Title: Crestlands: A Centennial Story of Cane Ridge

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Release Date: March 14, 2010 [EBook #31640]

Language: English

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Abner gently checked his mare, and sat watching her.

CRESTLANDS

A Centennial Story of Cane Ridge

BY

MARY ADDAMS BAYNE

Illustrated by O. A. Stemler

THE STANDARD PUBLISHING COMPANY
CINCINNATI, OHIO

DEDICATION

To my husband, J. C. Bayne, who in this, as in all else I have attempted, has given loving, loyal, unstinted support and encouragement.

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CRESTLANDS

A Story of Early Kentucky

MARY ADDAMS BAYNE

CHAPTER I.

THE COMING OF THE SCHOOLMASTER

The spirit of Indian Summer, enveloped in a delicate bluish haze, pervaded the Kentucky forest. Through the treetops sounded a sighing minor melody as now and then a leaf bade adieu to the companions of its summer revels, and sought its winter's rest on the ground beneath. On a fallen log a redbird sang with jubilant note. What cared he for the lament of the leaves? True, he must soon depart from this summer home; but only to wing his way to brighter skies, and then return when mating-time should come again. Near a group of hickory-trees a colony of squirrels gathered their winter store of nuts; and a flock of wild turkeys led by a pompous, bearded gobbler picked through the underbrush. At a wayside puddle a deer bent his head to slake his thirst, but scarcely had his lips touched the water when his head was reared again. For an instant he listened, limbs quivering, nostrils dilating, a startled light in his soft eyes; then with a bound he was away into the depths of the forest. The turkeys, heeding the tocsin of alarm from their leader, sought the shelter of the deeper undergrowth; the squirrels dropped their nuts and found refuge in the topmost branches of the tree which they had just pilfered; but the redbird, undisturbed, went on with his caroling, too confident in his own beauty and the charm of his song to fear any intruder.

The cause of alarm was a horseman whose approach had been proclaimed by the crackling of dried twigs in the bridle-path he was traversing. He was an erect, broad-shouldered, dark-eyed young man with ruddy complexion, clear-cut features, and a well-formed chin. A rifle lay across his saddle-bow, and behind him was a pair of bulky saddle-bags. He wore neither the uncouth garb of the hunter nor the plain homespun of the settler, but rather the dress of the Virginian cavalier of the period, although his hair, instead of being tied in a queue, was short, and curled loosely about his finely shaped head. The broad brim of his black hat was cocked in front by a silver boss; the gray traveler's cape, thrown back, revealed a coat of dark blue, a waistcoat ornamented with brass buttons, and breeches of the same color as the coat, reaching to the knees, and terminating in a black cloth band with silver buckles.

He rode rapidly along the well-defined bridle-way, and soon emerged into a broader thoroughfare. Presently he heard the high-pitched, quavering notes of a negro melody, faint at first and seeming as much a part of nature as the russet glint of the setting sun through the trees. The song grew louder as he advanced, until, emerging into an open space, he came upon the singer, a gray-haired negro trudging sturdily along with a stout hickory stick in his hand. The negro doffed his cap and bowed humbly.

"Marstah, hez you seed anythin' ob a spotted heifer wid one horn broke off, anywhars on de road? She's pushed down de bars an' jes' skipped off somewhars."

"No, uncle, I've met no stray cows; but can you tell me how far it is to Major Hiram Gilcrest's? I'm a stranger in this region."

"Major Gilcrest's!" exclaimed the darkey. "You'se done pass de turnin' whut leads dar. Didn' you see a lane forkin' off 'bout a mile back by de crick, close to de big 'simmon-tree?

Dat's de lane whut leads to Marstah Gilcrest's, suh."

"Ah, I see! but perhaps you can direct me to Mister Mason Rogers' house? My business is with him as well as with Major Gilcrest."

"I shorely kin," answered the negro, with a grin. "I b'longs to Marse Mason; I'se his ole uncle Tony. We libs two mile fuddah down dis heah same road, an' ef you wants to see my marstah an' Marstah Gilcrest bofe, you might ez well see Marse Mason fust, anyways; kaze whutevah he say, Marse Hiram's boun' to say, too. Dey's mos' mighty thick."

The stranger turned his head to hide a momentary smile.

"You jes' ride straight on," continued Uncle Tony, pointing northward with his stick; "fus' you comes to a big log house wid de shettahs all barred up, settin' by itse'f a leetle back frum de road, wid a woods all roun' it—dat's Cane Redge meetin'-house. Soon's you pass it, you comes to de big spring, den to a dirty leetle cabin whar dem pore white trash, de Simminses, libs. Den you strikes a cawnfiel', den a orchid. Den you'se dar. De dawgs an' chickens will sot up a tur'ble rumpus, but you jes' ride up to de stile an' holler, 'Hello!' an' some dem no-'count niggahs'll tek yo' nag an' construct you inter Miss Cynthy Ann's presence. I'd show you de way myse'f, on'y Is'e bountah fin' dat heifer; but you carn't miss de way."

With this he hobbled off down the road in search of the errant heifer. Meanwhile our traveler rode steadily forward until, in another half-hour, he came in sight of a more prosperous-looking clearing than any he had seen since leaving Bourbonton. To the right of the road some long-horned cattle and a mare and colt were grazing in a woodland pasture; to the left, in a field, several negroes were gathering the yellow corn from the shock and heaping it into piles. In an orchard adjoining the cornfield a barefooted, freckled-faced little girl was standing under an apple-tree with her apron held out to catch the fruit which another barefooted, freckled-faced little girl in the branches overhead was tossing down to her. In the center of a tree-shaded yard stood the house, a spacious, two-story log structure, with a huge rock chimney at each end.

As the stranger drew rein at the stile, he was greeted by a chorus of dogs, followed instantly by the cries of a number of half-clad, grinning little darkeys who came running forward from the negro quarters in the rear.

"Doan be skeered o' Ketchum, Mistah; he shan't tech you," called the largest of them, a bright-skinned mulatto, quieting the snarling dog with a kick.

"Reckon Marse Mason's somewhars 'roun' de place, suh," added the darkey in answer to the traveler's inquiry. "Miss Cynthy Ann she's in de settin'-room. Jes' walk in dar tru de passage-way, an' knock at de fust door you comes to. I'll tek yo' hoss, suh."

The stranger crossed the low, clapboard-covered porch and entered a wide, dusky hall running through the entire length of the house. The hum of a spinning-wheel guided him to a side door, at which he knocked. In answer to a loud "Come in," he stepped into a large room made cheerful by a gay rag carpet on the floor. A comely, middle-aged woman sat at a side window, at work with her needle on some coarse homespun material. Near her a bright-faced, rosy-cheeked girl, clad in short, linsey dress and homespun apron, had charge of the spinning-wheel in the center of the room. In one corner a negro girl was carding wool; and on the wide rock hearth two little boys were parching corn in a skillet.

"Glad to see you, suh," exclaimed Mrs. Rogers heartily, hastening toward the stranger with outstretched hand. "Susan," she said to the spinner, who came forward with a modest courtesy and a shy "Good evenin'," "set a cheer an' tek the gentleman's hat. Rache"—to the negro—"put by yer cardin' an' tek thet spinnin'-wheel out to the loom-room. Tommy an' Buddy, stop litt'rin' up the h'arth, an' run wash yer faces. Heah, tek this skillet with you, an' then see ef you kin find yer pap. He's down whar they're geth'rin' cawn, I reckon."

Seizing a split broom as she spoke, she brushed the hearth, then gave a tap with her foot to the smouldering logs, which broke into a blaze and sent a shower of sparks up the wide chimney.

"The days is gittin' cooler, 'spesh'ly ez night comes on. Draw up to the fire, suh—an', heah, tek this cheer; it's comf'tabler then that'n'," she said hospitably, ejecting a big tortoise-shell cat from the depths of a cushioned rocker which she pulled forward.

"My name is Dudley, madam; Abner Dudley," said the guest as he exchanged the straight, split-bottom chair for the rocker. "I learned from Squire Osborne, of Bourbonton, that a teacher was wanted in this neighborhood. I had intended going to Major Gilcrest's to-night, but made the wrong turning, and then met your old servant, who directed me here."

"You're welcome, I'm shore, 'spesh'ly ef you're a schoolmastah. We'd begun to think we warn't to hev no school a'tall this wintah. Folks 'roun' heah air beginnin' to tek big stock in schoolin'," she went on as she resumed her seat and began to sew.

"So Squire Osborne told me," answered Dudley. "I'm glad the people are interested in educational matters."

"Yes; Mr. Rogers, Hirum Gilcrest an' John Trabue air plum daft about it. Preachah Stone said last time he preached fur us thet we sartainly air progressin', an' I'm glad on it, too, though I never hed edvantiges myse'f. When I wuz a little gal down in Car'liny, I went to school long 'nough to l'arn my a-b-c's. Then the redskins broke up the school, an' we didn't hev no more tell I wuz a big gal an' 'shamed to go an' l'arn my a-b abs 'long with the little shavers. When I wuz 'bout sixteen, 'long comes Mr. Rogers, an' I didn't keer nothin' more 'bout school. You know, when a gal gits marryin' in her haid, thar ain't no room left in it fur book-l'arnin'. Mason he wuz a sprightly, well-sot-up young fellah, an' soon's I laid eyes on him (it wuz at a house-raisin' party), I wuz ready to say 'snip' ez soon ez he'd say 'snap.' Folks them days didn't fool 'way much time a-courtin'. A man'd see a likely gal, an' soon's he'd got a piece o' ground cl'ared an' a cabin raised, they'd be ready to splice. So Mason an' me wuz married, an' moved up to Kaintuck. Thet fust wintah, while we wuz a-livin' in the fort, Mason he broke his laig out huntin', an' while he wuz laid up a spaill, he l'arned me to read an' write an' ciphah some. I reckon ef it hadn't 'a' been fur thet crippled laig o' his'n, I'd nevah l'arned even thet much." She dropped her work for a moment as she reviewed this incident of her early married life.

"Doubtless, madam, you underrate your stock of learning. I dare say you made rapid progress," said Dudley, politely.

"Oh, I l'arned the readin' an' writin' all right, but, la! I nevah hed no haid fur figgahs. I jogged 'long purty brisk with the addin' an' subtractin', but them multiplyin' tables floored me. To this day I allus staggers at the nines, an' ef you wuz to ax me how much wuz seven times nine, I'd haf to count on my fingahs before I could tell whuthah it made forty-eight or fifty-seven—though I know it's one or tuthah. But times is changed, an' I want my childurn edicated in all the accompaniments."

"How many children have you?"

"Six livin'. We lost our fust two. Henry is goin' on seventeen, an' he jes' natch'ally teks to books—knows more'n his pap now, I reckon. Why, he kin figgah ez fast ez I kin ravel out a piece o' knittin', an' I nevah in my borned days heard nobody, 'cept mayby Preachah Stone, whut could read lak him. He kin run 'long ovah them big names in the papah an' them generalgies in the Bible lak a racin' pony. Susan, our eldest gal, is a little the rise o' fourteen, an' wuz counted the best spellah in the school last wintah. The twins, Lucindy an' Lucy, air real peart, too, fur ther age, jes' turned intah ther ninth year. Tommy, he's only five, but his pap'll sign him, too; fur we want him brung 'long fast in his books befoh he's big 'nough to holp with the wuck."

"That leaves only your youngest, I believe," said Dudley. "What is his name?"

"His real name is Barton Warren Stone, aftah our preachah. Mason he sets a big store by Preachah Stone—says he's the godliest man to be so smart an' the smartest man to be so godly he evah seen; an' you know them two things don't allus jump togethah."

"No, indeed," acknowledged Dudley; "they're not so often found in company as one might wish."

"Jes' so," assented Mrs. Rogers. "Well, ez I was a-sayin', Brothah Stone hed been preachin' fur us onct a month at Cane Redge meetin'-house 'bout a year when our youngest wuz borned; an' nothin' would do Mason but he must be called fur the preachah. It's a well-soundin' name, I think myse'f. So we writ it down in the big Bible, but, la! he might ez well be called aftah Ebenezer or Be'lzebub or any the rest o' them Ole Testament prophets. 'Bart,' or 'Barty,' is all he evah gits o' his big name, an' most times it's jes' 'Sonny' or 'Buddy.' But I reckon you're nigh 'bout starved, aftah ridin' so fur," she added, folding her sewing and rising briskly. "Heah, you kin look ovah last week's paper tell the men folks gits in. We air mighty proud o' that paper. It's the fust evah printed in Kaintuck. Mason an' Henry sets up tell nigh onto nine o'clock readin' it, the fust night aftah it comes. It's printed at Lexin'ton by John Bradford. He usetah live out heah, but, ten or twelve year ago, he moved intah Lexin'ton an' started up the 'Gazette,' an' I reckon it's 'bout the fines' paper whut evah wuz; leastways, it makes mighty fine trimmin's fur the cup'od shelves."

When his garrulous hostess had departed, Dudley, instead of reading the paper, looked about him. The chinked log walls of the room and the stout beams overhead were whitewashed, and the four tiny windows were curtained with spotless dimity. The high-posted bedstead was furnished with a plump feather bed, a bright patchwork quilt, and fat pillows in coarse but well-bleached slips. Underneath the four-poster was a trundle-bed

with a blue and white checked coverlet. In an angle by the fireplace was a three-cornered cupboard, and between the front windows stood a chest of drawers with glass knobs. On the chest lay a big Bible, a hymn-book, and several more well-thumbed volumes. A large deal table with hinged leaves, a rude stand covered with a towel, several rush-bottomed chairs, and the rocker constituted the chief items of furniture. On the tall mantel, beside a loud-ticking clock, shone several brass candlesticks, flanked by a china vase, a turkey wing, and a pile of papers. Suspended from a row of pegs near the bed were various garments, and over the back doorway a pair of buck horns supported a rifle, near which hung a powder-horn.

Presently a heavy step was heard on the loose boards of a back porch. "Lucy," called a loud voice from without, "fotch some hot watah and the noggin o' soap. Lucindy, find me a towel." Further commands were lost in a loud splashing and spluttering; and in a few minutes Mason Rogers, red-faced, red-haired, and huge of frame, entered the room, pulling down the sleeves of his coarse shirt as he came.

"Howdy? howdy? Glad to see you, suh," he exclaimed, extending his hand. "My wife says you're a schoolmarster; and you air ez welcome ez rain to a parched cawnfield. Whar'd you say you hailed frum?" He seated himself as he spoke, tilting his chair against the mantel.

"From Virginia, sir."

"From Virginny! Then you're twict ez welcome. I wuz borned an' raised in the old State myse'f; and I'll allus hev a sneakin' fondness fur her, though she wouldn't loose her holt on us ez soon ez she oughter, an' she hain't treated us egzactly fair 'bout thet Transylvany College bus'ness, nuther."

"Oh," Dudley said pleasantly, "Virginia's the mother State, you know, and Kentucky a favorite child whom she grieved to have leave the parental roof."

"Well, hev it your own way, suh," answered Rogers, genially, drawing from the pocket of his butternut jeans trousers a twist of tobacco and helping himself to a generous chew. "'Pears to me, though, she acted more lak a stepmother—couldn't manidge us herse'f, but wuz jealous uv us settin' up fur ourse'ves. Still, that's all past an' gone. We got our freedom ez soon ez it wuz good fur us, I reckon; so I shan't hold no gredge agin her —'spesh'ly ez it won't mek a mite o' diffruns to her ef I do. Whut part o' Virginny air you frum, suh?"

"Culpeper County, near——"

"Culpeper County!" ejaculated Rogers, bringing his chair to a level with a bang and planting a hand on each knee. "Why, thet's my county, an' thar ain't another lak it on the livin' airth. Cynthy Ann," he called, striding to the back door, "you an' Dink skeer up somethin' extry fur suppah, can't you? This young feller's frum Culpeper County.—Hi, thar, Eph, give the gentleman's hoss a rubbin' down an' a extry good feed, an' let him have the best stall—Whut you say? Dandy an' Roan in the best stalls? Turn 'em out, then. Don't stand thar scratchin' yer haid an' grinnin' lak a 'possum, but stir yer stumps 'bout thet hoss!" Returning to his chair and resuming his former attitude, he said in a milder tone: "I 'low you b'long to the lawyer-makin' class o' schoolmarsters; all the teachers we've had yit b'longed to one o' two kinds. Either they wuz jes' school-keepers, kaze they wuz too 'tarnal lazy to do anythin' else, or they wuz ambitious young fellers whut aimed to mek the schoolmarster's desk a steppin'-stone to the jedge's bench. Now, you don't look lak one o' the lazy kind; so I reckon you air a sproutin' lawyer, hey?"

"No, sir, I've no ambition of that kind. My intention is to look about, while teaching, for a good tract of land. I want to settle in Kentucky, not as a lawyer, but as a farmer."

"Now you're talkin' sense! Lawyers an' perfessionals air gittin' ez thick in Bourbon an' Fayette ez lice in a niggah's haid. Ev'ry othah young fellah you see, ef he hez any book-l'arnin', thinks he's a second Patrick Henry or John Hancock. But whut we need hain't more lawyers an' sich lak, but more farmahs an' carpentahs an' shoemakahs. An', ez fur land, thar's a track uv 'bout three hundurd acres back thar on Hinkson Crick whut ole man Lucky, I heah, will sell fur one dollah an' two bits a acre—lays well, is well watered an' well timbered, an' the sile fairly stinks with richness. All it needs is cl'arin' up. I've been castin' longin' eyes on it myse'f, but I couldn't manidge no more land jes' now, I reckon. So my advice fur you is to buy uv Lucky right away. An', I tell you whut, ef you hain't got money 'nough by you jes' now, I'll lend it to you, an' tek a morgitch on the land. I tell you this is the fines' country in the univarse—healthy climit, sile thet'll grow anything, an', to cap all, the fines' grazin' in the world. Nevah seed nothin' lak it! Talk 'bout yer roses an' honeysuckles! they can't hold a candle to the grass 'roun' heah. It has a sortah glisten to it an' a bluish look when it heads out thet beats any flower thet blows fur purty. I hain't no Solomon, nor yit among the prophets; but, mark my word, in twenty year from now, this'll be the gairden spot o' creation. A clock-tinkah frum Connecticut, whut

wuz heah last spring, got sortah riled at us, an' said we Kaintucks wuz ez full o' brag ez ef we wuz fust cousins to the king of England; but, Lawd! hain't we got reason to brag? Hain't ourn a reasonabler conceit then thet uv them ole 'ristercrats 'roun' Lexin'ton an' Bourbonton, allus talkin' o' ther pedergrees, an' ez proud ez though they wuz ascended frum the Sultan o' Asia Minor or the Holy Virgus hisse'f?"

"Indeed, you have reason to be proud," agreed Dudley, warmly; "in only a few years you have made a howling wilderness to blossom as the rose."

"You may well say this wuz a howlin' wilderness. Why, suh, jes' twenty year ago, in the spring o' 1780, when Dan'l Boone come to Kaintuck frum Car'liny, 'bout fifty uv us frum thet State come with him, through Cumberlan' Gap by the ole Wilderness road, an' we fit Injuns an' painters an' copperhaids all 'long the way."

"Did you settle at Boonesborough first?"

"Some did; but me an' Cynthy Ann (we wuz jes' married then) an' the Houstons an' Luckys an' Finleys an' Trabues pushed on up to whar Bourbonton is now. We built a fort near a big spring, an' called it an' the crick near by aftah ole Matt Houston. Thar wuzn't anothah house in this region, 'cep' at Bryant Station; and look at us now! Lexin'ton, nearly two thousand population—the biggest town in the State—an' Bourbonton a-treadin' right 'long on her heels—ovah four hundurd people now, an' a-growin' lak a ironweed. But in them ole days the only road wuz a big buffalo trail whut hez sence been widened an' wucked up inter 'Smith's wagon road,' runnin' 'long nigh Fort Houston; an' we settlers would kill buffalo an' sich like, an' tan the hides. Then 'long in 1784 some uv us concluded, ez the Injun varmints hed 'bout all been kilt or skeered away, that we'd open up farms. Boone come 'long agin, an' we axed him whar to settle—you know, he'd roamed all ovah these parts, an' knowed all the best places. He told us to come out to this redge whut sep'rates the waters o' Hinkson an' Stoner Cricks; an' he named it Cane Redge, fur, ez he said, the biggest cane an' the biggest sugar-trees in Kaintuck growed on it. So we come; an' a rough-an'-tumble life it wuz at fust." He crossed the room and drew back the curtain from one of the windows. "Thet ole smoke-house out thar undah the buckeye-tree wuz my fust home heah, suh. Until aftah the fust craps wuz in, none o' the settlers' cabins hed anythin' but dirt floors.

"Cissy," he said to Susan, who had just entered, "tell yer ma to git out the boughten table-cloth an' them blue chaney dishes—an' say, honey, you must set the table in heah. I hain't gwineter sot Mr. Dudley down to eat in the kitchen the fust night he breaks bread with us.

"Welt, ez I wuz a-sayin'," he continued to Dudley, resuming his seat, "our cabins hed dirt floors, an' the walls warn't chinked; an' ez fur winder glass, why, bless yer soul, we hardly knowed thar wuz sich a thing. The only cheers we had wuz stools made o' slabs sot on three laigs. Our table wuz made the same, an' our bed wuz laid on slabs whut rested on poles at the outsides, with the othah eends o' them let in between the logs o' the hut. Henry wuz a baby then, an' he wuz rocked in a sugar-trough cradle. But, pshaw! heah my tongue's a-runnin' lak a bell clappah; I reckon these ole 'membrances don't intrust you much, an'——"

"Indeed they do. It is more interesting than a romance. But tell me, how did you acquire so many negroes? You surely didn't bring them with you?"

