor, I don't wan' go home. I ain' got no home to go to.”

“Oh, yes, you have. Well, what is the matter? Out with it. Have you lost any money!”

“Nor, I ain' lost no money 's *I* knows on.”

“Been playing lottery?”

“I don' know what dat is.”

“You don't, ah! Well, you would if you had been in Wall Street lately. Well, what is the matter? You are going around here as glum as a meat-axe. Something 's up. What is it?”

“Ain' nothin' de matter wid *me*.” She glanced away under her master's half amused, half disdainful glance, then added half surlily: “I wants *rec'nition*.”

“Want recognition? What do you mean?”

“Dat 's what *we* wants,” declared the old woman, acquiring courage.

Graeme laughed.

“What is recognition?”

“I don't know what 't is edzac'ly, but dat's what we *wants*. You all 's got it and you got to gi' it to *us*.”

“You mean you want to sit at table with us!” exclaimed Mrs. Graeme.

Mammy Lyddy turned toward her. “You know I don't mean nuttin' like dat! I leetle more 'n smacked that yaller gal' what you call you' maid over 'bout talkin' dat way t'other day.”

“Then what do you want!”

“I wants *rec'nition*—dat's all I wants.”

“Who told you to say that!” asked Mr. Graeme.

“Who tol' me to say dat?” She was puzzled.

“Yes.”

“Ain' nobody tol' me to say it.”

“Yes, some one has. Who was it?—-the Reverend Johnson? Did n't he tell you that!”

She hesitated; but Mr. Graeme's eye was searching.

“Well, he no mo' 'n others—no *much* mo'. Of co'se, he tol' me dat—he *preaches* 'bout it; but did n't nobody *have* to tell me—I knows 'bout it myself.”

“Of course you did, and you must have it. So shall the Reverend Mr. Johnson,” said Mr. Graeme. His tone expressed such sudden amiability that the old woman glanced at him suspiciously, but he was smiling softly and thoughtfully to himself.

“What did you do with the four hundred and fifty-five dollars you drew out of bank last week? Did you invest it or lend it to Mr. Johnson?” It was a bow drawn at venture, but the arrow hit the mark, as Mr. Graeme saw.

“I 'vested it.”

“You mean Mr. Johnson invested it for you? By the way, what is his first name!”

“Yes, sir. His name 's de Rev. Amos Johnson.”

“By George! I thought so,” said Graeme, half aloud. “I saw him at the races last week. I knew I had seen him before.” His countenance grew suddenly cheerful.

“What did he give you to show for it?”

“He did n't gi' me nothin'. He 's gwine to draw the intrust for me.”

“Oh! I thought so. Well, I want to see the Rev. Mr. Johnson when he comes next time. When do you expect him?”

“I ain't 'pectin' him 't all. He comes sometimes. He was a friend o' Cæsar's.”

“Ah! he was! So I thought. Comes to smoke a cigar, I suppose!”

She looked so uneasy that he went on casually: “Well, it 's very well; always keep in with the cloth. He is a fine preacher, I hear! Keeps quite up with the times—interested in the races in more senses than one.”

“Yes, sir; he preaches very well.”

“That is all. Well, your friend must have 'rec'nition.'”

The old woman withdrew.

The following day Graeme went down to a detective agency and left a memorandum. A few days later he

received a message from the agency: “Yes, he is the same man. He frequents the pool-rooms a good deal. Came from Kentucky. He used to be known as 'Amos Brown.'”

IV

For some days Mr. Graeme took to coming home earlier than usual, and one evening he was rewarded. Just after his arrival little Ben came in, and, climbing up to his cigar box, took out several cigars, and silently withdrew. As soon as he had disappeared his father stepped to the telephone, and, calling up the detective agency, asked that an officer be sent around to his house immediately. A few minutes later the officer arrived, and after a few words with him Mr. Graeme stationed him at the back gate and strolled back toward the kitchen. As he softly approached the door he heard voices within-one of them his little boy's voice, the other the deep, unctuous tones of a negro man. The child was begging the latter to blow smoke-wreaths, and the man was bartering with him.

“Well, you must get me *more* cigars; remember what I told you—six wreaths for one cigar.”

At this moment the mammy evidently came in, for Mr. Graeme heard the man caution the child, and heard her voice for the first time,

“What dat you telling dat chile?” she demanded, suspiciously.

“Nothing. I was just entertaining him by blowing a few of those artistic wreaths he admires so much. My good friends keep me in cigars. It is one of the few consolations in a hard-working pastor's life. Well, sister, I called around to tell you your investment promises to be even more remunerative than I expected—and to tell you if you have any more, or even can borrow any, to let me place it as you did the other. I can guarantee to double it for you in a short time.”

“I ain' got any more—an' ain' got nobody to lend me none.”

“Well, ah! Could n 't you get any from your employer?” He lowered his voice; but Graeme caught the words. “You could raise money on the silver—and they would never know it. Besides, they owe it to you for all the work you have done without payment. Think how many years you worked for them as a slave without pay.”

“Now, I ain' gwine to do dat!” exclaimed the old woman.

At this moment Graeme softly opened the door. The mammy was standing with her back to him, and in one chair, tilted back with his feet in another chair, was a large and unctuous-looking negro of middle age, in all the glory of a black broadcloth coat and a white tie. He was engaged at the moment in blowing small wreaths, while little Ben stood by and gazed at him with open-eyed wonder and delight.

At sight of Mr. Graeme, the preacher with a gulp, which sadly disturbed his last effort, rose to his feet. An expression of fear flitted across his face, then gave way to a crafty, half-insolent look.