"Lawd, no! Why, we wuz pore ez Job's turkey, an' hardly owned a shut to our backs, let 'lone niggahs. Aftah the country wuz more cl'ared up, folks moved in frum Virginny an' even Pennsylvany, an' brought slaves with 'em. Then the Yankee dealers begun to fotch 'em in an' sell 'em at Lexin'ton an' Louisville an' Limestone. Rube an' Dink wuz the fust I owned—bought 'em o' ole Jake Bledsoe in the spring o' '87. Now I own nigh on to twenty darkeys, big an' little. The place is fairly runnin' ovah with the lazy imps, an' it keeps me an' Cynthy Ann on the tight jump frum sun-up tell dark lookin' aftah 'em."

"How long have you owned Uncle Tony? He talks like a Virginia darkey."

"So he is. He's not only frum my own State, but frum my county an' town—ole Lawsonville. Cynthy Ann 'lows Tony's done got the measure o' my foot, an' thet I spile him dreadful. I reckon I hev got a sneakin' likin' fur his ole black hide; but whut could you expaict when he's the only pusson, black or white, I've laid eyes on frum Lawsonville sence I run away to Car'liny nigh thirty year ago? I'll tell you sometime how I happened on Tony; hain't time now, fur I smell the bacon a-fryin', an' I reckon suppah'll be dished up in no time now."

"Did I understand you to say Uncle Tony was from Lawsonville?"

"Egzactly! Do you know the place?"

"Why, it's my native town," said Dudley.

"Whut!" exclaimed Rogers. "Shake agin, suh," striding over to Dudley, who also had risen. "Then you're jes' lak my own kin frum this time on. Frum Lawsonville!" he repeated, a tear on each swarthy cheek as he grasped the young man's hand.

"Say," he continued eagerly, after a moment's silence, "is the ole forge whut stood at the crossroads, jes' on the aidge o' the town, still thar? And the little brown house jes' behind it with the big mulberry-tree in the yard? That's whar I wuz borned, an' many's the hoss I've shod at the ole forge.—Tommy." addressing the little boy who was passing the door of the room, "run to the spring-house branch an' fotch some mint, an' then a gourd o' watah. We'll celebrate with a toddy, I reckon, suh," he said to Dudley, as he went to the cupboard for a glass, sugar, and a demijohn of whiskey. "Tell me, is ole Jeems Little still livin'? He usetah keep the red tavern in the middle uv the town. An' say, whut's become o' Si Johnson an' Mack Truman? We wuz boys together, an' many's the game we've—Good Lawd!" he broke off joyfully as he mixed the toddy, "I hain't been so happy sence the day I wuz convarted an' chased the devil outen the persimmon-tree!"

Presently the family and their guest were seated at the supper table bedecked in all the splendor of the "boughten cloth" and "blue chaney" dishes, and loaded with corn dodgers, roasted potatoes, bacon, hominy, pickled cabbage leaves and honey. Just as the others were taking their places, Henry Rogers entered, and, after bashfully greeting the stranger, took his place at the table. He was a tall, raw-boned, sandy-haired lad of seventeen, with stooping shoulders, slouching figure, big feet and toilworn hands. His large-featured, freckled face was kept from commonplaceness by its frank gray eyes, broad brow, firm chin and refined mouth.

"Try an' mek out yer suppah, suh," Mrs. Rogers urged as she handed Dudley a cup of steaming coffee. "I'm feared thar ain't much fittin' to eat. Ef we'd knowed in time, we might hev killed a shoat."

"Try some o' this middlin'," chimed in Rogers on the other side, passing the dish. "Tilt up the plattah an' git some gravy; it's better'n the meat. Wish 'twuz time fur 'possum. My mouth fa'rly watahs fur a taste o' possum meat. 'Tain't jes' a fashionable dish now, I reckon," he continued, reaching out for a potato; "Susan heah kindah turns up her nose et 'possum, an' I reckon Mar'm Gilcrest would die away et the sight uv 'possum meat on her table, but——"

The mention of Mrs. Gilcrest acted as a challenge to Mrs. Rogers. "Jane Gilcrest's a fine somebody to turn up her nose et 'possum! A purty mess her table'd be, fur all its silver spoons an' fine chaney, ef she hed the settin' uv it.—Tommy, don't spill thet gravy on the tablechoth. I'll send you'n' Buddy to the kitchen ef you can't eat lak white folks!—She puffs herse'f on bein' a Temple, an' claims they wuz uv the bluest blood in Virginny. Frum the way she spouts 'bout her generalgies, her fambly tree must be ez fine an' big ez thet ole elm down thah by the spring-house; but be thet ez it may, she's a pore limb offen any fambly tree, with her sheftless ways.—Rache, fotch in some moah hom'ny.—Gilcrest's got the finest house in these parts, and——"

"Yes," interrupted her husband, "the logs is weathahboa'ded an' the walls plarstahed, an' thah's big porches with pillahs an' lots o' fine fixin's 'roun' the cornish. The weathahboa'din' an' shingles an' door an' windah frames wuz brung frum Pittsburg to Limestone on flatboats, an' wagoned through frum thah. Sam Carr did the wag'nin'! 'Twuz a big undahtakin', but he made money on it."

"The furnicher's ez fine ez the house," went on Mrs. Rogers. "Thar is a boughten cairpit in the parlor, an' mahog'ny sofy an' cheers.—Lucindy, wipe yer knife on yer bread befoh he'pin' yo'se'f to buttah. Can't I nevah l'arn you no mannahs?"

"They have a big music-piece with ivory keys, and Miss Abby's teaching Betsy to play on it," said Susan, forgetting her shyness, and her blue eyes shining at the recollection of this wonder.

"Yes, it's all mighty fine, an' I'm shore I don't begrudge any uv it: an' now thet Miss Abby hez come to live thar an' Betsy's gittin' to be a big gal, things is bettah looked aftah," Mrs. Rogers conceded. "The heft o' manidgment falls on Betsy an' Miss Abby, fur Jane hain't no more faculty then a grasshopper.—Lucy, don't eat with yer fingers lak a niggah. Whut's yer knife fur, ef it ain't to eat with?—I wuz ovah there last spring, 'long in April or May, an' axed Jane ef she'd got her soap grease made up. She looked et me onconsarned lak, an' says she really didn't know; ole Dilsey allus looked aftah sich things. Think on it! a wife an' mothah an' housekeepah not knowin' ef the year's soap grease wuz wucked up—an' it late on in spring, too. Jane she knits some, an' she kin do a lot o' fine herrin'-bonin' an' tattin' an' tambour wuck; but spinnin' an' weavin' an' mekin' candles an' soap, an' sich useful emplements, she don't consarn about no more'n my Lucindy an' Lucy.—Henry, ef you eat any more o' thet bacon, you'll be squealin' lak a pig, befoh mawnin'. Hev some more honey, Mistah Dudley."

After supper was over, the table cleared, and the two little boys stowed away in the trundle-bed, the rest of the family gathered about the broad hearth.

"Heah." Mrs. Rogers said to the twins, "you don't go to the kitchen to play. You fooled 'way so much time out in the orcha'd this evenin' thet yer stent hain't nigh done. Set right down on them stools, an' don't let me heah a word outen you tell them socks is ready to hev the heel sot. Ha'f a finger length more you've both got to knit." She measured the unfinished socks, and then handed each little girl her task. "Henry, you'll put yer eyes out readin' by thet fire, an' me an' Susan needs all the candle-light fur our wuck. 'Pears lak you ain't nevah happy 'less you've got yer nose in some book. Heah, Cissy, them britches' laigs is ready to seam up. Mek yer stitches good an' tight, else you'll haf to rip it all out an' do it ovah. Snuff the candle, fust, an' hand me thet hank o' thread an' the shears, befoh you set down."

"Le's see," said Rogers to his guest, taking a corncob pipe from the mantel and lighting it with a fire coal. "This is Friday, an' school oughtah begin Monday. Bettah draw up a subscription paper to-night, an' ride 'roun' with it airly to-morrow. I'll send Henry 'long to show you the way. Set right down heah by the table an' draw up yer writin's. Henry, light anothah candle." As he spoke, he went to the tall chest of drawers and took out paper, a bottle of pokeberry ink, and a bunch of quills.

"I see you kin mek a pen," he continued, as Dudley took out his knife, selected a quill, and proceeded in a businesslike way to point it. "Now, whut kind uv a fist do you write? Hope you kin mek all the flourishes; ha'f the folks in Bourbon County jedge a man's book l'arnin' by the way he writes. That's hunkey-dorey!" he exclaimed, looking over the writer's shoulder. "Thet'll fetch 'em!"

When the clock pointed to half-past eight, Mrs. Rogers rolled up her work, declaring it time for all honest folks to be abed. "Thar's lots o' wuck to be did to-morrow, an' the only way to git it did, is to tek a good holt on the day at the start, an' set it squarely on its laigs."

CHAPTER II.

GETTING TO WORK

"This process of 'setting the day on its legs' is certainly a noisy one," was Abner's first thought next morning as he awoke in the gray dawn to find that the place beside him in the big feather bed had already been vacated by Henry.

Above the clatter made by dogs, chickens and geese in the yard below, could be heard the stentorian tones of Mason Rogers evoking his black myrmidons. "Hi, thar, Rube, Tom, Dink, Eph! Wake up, you lazy varmints!" From the negro quarters came, in answer to each name, "Yes, suh! Comin', Marstah!" The creaking boards of the back porch, the slamming of doors, the clatter of cooking utensils, and the admonishing voice of Mrs. Rogers attested that she, too, was taking "holt on the day" in earnest.

Dudley slipped into his clothes and hastened down the steep stairway in search of such toilet accessories as his attic apartment did not afford. When he reached the porch, the twins provided him with a basin of water, a "noggin" of lye soap, and a towel; and telling him he would find the "coarse comb on the chist of drawers in the settin'-room," hurried to the poultry-yard, where the chickens were already off their roosts and clamoring for their morning meal.

His toilet completed, Dudley started for a ramble before breakfast. At first a faint pink light began to tinge the eastern sky, but presently, from over the crest of the hills across the road, the sun arose like a red ball, dispersing the chill gray mist, and the new day, fresh and radiant and vibrant with the songs of birds, the crowing and cackling of chickens, and the lowing of cattle, was fully inaugurated.

If the stranger found the scene in front of the house quietly beautiful, no less interesting was the more homely one to the rear. In the stable lot Susan and Rache were each stooping beside a long-horned cow, milking. In another enclosure Eph was struggling to head off a determined little calf from its mother, a fierce-looking spotted cow which a negro woman was trying to milk. At the window of the barn loft could be seen a negro man tossing down hay to the horses; and in a lot across the way a number of hogs, in

answer to Henry's loud "Soo-e-ey, soo-e-ey!" came clamoring and squealing for the corn "nubbins" he was tossing from the sack across his shoulders.

Soon after breakfast, Abner, accompanied by Henry, set out with the subscription paper.

"How many signers did you git?" inquired Rogers that night when the family were again assembled around the fire.

"Forty-three down, four more doubtful, and two more promised conditionally."

"Who air the conditionals?"

"The Hinkson children."

"Whut's Bushrod Hinkson mekin' conditions fur, I'd lak to know?" exclaimed Mrs. Rogers. "I'll bet it's jes' his stinginess. He'd skin a flea fur its hide an' taller, any day."

"He will send his children only on condition that I work out a certain problem which it seems the last two schoolmasters could not solve."

"Pshaw!" ejaculated Rogers. "Is he still pipin' on thet ole sum? It's in po'try, ain't it?"

"Yes," replied Dudley, taking a slip of paper from his pocket and reading therefrom:

"A landed man two daughters had,
  And both were very fair;
To each he gave a piece of land,
  One round, the other square.

"Twenty shillings to an acre,
  Each piece this value had;
But the shillings that could compass it
  For it just ten times paid.

"And if once across a shilling be an inch,
  As which is very near,
Which had the better fortune,
  The round one or the square?"

"Kin you wuck it?" asked Rogers, anxiously.

"Oh, yes, I think so. It doesn't seem a very complicated affair."

"Bushrod Hinkson sartinly is the crankiest ole somebody I evah hearn tell on," was Mrs. Rogers' verdict. "What diffruns would it mattah ef you couldn't wuck thet fool sum? His two shavers hain't no fu'thah 'long in ther books then my twins, air they, Susan?"

"Lawdy!" ejaculated Rogers. "I hope you kin wuck it, an' shet him up fur good an' all. He thinks he knows it all when it comes to figgahs, an' kin siphah fastah'n a hoss kin gallop. It's time somebody took him down 'bout thet ole po'try sum. I'd lak to choke him on it.

"Reckon Gilcrest put you through yer gaits, too, didn' he?" Rogers asked presently, removing his cowhide shoes, stretching his legs out in front of the fire, and proceeding, as he explained, "to toast his feet befoh goin' to roost."

"Yes, sir," answered Dudley, "and he looked so stern and eyed me so keenly from underneath his grizzled eyebrows that I felt as though I were before the Inquisition."

"Jes' so!" Rogers assented, although he had probably never heard of the Inquisition. "Hiram's three hobby hosses air 'good roads, Calvinism and slavery.' Which o' them ponies wuz he ridin' this mawnin'?"

"He took a gallop on all three," laughingly answered Abner; "but he rode the doctrinal steed longest and hardest."

"Egzactly!" said Rogers, taking a chew of tobacco. "He's daft on good roads; kinder rabid on slavery; but when it comes to the 'five p'ints,' he's rank pizinous. I s'pose he rid the good-roads hoss fust. He ginerly does."

"Yes, he took a preliminary canter on it. Then he looked at me searchingly and asked if I was opposed to slavery. I rather think he suspected me of being here on some secret mission to stir up insurrection among the negroes; but when I said that I thought they were much better off as slaves than they were in their native heathen condition, he relaxed considerably. He then worked around to church and doctrinal matters, and was argumentative and dictatorial about 'predestination,' 'effectual calling,' etc.; but I finally told him that though not a church-member, I had been reared under strict Presbyterian influences. This delighted him, and he said I was doubtless well grounded, and that if I was one of the 'elect,' I would be called in the Lord's own good time."

"I'm glad you got through so well. Hiram's a good man at bottom, but ez full o' prejudice ez a aigg's full o' meat. He even claims thet Stone hain't sound on orthodoxy, which means he ain't so streenous 'bout God Almighty's fav'rin' some folks to etarnal salvation, befoh the foundations o' the world, and others, jes' ez good, to everlastin' damnation. Brother Stone he's mighty quiet an' mild-like, but kindah hints thet God Almighty's too just to hev fav'rites. I tell you, thar's trouble brewin' on this very p'int; and thar's gwintah be a tur'ble split 'foh long in Cane Ridge meeting-house."

"Did you see the rest o' the folks at Gilcrest's?" Mrs. Rogers asked.

"No, ma'am, the interview was held at the stile block; but Major Gilcrest asked me to return after seeing the other patrons, and take dinner; and he also said something about my boarding with him."

"Boahdin' at Gilcrest's!" said Rogers. "Not ef me an' Cynthy Ann knows it! Of course you'll stop with us."

"Yes," added his wife, "me an' Susan's been all maw-nin' a-fixin' up the north room fer you, so's you kin hev——"

"You are certainly most kind, Mrs. Rogers. I'm sure I'll be pleased with everything which you and Mr. Rogers arrange."

"Well," said Rogers, again taking up the subscription paper and making a calculation, "you've done fine gittin' up a school, an' will mek a purty little sum outen yer wintah's wuck—'bout one hundred an' thirty dollahs, I mek it. Now, how many acres et a dollar an' two bits a acre kin be bought fer thet? 'Bout one hundred an' four, hain't it?"

"Yes, one hundred and four acres, if there were no other expenses, but——"

"Whut othah expenses kin you hev wuth namin'? You've got a saddle-bag full o' clothes an' books, hain't you?—'nough to last through the wintah; so whut——"

"But my board! You haven't said how much that will be."

"Well, now," said Rogers, with a sly wink at his wife, "how much do you reckon 'twould be right ter pay?"

"About five shillings per week. I'm told that is the usual——"

"Five shillin's! The granny's hind foot! Why, boy, whut you tek me an' Cynthy Ann fur? We shan't tek five shillin's nor yit five cents. A boy like you, not much older'n our William, ef he'd 'a' lived, an' frum Lawsonville, too! Didn't I tell you you'd be jes' lak my own frum this time on? Board, indeed! Heah's plenty o' cawn pone, hom'ny, bacon an' taters, I reckon; 'sides cawn an' oats an' stable room fur yer nag. All we ax is thet you nevah say board to us agin. But, ef you like," he added kindly, "you kin holp Henry an' Cissy some o' nights in ther books, an' mek a hand to wuck roads, one Sat'dy in each month tell snow comes."

Early Monday morning, while the frost yet glistened on grass and hedge row, Abner, accompanied by Susan, Tommy and the twins, set out for the schoolhouse, a mile distant. At the same time, by a dozen different paths through woods and fields, other children with dinner pails and spelling-books hastened toward the same goal, regardless of nuts, wild grapes and other woodland attractions; for each wanted to be first to reach the schoolhouse on this, the opening day.

Cane Ridge schoolhouse was a large hut of unhewn logs, with a roof of rough boards and bark. The windows were covered with oiled paper instead of glass, and the scanty light thus admitted was augmented by that which came in through frequent gaps in the mud-daubed walls. Wind, rain and snow likewise found free admission through these crevices; but on winter days the climate of the schoolroom was tempered by the blazing logs piled in the mammoth fireplace occupying one entire end of the building.

A rude platform opposite the fireplace was the master's rostrum, whereon was his high, box-like desk of pine and his split-bottomed chair. Just back of his seat upon the floor of the platform stood a row of dinner pails, and above on wooden pegs hung the children's hats and bonnets. On each side of the room was a long writing-desk, merely a rough board resting with the proper slant upon stout pins driven into the walls. Here on rude, backless benches sat the larger boys and girls. At the right-hand side of the room, on a lower bench in front of the older pupils, sat the little boys "with curving backs and swinging feet, and with eyes that beamed all day long with fun or apprehension." Opposite them, on a similar bench, was a row of little girls in linsey dresses and tow-linen pinafores.

Every grade of home was represented—the shiftless renter's squalid hovel, the backwoods hunter's rude hut, the substantial log house of the prosperous farmer, and the more pretentious dwelling of such men as Gilcrest and Dunlap and Winston, who claimed kinship with the flower of Virginian aristocracy.

In the pioneer schools grammar, history, geography, and the sciences, if taught at all, were usually treated orally; but in the main, spelling, reading, writing and arithmetic were the only branches studied. As reading-charts for the little ones, the alphabet was pasted upon broad hickory paddles which were frequently used for outside as well as inside application of knowledge. Readers were coming into vogue, but in most schools the pupils in reading advanced from alphabetical paddle to spelling-book; from spelling-book to "Pilgrim's Progress" or the Bible. Sometimes the Bible was the only reading-book allowed by the parent, and many a child in those days learned to read by wrestling with the jaw-breaking words in Kings and Chronicles; for, as Bushrod Hinkson declared when he refused to buy a reader for his son, "The Bible's 'nough tex'-book on readin', an' when a boy hez learned to knock the pins frum undah all the big words in the 'Good Book,' he'll be able to travel like a streak o' lightnin' through all kinds o' print."

Cane Ridge Meeting-house.

CHAPTER III.

CANE RIDGE MEETING-HOUSE

The third Sunday in October was the regular once-a-month meeting-day at Cane Ridge Church. Early in the morning a note of preparation was sounded throughout the Rogers domain, and by nine o'clock the entire household was en route for the place of worship. On chairs in the wagon drawn by two stout farm horses sat Mr. and Mrs. Rogers and the four youngest children, while young Dudley, Henry and Susan rode horseback. Uncle Tony, by reason of age, and Aunt Dink, by reason of flesh, instead of walking with the other negroes, were allowed to sit on the straw-covered floor of the wagon behind the white occupants.

As the cavalcade neared the church, a big, weather-stained log structure, they saw that, early as it was, a crowd had preceded them. Other wagons were stationed about in the shade, and many horses were tethered to overhanging boughs.

While waiting for service to begin, Abner stood near the church and looked around with some curiosity and not a little surprise; for nearly every grade of frontier society seemed represented—aristocrats and adventurers; mistresses and slaves; farmers and land agents; ex-Revolutionary officers and ex-Indian-fighters; lately established settlers and weather-beaten survivors of early pioneer days.

"Visiting together" near the woman's entrance were a number of matrons, some in homespun gowns, calico split bonnets and cowhide shoes; others in more pretentious apparel—bombazine gowns, muslin tuckers, and "dress bonnets" of surprising depth and

magnitude. Near the other entrance, comparing notes upon fall wheat-sowing or corn-gathering, was a cluster of farmers in shirt sleeves, homespun trousers and well-greased shoes. Upon the horse-block a group of merry belles, divesting themselves of mud-stained riding-skirts, stood forth in bright array—beads and ribands, flaunting chintzes, clocked stockings and morocco slippers. Some distance off, upon the roots of a wide-spreading elm, sat two barefooted, swarthy, scarred old hunters with raccoon skin caps, linsey hunting-shirts and buckskin breeches. Near by, a group of urchins listened with open-mouthed absorption to blood-curdling reminiscences of days when upon this now peaceful slope the scream of the wildcat and the whoop of the Indian were more familiar sounds than the songs of Zion and the eloquence of the revivalist. Less in accord with the quiet beauty of this October Sunday, a squad of loud-voiced, swaggering, half-intoxicated young men lounged under the trees, recounting incidents of yesterday's cock-fight or betting upon the wrestling-match next muster day.

In contrast to the other vehicles, the Gilcrest family coach, with its span of glossy-coated bays, presently drew up before the church. The negro driver sprang from his high seat, and, bowing obsequiously, let down the steps and opened the door of the coach, from which emerged, first, Hiram Gilcrest in all the glory of Sunday broadcloth; next, two small boys, then a negro woman bearing in her arms the youngest scion of the house of Gilcrest, an infant in long clothes. Lastly came Mrs. Gilcrest, a fragile, faded woman in rustling brocade and satin petticoat. Close behind the coach rode a horseback party of four—Betsy Gilcrest, two of her brothers, and a young woman in long black riding-skirt and loose jacket, her features hidden by the gauze veil depending from her dress bonnet of corded white silk.

Betsy, rosy and dimpling, unencumbered by riding-skirt, dust-jacket or veil, tossed her bridle to her brother, John Calvin, and sprang from her saddle to the stile. Her movements were light and graceful, and she looked like a woodland nymph in a gown of light, gaily flowered chintz, and a large hat encircled in a wreath of bright leaves. As her companion, the girl in the corded silk bonnet, drew up, several gallants from the group of young people near by hastened eagerly forward to her assistance. After doffing riding-skirt and loose jacket, she stood a moment upon the block, adjusting her attire, a robe of misty lavender sarcenet with a pink crepe scarf loosely knotted across the bosom.

"I wish she'd throw back that veil," thought Abner, as he stood with Henry a little apart.

"That's Major Gilcrest's niece, come from Virginia to live with them," explained Henry, seeing Abner's admiring gaze fixed upon the girl. "She's as pretty as a rosebush covered with pink blossoms; there ain't a girl comes to Cane Ridge that can stand alongside her. She makes even Sally Bledsoe and Molly Trabue look like common hollyhocks."

By this time every one save the group of young people and a few stragglers out in the shade had entered the church, from which at this moment a loud voice was heard announcing, "Hymn 642;" while at the same time Deacon Hiram Gilcrest, standing at one door, and Deacon Bushrod Hinkson at the other, admonished all loiterers to come in.

As soon as the congregation was seated, Mason Rogers, in a voice of much power and sweetness, started the hymn already announced. Others quickly joined in, until soon the building was filled with a swelling volume of melody which made the walls resound and the cobwebs tremble. The negro nurse on the doorstep crooned the hymn as she held the sleeping baby. Uncle Tony, sitting on the steps of the pulpit platform, swayed his body and nodded his head in rhythmic motion. He could not carry a tune, but now and then would join in with a single note which rang out clear and loud above all the rest. Other negroes from their places in the gallery over the doorways opposite the pulpit, though they knew not the words of the hymn, added the melody of their plaintive voices. Little girls seated by their mothers on the woman's side of the low partition, and little boys by their fathers on the other side of the church, joined in with piping treble. Deacon Gilcrest, his stern features relaxed, kept time with his hand (down, left, right, up) as he thundered forth a ponderous bass. Old Matthew Houston from one "amen corner" added his quavering notes; while from the other, Squire Trabue, his chair tilted back, his face beaming, sang with little regard to time or tune, but with melody in his heart, if not in his voice. Near the central partition Susan Rogers and Betsy Gilcrest, happy and bright-eyed, sang from the same book, their voices clear, true, and sweet as bird notes.

As the music arose in a swelling wave of melody, Abner Dudley looked through the congregation for the girl in the lavender sarcenet. Presently he discovered her seated near a window and singing with the rest. Her veil was thrown back, and from the depths of the scoop bonnet, with a wreath of roses under its brim, shone forth a face of radiant loveliness. From her broad, white brow the shining brown hair was parted in rippling masses; she had darkly fringed blue eyes, a well-rounded chin, and skin whose tints of rose and pearl were like the delicate inner surface of a sea shell.

"Abigail Patterson, of Williamsburg!" he mentally ejaculated. "What is she doing here?

Henry said that she was Major Gilcrest's niece, too. So this is the 'Miss Abby' whom the Rogers children talk so much about, and whom the Gilcrest children are always quoting. And to think that I had pictured her a prim old maid."

It was not until the preacher, who until now had been hidden by the high pulpit, stepped forward, that Abner was aroused to a sense of time and place. He looked up as the clear tones of the speaker rang through the building, and saw for the first time the man who was destined to exert a powerful influence upon his career—Barton Warren Stone. At this time, Stone was about twenty-nine years old, of slender build, refined features, earnest mien, and childlike simplicity—"an Israelite indeed in whom was no guile." This third Sunday in October was the day for the regular quarterly communion service, and the emblems of the sacred feast were spread upon the table in front of the pulpit. Extending his hand, the speaker reverently pronounced his text: "Put off the shoes from off thy feet; for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground" (Ex. 3:5).

Barton Warren Stone.

After pausing a moment that the words of the text might have due impressiveness, Stone proceeded. He explained that the command in its spiritual significance was still as imperative upon God's people when they entered the house dedicated to his service, as it had been in its literal sense to Moses when he had stood face to face with Jehovah at the foot of Mount Horeb. The speaker's musical accents fixed the attention of every hearer, and his words impressed every heart with the solemnity befitting the place and the hour.

As soon as the people were dismissed for the noontide intermission, they scattered about the grounds, talking, laughing, and setting out, upon the table-cloths spread upon the grass, the luncheons which they had brought with them.

While these preparations were in progress, Dudley started off with Henry to look after the horses. Before reaching the grove where they were tethered, he was hailed by Major and Mrs. Gilcrest with a cordial invitation to "break bread" at their table—an invitation which he, thinking of the beautiful niece, gladly accepted. He followed his host and hostess to a cluster of trees under which Abby Patterson and Betsy Gilcrest, assisted by their dusky servitors, had already spread a repast which an epicure might have envied. But to one, at least, of the guests it mattered little what viands were served; for young Dudley was soon enthralled by the witchery of the blue eyes, rose-tinted complexion and low-toned voice of the girl beside him. He was conscious the while of little else save an unreasoning animosity for a young man in powdered queue, flowered satin waistcoat, frilled shirt, and silver knee buckles, who sat at Miss Patterson's other hand, between her and Miss Gilcrest. This man, James Anson Drane, of Lexington, lawyer and land agent, notwithstanding Dudley's jealous fancies, divided his attentions almost equally between the two damsels, and seemed quite as content with Betsy's lively sallies as with Abby's gentler, more dignified conversation. As for the two gay youths, Thomas Hinkson and William Smith, who sat opposite, if Abner thought of them at all, it was only to pity them that the width of the table-cloth divided them from the angelic being at his right; although

they had for their companions, Molly Trabue and Sally Bledsoe, who in their own buxom style were accounted beauties.

Later, the young people started on a ramble through the woods. Dudley offered his arm to Miss Patterson, thus separating them in a measure from the rest of the company, who finally joined other groups of strollers, until at last he found himself alone with her.

The air, odorous with the elusive fragrance of bark and crisping leaf, breathed a delicious languor. The summer green of the chinquapin burrs had given place to a richer coloring; the sumac and blackberry bushes flushed red in the sunlight. Not even when clad in the tender freshness of springtime beauty could the woods have been a more favorable place in which to indulge in tender fancies than now when panoplied in crimson and gold and burnished bronze, the scarlet fire of the maple and the gaudy yellow of the hickory contrasting with the sober brown of the beech, the dull red of the oak, and the dark gloss of the walnut. A redbird arose from the grass at their approach and circled away into the blue ether, and a rabbit, startled by the crackling of a twig, scattered away into the deeper undergrowth.

Presently, Dudley and Abby reached a shady spot where a large spring, clear as crystal, bubbled up from a hillside cleft. Outside this leafy nook, myriads of gnats and bright-winged flies buzzed in the sunlight; the soft breeze murmured faintly through the treetops, and the far-off echo of laughter and merry shouts of other strollers accentuated the quiet of this little retreat. They seated themselves upon the gnarled roots of a big tree that guarded the spring. Abby, untying her bonnet, tossed it upon the grass, and the sunlight glinted upon her lavender gown and gave a warmer radiance to the wavy masses of her hair.

"To-day is not the first time I have seen you, Miss Patterson," Abner said presently; "I recognized you the instant I saw you in church this morning."

"Indeed!" she exclaimed, looking at him searchingly. "Are you not mistaken? I have no recollection of ever seeing you before; and I have a good memory for faces, too."

"As to your having seen me, that's a different matter," he replied, "but I've a vivid recollection of you. It was at the Assembly ball at Williamsburg just four years ago this month."

"Ah, that Assembly ball!" she exclaimed sadly. "That was the closing scene of my happy young girlhood. Trouble followed quickly upon trouble immediately after that night, until, within six weeks, I had lost everything that made life sweet. But," she asked with a quick change of manner, "if you were at that ball, how happened it I did not see you? Were you not among the dancers?"

"On the contrary," Abner laughingly replied, "I was there as an uninvited guest. Not for me were the delights of minuet, cotillion and Roger de Coverly; for I had neither the costume nor the courage to penetrate into the ballroom. With several fellow-students, I had stolen from the college that night to witness the gay doings at the Capitol. As I stood in a doorway wishing I could exchange my sober college garb for that of a gentleman of fashion, you were pointed out to me as the belle of the ball; and memory has ever since treasured the radiant picture of the girl in a richly flowered brocade gown, who, with bright eyes glowing, powdered head held high, and with little feet that scarce touched the floor, led the dance with a handsome young soldier in officer's uniform."

"Ah! those were happy days!" she said sadly. "I wonder you recognized me to-day; I've had so much to change and age me."

"Changed you certainly are," he replied; "but, if I may say so, it is a change which has but enhanced your claims to the verdict I heard pronounced upon you that night—'the most beautiful woman in Virginia.' As for having aged, I can not agree with you. Beauty that owes its charm even more to sweetness of expression than to perfection of coloring and regularity of features never grows old. Besides, four years is not a long period, even when reckoned by youth's calendar. Some authorities, moreover, with whom I heartily agree, assert that no woman is older than she looks. According to that, you can not be more than sixteen."

"But," she replied archly, "another and equally reliable theory is that a woman is as old as she feels. That would make me at least thirty-six. So, perhaps, between two such conflicting opinions, it would be well to take middle ground and place my age correctly, at twenty-six. But here!" she added laughingly, "you have actually inveigled me into confessing my age, and that, you know, is what no woman likes to do—especially when, as I suspect to be the case here, the woman is several years older than the man. I am forgetting, too, to do the honors of our spring, which is said to be the largest and most unfailing in Kentucky—at any rate, it is known all through this section as 'the big spring.' Boone declared this water to be the coolest in the State. I wish it was like that magical

fountain of Lethe, and that a draught from it could make me forget my old life. But, there! I will not look back, although your reminder of that Assembly ball has stirred old memories to the depths. That road out there was once a buffalo trail, and the buffaloes, doubtless, always stopped at this spring to quench their thirst—at least, old hunters declare that this was their favorite camping-ground. It was also a favorite resort of the Indians, and a battle was fought here between them and the white settlers, before the terrible massacre at Bluelicks had aroused the whites to determined and well-organized resistance and war of extermination. You should get old Mr. Lucky or Mr. Houston to describe the battle at this spot—they were in it. But now you must drink of this spring before you can be properly considered a member of this community in 'good standing and full fellowship."

"See!" she added, offering him a drink from an old gourd kept in a cleft of the rock for the use of chance passers-by. "This water is almost ice-cold—and just look at this mint. Uncle Hiram declares it to be the finest flavored he ever tasted. He never comes here without carrying away some for his morning julep. I will take a handful to stow away in the lunch-basket; it will save him a trip here after service this afternoon."

Before drawing on her lace "half-hand" mitts, she held out her hands, and asked him to pour water from the gourd upon them. Then she drew from the swinging pocket at her belt a tiny embroidered square, but before she could use it, Abner rescued it, and, substituting his own handkerchief, dried her hands himself. Her loose sleeves fell back to the dimpled elbows, and as he lingered over his task, he noted the delicate tracery of blue veins along the inner curve of her white arms. He saw, too, the freckles upon her rounded wrists, and that her well-formed hands were sun-browned and hardened by work.

"Are you counting the freckles?" she asked demurely, smiling at him from the depths of her white bonnet. "I fear you will not have time to make a complete inventory of all the freckles, needle-pricks and bruises; besides, it is some time since I heard voices, and we are far from the meeting-house. Uncle Hiram would think it no light offense to be late at afternoon service—and there is Betsy yonder by the big oak on the hill, waving and beckoning frantically. Let us join her at once."

"Yes, we must hasten," assented Dudley, consulting his big silver watch, after thrusting his wet handkerchief into the bosom of his coat.

David Purviance, a young licentiate awaiting ordination at the next session of presbytery, preached the afternoon sermon, and handled his theme, "The Final Perseverance of the Saints," in a masterly manner. But Abner Dudley gave little heed to the discourse; for his thoughts, stirred by the vision of the beautiful girl across the aisle, were wandering in an earthly paradise.

Through the deepening twilight he rode home alone that evening in a tumult of bewildered feeling, scarcely able to realize that only that morning he had been on that same road with Henry and Susan; for in the interim he seemed to have entered an entirely new world of thought and feeling.

CHAPTER IV.

WINTER SCHOOL-DAYS

Soon beautiful, misty Indian summer had vanished before the stern approach of winter. The chestnut burs had all opened; the wild grapevines, clinging to fence rails along the roadside and twining in drooping profusion over the trees in wood and thicket, had long ago been robbed of their glistening, dark clusters of frost-ripened fruit. The squirrels had laid in their supply of nuts; the birds had given their last Kentucky concert of the season and had departed to fill their winter engagements in the Southland; and the forest trees waved their bare arms and bowed their heads to the wind that wailed a mournful requiem for departed summer.

By this time the wheat had been sown, and the last shock of corn gathered. The school forces were, therefore, augmented by the advent of a dozen or more larger boys and young men, eager to gain all the learning that could be compassed in the months which intervened before early spring plowing and seeding would call them again to the fields.

In the icy gray dawn of these winter days the boy whose week it was to build the schoolhouse fire, would resist the temptation to snug down again in the soft folds of the big feather bed for another trip into delicious dreamland, and would hurry from his warm nest to attend to his morning chores, so that as soon as the early breakfast was over he could hasten through the snow-covered fields to the schoolhouse. There he would pile the fagots high in the big fireplace, eager to have them blazing and crackling before the clap of the master's ferule upon his desk at eight o'clock should summon the school to its daily work.

Cane Ridge school, under the gentle yet energetic sway of Abner Dudley, presented a busy scene. The click of the soapstone pencil upon the frameless slate, the scratch of the quill pen across the bespattered copybook, the shrill tone of the solitary reader as he stood with the rest of the class "toeing the mark" before the master, or the shriller tones of the arithmetic class reciting in concert the multiplication table, kept up a pleasant discord throughout the short day. The rear guard of this army of busy workers, the rows of chubby-faced little boys in short-legged pants and long-sleeved aprons, and of rosy-cheeked little girls in linsey dresses and nankeen pantalets, sat on their slab benches, droning mechanically "a-b, ab; e-b, eb," and looked with wonder at the middle rank of this army, adding up long columns of figures or singing the long list of capitals. Those of the middle rank, in their turn, as they gave place before the master's desk to the three bright pupils of the vanguard, wondered no less to see them performing strange maneuvers called "parsing and conjugating," or battling successfully against Tare and Tret, or that still more insidious foe, Vulgar Fractions. Ahead of this vanguard, on a far-off, dizzy peak of erudition, was Betsy Gilcrest, the courageous color-bearer of the army—actually speaking in an unknown tongue called Latin, and executing surprising feats of legerdemain with that strange trio, x, y and z, who had somehow escaped from their lowly position at the tail end of the alphabet, to play unheard-of antics and to assume characters utterly bewildering.

There was not one of those fifty pupils who did not soon find a warm place in the master's heart; but, though he took care by special kindness to the others to hide his partiality, yet soon pre-eminent in his regard were the four advanced pupils, Henry and Susan Rogers, plodding, thoughtful, thorough; John Calvin Gilcrest, shrewd, retentive, independent; and Betsy Gilcrest, bright, original and ambitious.

Betsy at sixteen was a capable, well-grown girl, such as the freedom and vigor of those pioneer days produced—glowing with health, instinct with life, and of saucy independence to her finger-tips. She possessed a fund of native wit which might, perhaps, often have taken the turn of waywardness, had not her scholarly pride held her girlish love of fun and frolic somewhat in check. Kindly-natured, bright-faced Betsy, champion of the poorest and meanest, helper of the dull and backward, idol of the little children, and object of the shy and silent but sincere adoration of all the big, uncouth boys! She was an exceedingly winsome lassie, with a light, graceful figure, and a richly expressive face framed in by a wealth of clustering dark hair. The sparkling light in the great brown eyes, the saucy curve of the scarlet lips, and the dimple in the rounded cheek betokened a laughter-loving nature; while the proud poise of head, the exquisite turn of sensitive nostrils, and the firm moulding of chin indicated dignity, refinement, and force of character. In her stuff dress of dark red, her braided black silk apron with coquettish little pockets, and her trim morocco shoes, she presented a striking contrast to the linsey-clad, coarsely shod girls on each side of her at the rude writing-desk, or even to her especial chum and chosen friend, Susan Rogers, in homespun gown, cotton neckerchief and gingham apron. It was well for the young schoolmaster that his heart was fortified by its growing love for Abby Patterson, else he could not, perhaps, have withstood the charming personality of Betsy Gilcrest, and a deeper regard than would have been in keeping with their character of master and pupil might have mingled with his interest in this warm-hearted, brilliant girl.

The fashionable people from Lexington who visited at "Oaklands," the home of the Gilcrests, wondered that Major Gilcrest sent his only daughter to this backwoods school, and his wife sometimes urged that Betsy be sent to some finishing-school in Virginia, or at least to the fashionable female seminary at Lexington, or to the lately opened young ladies' college at Bourbonton. Probably, had Betsy seconded the hints of these friends and the rather languid suggestions of her mother, this might have been done; but this independent child of nature loved her home and the humble little schoolhouse by the spring; and her father, whether at the pleading of his daughter, or because of his ingrained dislike of any suggestions from outsiders, continued to send her to the little neighborhood school. In so doing he was building better than he knew; for humble as was the Cane Ridge school, there was in it an atmosphere of happiness and refinement more real than could be found amid the superficial culture, genteel primness and underlying selfishness of most of the fashionable female seminaries of that day. The young Virginian schoolmaster was teaching these boys and girls far better things than could be found in any text-books—independence of thought, reverence for learning, and love of purity and truth; and it was lessons such as these that made these Bourbon County boys and girls

reverence their master and love their backwoods school.

CHAPTER V.

"SETTIN' TILL BEDTIME"

One night in November the Rogers household had gathered as usual around the hearth in the spacious living-room. The fire roared and crackled merrily, dancing on the whitewashed walls, and shining brightly on the brass andirons and the glass doors of the cupboard.

The candle-stand stood in the center of the room; on one side of it sat Abner Dudley, reading aloud from the "Kentucky Gazette"; on the other, Mrs. Rogers, seated in the cushioned rocker, was patching a linsey jacket for Tommy, who, with his youngest brother, was playing jackstones on the floor behind the stand. To supplement the light from candle and fire, a huge hickory knot had been thrust into the fireplace, against one of the andirons. By its light Henry was weaving a basket, the floor around him littered with the long, pliable osier slips which the twins were sorting for his use. In the opposite corner, on a low stool, the negro girl, Rache, nodded over a piece of knitting. Mason Rogers, enjoying his after-supper pipe, was engaged in mending a set of harness. Susan, dreamily staring into the fire, held her sewing idly in her lap until her mother's voice aroused her.

"Come, Cissy, don't set thah with folded hands, ez though you wuz a fine lady. Ef you can't see well 'nough to do the overcastin' on thet jac'net petticoat, git out yer tettin' or them quilt squares. Rache, you triflin' niggah, wake up. You don't airn yer salt. I declar' I'll hev you sold down South the nex' time ole Jake Hopkins teks a drove to Alabam'. I reckon you won't hev much time fur noddin' down in them cottonfields, with the overseer's lash a-lippin' yer back ever' time he sees you idlin'. You'd better mek yer needles fly, fur nary a thing 'cept a switch an' some ashes will you git in yer Chris'mas stockin', ef all them socks fur Rube an' Tom ain't done by then. Lucy, you an' Lucindy leave 'lone them strips; you're jes' hend'rin' yer brothah. Git yer nine patch pieces. Gre't, big gals lak you ortn't idle."

"Some one's comin'!" exclaimed Mr. Rogers, the first to notice the barking of the dogs outside. "See who 'tis, Henry."

"Heah, Lucy, gether up them twigs," bustled Mrs. Rogers, as she swept the hearth. "Rache, tek thet harnish out. I declar', Mason, I wish you'd do sich wuck in the kitchen or stable. Folks'll think I ain't no sort o' housekeepah."

"How's Mrs. Gilcrest?" asked Mrs. Rogers a moment later, as she shook hands with Major Gilcrest and nodded to his boys, Martin Luther and Silas. "Wish she'd come with you, but I reckon she's feared to be out in the night air."

"Why didn't Betsy come?" Susan asked.

"Oh, Abby had company; Drane and Hart rode out from Lexington to spend the evening. Abby felt that she couldn't entertain two beaux at once, so Betsy stayed to help her."