“Good evening, sir,” he began, with an insinuating smile, not wholly free from uneasiness.

“Good evening, Amos. Mammy, will you kindly go to your mistress. Take the boy with you. Run along, son.”

The old woman with a half-scared air led the child out, and Mr. Graeme closed the door and turned back to the visitor, who looked much embarrassed.

“Take my cigars out of your pocket.”

The preacher's hand went involuntarily to his breast-pocket, and then came down.

“What! Your cigars out of my pocket? I have no cigars of yours, sir.” He spoke with slightly rising severity, as Mr. Graeme remained so calm.

“Oh, yes, you have. But no matter for the present. You had just as well leave them there for a moment. What are you doing, coming here all the time?”

“What am I doing?—Coming here? I am a minister of the Gawspel, sir, and I have a member of my congregation here, and I come to look after her welfare.”

“And to see that she gets recognition?”

“Suh?”—with a wince.

“And incidentally to rob me of my cigars, and her of her small savings”—pursued Mr. Graeme, calmly.

“Suh? Nor, suh, I has not done dat I will take my oath to it on the word of Almighty God.”

The veneer of his fine speech had all been dropped, and the Rev. Johnson was talking naturally enough now.

“What did you do with that money you took from her?”

“What did I do wid—? What money?”

Mr. Graeme showed impatience for the first time.

“The four hundred and fifty-five dollars you got from her. Was there more than that?”

At this point Mam' Lyddy opened the door and came in. She looked somewhat mystified and rather disturbed, but she said nothing. She only took her stand, and with arms folded waited silent and observant.

The negro saw that Mr. Graeme knew of the fact and answered promptly.

“Oh! You are mistaken, sir. I have taken no money of her. You can ax her. She had a sum of money which I as a favor to her invested for her. You can ask the sister there. I suppose you refer to that!”

“Invested! In what?”

“Ah—ur—in—ur—the Afro-American Sister's Loan and Trust Association. I have promised to invest it in that for her.”

He stammered a good deal at the start, but was glib enough when he brought out the name. “Didn't I,

sister!”

“Yes, sir.” The old woman was manifestly impressed. The preacher's cunning face brightened.

“You see what she says?”

“With its chief office at the Race-course out here,” said Graeme, with a toss of his head. “Look here, I want you to get that money.”

The negro shot a glance at Mam' Lyddy and decided that she would stand by him. He suddenly stiffened up and resumed his affected manner.

“Well, sir, I do not know by what right you interfere with my affairs—or this lady's.”

“You don 't? Well, that's what I am going to show you now. My right is that she is a member of my family, whom I am going to protect from just such scoundrels and thieves as you, Amos Brown.”

The preacher received the name like a blow.

At the words the old mammy jumped as if she were shot. She leaned forward, moving up slowly.

“What's dat?—'Amos *Brown*'? What's dat you said, Marse Cabell? 'Amos *Brown*'?”

Mr. Graeme nodded. “Yes. This is Amos Brown, 'a friend of Caesar's.'”

“Indeed, I ain 't suh. I'm de Reverend Amos Johnson—” began the preacher, but his looks belied him. Mammy Lyddy took in the truth, and the next second the storm broke.

“'Amos Brown' you is? I might 'a' knowd it! You thief! You a friend of Caesar's! Whar's my money?—My money you stole from Caesar? You come talkin' to me 'bout rec'nition? I done rec'nize you, you black nigger. Let me get at him, Marse Gabelle.”

The old woman swept toward him with so threatening an air that Graeme interposed, and the preacher retreated behind him for protection. Even that place of security did not, however, save him from her vitriolic tongue. She poured out on him the vials of her wrath till Graeme, fearing she might drop down in a faint, stopped her.

“Stop now. I will settle with him.”

His authoritative air quieted her, but she still stood glowering and muttering her wrath.

“You will have that money back here by to-morrow at this hour or I will put you in the penitentiary, where you have already been once and ought to be now. And now you will take my cigars out of your pocket, or I will hand you to that policeman out there at the door. Out with them.”

“Boss, I ain't got no cigars o' yo's. I 'll swar to it on de wud o'——”

“Out with them—or—” Mr. Graeme turned to open the door. The negro, after a glance at Mam' Lyddy, slowly took several cigars from his pockets.

“Dese is all de cigars I has—and dey wuz given to me by a friend,” he said, surlily.

“Yes, by my little boy. I know. Lay them there. I will keep them till to-morrow. And now go and get that money.”

“What money?—I can't git dat money—dat money is invested.”

“Then you bring the securities in which it is invested. I know where that money went. You go and rob some one else—but have that money at my office to-morrow before three o'clock or I 'll put you in jail to-morrow night. And if you ever put your foot on this place or speak to that old woman again, I 'll have you arrested. Do you understand!”

“Yes, sir.”

“Now go.” He opened the door.

“Officer, do you recognize this man!”

“Yes, sir, I know him.”

“Well, I am going to let him go for the present”

The Rev. Amos was already slinking down the street. Mr. Graeme turned to the old woman.

“You want recognition?”

“Nor, suh, I don't” She gave a whimper. “I wants my money. I wants to git hold of dat black nigger what 's done rob me talkin' 'bout bein' sich a friend o' Caesar's.”

“Do you want to go home?”

“Dis is my home.” She spoke humbly, but firmly.

Two days afterward Mrs. Graeme said:

“Cabell, Mammy is converted. It is like old times.”

“I think it will last,” said her husband. “She is out four hundred and fifty-five dollars, and the Mount Salem flock is temporarily without a shepherd. The Rev. Amos Johnson was gathered in this morning for fleecing one of his sheep and signing the wrong name to a check.”

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