"Don't pull the house down, childurn," Mr. Rogers called cheerily, as his four youngest and the Gilcrest boys were hurrying off to the kitchen for a game of romps. "Hold out yer apurns, gals, an' tek some apples 'long," he added to the twins. "You kin roast 'em on the h'arth."

"I hear, Mr. Dudley," said Gilcrest presently, "that you use the Bible as a reading-book in your school."

"Only in one instance," replied Dudley. "Eli and Jacob Hinkson use the Bible as a reader because their father refuses to get them any other."

"Ah!" exclaimed Gilcrest; "I must remonstrate with Hinkson."

"I'll be obliged if you will. I said all I could to him with no avail."

"It's a wrong use of the Word," said Gilcrest.

"Oh, I don't say that," Dudley replied. "If the text were not such hard reading for the little fellows, I'd be satisfied to have the Bible the only reader used in school."

"No, no!" Gilcrest objected with an emphatic shake of his head. "Such a course would tend to lead the young mind into error."

"On the contrary," returned Dudley, thoughtfully, "might not the seed of the gospel, thus sown, fall unconsciously into the child's heart and bear fruit for good when he is older?"

"No! It's dangerous to place the Bible in the hands of the unconverted young."

"Do I understand you to mean that children should not read the Bible at all?" asked Dudley.

"The mysteries of the Scriptures are not for the child to tamper with. When I was a schoolboy in Massachusetts, the New England Primer was the only reading-text, and I wish it were in vogue in our schools now; it contained the Lord's Prayer and the Shorter Catechism, and that's all a child should know about the Bible until after he is converted."

"But," asked Dudley, "how can a child learn the way of salvation if not by Bible reading?"

"By study of the catechism, of course," answered Gilcrest. "Once rooted and grounded in that, he will not be liable to fall into error later on, and put wrong interpretations on the Holy Scriptures. I'd rather have the Bible a sealed book to the unconverted, so that the Spirit may work untrammeled and sovereignly on his heart."

"Ah! I see now why the priests in olden times chained up the Bible so that the common people could not have access to it," observed young Dudley, with a sarcasm which was entirely lost on Gilcrest. "But isn't it the idea of this age and country that there should be a 'free Bible for a free people'?"

"Yes, for a 'free' people," retorted Gilcrest, "but not for those who are still under bondage to sin. Besides, those who have not been well instructed in the catechism, know nothing about 'rightly dividing the word.'"

"How about that passage," asked Abner, "'All scripture is given by inspiration, and is profitable for—for—for——'?"

"Henry kin say it fur you," interrupted Mason Rogers, thinking that the schoolmaster's Biblical knowledge had failed him; "he's mighty peart on quotin' Scriptur."

Whereupon Henry, who up to this time had been a silent but interested listener to the discussion, repeated the passage.

"Precisely!" Gilcrest exclaimed. "All Scripture is profitable—but to whom? To 'the man of God.' To such—the elect, the called—how are the Scriptures profitable? Why, as Paul says, to reprove and correct when he goes off into forbidden paths, and to instruct him further in righteousness. Only the regenerate, the elect, are referred to; for they only can do good works. Moreover, the very passages that are 'a savor of life unto life' to the called, are 'a savor of death unto death' to those out of Christ."

"Egzactly! I see that p'int, anyway," said Mason Rogers, as he sat with chair tilted back, meditatively nibbling at the stem of his unlighted pipe. "Sartain Scriptures air made to suit sartain diseases, lak doctah's physic; an' ef took when the systum hain't jes' in the right fix fur it, they might kill, instid o' cure."

Here Mrs. Rogers, who until now had been dutifully silent, intent on her sewing, remarked, "Well, Hirum, Preacher Stone hain't o' yo' way o' thinkin'; he's allus urgin' Bible readin'."

"Ah! Sister Rogers, Stone has much to learn and to unlearn. He's too broad in his views. In fact, I sometimes question whether he believes in Calvinism at all."

"Well, whut ef he don't, so long ez he lives right an' preaches right?" asked Mrs. Rogers. "When I heah him preach, I feel lak I want to be bettah. An' hain't thet whut preachin's fur, to mek folks want to live bettah lives? Whut diffruns whuthah he b'lieves in Ca'vinism, or not? It's jes' a big, onmeanin' word, anyway."

"That won't do, Sister Rogers. Calvinism is the stronghold of the Christian religion. Furthermore, it's a logically constructed system of belief, and if you are loose on one point, you're loose on all. Every departure from Calvinism is a step towards atheism. The downward grades are from Calvinism to Arminianism; from Arminianism to Pelagianism; from Pelagianism to deism; from deism to atheism."

"Pshaw!" exclaimed Mrs. Rogers, undaunted. "It teks a scholard to undahstand all them jawbreakahs. Common folks lak me nevah'd git the meanin' intah ther head pieces. An' I say thet the sort o' preachin' to do good is them plain, simple truths whut Bro. Stone gives us."

"Yes, Hiram, Cynthy Ann's right," said Rogers. "The gospel ez Stone preaches it seems

plain ez the nose on yer face, but when the 'five p'ints' is discussed, I git all uv a muddle."

"But, Mason," asked Gilcrest, "you surely believe in the Confession of Faith of your church, do you not?"

"Why, I s'pose I do b'lieve it—leastways, I subscribed to it when I jined the chu'ch; but I'll be fetched ef I understand it."

"We've hed 'nough talk on religion fer one spaill, I think," now put in Mrs. Rogers. "Let's hev some apples an' cidah. Susan, see whut them childurn air about. They're mekin' 'nough fuss to tek the roof off." As she spoke, there came from the kitchen the sound of loud peals of laughter, much scampering, and the cry, "Pore Puss wants a corner!" indicating that the children were having an exciting game.

Presently Gilcrest, as he took another apple, said, glancing at the "Gazette" on the stand: "So Aaron Burr came within one of the Presidency! I'm glad the House decided in favor of Jefferson. He is bad enough, but Burr would have been even worse. Are you a Federalist or a Democrat, Mr. Dudley?"

"How could a Virginian be anything but a supporter of the great Jefferson?" replied Abner. "Could I have done so, I should have remained in Virginia until after the election, so as to cast my vote for Jefferson; but it was necessary for me to come to this State."

"An' glad we air thet you come," said Rogers, heartily.

"Being a Virginian ought to make you a Federalist, I should say," suggested Gilcrest. "You forget that a greater than Jefferson was born in Virginia."

"Then, as Massachusetts is your native State," said Dudley, "I suppose your Federalistic convictions are modeled according to the hard-and-fast principles laid down by Adams, rather than the more elastic federalism which Washington taught. That is, if place of birth really has anything to do with shaping one's political views."

"One could not have a better leader than John Adams," Gilcrest stoutly asserted.

"Whut!" exclaimed Rogers. "Afteh them Alien an' Sedition outrages?"

"Why, man!" Gilcrest retorted, "those very laws were for the saving of the nation."

"Though a Democrat, I'm inclined to agree with you there, Mr. Gilcrest," Dudley said.

"Ha, Mr. Dudley," said Gilcrest, pleasantly, "I've hopes of your conversion into a good Federalist yet. You're young, and your political prejudices haven't become chronic—as is the case with Mason here."

"My motto," rejoined Rogers, "is, 'Our State fust, then the nation.' The Federal Government didn't do no gre't shakes towa'ds he'pin' Kaintucky when redskins an' British skunks wuz 'bout to drive us offen the face o' the livin' airth."

"But, Mason, remember that at that time our nation was battling for independence, and could ill spare aid for us in our struggle for supremacy in this western frontier."

"Jes' so!" retorted Rogers. "An' whar'd you an' me an' the rest uv us who wuz strugglin' fur footholt heah hev been, ef we'd depended on the Federal Government to fight Caldwell, McKee, Simon Girty, an' ther red devils? We had to do our own fightin' then, you'll agree, Hiram."

"Why, Major Gilcrest," Dudley exclaimed, "were you an Indian-fighter? I thought you were a Revolutionary soldier."

"So I was," Gilcrest answered, "from the battle of Lexington until badly wounded in Virginia by Arnold's raiders in the spring of '81. Then, early in the next year I came to Kentucky."

"You surprise me," Abner replied. "I thought you did not settle here until after Indian depredations had ceased."

"Ha! ha!" laughed Gilcrest. "You thought I came like Abram from Ur of the Chaldees, bringing family, servants, goods and chattels, did you? No, I made that sort of migration several years later. I first came alone, to spy out the land, and to find a suitable location wherein to plant a home and rear a family. Descriptions of this new country beyond the mountains had led me to picture it a paradise of peace and plenty and tranquil beauty; but when I came, I found the picture obscured by the red billows of savage warfare. Why, the first time I ever saw Mason here, he was equipped with knife and tomahawk, rifle, pouch and powder-horn, and just setting forth to the relief of a beleaguered station."

"No wondeh," exclaimed Rogers, "thet you found me an' ev'ry otheh able-bodied man uv us should'rin' our guns an' gittin' knives an' tommyhocks ready! You see, Abner, the

Injuns undeh ther white leadahs wuz thet year mekin' a stubbo'ner an' bettah planned warfare than eveh befoh. Ruddell's an' Martin's stations hed been demolished, an' follerin' close hed come, airly in the spring, the defeat at Estell's, an' a leetle later, Holder's defeat; an' heah in August, on top o' them troubles, comes accounts uv more massacrein's an' sieges. If eveh the right man come at the right hour, it wuz you, Hiram," Rogers continued, "when you rid inteh Fort Houston jest afteh we'd got the news. Ez soon's I clapped eyes on you I sized you up ez a fellah afteh my own heart—a man ready to go whar danger wuz thickest, a man whut would stand by a comrid tell the last drap uv his own blood wuz spilt. Will you eveh furgit thet seventeenth o' August, Hiram, an' the tur'ble days whut follehed on its heels?"

"Never, while life lasts," replied Gilcrest. "And, as for a comrade in time of peril, one could not want a braver or a truer than yourself, Mason. You see," he continued, turning to Dudley, "it was this way: Early that morning had come tidings that the Indians, a few days before, had surprised the scattered families around Hoy's, and had butchered many ere they could reach the fort. Hardly had this tidings been related before two more runners, half dead with fatigue, half-crazed with horror, came panting in from Bryan's to tell how Caldwell and Girty and their hordes of savages had surprised and surrounded that garrison. These two runners had managed to steal out under shelter of the tall corn back of the fort at Bryan's, to bring messages from Colonel Todd, imploring Fort Houston to come to the rescue. Other messengers had carried the same appeal to other stations. Ah!" he continued enthusiastically, "the men of Kentucky were brothers indeed in those trying times! And the garrisons of Houston, Harrods, St. Asaph's and all the other forts, responded as one man to that cry from Bryan's."

"Did you leave the women and children in Fort Houston?" asked Dudley.

"No, indeed," answered Rogers before Gilcrest could speak. "'Twuzn't safe. Houston's wuz li'ble to be attacked in our absence. Besides, it wuzn't ez big an' strong ez Bryan's, whar the stockades wuz bullet-proof, the gates uv solid puncheons, an' the houses within built afteh the ole block-house pattern. So we tuck our women an' childurn with us. Cynthy Ann, with our little William in her lap, rid behind me on the nag, an' I carried befoh me in the saddle a little chap belonging to one uv our men, who hed a sick wife an' a two-weeks-ole baby to look afteh. Thet was a sad, sad trip fur me an' Cynthy Ann," he murmured with a sudden break in his voice and a wistful look at his wife. "The hurryin' gallop oveh eighteen mile o' rough country with the br'ilin' sun a-scorchin' down on us all the way, cost us the life uv our fust-borned, our purty little William. I tell you," he added excitedly, "ef the men o' thet day showed up brave an' faithful, our women, God bless 'em, wuz even braver an' more endurin'."

"They were indeed," Gilcrest heartily agreed with an appreciative glance at Mrs. Rogers, "and it was their heroic self-sacrifice and noble endurance that made it possible for us to subdue this wilderness. When I reached here that summer of '82, and saw the terrible life of the pioneer women, I was thankful I had left my betrothed bride in Virginia. It took women of stout courage and nerve, such as you, Sister Rogers, to be really a helpmeet to a man in this wilderness of twenty years ago. A woman of weak nerve or faint heart would have succumbed under the hardships and danger."

"Like pore Page's wife," added Rogers.

"Pore Mrs. Page!" exclaimed Mrs. Rogers. "I'll nevah furgit her hard fate."

"She was the wife of one of the Page brothers who were with us at Blue Licks, was she not?" asked Gilcrest.

"Yes," Rogers answered. "The two brothers hed come oveh the mountains the spring befoh, an' hed built a cabin an' made a sort o' cl'arin' out in the wilderness 'bout two mile frum Houston's, on the road to Bryan's. One uv the brothahs—I can't re-collect his fust name—wuzn't married; but the otheh hed a wife an' a four-year-old boy when they come, an' anotheh child wuz borned to 'em 'bout two weeks befoh thet last Injun raid. They hed been warned agin an' agin thet it wuzn't safe outside the fort; but still they lived on out thar till thet tur'ble August mawnin'—when they runs pantin' inteh Houston's with the tidings thet the savages hed attacked ther cabin. They'd been roused in the night by the stompin' an' nickerin uv the hosses. It wuz a starlight night, an' peepin' out uv a loophole in the front uv ther house, they seen redskins skulkin' in the shadow o' the trees. They couldn't tell how many ther wuz, but nigh a dozen they thought, an' they didn't know how many more might be hidin' in the bushes. So they decided it wuz no use to try to defend themselves, an' that ther only chance to save ther scalps wuz to steal out befoh the Injuns got to the door. You see, they couldn't git to the hosses, fur the red imps wuz between the house an' whar the hosses wuz in the woods which grew up close to the cabin in front. But at the back the trees wuz all cl'ared off, an' ther wuz a gairden patch next to the cabin, an' then a cawnfiel'. The only door wuz in front, an' thar wuz no windah either in the back—only two little loopholes. One uv the puncheons in the floor hed been left loose a purpus,

an' they took it up without mekin' any noise. Then, afteh waitin' tell they saw thet the Injuns hed skulked up nearly to the door, they crawled through the gap in the floor, an' then frum undeh the house into the gairden, an' then to the cawnfiel', an' stole through it to the woods on t'otheh side. Then they run fur ther lives, expectin' ev'ry minit to be attacked. It wuz a meracle they eveh reached the fort alive. Pore Mrs. Page wuz 'bout tuckered out. You see, her baby wuz barely two weeks old; besides, she 'peared to be a pore, weak-sperrited creeter, anyway; an' the long run an' the skeer hed well-nigh done fur her. It wuz her little boy, the four-year-old shaver, whut I toted befoh me as we hurried to Bryan's. On the road, we hed to pass the Pages' cl'arin', an' thar, still burnin', wuz the remains o' their cabin which the redskins hed fired. Ther gairden an' cawnfiel' wuz trompled an' blackened an' ruined; an' jes' on the aidge uv the woods by the roadside thar lay ther pore cow, still breathin', but welterin' in her own blood. The red devils hed split her wide open with a tommyhock. Mrs. Page fainted away when she saw thet, an' wuz most dead when we got to Bryan's. She got bettah, though, an' the next day when we sot out in pursuit uv the Injuns, her husband went with us. But, pore woman, she an' her baby both died thar in the fort befoh we got back."

Abner Dudley, listening with fascinated attention, was thrilled into strange excitement by the tantalizing impression of his having once been, as a little boy, a spectator or a participator in just such an episode as Mr. Rogers was describing—of the terror-stricken little family fleeing through the woods at night. He also seemed to recall the picture of a burning cabin, and of a slaughtered cow lying on the roadside. Still another picture seemed to flit before him—that of a group of women and children alone within high log walls, and of a bewildered, heart-broken little boy being lifted by one of these women from a rude pallet where lay a dying mother and a still-faced, tiny babe.

Often before to-night Dudley had had dim, fleeting fancies or imaginings of such a scene which always, when he would have recalled more clearly, would vanish entirely. Realizing how impossible it was that he, born and reared in a quiet Virginia village, could ever have lived such a scene, he had always, when tormented by the fancy, concluded that the impression was evoked by the memory of some tale heard in early childhood of the horrors of pioneer life. So now, instead of trying to follow up these tantalizing fancies, he dismissed them again from his mind.

"When we got to Bryan's," Rogers was saying when Abner again began to listen, "Girty an' Caldwell an' ther Wyandottes hed fled. The stockade hed held out agin 'em, an' all inside wuz safe. But, land o' liberty! whut a ruination all about the outside o' them walls! Oveh three hundurd dead cattle an' hogs an' sheep lay strowed 'round through the woods; the big cawnfiel's wuz cut down an' tromped an' ruined; so wuz the flax an' hempfiel's; an' the tater craps an' the other gairden stuff wuz pulled up. No wondeh we thusted fur vengeance. So us rescuin' parties an' the Bryan Station fo'ces, afteh a night consultation, set out et daybreak nex' mawnin' to folleh up an' punish. We thought ef we hurried we could soon ketch up with the enemy; so we didn't wait, as some o' the oldeh men advised, fur the reinfo'cements whut Gen'ral Logan hed already started."

"Had we waited," interrupted Gilcrest sadly, "no doubt the story of savage butchery enacted at Blue Licks two days later, might have had a different ending."

"Maybe so," assented Rogers, "or ef, when we did git to the springs thar on the banks uv the Lickin', we'd heeded the counsels uv Boone an' Todd an' Trigg, instid o' the lead o' thet red-headed, hot-blood Irishman, Hugh McGary, when he plunged his hoss inteh the river, an' wavin' his knife oveh his haid, challenged all whut wuzn't cowa'ds to folleh him. My soul! my hair rises yit when I think uv whut come next. On we all reshed afteh McGary inteh the river, an' up the redge on t'otheh side; fur, of course, Todd an' Boone an' our otheh rightful leadehs, whose advice we'd disregawded, wouldn't fursake us when they seed we wuz detarmined to rush it. Et fust, without ordeh or caution, we hustled forwa'd—until the foes sprung out uv ambush. Good Lawd! Ev'ry cliff, ev'ry bush an' cedah-tree wuz alive with them red devils; an' it seemed lak all hell hed bust loose on us. Still, Boone an' the otheh commandahs, afteh the fust minit's surprise, managed to rally us in spite o' the hell fire whut rained on us frum behind ev'ry tree an' rock. So when we'd reached the backbone uv the redge, we formed in some sort uv ordeh. Boone, fust in command, took the left wing; Todd, the centah; Trigg, the right; an' the Lincoln County men undeh Harlan, McBride an' McGary a sort o' advance guard. But 'twuz no use then. We only fired one round. Befoh we could reload, them devils wuz on us with tommyhocks an' scalpin'-knives. Then, a hand-to-hand fight fur a minit. Afteh thet, our men—all whut wuz left uv us—wuz mekin' back towa'ds the river, with the yellin', whoopin' swarm o' hell's imps at our heels."

"Who can depict the horrors of that day!" Gilcrest ejaculated. "It has been estimated that at least one-tenth of all the able-bodied men in Kentucky either fell on that battlefield, or were carried captive to meet lingering death by torture. You see," he continued, "we had thought we could have a better chance at the enemy on foot than on horseback, so we had dismounted before forming into line; and then we were so closely pursued that few had

time to reach the horses."

"An' thet," said Rogers, taking up the narrative, "give the savages anotheh big edvantidge; fur they jumped on our hosses an' galloped afteh us, while we had to mek to the river on foot."

"Yes," said Gilcrest, "and if it hadn't been for you, Mason, I'd never have reached the river. A fierce Wyandotte brave mounted on one of our horses had picked me out as his special prey, and I, exhausted by my long, hot run, and already slightly wounded, could never have reached the ford but for your timely aid."

"Fo'tunately," Rogers put in, "I, who hadn't been so close pressed, hed hed time to reload my rifle. So we left thet Injun varmint rollin' in the dust with a bullet in his back, an' you an' me jumped on thet hoss an' swum the river. But, pshaw, Hiram! talk 'bout my savin' yer life! Thet wuz nothin' to some o' the brave things you an' others done thet day. Do you re-collect how two uv our men afteh they'd got safe oveh the river, instid o' mekin' fur the bresh, stopped thar on the bank in full range o' the Injuns on t'otheh side, an' rallied the men an' made 'em halt an' fire back at the whoopin' red demons, so's we pore wretches whut wuz still swimmin' fur life could hev some chance to escape? It wuz Ben Netherlands an' one uv the Page brothehs—Marshall Page, I believe 'twuz—who did thet."

"Marshall Page!" ejaculated Abner Dudley.

"Yes, it was Marshall Page, I think," answered Major Gilcrest; "but why your exclamation, Mr. Dudley? Do you know any one of that name?"

"I can't recall that I do," answered young Dudley; "but the name seems familiar, and, in fact, I have a dim impression, absurd though it may seem to you, of having heard or experienced many incidents such as you and Mr. Rogers have been describing. But my impressions may be baseless."

"Your impressions," said Gilcrest, "are doubtless only the faint memory of some tale heard in your early childhood. Such harrowing incidents as Mason and I were recalling were common enough in the pioneer days, and have furnished the theme of many a fireside recital. As for Marshall Page, you very likely have known some one of the name; for I believe there are still many Pages living in Virginia and Maryland; but you can not have known the man I mean—either Marshall Page or his brother, whose Christian name I can not recall just now—for he was killed there on the banks of the Licking while bravely helping his comrades to escape. Which brother was it, Mason?"

"Blest ef I know," Rogers replied; "but one, whicheveh it wuz, wuz killed at the Licking, an' the otheh wuz captured by the savages. Seems to me, though, I heard aftehwa'ds thet he escaped befoh they got to the Injun town way back in Ohio, an' thet he turned up agin at Bryan's thet fall, an' took the little Page boy back across the mountains to his own people. Wuzn't thet the way uv it, Cynthy Ann?"

"Yes," Mrs. Rogers answered, "Mary Jane Hart, who kept the little boy with her at the station afteh his motheh died, tole me about it the nex' summeh when she come oveh to Houston's one day, an' uv how she hated to part with him; fur she hed no childurn uv her own then, an' hed took a mighty fancy to the pore little fellah."

"Speaking of Netherland's and Page's brave deed," here spoke Major Gilcrest, "Mason, do you remember Aaron Reynolds' equally brave and self-sacrificing rescue of young Patterson that day?"

And the two veterans, spurred by each other's promptings into livelier recollection, painted in vivid colors many more of the stirring incidents of that most tragic event in the annals of pioneer Kentucky, the battle of Blue Lick Springs.

Young Dudley and Henry Rogers, their fighting blood aroused by the realistic portrayal, sat by with kindling eyes and quickened pulses, while each in his heart pictured some deed of daring heroism which himself might have achieved had he been in that memorable battle.

Mrs. Rogers' sewing lay unheeded in her lap as she rocked slowly to and fro, her gaze fixed upon the fire. She, too, was painting pictures and seeing visions of the long ago—pictures which included not only the heroic band of Kentucky's defenders in the midst of the bloody horrors of that battlefield, but also that band of devoted women shut up alone with their helpless little ones in that lonely station, not knowing what terrible fate was befalling husbands, brothers, kinsmen out in the wilderness, nor what even greater evils from lurking foes might at any moment beset themselves within their stockade fortress; and her brave lip trembled and the visions in the fire became dimmed and blurred as she thought of that terrible ride under the scorching rays of the August sun, and of the eighteen-months-old babe, her little William, who, already ailing before the departure from Houston's, and unable to bear the merciless heat of the long journey, had died in her

arms at Bryan's two days later—hours before her husband returned from that ill-fated march to the Licking.

"No," she thought, as she wiped the tears from her eyes, and resumed her sewing, "our men didn't hev all the strugglin's an' the trials; we women fought our battles, too; an' ours, afteh all, wuz the hardest parts."

CHAPTER VI.

ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

The household at Oaklands presented a singular admixture of diverse elements working together harmoniously, and blending into a home life that was thrifty, stirring, and, at the same time, genial and refined.

In Hiram Gilcrest, notwithstanding a certain air of Puritanical bigotry, there was a strong leaven of integrity and sound sense which won him much respect from his neighbors. Seeing him in the midst of his family, one thought him like a tall, vigorous New England fir-tree, standing sentinel over a garden of blooming children, and protecting and sheltering the delicate, listless wife who seemed like a frail hothouse flower which, too late in life, had been transplanted from the artificial warmth of a greenhouse into an outdoor garden.

The sons, reared in the new and hardy soil of Kentucky, were like sturdy young shrubs. Betsy, in her youthful bloom and piquancy, was the type of the fragrant, spicy garden pink; and no one could look at Abby Patterson without thinking of a June rose.

During the winter Abner Dudley was often at Oaklands. The undemonstrative yet hearty interest of Hiram Gilcrest, the serene cordiality of Miss Abby, and the boisterous greeting of the children made the young Virginian feel himself a welcome guest. But, whether he discussed affairs of church or school, state or nation with his host, or listened to Mrs. Gilcrest's somewhat languid conversation, or parried the sparkling quips and gay repartees of Betsy, he carried away from these visits very little realizing sense of anything save the presence and personality of Abby Patterson, whose serene gentleness and blooming beauty had power to stir within him "all impulse of soul and of sense."

Another frequent visitor at Oaklands was James Anson Drane, the young lawyer and land agent of Lexington. In him Dudley at first feared a formidable rival; but it soon became apparent that Betsy Gilcrest, not Abby Patterson, was the magnet which drew the young lawyer to Oaklands. Hiram Gilcrest and Drane's father had been close friends. For this reason James was ever a welcome guest; and he ingratiated himself into still greater favor with Major Gilcrest by agreeing with him on all points, whenever religion or politics was the topic of discussion. Abner Dudley distrusted this easy acquiescence, and had a suspicion that the views which Drane expressed so glibly were not his true sentiments—a suspicion which Betsy Gilcrest appeared to share, as testified by the scornful toss of her head, the contemptuous smile that flitted across her lips, and the sarcastic light that flashed in her eyes whenever the bland and brilliant young lawyer fluently argued in favor of federalism and Calvinism.

No distinctions of rank and culture disturbed the homogeneous character of society at Cane Ridge. Friendships were warm and constant; and just as these men and women had toiled and struggled together in the first days of settlement, so now they and their children lived, worked, and enjoyed their simple pleasures in cordial harmony. Although staunch Presbyterians in doctrine, these people did not, as a rule, oppose dancing. Mason Rogers was the fiddler of the neighborhood, and as much esteemed in that capacity as in that of song-leader at church; and even Deacon Gilcrest, notwithstanding the Puritanical stiffness of his mental joints upon questions of creed, relaxed considerably upon matters of social pastimes; nor did he assume superiority over his neighbors on account of his greater wealth and education. On the contrary, he encouraged his niece and daughter to mingle in all the social functions of the community. Hence, the young schoolmaster was likewise a frequenter of these gatherings—drawn thither by the hope of seeing Abby Patterson, who, although she did not participate in any of the more boisterous games, was frequently present as an onlooker; and while the crowd of merry young people were romping through "Rise-up-thimbler," "Shoot-the-buffalo," or "Skip-to-me, -Lou," Abner had the opportunity he coveted, a quiet chat with Abby in some retired corner of the room.

One form of merry-making which was in high favor among the women of that day was the quilting-bee. These quilters of the long ago must have been accomplished needlewomen, as evidenced by the heirlooms in "diamond," "rose," "basket," and other quaint designs which have descended to us from our great-grandmothers.

One Saturday in November there was a quilting-bee and a corn-shucking at farmer Trabue's. Early in the afternoon the matrons and maids of Cane Ridge—each with thimble, needles and scissors in a long reticule dangling from her waist—congregated in Mrs. Trabue's big upper room, where the quilt, already "swung," was awaiting them.

To Polly Hinkson, who was considered highly accomplished in such matters, was accorded the honor of marking the quilt into the pattern previously decided upon, an elaborate and intricate design known as "bird-at-the-window." The marking done, women and girls seated themselves around the quilt, and began to work, taking care to make the stitches short and even, and to keep strictly to the chalk line defining the pattern.

With an accompaniment of laughter, jest, good-natured gossip and innocent rivalry, the work went merrily forward all afternoon until the evening shadows began to gather in the upper room. Then the nearly finished quilt was rolled upon its frames; and the older women repaired to the kitchen to assist the hostess and her dusky handmaidens in supper preparations, while the girls doffed aprons and reticules, smoothed out Sunday merinoes or bombazines, and readjusted combs and fillets, to be ready for the evening gayeties; for by this time the beaux were arriving.

In the kitchen, with its smoke-begrimed walls and its blackened rafters, from which dangled sides of meat, bunches of herbs, and strings of pepper, the supper was spread. Keeping guard at one end of the long table was the roast pig, brown, crisp and juicy, stuffed with sage dressing; around its neck a garland of sausage, in its mouth a turnip. At the other end of the table, facing the pig, was a turkey replete with gravy and rich stuffing, and garnished with parsley. Down each side of the board stretched a long line of edibles—sparerib, potatoes, cabbage, beans and hominy, pitchers of milk and of cider; within this double line, another of pies, white loaf bread, corn pone, flakey biscuit, pickles, honey and apple-butter. In the center of the board rested the masterpiece of culinary art, the tall "stack cake" shaped like a pyramid, and at its apex a wreath of myrtle. Ranged around this pyramid stood glasses of foaming, yellow "float."

Immediately after supper the entire company assembled in the barn for the shucking bout. Several scaffolds had been erected at suitable intervals in the barn, their tops covered with dirt and rocks on which were big billets of blazing hickory to furnish light for the workers. The corn was apportioned as equally as possible, and then at a given signal a lively contest began.

"You don't seem to be trying for the championship," laughingly remarked Abby Patterson to Abner Dudley that evening as they sat side by side in the long line of busy shuckers. "See how William Hinkson, Jed White and John Smith are working; and look how swiftly Thomas Miles is reducing his heap. I do believe he will win the contest."

"He may, for all of me," was Abner's smiling rejoinder; "I'm well content to be among the laggards, so long as you are sitting near me. Besides, the prize is not one I should dare claim."

"Is there a prize?" asked Abby. "I did not know that; this is the first shucking party I ever attended. What is the prize to be?"

"A kiss from any girl the winner may choose from among the shuckers, I believe," Dudley answered demurely.

"Oh!" murmured Abby, blushing warmly. "I now understand."

"The girl of my choice," Abner added with a meaning glance at his companion, and with a decided emphasis upon "my," "is far too refined and womanly to permit my taking such a reward. Hence, I do not aspire to be a champion shucker, nor a fortunate finder of red ears of corn."

"It is rather difficult, is it not, Betty," he continued presently, with a humorous twinkle in his eyes, as Miss Gilcrest came across to where he and her cousin were seated, "to find the logical connection between the championship as the fastest corn-shucker, and the privilege of kissing the girl of one's choice?"

"The custom isn't founded upon logic, but solely upon the consent of the parties," was Betsy's ready rejoinder; "and who but a pair of old sobersides like you and Cousin Abby would sit here discoursing on 'logical connections,' while all this fun is going on? 'Logical connection,' indeed!" she exclaimed merrily, with a saucy toss of her curls.

"At any rate, those hilarious folks over yonder certainly appear to care but little as to

whence the custom originated or upon what principle, logical or otherwise, it is perpetuated," Dudley added, nodding towards the center of the barn, where a number of noisy boys and girls were circling around Thomas Miles, who had just won the championship, and was now claiming his reward from the lips of the blushing, screaming, struggling, but by no means displeased, Mary Hitt.

"It is wonderful, isn't it," Abner continued, as Betsy danced away, "how Betty always contrives to evade taking part in those detestable kissing games, and yet maintains her popularity with all those boys and girls? She's a rare combination—self-willed and impetuous, yet big-hearted and lovable—and how pretty she is growing!"

"Pretty!" Abby exclaimed warmly. "She is more than pretty, she is lovely; and there is a certain force and dignity about her, too, that contrasts curiously with her piquant wit and coquettish ways. It would be a bold man indeed who would attempt a familiarity with her."

Returning home after school one February afternoon, schoolmaster and pupils found an unusual stir and commotion agitating the Rogers domain, news having arrived that the neighbors would gather there that night for a dance.

Soon after six o'clock, a loud hail from the stile block proclaimed the first arrivals, a big sledload of merry folks. Others followed quickly, until in half an hour the spacious family room was overflowing with life and laughter and excited chatter. Hoods and wraps were quickly thrown aside, rumpled dresses smoothed out, loosened ribbons readjusted, refractory ringlets reduced to order, and presently the sitting-room was deserted, and the entire company had assembled in the loom-room across the yard, where the dance was to be held.

"Why do you wound me and slander yourself by such language?" Abner Dudley asked, gloomily, in answer to Miss Patterson's request that he leave her quietly in her corner, and choose some fairer, fresher, merrier partner for the first dance. "I shall not dance at all unless you favor me," he stoutly asserted.

"In that case, I suppose I must yield," Abby answered good-naturedly; "I should hate to mar your pleasure of the first Kentucky dance you ever attended," and she rose smilingly and took his arm.

A proud and happy man was Abner as they crossed the room to take their places among the eager groups who were standing about impatiently waiting while Mason Rogers fitted a new string to his fiddle.

> "'Fairer than Rachel at the palmy well,"
> Fairer than Ruth amid the fields of corn,"
> Fair as the angel that said "hail," she seemed!'"

quoted Abner, bending his head to look into the face of the girl beside him—the grandiloquence of the quotation and the blunt directness of the flattery atoned for by the earnest sincerity of his voice and glance.

Abby was indeed a fair and gracious vision as she stood there, straight and lissome as a young palm-tree. The somber plainness of her winter gown of dark merino and the soft, clinging texture of her muslin tucker accentuated the delicate fairness of skin, the dainty perfection of feature, and the exquisite beauty of the white throat. Her quiet, rather pensive face was just now unusually animated, and the faint sea-shell tint of her cheek was deepened into a glowing crimson.

"This homely scene is a contrast to that Assembly ball, isn't it?" Dudley said presently; "and how different my position now from that of the forlorn youth who that night stood afar off, gazing with useless longing at the brilliant scene within the ballroom! Little did I then dream that to-night in far-off Kentucky I should be leading the reel with the peerless belle of that assembly."

"There stands the 'peerless belle' of this assembly," returned Miss Patterson, looking across to Betsy Gilcrest, the center of a group of boys and girls. "Dear little girl!" continued Abby; "she appears in her airiest, sauciest mood to-night, and is clearly bent on enjoying life to its fullest extent. No one holds her head so prettily as Betty; no one laughs and chatters with such innocent gayety. Is she not bewitching?"

A momentary look of vexation flitted across the young man's face. "What is Betsy's witchery to me, and why does Abby always try to divert my attention when I would give our conversation a personal meaning?" he thought gloomily. "Of course," he admitted, glancing at Betsy with reluctant admiration, "she is bright and winning, and extremely attractive, at least to the youths of this community; but she is not the rose, and I——"

"Ah! It is easy to see what is the attraction here for that bepowdered, beruffled, fashionable swain, as well as for the Cane Ridge youths," Miss Patterson interrupted, as

James Anson Drane presented himself before Betsy, and bowed over her hand with a courtly grace befitting a far more brilliant scene than this country dance in the old loom-room.

"Do you think she favors him?" asked Dudley, anxiously, a momentary fierce pang of dislike or distrust or envy shivering through him as he looked at the debonair young lawyer.

"At any rate," laughed Abby, "there can be no doubt of his intentions. As for her," she continued, looking earnestly at Abner, "I have in mind a far more suitable lover, who will, I hope, some day win that heart of gold."

"Who is this fortunate one destined to 'win that heart of gold'?" Dudley carelessly inquired, feeling but little interest just then in any topic save that which concerned himself and the girl at his side. "Do I know him?"

"Only slightly, I believe," Miss Patterson replied, looking down with a demure smile; "not nearly so well as I hope you will some day."

Abner flushed warmly, and his pulse leaped high with hope; for he interpreted the words to refer to a closer relationship between Abby and himself. "Of course," he thought jubilantly, "I shall become well acquainted with Betsy's prospective husband, when Abby shall have accepted me."

"Whoever he may be," said Abner, heartily, "since he has your approval, I wish him Godspeed with Betty; for," he added in a lower key, and frowning slightly, as he looked at Mr. Drane, "I can not, for the life of me, cordially like or trust yonder fine gentleman. But what about this other lover for Betty?"

"At present," Abby answered with a meaning which Abner was far from construing correctly, "he thinks his affections are centered in a far less worthy object; and he is blind to his heart's best interests."

"Let us hope that this blind Romeo may soon be restored to sight," laughed Abner; "or else, that dear little Juliet yonder will be carried off by some clearer-visioned wooer. But see, Mr. Rogers has at last restrung that fiddle and tuned it to his notion; so now for our dance!"

No stately minuet or mincing cotillion was the order of the evening. Instead, the "countre dance," the "gauntlet," the "four-handed reel"—old-time, energetic country dancing—shook the rafters overhead, and made the puncheon floor vibrate. Such jigging, such "cutting the pigeon wing," such swinging corners! No languid, lazy gliding, but hearty motion—up and down, round and round, faster and faster, as the twinkling bow sawed across the strings to the tune of "Coon Dog," "Roxy Ann," "Billy Batters," or "Niggah in the Cawnfield."

Rousing music it was—"enough," as Rube and Tom declared, "to mek even a one-legged fellah git up an' hump hisse'f."

Mason Rogers at one end of the room, his eyes beaming, his face shining, made the fiddle hum and sing. Interspersed with his music came energetic promptings, "Balance all!" "Swing yer pardnahs!" "Ladies, chain!" "Gals to the centah, an' boys all around!" Sometimes he admonished some laggard or blunderer, "Hurry, thah, Sammy!" "Bill, to the left!" his feet the while tapping the floor, and his body swaying rhythmically as his right arm swung the bow and the fingers of his left hand twinkled over the strings. A further incentive to merriment was the excited admiration of the negroes gathered outside at doors and windows—not only the darkeys of the Rogers household, but many from neighboring domains as well—heads bobbing, eyes rolling, teeth glistening, as their feet beat time on the frozen ground. Sometimes a dusky swain caught some dusky maid around the waist and swung her merrily; and all promised themselves "jes' sech a dance in the big cabin, nex' Sat'day night, with Marse Bushrod Hinkson's Jake fur fiddler."

CHAPTER VII.

THE "HOUSE-RAISIN'"

Soon after coming to the neighborhood, Abner Dudley, heeding the advice of Mason

Rogers, had gone to see the tract of land lying on Hinkson's Creek. He found it to be all that Rogers had said of it—a rich, well-watered, well-timbered body of land. Early in November he had purchased of Simon Lucky his "head right" to four hundred acres, for four hundred and fifty dollars. He had enough money for the first payment, and Mason Rogers became security for the rest of the purchase price. After making a rough survey of the land, and recording the transfer in the land office at the county-seat, Dudley, with his ax, notched the corner trees of his purchase, and thus took formal possession.

"Well, Abner," said Rogers the evening after he and young Dudley had returned from Bourbonton, whither they had gone to record the deed of transfer, "you've got four hundred acres uv ez good land ez thar is in Bourbon County, or in Kaintucky, fur thet matteh, an' now you kin push yer way right on, an' in a few years you'll be inderpendent rich. Ef I wuz you, I'd buy up a lot o' hogs, an' turn 'em loose in the woods, ez soon's you git yer place fenced in. They'll be no expense fer ther keep; they'll fatten on the mast undah the trees, an' be an advantidge ev'ry way. Henry'll holp you Sat'days to cl'ar off breshwood an' cut down trees, so's to let in the sun to dry yer ground in time fer yer spring plowin'. I'll spar' you Rube an' Tom this wintah sometimes, when thar ain't much a-doin' at home, an' you kin hev the ox team, too, to haul off the bresh. You'd bettah begin nex' Sat'day to girdle 'bout a dozen o' them big oaks ovah thar on yer west slope—it'll mek splendid cawn-ground."

Spring in this favored locality was neither coy nor capricious, but came on with a steady step and an assured air, as though confident of her welcome. By the middle of February the icy fetters of winter's binding were loosened from creek and pond. Then came the fierce winds of March to melt the snow and to dry the earth; and presently woods and fields were springing into new beauty under the gentle touch of April shower and sunshine.

The school term ended in March. The same need which called Abner and the larger boys to the fields, provided tasks in garden, poultry-yard, loom-room and springhouse for the girls.

"Books is all very well fer wintah times," said Mrs. Rogers to Susan one afternoon as she sat on the back door-step, marking a basket of eggs to set. "But now thet warm weathah's tekin' holt in arnest, thar's more important things ter think 'bout. Thar's all thet soap grease to mek up soon's I kin git the leach bar'l sot up—'sides hens to set, gairden to plant, the turkey hens to watch so's they don't steal ther nests; an' Brindle an' Crooked Horn an' Spot all comin' in fresh nex' week, an' ther new calves to look aftah, 'sides all thet buttah an' milk an' cheese. The days hain't nigh long 'nough fer all the wuck thet's to be did. Heah, these aiggs is marked. Put 'em undah them five hens whut's been a-cluckin' an' takin' on fer a week or more. Eph made the nests fer you this mawnin'—a whole row o' 'em back o' the loom-room in a fresh place, so's the chiggers won't pester the hens. Hev you boys picked thet basket o' chips?" Mrs. Rogers then asked of Tommy and Buddy, who at this moment came around the corner of the house, prancing and dancing, each astride a stick horse. "Whut! You hain't? Drap them sticks this minit, or I'll w'ar 'em out on yer backs! Cl'ar out to thet woodpile, fast ez yer laigs'll carry you. Ef you don't look sharp, nary a step do you go to the sugah-camp ter-morrow, an' nary a mouthful o' thet maple sugah shell you hev."

It was an unwritten law of the community that whenever a farm was opened up, a house should be immediately built upon it. In fact, a man was not considered to have positive possession of his land until a house of some description was erected thereon. So, although Dudley was to continue to live with the Rogerses at least for the spring and summer, as soon as the first plowing was done and the corn planted, he proceeded to build his house, the logs for which had already been cut; for Mason Rogers, in common with the other old settlers, held to the superstition that if the timber for a house was cut in the full moon of February, the future inmates of the house would never be molested by bedbugs—"An'," Mrs. Rogers had added when her husband was recommending this course to Dudley, "ef you gether pennyrile when it's in blossom, an' dry it, an' keep sprigs o' it b'tween yer bed-ticks, an' 'long the cracks o' the walls, you won't be pestered with fleas, nuther."

It was another unwritten law of these early times that every ablebodied man should assist in a "house-raisin'." Therefore, one clear April morning about forty men and boys assembled with axes, mauls, and other rude tools, near the site of the proposed cabin. This site was a gently sloping, wooded prominence near the center of the farm. A pretty locality it was. Through the trees at the back there was a glimpse of Hinkson Creek, and across the newly plowed fields to the right and left could be seen the shadowy blue of some distant, low-lying hills. In front, several walnut, oak and elm trees had been left standing to preserve the wild beauty of the place.

The first day was spent in preparing materials and laying the foundation logs. The men laughed and jested and shouted merrily as they worked; and by noon the timbers were prepared, and the rock hauled for the two mammoth chimneys. Well it was that the

hardest part of the work was already done, for some of the party, not content with the efficacy of hard cider, had brought whisky, and at the noon repast many of the men imbibed so freely that they were incapacitated for active service, and spent the afternoon lounging on log heaps, dozing off the effects of their potations or singing maudlin songs and making still more maudlin jests. However, the whisky of those days was pure, and though it did inebriate, its after effects were not so injurious, nor did it render its votaries so quarrelsome as does our so-called "pure Bourbon" of to-day. By the next morning even the most intoxicated had slept off the effects of their indulgence, and all reassembled at sunrise for the "raisin'." Four "corner men" were chosen, whose business it was to notch and place the logs handed them by the rest of the men, as needed. Meanwhile, boards for window and door frames were placed in readiness, so that by the time the walls were a few rounds high, the sleepers were laid and the chimneys being built.

The cabin was considered unusually commodious and elegant for a young householder. It was built of white oak logs and was forty feet long by eighteen wide. Moreover, it was a "double house;" that is, the two large rooms were separated by a passageway. The puncheon flooring was planed into delightful smoothness, and the mantels were of beautifully grained walnut, prepared by Abner during winter evenings.

The house was to "set with the sun;" and on the second day, by the time the sun's rays shone squarely across the newly laid threshold, walls were raised, rafters laid, and door and window frames adjusted. The noon recess was a merry time. Lunches were eaten with greater relish, and cider and whisky circulated even more freely than on the previous day. Nevertheless, by four o'clock the work was completed, and the last helper had departed homeward.

The cabin was, of course, not yet fit for occupancy; the walls were not chinked, nor the hearthstone laid. Doors were still unhung and windows unglazed; but as Abner stood alone that evening in his doorway, leaning on his ax and looking across his rich lands, his heart swelled with a feeling of proud proprietorship. He pictured how inviting this wilderness home would look when its interior walls should shine with a plentiful coat of whitewash, and when hop vines and morning-glories should cover the rough exterior, and convert doorways and window frames into bowers of beauty.

"In a few years," he mused, "if I am as prosperous as I see reason to hope, this log cabin will be replaced by a mansion as commodious as any in Bourbon County. Flowers will bloom in my trim gardens; and my broad fields will whiten with a wealth of grain. A home that shall be a fit setting for the jewel of my love shall make her forget her former luxurious life in Virginia, as well as the toils and privations of the first days with me; and our children shall take their places with the highest in the land."

From that October day when Abby Patterson had raised her veil in the old church and revealed the features of the beautiful girl who had entranced his boyish fancy at the Assembly ball four years before, a veil seemed lifted from his own vision. Love had dawned, and in its light life was invested with a deeper and more beautiful significance. "What if she is a few years older than I?" he would ask himself. "Is she not above me in everything else as well? So that, if she accepts my love, it will be through no worthiness of mine."

CHAPTER VIII.

LOVE'S YOUNG DREAM

"Like ships that sailed for sunny isles,
But never came to shore."—*Hervey.*

All through the early spring Abner toiled with the might of a hopeful heart—love lightening every task and enduing him with the strength of two. His farm was soon enclosed, and divided into fields and woodland stretches by neat rail fences. Planting-time was over. The young corn was rank and tall, and its luxuriant green foliage almost hid the brown ridges and furrows.

One day in May Abner stood at the threshold of his unfinished cabin, and gazed with unseeing eyes over fields and woods and growing corn. Alas for visions of domestic joy! The day before, he had asked Abby to be his wife. So gentle, so sad, and withal so tender, had been her manner, that at first he had refused to accept her decision. "Believe me,

dear friend," she then said, "there is no answer possible save the one I have given. Though I honor you above any one else I have known during my life in Kentucky, I have no love to give you. Besides, I am too old, too grave, too disposed to melancholy, to make you happy. You need a younger, stronger, more joyous nature than mine. At present you can not understand this; some day you will, and then you will see that a far more suitable mate—a girl self-reliant, buoyant, and with a wealth of love in her pure, warm heart—is waiting for you. Ah! you are blind, blind, that you do not see how Happiness is holding out her hand to you."

A dim, shadowy wonder as to whom she could mean flitted an instant across the young man's mind; but he was too eager, too absorbed, to entertain the thought, and renewed his pleading. Then Abby, after looking at him a moment in wistful silence, rose from her chair, and, standing before him, laid her hands upon his shoulders, and, looking earnestly into his face, said: "Abner, I have no love to give you; for long ago all the love of which my heart is capable was given to another. He is dead now; but I am as much his as though he stood here before me to-night. As I loved him at the first, I love him now, and must love him to the end. For some, and I hope it will be so for you, love reblossoms into new beauty and vigor; but not for me. My heart can have no second springtime."

Abner Dudley was of too manly a nature to grow morbid—no healthy-minded, strong-bodied man does that—but for a long, dark season he went about his work with a cherished sadness in his soul. The spring was gone from his step, the light from his eyes, and he was so quiet, so little like his former cheery self, that Mason Rogers, noticing his depression and attributing it to overwork, urged him to take a "rest spaill."

"Tain't wuck whut's ailin' you, Abner," said Mrs. Rogers. "Thet nevah. hurt nobody yit. It's stayin' so much in them damp woods. You're gittin' peaky ez a sick kitten, an' saller ez a punkin; you'll be down with fevers an' agers nex'. You need dosin' on boneset an' life-evehlastin', an' I'll brew you a cupful this very night. Drink it bilin' hot, then soak yer feet in hot watah with a lot o' mustard pounded up in it; then go to bed an' sweat it out, an' you'll be all right by mawnin'. Thar's nothin' lak a good sweat to drive fevers an' agers outen the systum."

Abner thanked his kindly hostess, but could not help laughing secretly at her diagnosis and prescription. "Truly," thought he, "it's but a step from sentiment to bathos. 'Fevers an' agers' instead of disappointed love! Boneset tea and a mustard foot-bath for a broken heart! I really must pull myself together."

This perfect unconsciousness of the simple household was helpful to the young man. Furthermore, his work necessitated his living much out of doors, and this helped him still more; for none but those who have the unseeing eye and the unappreciative heart for the beauty of woods and fields, summer sunshine, glinting stream, and joyous bird notes, can long be wholly without benefit from nature's ministry. Thus Abner had within reach two mighty remedies for sadness—the balm of nature's beauty, and the bracing tonic of hard work.

For some time he kept aloof from Oaklands; not only because of Abby, but because, when in Betsy's presence, certain tones of her voice when speaking to him, and a wistful look in her eyes, troubled him with a vague, half-conscious sense that she, young though she was, comprehended his trouble.

In July, Abby, taking advantage of the proffered companionship of a family who were returning to Virginia, went for a protracted visit. After arriving in Norfolk, she decided to make her home with a cousin there. It was many a day before Abner Dudley saw her again.

CHAPTER IX.

THE GREAT REVIVAL

In the summer of 1801, Cane Ridge became a storm-center of the great religious agitation which at that time was sweeping over the Western States.

In the spring of that year, Barton Stone, leaving his Bourbon County churches for a time, had gone to southern Kentucky to attend a meeting conducted by McGready, McGee, and other noted revivalists, upon the edge of a barren tract in Logan County where multitudes

encamped, and where worship was in progress in some parts of the grounds during the entire meeting, which lasted over a week.

This southern Kentucky revival was followed by others of a like nature throughout other portions of the State, and like a wind-driven fire through the dried grass of a prairie was the effect of such meetings. In the prevalence of this excitement, sectarianism, abashed, shrank away, and the people, irrespective of creed, united in the services.

It was decided to hold a camp-meeting at Cane Ridge. The woodland slope surrounding the meeting-house was cleared of its thick undergrowth for a space of several hundred yards, and three-fourths of this space was soon covered with long rows of log seats with broad aisles between the rows. In front, a spacious platform was erected, and over all was a roof of loose boughs supported by posts.

The meeting began Thursday night before the third Sunday in August. Before sunrise on that Thursday, the roads were thronged with carriages, wagons, ox-carts, horseback riders, and persons on foot, all moving toward the woodland rendezvous. Many came from distant parts of Kentucky; many from the neighboring States. A Revolutionary officer, skilled in estimating large encampments, declared that the crowd numbered between twenty-five and thirty thousand people.

Enthusiasm gathered intensity with each succeeding hour. There was no fixed time for intermission. Each family cooked, ate, slept at any time its members chose, and returned to the services, which began at sunrise and continued until long after midnight. Sometimes several preachers were each exhorting a large audience in different parts of the ground at the same time, while singing, shouting, praying and groaning were the constant accompaniment of the fervid, chantlike exhortations.

At night the vast encampment, illuminated by scores of bear-grease lamps, hundreds of rush-lights, and thousands of tallow dips, presented a spectacle of weird sublimity. In the improvised auditorium lights suspended from overhanging boughs fell upon a concourse of earnest worshipers whose voices, rising in the solemn melody of a hymn, mingled with the fervid petitions of the preacher, the shouts of the newly converted, the sobs and shrieks of the newly convicted. Pine knots set in sockets upon the rostrum revealed in unearthly radiance the face of some impassioned speaker, silhouetting his form with startling distinctness against a background of forest. In the shadowy depths beyond the rostrum could faintly be seen, by the light of smoldering campfires, the long, ghostly line of tents and wagons, and here and there the fitful gleam of torches, like giant fireflies in the surrounding gloom. Enclosing all this was a black and seemingly illimitable expanse, from which could be heard the occasional hoot of an owl or the baying of a hound, mingled with the unceasing voice of the trees, now rising almost to a scream, now softly sighing, now wailing as in a dying agony.

In an environment of such great natural solemnity, and under the spell of tense religious fervor, it was not strange that the very atmosphere seemed surcharged with a mystical and awful force, and that many of the campers were soon the victims of those singular "manifestations" called, in the parlance of the times, "the falling exercise," "the jerks," "the trance," and "the ecstasy." The various phases of this strange disorder attacked indiscriminately the credulous and the critical, the fervid and the frivolous, the religious and the reprobate. A strong man, while quietly attending to the exposition of some text; a young girl, while listening with blanching lips and quickening pulses to the impassioned appeal of the exhorter; or a careless onlooker, while laughing and jesting, might suddenly be affected by this terrifying malady. Some scoffer might perhaps at one moment be sneering or denouncing the demonstrations as demoniac, and the next be attacked with great violence. Nor were the campers alone affected. New arrivals, while yet upon the outskirts of the encampment, were sometimes seized with violent and inexplicable sensations. The air seemed charged with an irresistible electrical force.

Many farmers of the neighborhood attended the meeting, taking advantage of the comparatively leisure season between summer harvesting and fall wheat-sowing. Mason Rogers was among this number, his wife declaring that "the hull thing would likely fall through ef Mason warn't thar to holp lead the singin'. Ez fer me," she said cheerfully to her children, "I'll stay to home most o' the time to cook things fer you-all ter eat up thar et the camp. Some day when I kin spar' time, I'll be ovah to heah the preachin', an' ter see whut's goin' on. You kin go, too, Susan, ef you want to, seein' ez you air 'titled to a leetle play-spaill arter wuckin' so spry all summah. You kin find a place to sleep with Betsy in Gilcrest's tent, or with Molly an' Ann Trabue. I reckon yer pap an' Henry an' Abner kin git a shakedown in some uv the wagon-beds, or else on the groun'; 'twon't hurt 'em this dry weathah. No, Tommy, nary step do you go; you an' Buddy's gwintah stay right heah. Camp-meetin's hain't no place fer brats. Maybe, though, ef you're good, I'll tek you ovah with me some day; or I'll let you go 'long with Rache an' Tom some mawnin', when they tek the baskets uv vi'tuls fur the folks to eat."

CHAPTER X.

AFTERNOON IN THE GROVE

One afternoon toward the close of the revival, Betsy and John Calvin Gilcrest and Henry and Susan Rogers took their lunch-baskets to a shady grove near the big spring, with the intention of spending the afternoon in the woods.

"I'm completely worn out," declared Susan, throwing herself down upon a grassy knoll and tossing her bonnet aside. "I've had enough excitement for one while."

"And I, too," assented Betsy, as she uncovered her lunch-basket. "Every nerve in my body is on the war-path. We'll be having the 'jerks,' if this meeting lasts much longer."

"If you do," remarked John Calvin, as he attacked the wing of a fried chicken, "I suppose you'll think it an 'evidence of conversion,' as old Daddy Stratton shouted out this morning when Billy Hinkson fell to the ground foaming at the mouth."

"'Evidence of conversion,' indeed!" rejoined Betty. "I never felt further from it in my life. My head is like a ragbag stuffed to overflowing with all sorts of odds and ends of doctrinal wisdom, and when I want to get at any one sensible idea, out tumble a dozen or more that are of no use whatever."

"My head's all confused, too," acknowledged Susan. "Yesterday Dr. Poague preached on 'Saved by Grace,' and showed that all we have to do is just to sit still and wait for the Lord's call. I felt real comfortable under that discourse. But last night old Brother Steadman's text was, 'Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,' and he made me dreadfully uneasy. Now, are there two plans of salvation, or only one?"

"Why, two, of course," said John Calvin, with laughing assurance. "One teaches that if you mean to get to heaven, you must keep your horse everlastingly hittin' the road; the other, that the best way to get there is just to sit still. I like the 'sittin'-still plan' best, myself," he declared, with boyish frivolity.

"This is what puzzles me," said Betsy, ignoring her brother's irreverent summary of the two seemingly conflicting doctrines, "grace" and "works": "if it be true, as so many of our learned brethren teach, that nothing good that one can do merits salvation, then it seems to me that, in accordance with every principle of justice, nothing bad that one can do ought to merit damnation. Therefore, why should not I do the thing that pleaseth me best, whether it be good or bad? If I'm one of the 'elect,' nothing will keep me out of heaven, anyway."

"If you're of the elect, Betsy, you won't ever want to be wicked," Henry said gravely, speaking for the first time.

"Then, I fear I'm not of the elect."

"Oh, yes, I hope you are—only you're not yet converted. When you are, you'll see things differently." Henry was of a devout, reverent temperament, with a vivid imagination in spite of his quiet, self-contained manner. He had been greatly stirred by what he had seen and heard during the last ten days.

"But, Henry," began Betsy, argumentatively, "if I'm among the chosen at all, I'm as much chosen now as I will ever be; for I'm a sheep, not a goat—'Once a sheep, always a sheep,' you know."

"Well, sis," teasingly interrupted John Calvin, "if you're a sheep, you're surely one of the black ones; and it'll take a mighty heap o' scrubbin', I tell you, to get you white."

"And you," rejoined his sister, playfully, "I fear must be a goat—judging by the way you're always butting in, and interrupting serious converse."

"Oh," answered John Calvin, lightly, "I ain't bad enough to be classed with the goats, nor good enough to be a sheep, even a black one. That other parable about the wheatfield fits my case better. I reckon I'm just one of those useless tares."

His sister retorted: "The parable also declares that 'he who sows the tares is the devil,' and I hardly believe you are prepared to call your parents the devil, although they put you

into the church by having you baptized in infancy." Then, resuming her conversation with Henry, she said, "If I am of the elect at all, Henry, I am elected already, before conversion, am I not?"

"To be sure," Henry replied. "God chose his people before the foundation of the world."

"Bosh!" exclaimed Susan, impatiently. "You don't know what God was doing before the foundation of the world, and I doubt if any of those wise brethren up at the camp do, either."

"Besides," added the irrepressible John Calvin, "the catechism says we're made of the dust of the earth; and before the foundation of the world, there wasn't any dust. So, the elect must mean some other folks—not us of this world, at all."

"Doubtless the inhabitants of Mars or Jupiter," observed Betty, laughing in spite of herself at John's flippant remark.

"Betsy," presently said Henry very earnestly, "I've watched you and Susan closely all during this revival, and I do believe that you both are really under conviction. The belief in your own wickedness and in the total depravity of the human heart is the first link in the chain—as Brother Weaver says."

"But I do not believe in 'total depravity,'" maintained Betsy, stoutly. "If the human race was utterly depraved to start with, how could one keep growing worse and worse all the time?"

"Ah, Betty," said Henry, "I reasoned just as you do, once; but now I understand these things better. Although I am of myself utterly vile and worthless, the mercy of God has taken hold of me and clothed and hidden me in the righteousness of his dear Son, and now I——"

"Henry," interrupted Betsy, with sudden sweetness, for the time sobered by his earnest face and voice, "you mustn't feel hurt by anything I have said. You know I jest over the most solemn subjects, and see the ludicrous side of everything; but I can be impressed by real earnestness, and I have never doubted that you are sincere in all you say."

"Yes," said Susan, "I'd sooner doubt my own eyesight than your sincerity, Henry. I can understand and believe in that at least; but in other things I must be a bigger simpleton than even the 'wayfaring man'; for the way of salvation is anything but plain, if it includes the doctrines of our churches. I can't understand them at all."

"Understand them!" exclaimed Betsy. "Who can? Why, whenever one of our learned ministers is on the subject of 'reprobation,' 'predestination,' or 'effectual calling,' his reasoning is so subtle and his logic so ingenious that it must puzzle the elect angels themselves to understand his arguments."

"But you surely believe in the beautiful doctrine of grace?" Henry asked earnestly. "You believe that the saints will persevere and get home at last to glory, don't you?"

"We'll tell you more about that when we get there ourselves—if we ever do," replied Susan.

"If the saints do persevere to glory," remarked John Calvin, "some of 'em are makin' a mighty poor start of it here below. Look at Sam Ruddell, drunk half his time, and too lazy and mean to do any honest work at any time; yet he claims to be one of the elect, and the church accepts him as such."

"And, Henry," Betty pursued mischievously, "in spite of your hopeful view about Sue and me, I, for one, am not under conviction, if every truly convicted penitent believes himself a 'sinner above all Galilee'—that's the orthodox phrase, isn't it? I'm not nearly so bad as Sam Ruddell, nor as Zebuel Simmons, who beats his wife."

"Ah, but my dear little girl," said Barton Stone, who, with Dudley, had just come up, and had laid his hand gently upon the girl's shoulder, "you must remember that training and environment are the measure of guilt or innocence."

"You'll think me a reckless girl, I'm afraid, Brother Stone," Betsy answered, laughing and coloring. "I shouldn't have made that speech had I known that you and Mr. Dudley were within hearing. But, nevertheless, I do not believe that I am the chief of sinners; others who have had just as good opportunities are as bad as I am, I'm sure."

"Besides, if everybody who gets up in meeting and says he's the chief of sinners, is really so, there would be more chiefs in this neighborhood than in all the Indian tribes taken together," put in John Calvin, pertly, unabashed by the presence of parson and schoolmaster.

"The trouble with so many ministers," said Dudley, as Betty, Susan and John Calvin

strolled away, "is that they seem to think that furnishing people with doctrine is equivalent to awakening them to conviction and supplying them with faith."

"Too true," assented Stone rather sadly. "Dogma and doctrine contain very little of the true essence of faith. But the time is coming when people will begin to search the Scriptures for themselves; and then, just as the walls of Jericho fell before the blasts of the trumpets, so will the whole superstructure of human theology, whose four corner-stones are bigotry, intolerance, superstition and speculative doctrine, crumble into nothingness. Even now the walls are beginning to tremble. When this human-built edifice shall have fallen, and all the debris shall have been cleared away, then shall arise upon the one true foundation, Jesus Christ, a glorious structure, pure, consecrated and untrammeled, the church of the living God."

"Do you really believe," inquired Dudley, "that there will ever be a union of all the sects of Christendom?"

"A union of sects? Never!" replied Stone, emphatically. "Such a thing is impossible from the very nature and meaning of sect. But union, or rather unity, of Christian people there will surely be. Our Saviour's prayer was that all his people might be one. That petition will certainly be answered."

"We seem very far from the realization of that prayer now," said Dudley, thoughtfully.

"Yes!" assented Stone. "That evil spirit of intolerance, the curse of the Corinthian church, besets the churches to-day. We must first overcome that foe before unity is possible. But some day—and I pray that it may be in my day," he continued with flashing eyes—"when the storm and stress of this battle are over, there will ring out, mingling with the shouts of victory from every rank and company of the Lord's hosts, this one clear, dominant note, 'Unity of all of Christ's people!'"

After a moment, he continued: "Clergy nor presbytery nor synod has the right to stand between the people and the Bible, with authoritative creeds and confessions of faith; for the Bible is its own interpreter; and 'Equal rights to all, special privileges to none,' is a doctrine that will some day be adopted in religion as well as in civil and political matters."

"Ah, Stone," Dudley replied, "that is indeed laying the ax to the very root of the tree of denominational intolerance. If you make public such opinions, you will be branded as a heretic."

"I can stand that," Stone answered simply. "'Orthodoxy' and 'heresy,'" he continued after a pause, "are in truth variable terms in religion. The 'orthodoxy' of this generation may perhaps be considered by the next as ignorance and superstition; and what is to-day denounced as 'heresy' in the father, may become 'orthodoxy' in the son."

Henry Rogers, who for some time had remained a deeply interested but silent listener, sitting with his back against a tree, his hat shading his eyes, presently asked Stone what he thought of the singular manifestations at the camp-meeting.

"I hardly know what to reply," said Stone. "Many things connected with this revival are mystifying to me; and, besides," he went on, smilingly, "your question places me in an embarrassing position, as, you know, I was largely instrumental in starting the meeting at this place. If I say I do not believe that these manifestations are conducive to good, you, Henry, I can see by the quickening sparkle in your eye, will immediately impale me upon one horn of my dilemma by asking me why, after seeing a similar excitement at the southern Kentucky revival, I should help to start this one. And if I say I do not believe that these manifestations are the work of God, there sits Abner, ready to confound me with arguments, psychological, philosophical and common-sensical. So what am I to answer?"

"But, Stone," Abner exclaimed, "you surely do not deny the work of the Spirit in conversion, do you?"

"Certainly not," Stone replied. "The Bible plainly teaches that without the unceasing instrumentality of the Holy Spirit there can be no real conversion; but nowhere in the Bible can I find it taught that we should seek in supernatural signs and special revelations, rather than in the clear and unchangeable testimonies and promises of the gospel, for evidence of our acceptance with God. In fact, I can find in the New Testament no account of any miraculous manifestation being sent for the sole purpose of converting any one, although there are instances where a miracle did attend the conversion."

"What about Paul?"

"The voice and the great light were, I think, sent more for the purpose of making him an apostle than for the purpose of converting him."

Abner smiled. "You certainly dispose of Paul's case in a cool, offhand way; but how about the 'Philippian jailer'?"

"You misunderstand me," said Stone; "whether Paul and the Philippian jailer were miraculously converted or not, I am not prepared to say. My statement was, that when a miracle did accompany any case of conversion, it was sent for some other purpose. Incidentally the miracle may have converted the jailer, but I do not think it was sent for that purpose."

"Then, in the name of reason and common sense, what do you think it was sent for?" asked Dudley.

"To free the two apostles. Through their imprisonment the gospel was enchained. For example, suppose some malicious boy hurls a stone to break a neighbor's window, and, in so doing, hits some one inside the house. He did not therefore throw the stone for the purpose of hitting the person, did he?"

"You're a Stone too many for me," laughed Abner. "Your subtle reasonings and hair-splitting distinctions are too much for me to attempt to disprove, on such a broiling hot day as this."

"Brother Stone! Brother Stone!" shouted a voice from the brow of the hill back of them. Looking up, they espied among the trees a man waving and beckoning.

"Coming!" shouted Stone in reply. "I have an appointment at three o'clock with some of the brethren," he explained. "It must be fully that hour now; so I must hurry back. After all this excitement is over, I will talk further with you, Dudley, on the subject we were discussing. Will you return with me now?"

"No," replied Abner, throwing himself down at full length on the grass under the big elm, and drawing his hat over his face. "I'd rather stay here and commune with nature. I want to think over what you've been saying—and see if I can't find arguments to confute you."

CHAPTER XI.

LIGHT DAWNS

After Stone and Henry had disappeared through the woods, Dudley did not long ponder over the late discussion; he found in his environment too much food for other thought. He was on the same spot where, ten months before, he had first been alone with Abby Patterson. Yonder was the fallen log upon which she had sat toying with a spray of goldenrod, her white bonnet beside her, the soft wind playing with her brown hair, the sunlight through the overhanging boughs dancing over her head and hands, and making little patches of brightness on her lavender gown. The pungent odor of mint was in the air now as then when she had gathered some for her uncle's glass of toddy. The water sparkled and danced in the sunshine, trickling down the mossy rocks into the spring, and yonder in the cleft was the old gourd from which he had poured water on her hands.

Somewhere in his reading he had come across the story of the man who always "thanked God for the blessings that passed over his head." Often in the last few weeks he had had a dim consciousness that perhaps it was best for both that Abby had not yielded to his pleadings; but hitherto he had thrust the thought from him, as though it were disloyalty to Abby and to love. But though the recollection of Abby had still a tender, half-sad sweetness, Dudley's nature was too vigorous and buoyant long to give way to melancholy and vain regrets. As he lay there in the forest solitude, a renewed hopefulness filled his soul, and he felt that he, too, could thank God for the blessing that had passed him by. He got up, intending to return to the encampment, but a recollection of something Abby had said in their last interview, about his being blind to the good that fate was ready to bestow upon him, suddenly arrested him. "What could she have meant?" he wondered, as he seated himself on a stump, pulled his hat over his eyes, and, with a stick in his hand, idly traced lines and figures in the dust at his feet.

A slight noise presently made him look up, and there, standing under the big oak on the little prominence above him—just where she had stood that October afternoon, beckoning to him and Abby—was Betsy, again looking down upon him. She did not beckon this time; but as he looked up she turned quickly away, though not before he had caught the wistful, steadfast look in her eyes, and had seen the quick flush that covered her face.

Like lightning came the thought, "Was it Betsy whom Abby meant?" and as quickly the

truth was flashed upon him with all the force of an electric shock. In an instant, old things had passed away, and a tumult of feeling stronger than anything he had ever known leaped into life. It was not alone the realization of Betsy's love, coming to him in that flash of intuition, that set his nerves tingling and made the hot blood pulse madly through his veins; but, with a rapture that approximated pain in its intensity, there rushed into his soul an answering love, tender, deep and fixed.

It is supposed by many people that man's love is founded upon uncertainty as to any answering passion in the woman's heart, and that a true woman never gives her love unsought; but there is more proof to warrant the contrary belief—that it is her love, unspoken, carefully hidden from all eyes, yet revealed by the mysterious telepathy of spiritual sympathy, that calls his love into being. A man of noble, generous nature is often thus kindled into responsiveness, and his love thus evoked is often the most reverent and the most lasting.

In a moment Abner had to some extent regained his self-possession, though his pulses still beat riotously. He hastened after Betsy, who turned as he approached, her face still flushed, her eyes glowing with unwonted fire. She greeted him in her usual nonchalant manner, and walked demurely beside him, swinging her bonnet carelessly.

"You seem to have forgotten, sir, that a big camp-meeting is in progress in these woods. You reminded me of Daniel Boone or Simon Kenton, sitting on that stump with your 'monarch-of-all-I-survey' air, as though you were alone in the heart of some vast wilderness of which you were the sole proprietor. What schemes were you hatching? and what were you doing with that stick? Working out some abstruse mathematical problem, or calculating how much money your year's crops will bring? This is no time for such worldly thoughts, while all these hair-lifting wonders are occurring yonder. Your leisure moments should be employed in pious meditation, or in repenting of your sins."

Too much agitated by the revelation which had just come to him to answer her light banter, he walked silently by her side. She, surprised by his silence, glanced into his face. What she saw there arrested her footsteps and brought a startled look into her eyes. For a moment they stood still in the pathway, gazing into each other's faces—soul revealed to soul in the look. Then her eyes fell, a trembling seized her, and a wave of crimson swept over cheeks and brow and throat. In a voice hoarse with feeling, he exclaimed, "Betty! Betty!" and stretched out his arms toward her. Tremblingly she threw out her hands as though to repel his approach; and then, turning from him, ran down the path toward the encampment.

Abner was in no mood for the noise and excitement of the "revival"; so he turned aside into a ravine where many of the campers' horses were tethered. Here he encountered Henry, to whom he said abruptly, saddling his mare as he spoke, "I'm sick of all this; I'm going for a gallop."

"It's a pity to miss to-night's service," Henry answered. "The camp breaks up to-morrow."

"No matter," Dudley replied as he sprang into the saddle. "I'm off now."

"Better take a snack before you go. You must be hungry," called Henry, but Dudley, already beyond the ravine, gave no heed.

In his overwrought mood hunger and slumber were equally impossible, and the quiet of his attic room would have been as intolerable as the glare of the torchlights and the singing, shouting, and wild ravings of the encampment. He rode on and on through the moonlight, over hills and fields and roads, until his mare, flecked with foam, was breathing uneasily. Then he allowed the reins to drop loosely over her neck, and rode slowly back until he reached his own unfinished cabin. But the air of the unused house was oppressive, and the walls seemed to stifle him. Freeing the mare of saddle and bridle, and turning her out to graze, he threw himself down on the sward in front of the house. Even then he could not sleep, but for a long time lay gazing into the clear, star-studded sky; for the sudden broadening of the perspective of his future kept him wide awake. He wondered at his long blindness, and with an agony of uncertainty questioned whether Betsy's sympathetic comprehension of his old feeling for her cousin might not now hinder the fulfillment of his dearest hope. But at last the solemn serenity of the summer night stilled his unquiet spirit, and he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the flaming radiance in the eastern sky indicated another sultry day; but at this early hour there was a dewy freshness in the air, and all nature was astir and joyous. Upon the bark of a hickory-tree a crimson-crested woodpecker was tapping for his breakfast; under the edge of a half-decayed stump a colony of ants had already begun the day's labor. Lark and bee were on the wing; squirrels ran up and down the trunk of a big elm, leaping from branch to branch, where redbird, thrush and linnet were making the

woods merry with their morning concert.

CHAPTER XII.

COMMENT AND CRITICISM

On Friday the campers returned to their homes, and Cane Ridge neighborhood settled down to its usual routine.

"It's high time thet fo'ks should come to ther senses," said Mrs. Rogers, as she and her husband and young Dudley sat in the yard after supper that evening. "I don't see how you all stood it stiddy fur two weeks et a stretch up et the 'campment. Ev'ry time I sent the niggahs up thah with the fresh vittuls, they'd come back with ther eyes fa'rly bulgin' out o' ther haids, an' whut little wits they hed knocked sky west an' crooked. They brung me sich 'counts uv the goin's-on thet at last, thinks I, I'll go an' see fur myse'f. I knowed you an' Henry could tek keer uv yo'se'ves; but I wuz consarned 'bout Cissy, an' felt it high time to be lookin' artah her. I soon found her, an' when I seed she still hed her haid on her shouldahs, I wuz easier in my mind; but I'll nevah fergit thet fust visit. The meetin' hed been goin' on six days, an' things hed got in a good weavin' way. Thah wuz no less than five preachahs holdin' forth to oncet in diffrunt parts uv the grounds; so I tells Cissy thet ez thah wuz no tellin' when I'd git thah ag'in we'd meandeh 'roun' permiscous lak an' tek in all we could. Fust, we went to the arboh whah thah wuz a big geth'rin'—hardly even standin'-room in the aisles—but we manidged to squedge in on a seat close up in front. The platform wuz crammed with preachahs, an' ole Brothah Ranson wuz holdin' fo'th et a gran' rate. His subjec' wuz 'Fleein' frum the wrath to come,' an' he wuz pow'rful. The pictures he drawed uv the tormints uv the lost, writhin' in the midst uv the fire an' brimstone in the bottomless pit, wuz 'nough to set a snowbank afire. I felt ez hot ez ef I wuz danglin' ovah thet pit myse'f; an' ef one o' the angels hed happened to peep ovah the battermints o' heaven et thet minit, he'd been scorched hisse'f by the billers o' flame whut riz mountain high frum thet sea o' tormint. But somehow, the fo'ks didn't git ez much rousement on 'em ez I'd looked fur—reckon they'd done hed so much preachment thet they wuz kindah tuckahed out. Oh, yes, thah wuz considahble groanin' an' wailin' an' sich like, an' a whole passel o' sinnahs come furwa'd to be prayed fur; but I could see thet Brothah Ranson wuz disapp'inted et the lack o' 'citement, an' thet he wuz fixin' to mek a big jump uv some sort. Fust, he prayed a ha'r-liftin' pertition; then, soon's thet wuz ovah, he swung hisse'f out to the aidge o' the platfo'm, stomped his foot, waved his arms, an' hollahed out, 'Ev'rybody whut wants to 'scape the wrath to come, an' to meet me in heaven, clap yer hands an' shout "Glory!" altogethah.' Thet fotched us shore 'nough."

"Yes," said Mr. Rogers, "I hearn o' thet meetin', but I wuzn't thah. I wuz list'nin' to Brothah Rice et t'othah eend o' the camp."

"Did you shout with the rest, Mrs. Rogers?" Dudley asked.

"I should say so!" she answered. "Ev'rybody did, an' sich a hullabaloo ez it wuz—'nough to raise the dead. I thought fur a minit thet judgment-day hed come, an' wouldn't been s'prised to heah the toot o' Gabr'el's horn then an' thah. No wondeh fo'ks hed jerks an' fits an' swoondin' spaills et the camp! My ha'r wuz all creepy, thah wuz goose flesh all ovah my arms, an' hot an' cold chills a-chasin' one 'nothah up an' down the spines o' my back."

"How'd Cissy behave in all thet rumpus?" asked Rogers.

"I got Cissy outen thah none too soon," Mrs. Rogers acknowledged with a wise shake of her head. "Her face wuz ashy, an' she wuz all o' a shake an' a quake. I took her ovah to some trees whah a watah barr'l stood, an' made her tek a good swill, an' wet her hankchief an' mop her face. Then I walked her off to a quiet place an' says to her, 'Cissy, the Lawd knows I want to see you become a child o' grace, but I don't intend to hev religion jerked an' shouted an' skeered intah you. 'Tain't fittin', to my notion, to see a modest young gal a-mekin' a show uv herse'f, an' the Lawd nevah intended it, nuthah. Ef you're 'lected to salvation—an' I believe you air, fur he's a marciful an' gracious God, an' you're a nice, innercent, well-behaved gal—you kin be called in a quiet way; an' when he does call, whut you got to do is to heah an' obey. Thet's all thah is to convarsion, anyway. So I reckon you'd bettah come 'long home with me this evenin', outen all this fuss.' But she begged so hard to stay, an' promised so faithful not to git wrought up ag'in, thet I let her stay."

After a short pause, Mrs. Rogers continued: "But I stick to it thet the Lawd nevah intended his people to go stark, starin' crazy ovah religion, no more'n ovah anything else. All them ravin's an' jerkin's an' holy-laughin's an' holy-dancin's air onseemly in any fo'ks, sinnah or saint. The Almighty don't want to be pestered with no sich tekin'-on. When he calls, listen; whut he says do, you jes' git up an' do. Thet's religion, an' nuthin' else."

"You're 'bout right, Cynthy Ann," Rogers assented, as he lay at full length on the grass. "To my mind, the main p'int is to love God, an' do yer duty by yer neighbor an' fambly."

"An' do it quiet, too," added his wife. "You nevah heah uv a woman tekin' spasms an' jerks ovah lovin' her husban' or childurn, or a gal ovah lovin' her sweetheart. Then, why must fo'ks raise sich a cavortment 'bout lovin' God—hollahin' an' whoopin' an' sprawlin' 'roun' on the ground lak Sal Fox did thet las' time I wuz et the camp? She'd been a-jerkin' an' a-rollin' an' a-foamin' et the mouth wussen a mad dog, tell she wuz clean tuckahed out, an' thah she lay in the straw 'roun' the altah, her pink caliker dusty an' tore lak she'd been a-chasin' through a briah patch, straws stickin' out all ovah her haid. Thah stood ole Brothah Stratton prayin' ovah her, her sister Jane an' Poll Tribble snifflin' an' snufflin' an' fannin' her, an' sayin' they feared she'd nevah come outen her trance. Thinks I, 'I'll fotch her out.' I walks up, an', pokin' her with my foot, I says, 'Git up, Sal! Hain't you 'shamed yo'se'f, layin' heah with yer haid lookin' lak a rat's nest, an' yer laigs a-showin'?' Daddy Stratton he prayed loudah, Poll she fanned fastah, an' Jane she sniffled an' snuffled harder'n evah, while Sal she jes' lay thah lak a dead corp. I knowed she heard me, though, fur she kindah flickahed her eyeleds, an' then lay stiffer'n evah. So I says, pokin' her ag'in, 'Ef I hed sich pipestems ez them laigs o' yourn, I'd keep 'em hid—an' heah comes Jed White, too!' With thet she sets up, smoothes down her dress, an' winds up her ha'r, spry ez a ant; fur Jed's her beau."

"Oh, well, Sal nevah 'sperienced religion befoh," said Rogers, "so it went hard with her, 'cause, befoh this, she's allus resisted the Speret. But whut I can't stand is them Methodis' folks whut fall in an' out uv religion so of'en—'speri'ncin' a change o' heart ev'ry day in the week, an' mekin' the Lawd out a reg'lar Injin givah, bestowin' grace at ev'ry revival, an' tekin' it away soon's meetin's ovah. While the rousement lasts, the road to glory stretches out befoh 'em, an' they're ready, ez the hymn says, 'to bid far'well to ev'ry fear an' face a frownin' world.' Then by the nex' week they can't mustah up 'nough strength to hoe a row o' cawn. Oh, yes, they're mighty happy while the meetin' lasts. They're on the way to the land o' promise, singin' ez they journey on, ez how they'll 'b'ar the toil, endure the pain, supported by His grace.' Soon's the revival's ovah, they're ready fur anothah kind o' journey, an' lak ez not, they will jine in a drinkin' spree, an' end up in a free fight an' a gen'ral fisticuff. Now, thahs Jake Simmons, a lazy, no-'count skunk whut won't even tote in a back log to keep his fambly frum freezin'. He's got religion ha'f a dozen times, an' teks on a leetle crazier ev'ry time. When I seed him a-rollin' an' stompin' an' cavortin' an' axin' the brethren to pray fer him, thinks I, 'Whut you need, Jake, wossen the prayers uv the saints, is a big blacksnake whip larruped ovah yer back.' The Lawd does the job up right when he really convarts a man. It's 'onc't in grace, allus in grace,' ez the catechism teaches."

"But," said Dudley, who until now had listened silently to this discussion, "the Bible speaks of wanderers from the fold. No doubt Jake is a wandering sheep."

"Maybe he is," Mrs. Rogers agreed; "but, ef so, he looks an' acts so lak a goat thet the angel Gabr'el hisse'f don't know the diffruns."

"An' ef he is a sheep," added Mason, "he's so hidebound an' so fleece-growed, an' hez been herdin' with the goats in the devil's pastur' so long, thet he hain't wuth fotchin' home to the fold."

As soon as the fall wheat-sowing was finished, Abner Dudley resumed his school, but under such changed conditions that he could not feel the same enthusiastic interest as during the previous term. John Calvin was now the only advanced pupil; Henry had entered Transylvania University, and neither Betsy nor Susan were in school.

"Cissy's goin' on sixteen, an' hez eddication 'nough," said her mother. "It don't do gals no good to be too book-l'arned—jes' meks 'em uppish an' no-'count."

Mr. Rogers submitted to his wife's decree. "I boss the boys," he said, "but I reckon Cynthy Ann knows whut's best fur the gals; though, ez fur ez I'm consarned, I'd like Cissy to be ez eddicated ez any uv them high-flyers 'roun' Lexin'ton."

Susan was ambitious and loved study, and, although she did not openly rebel against her mother's ruling, went about her household tasks in a dejected way which greatly tried bustling Mrs. Rogers.

"Now, Cissy," she said, coming to the girl's room one night and finding her sobbing over

disappointed hopes, "don't you s'pose yer own mammy'll do whut's best fur her dautah? You mustn't think 'cause I'm sharp an' stirrin' with you thet I don't love you." She seated herself on the side of the bed and began to stroke Susan's hair. "'Tain't no use fur you to tek on so. You must jes' trust yer mammy, an' by an' by you'll see I'm right. I can't spar' you frum home this wintah, but you kin study o' nights, an' Abner'll holp you with yer books. So cheer up, lak a good gal; an' nex' time the packman comes 'long—an' I'm lookin' fer him 'most any day—I'll buy you some ribbon fur yer hair an' a string uv beads. Soon's we git the heft o' the fall wuck did up, you'n' me will mek you one o' them fine quilted silk petticoats, lak Betsy's, to w'ar under yer red calaminco dress. Thah now!"—and she kissed the girl—"say yer prayers, an' go to sleep." Then she murmured as she left the room, "Pore gal! 'Tis hard on her; but I jes' can't spar' her this wintah. I know she's ez purty an' ez good a gal ez kin be found anywhahs!"

As the weeks went by, Betsy Gilcrest did not sing over her work in her old light-hearted way. Mrs. Gilcrest was not an observant woman; but Aunt Dilsey, the old "black mammy," noticed the change in her idolized young mistress. "The keer ob dis place an' all de man'gin' o' dem noisy boys an' lazy niggahs am too much 'sponsibility fur sich young shouldahs ez hern. Ole Dilsey does whut she kin to spar' de precious chile frum worry an' care; but one ole niggah lak me carn't do ebbrythin'; an' 'tain't no wondah Miss Betsy's gittin' pale an' peeky an' low-spereted."

CHAPTER XIII.

COURT DAY

The old-time county court, held once a month, usually on Monday, was an interesting feature of early statehood.

Judging by the crowds that always assembled at the county-seat upon court day, one would have supposed that if legal business were the main feature of the occasion, a surprising amount of litigation was necessary to the well-being of the commonwealth. But legal business was often the least important feature of these gatherings, which seemed to combine the characteristics of picnic, county fair, muster day and old English hustings.

From an early hour upon court day, all was excitement, noise and confusion in and around the county-seat. The discordant bleating and lowing of sheep and cattle filled the air, and droves of swine, after the manner of their kind, refusing to be driven quietly to the market-place, wandered into byways, or sought refuge in stable lots and house yards. In fence corners and under trees, along every approach to the town, horses were hitched—many of them with heaps of provender on the ground before them, that they might feed at any hour which suited their appetites; and vehicles of every known pattern, from family coach to ox-cart, thronged the highways. It was a gala time for the slave-buyer, stock-trader, horse-jockey, and itinerant packman, as well as for the politician and the militia men. Not only was there much trading and political speech-making, but also horse-racing, cock-fighting, gambling and drunkenness; for society, even in the good old times, contained a large rioting element.

At Fayette County court, however, the chief interest was usually the political; and the most popular rendezvous was the tree-bordered enclosure surrounding the court-house, until the noon hour; then the center of interest was the tavern, which, though but a two-storied log house, having only eleven rooms to serve all purposes of dining-hall, office, kitchen and guest chambers, was a famous resort. The sleeping apartments were large, and each was furnished with four beds. Always as many as two guests to a bed, and frequently as many as three, was the economical rule of the house—an arrangement which, though possibly inconvenient in some respects, was one likely to encourage a spirit of democratic sociability.

Abner Dudley accepted Major Gilcrest's invitation to accompany him in his coach to Lexington upon a certain court day which was an occasion of unusual excitement. Tidings that the trade of the Mississippi River was again endangered had just been received. The treaty of 1795, which secured to Kentucky the right of navigation of the Mississippi and the right of deposit in the New Orleans Bank, had now come to a termination by limitation of treaty; and the Spanish Intendant of the province of Louisiana had issued a proclamation that there should be no renewal, although it had been plainly stipulated in the former treaty that the privileges should be renewed. The indignation which this act of

broken faith produced in Kentucky was greatly augmented by tidings which had just reached the State that Louisiana had been ceded by Spain to France by the treaty made secretly in 1800, but not made public until 1802.

The failure of all former efforts to induce Kentucky to sever her allegiance to the Union and to join her fortunes with Spain had not destroyed the hopes of the Spaniards and of self-seeking Kentucky agitators. Thus the revival of the old troubles over the navigation of the Mississippi afforded an opportunity of which treacherous conspirators were not slow to avail themselves.

During the noon repast at the tavern, Dudley and James Drane had been neighbors at table; and when the meal was concluded, the two had linked arms and strolled up and down the wide portico running the length of the tavern, and serving to-day as a reception-room for the tavern and as a political arena for groups of excited men who were hotly denouncing Spain and all her works. Other groups near by were as earnestly, but far less noisily, insinuating that Spain was the best friend Kentucky could have, and that her interests lay in the direction of an alliance with the foreign power.

Somewhat apart from the larger groups three men were talking in low tones. Presently, at a sign which, unperceived by Dudley, passed between his companion and one of the men, Drane, saying that he desired to introduce Abner to three of the most agreeable and gifted men of the age, drew him toward the trio at one end of the porch, and presented him to General Wilkinson, Judge Sebastian and Judge Murray. Immediately after the introduction, Drane excused himself and withdrew. Before any conversation, save the usual exchange of introductory courtesies, had passed between the three distinguished Kentuckians and our young Virginian, Hiram Gilcrest came through the door opening from the hall. Seeing Dudley in what was apparently a confidential conversation with the three older men, Gilcrest stood a moment in the doorway, frowning heavily; then, turning, he strode through the hall to the negro quarters of the hotel. Here he found Uncle Zeke, his coachman, and ordered him to prepare for a speedy return home. When he returned to the porch, he walked up to the group of which Dudley was one, and said to him, after a somewhat curt salutation to the other three, "I am sorry to cut short your day's pleasure, but I find that a matter of grave importance necessitates our leaving immediately."

On the homeward drive Gilcrest explained the reason for this hasty retreat. "You were in the company of three of the slyest and most dangerous intriguers of these unsettled times. They are brilliant, daring men, and I fear many of our adventurous young men are being led away by their specious arguments and schemes for future greatness. You have never been in their company before to-day, have you?" with a keen glance at his companion.

Dudley explained that he had only exchanged a few words of ordinary civility with the three before Gilcrest had interrupted the conversation. He did not, however, mention that Drane had brought about the meeting, and had spoken of the men in glowing terms.

CHAPTER XIV.

BETSY SAYS "WAIT"

Rarely ever since that August afternoon when Abner and Betsy had stood a moment in the pathway, gazing into each other's souls, and she had hurried away from him, could he by any pretext or maneuver succeed in being for one moment alone with her. Always when in her presence, either as one of the quiet home circle at her father's house, or at church, or at a neighbor's, he was conscious of a change in her manner towards himself. Much of her old, light-hearted gayety had vanished, and in its stead were a new quietness and reserve, without any trace of embarrassment, it is true, but with a demure dignity which made her seem to repel even such advances as ordinary gallantry would prompt any young man to make to a pretty girl.

Dudley tried vainly to win her back to her former attitude of cordial ease. Occasionally he noticed a merry chord in her voice and something of the old, sparkling playfulness of manner; but if he sought to answer her quips in the same vein of pleasantry, she would color warmly, answer gravely, and then seem to shrink from him. Never could he get her eyes to meet his. Once or twice, in some rare opportunity when he found himself for a brief moment alone with her, he had tried with the most delicate and insinuating skill to approach the subject of his love for her; but at the first hint she, like a fish that sees the

line gleaming in the sunlight, would dart away to another topic, or would find some ready excuse for leaving him. Furthermore, the very power of his love made him likewise often constrained and ill at ease in her presence; and as the months dragged on, it seemed to him that not only was he making no progress toward winning her, but that he was losing even her former frank regard. He frequently questioned the reliability of the revelation which had come to him that afternoon at the spring; for although it had given him unmistakable knowledge of his own feelings, it had, he feared, erred in its interpretation of hers. Nor was the element of jealousy wanting to complete his torment at this period. Betsy was developing into the recognized beauty and belle of the county, and not only did the rustic swains of the neighborhood court her favor, but the fashionable beaux from Lexington and Frankfort found abundant attraction at Oaklands. The one feared most by Abner was James Anson Drane, who, besides being well-to-do and of good family, was handsome and gallant and stood very high in Major Gilcrest's good graces. In fact, it seemed to Dudley in his moments of deepest despondency that Drane had everything in his favor, while he himself had nothing to plead in his own behalf save the might of his love, and that between two such suitors as Drane and himself no girl would hesitate to choose the former.

Under the sway of these feelings, Abner's first instinctive dislike of Drane, which had been lulled to sleep by the young lawyer's courteous bearing, awoke into more than its former vigor. At times the schoolmaster felt ready to believe anything of James Anson Drane—he was a schemer, a traitor, and was doubtless even now plotting against the Government. He would marry Betty, of course, and would wreck her happiness, and bring financial ruin and political disgrace upon the Gilcrests. Nevertheless, although Betsy's reserve, his own lack of opportunity for wooing her, and his jealous distrust of Drane, made Abner alternately chafe and despond, yet through all these moods there ran the fiber of a proud, buoyant spirit which would not allow him to give up; and hope, though for a time baffled, retreated only to advance again with new courage.

While returning from Bourbonton one May afternoon, Abner, lured by the beauty of the day, turned from the public road, and chose instead a sequestered bridle-path which, with many a devious turn and twist, wound through the forest whose giant trees, though centuries old, were now again clothed upon with youthful freshness and beauty. Through this green canopy of arching boughs, where sunshine and shadow intermingled, one caught glimpses of the sky, a dome of azure velvet flecked with fleecy white. A soft wind blew from the south, laden with the faint, elusive fragrance of anemone and violet. From every bush and treetop came the light-hearted carol of linnet and thrush and redbird; and in the open spaces between the trees the sportive sunlight gleamed and smiled so joyously that every blade of soft, green grass seemed to quiver with gladness. The day was so golden, so filled with the tender hope and promise of the Maytime, that Abner, yielding to its charm, for the moment forgot his doubts and perplexities. His path led in the direction of a shallow creek; and as he drew near the stream, he spied upon its bank a girl who had stopped to let her horse drink. It was Betty on old Selim. Abner gently checked his mare and sat watching her. Her white scoop-bonnet was hanging from the pommel of the saddle, the bridle-reins drooped carelessly upon old Selim's neck, and her hands, encased in white linen "half hands," were crossed in her lap. She was looking out across the country with a far-away, dreamy expression. Her lover noticed every detail of her beauty—the regal poise of head, the lovely outline of throat and shoulders, the rosy oval of face, the piquant cleft of the chin, the arch curve of the upper lip, and the ripe fullness of the lower. Presently her horse, more awake to outside influences than was his mistress, caught the sound of a breaking twig, and, raising his nose from the water, pricked up his ears and neighed.

"Old Selim spied me first," said Abner, riding to Betty's side.

She looked up for an instant, then her eyes fell before a scrutiny whose blending of admiration and passionate feeling she could not fail to understand.

"Yes," she answered lightly, laughing and striving to regain self-possession, "Selim is glad to see you, I know; he is getting impatient for his supper, and there's no knowing how long I might have sat here day-dreaming, had you not appeared. Shall we ride on?"

"And is not Selim's mistress glad to see me, too?" asked Abner, as he rode by her side.

"Oh, of course," was the reply; "but it is getting late, and we had better hasten on."

After riding a few moments in silence, he said, laying a detaining hand on her bridle: "Betty, why do you avoid me so persistently, and why are you so reserved with me? Is it because, knowing that you are becoming all the world to me, you would by avoidance and reserve spare me the pain of refusing my love? It is now nearly ten months since I first began to realize what you are to me, and that knowledge has become everything."

"No! no! do not speak! Please, please do not!" she remonstrated, her face flushing and then paling.

"Why will you not let me speak?" he continued gently.

"Oh, not—not now," she murmured stammeringly. "I—I—I could not bear it. I can not listen—yet," she ended, her eyes filling with tears.

Her manner, though it had something of a proud reserve, was not wholly unrelenting. In her voice there was a winning cadence which seemed to bid him hope. He understood her at once. She did not want to silence him entirely, but it was too soon—that was what she meant—too soon after his feeling for her cousin. She owed it to her own womanly dignity that his love should be put to the proof of time. She must not be too easily won. Yes, Abner felt that he understood her. Instantly the look of deprecating humility vanished from the young man's face, and in its stead there flashed into his eyes an eager, courageous light; for renewed hope was sending the warm blood leaping and dancing through his veins; and the humble, dejected suppliant of the moment before was transformed into the hopeful, assured lover.

For a time he said nothing, but, with his hand still upon her bridle, they rode on silently through the twilight of the forest aisle, where all was so still and peaceful that their fast heart-throbs seemed almost audible. Pledges more definite and binding might afterwards be exchanged, yet in the hearts of these two lovers this solemn temple of nature was forever consecrated as the place of plighting.

"I will wait, Betty," he said presently; "but do not keep me too long in suspense. Remember how long I have already waited for you. When may I speak?"

"Oh, I—I don't know—not for a long time yet." Then, regaining her old, saucy air, and flashing into his eyes one glance, half tender, half defiant, she snatched her bridle-rein from his hand, and, with a flick of the switch across her horse's neck, rode on. As she galloped off, she looked back for an instant to say archly, "Spring is very beautiful; but I like autumn better, and November is my favorite month, for Thanksgiving Day comes then. No! no! do not follow me, sir," she added saucily, as he rode quickly towards her. "Your road lies straight on," pointing with her switch to where the roads forked. "Mine leads down this lane to Oaklands."

"Very well," he answered with grave sweetness, "I will leave you now, but I shall remember what you have said, and hope that my own thanksgiving day may, in truth, come next November—though it is a weary while to wait."

CHAPTER XV.

THE WAITING-TIME

The Cane Ridge revival of the August before had been followed by many others of a similar nature throughout the country. Although there was much that was fanatical and grotesque in these meetings, much good was undoubtedly accomplished. With all the fanaticism, there was in them the wholesome leaven of gospel truth which did much to arouse the churches from their deathlike indifference. Better than this, the revivals were a bond of union between the different religious sects; for, in the prevalence of enthusiasm, even such rigid upholders of creed as Gilcrest and Landrum felt more concern about the salvation of their children than about the tenets of their church. In fact, from the beginning of the awakening, Books of Discipline and Confessions of Faith had been gathering dust, and soon would have been completely lost to view, had not the more strenuous churchmen at last in alarm put forth their hands to stay their tottering ark of creed, mistaking it for the ark of God. But though for a time the orthodox element held its peace, apparently well pleased to see members of other denominations joining cordially in the revivals, each sect finally became fearful lest other churches might draw away disciples from its own ranks. The tocsin was sounded, "'To your tents, O Israel!' Our creed is in jeopardy! There must be no more union meetings!" Thus the old denominational war waged with renewed fierceness.

Though Barton Stone was, like John, gentle and tender, yet he was also, like Paul, ready at need to wield the double-edged sword of logic and truth to cut down sophistry and combat unbelief. Therefore, to those dominated by sectarianism, as well as to the indifferent and the scoffer, his work was unacceptable; but between the high-water mark of orthodoxy and the low-water mark of willful unbelief, there were many who heard him gladly.

His June appointment at Cane Ridge was an occasion never to be forgotten by those present. Indeed, his sermon that day was well calculated to make the more orthodox members of the congregation writhe in their seats.

He chose as his text the familiar sixteenth verse of the third chapter of John, announcing at the same time that his topics would be God's love as manifested in the gift of his Son; the gospel, the power of God unto salvation; faith, the first requisite, which all who willed might have.

Stone began by portraying, forcibly and tenderly, the love of God, emphasizing the fact that "he willed not that one of his creatures should perish." His love included the whole world, and Christ, instead of being surety for an elect few only, had satisfied the demands of the Father's love by dying for all mankind. Thus "by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification," and Christ, by office, became the Saviour, not of a few only, but of all who would accept him.

He said that the only way to reconcile the two passages of Scripture, John 6:44 and John 12:32, was to believe that the Father recognized no other means of drawing men to him than that of holding up his Son in the gospel; and that, therefore, all who believed on Christ and received the Word were elected to salvation.

Stone next pointed out what he considered to be a marked contrast between the teachings of the Scriptures and that of the Confession of Faith of his church upon this point. He then spoke of regeneration, or the "new birth," and said that the declaration, "born not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible by the word of God," showed clearly that the Word must first be believed in order to produce this effect; consequently, faith preceded regeneration. Furthermore, this faith was wrought in the heart by no outside or miraculous influence, but was freely given to all who would believe. He explained the passage, "Faith is the gift of God," by saying that the object of faith, "the man, Christ Jesus," is the gift of God.

A strange sermon, indeed, to be preached at that time, to such a people, by an ordained minister of the Presbyterian Church! As he spoke, several of the staunch supporters of orthodoxy shook their heads, and looked frowningly at the daring young preacher. Many recalled an incident of his ordination in that very house three years before. Stone, who had long entertained doubts upon the doctrines of predestination, regeneration and effectual calling, as set forth in the Confession of Faith of his church, had, on the day before the one set for his ordination, called aside two of the pillars of the Transylvania Presbytery, and with characteristic honesty had made known to them his difficulties. After laboring in vain to remove his doubts, the two men asked him how far he was willing to receive the Confession. "So far as I see it to be consistent with the word of God," was the answer, which they declared to be sufficient. No objection was raised to his answer when given before the presbytery the next day, and, after making satisfactory replies to all other questions propounded, he was ordained.

When Stone had finished his discourse, he called upon Gilcrest to lead in prayer. With an angry shake of his head, and a frown upon his stern features, the old man declined. Old Brother Landrum was then asked to pray. In a voice which shook with emotion, he besought pardon for the error in the sermon just heard and enlightenment for the mind of the preacher that he might have a better understanding of the mysteries of the gospel. When he began further to petition that the Lord would in his own good time and way manifest himself to the unconverted elect in the congregation, he was interrupted by David Purviance: "Not to the elect alone, O Lord," he prayed, "but unto all—all within these walls; for thou, O God, art no respecter of persons, and salvation is free, free to all who will accept!"

Notwithstanding the evident disapproval of some of his flock, Stone continued to preach sermons of a like nature. A few who heard him were stunned by his boldness and shocked by his ruthless defiance of the established order of things. Others found his words forcibly convincing. Still another class, though not exactly understanding his reasoning, had so great love for the young preacher and so great confidence in his ability that they were his warm advocates. Of this blindly trustful number, none were stouter in their adherence than Mason Rogers.

To Hiram Gilcrest these sermons seemed the undermining, blowing up and pulverization of the whole structure of sound doctrine. One day, in the course of a discussion with Mason Rogers, Gilcrest angrily maintained not only that the church should take action against their minister, but that his transgressions should be reported at the next meeting of the synod. Rogers, of course, defended Stone. Hot words ensued on both sides, and the friendly relations between the two old neighbors were somewhat strained.

One afternoon Gilcrest, who was so full of the subject of the parson's iniquities that he could think or speak of little else, encountered Dudley, to whom in no measured terms he denounced Stone. Abner would gladly have avoided argument with Gilcrest upon any

subject, and especially upon this, which he felt did not concern himself personally; but Gilcrest was not to be evaded.

"You know, Major Gilcrest," said Dudley at last, "that I'm not a church-member, and therefore it is not fitting for me to discuss the question."

"No matter," answered Gilcrest; "you're a man and capable of reasoning, and can surely see the fallacy of this fellow's doctrine."

"But Stone is a personal friend of mine," Abner urged.

"What of that?" asked Hiram. "It's not the man, but his doctrine, that I abhor."

Thus driven to bay, Abner had no alternative but to reply that from what he could learn by his own study of the Bible, Stone seemed to be right. This was literally throwing down the gauntlet to Gilcrest, and the discussion waxed hot and stormy.

"This is a fine way to win the daughter—to be locking horns with the father in theological combat," Dudley soliloquized ruefully as Gilcrest rode off; but he laughed, too, as he thought how little like one "saved by grace" and "sanctified by the Spirit" the old man had appeared as, with frowning brow, loud voice and vehement gesticulation, he had stormed and raved against the offending Stone. "What a fool the old fellow did make of himself," thought Abner; "but not a bigger one than myself, considering all things. 'Never discuss theology with your intended father-in-law,' is a safe maxim for lovers to follow."

Later in the summer, Abner Dudley received from his uncle, Dr. Richard Dudley, of Williamsburg, intelligence of a surprising nature; namely, that an uncle of Abner's mother, Andrew Hite, of Sterling County, Virginia, had died, leaving a will by which Abner was heir to all his worldly possessions.

Richard Dudley urged upon Abner the necessity of coming at once to Virginia in regard to this inheritance. Accordingly, Abner, merely telling the Rogers family that he was summoned to Virginia on important business, set out one August afternoon. He went first to Lexington, and from there on horseback to Limestone. His companions on this horseback ride of sixty-five miles were Judge Benjamin Sebastian and Judge William Murray, against whom Hiram Gilcrest had seen fit to warn him. Nothing, however, of the negotiations and intrigues in which Sebastian and Murray may or may not have been concerned, had at this time been made public; and young Dudley saw no reason why the mere suspicions of so prejudiced a man as Hiram Gilcrest should deter him from accepting the company of two such agreeable men.

Soon after taking the boat at Limestone, Sebastian and Murray told Abner that they intended spending the night at the island home of Harman Blennerhassett, and urged him to do likewise. He readily accepted; for he had heard of this secluded island paradise with its romantic surroundings, beautiful grounds and vast library, and of the gracious hospitality of the scholarly Irish recluse and his charming wife. He found the home and his host and hostess all that had been reported, and greatly enjoyed his little visit. The next day, leaving Sebastian and Murray still guests of the Blennerhassetts, Dudley continued his journey by boat to Pittsburg, and thence by horseback across Virginia to Williamsburg.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SINGULAR WILL

Upon reaching Williamsburg, Abner, of course, examined the will of his late granduncle. It was dated May 2, 1782, when Andrew Hite, being dangerously ill, thought death imminent.

Stripped of all legal verbosities, the purport of the document was that the testator bequeathed all of his earthly possessions, consisting of six hundred and forty acres of land in Henderson County, Kentucky; Crestlands, a Virginia estate of some three hundred acres, and all slaves, cattle, horses, goods and chattels pertaining to this estate, to his niece, Mary Belle Hollis Page, youngest child of Andrew Hite's sister, Mary Hite Hollis —"provided," so read the will, "Mary Belle Hollis Page, wife of Marshall Page, is still living at this date, the second day of May in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred

and eighty-two. If, however, said Mary Belle Hollis Page, wife of Marshall Page, is already deceased, I, Andrew Thurston Hite, of Crestlands, Sterling County, Virginia, do give and bequeath all my worldly possessions above mentioned to her legitimate offspring, if any. In case my niece, Mary Belle Hollis Page, be already deceased and has left no legitimate offspring, I give and bequeath all houses, lands, slaves, live stock, goods and chattels of whatsoever nature of which I die possessed to my niece, Sarah Jane Pepper, of Chestnut Hall, Caxton County, Virginia, only child of my half-sister, Sarah Melvina Thornton Pepper, deceased."

Dr. Richard Dudley, of Lawsonville, "husband of Frances Hollis, deceased, sister of Mary Belle Hollis Page," was named as sole executor of this will. A codicil dated twenty years later, June 30, 1802, the very day of Andrew Hite's death, stated that all subsequent wills having been rendered null and void by the death of the testator's adopted son, Stephen Balleau Hite, were destroyed, and that the testator, Andrew Thurston Hite, decreed that the will dated May 2, 1782, should be his last will and testament. This codicil also named Richard Dudley, "late of Lawsonville, now of Williamsburg," as sole executor.

Contrary to his own convictions and the dictum of his physicians, Andrew Hite recovered from his illness in 1782, and five years later adopted a lad, Stephen Balleau, and reared him as his son. This Stephen, grown to manhood, but unmarried, was killed in a duel, four months before the death of his adopted father, then an old man of seventy-six years. After Stephen was killed, Andrew Hite seems to have lost all interest in life, and to have neglected making any provision as to the disposal of his property, until the very day of his death. Then, instead of making a new will, he on his deathbed, in the presence of his physician, his old body-servant, and a neighbor, simply added the codicil to the will made twenty years before.

"This strange will still holds good, I presume, eccentric though it be," Abner said to Dr. Dudley, after reading the document.

"Certainly," his uncle replied; "for your mother was undoubtedly living at the date specified in the will."

"Yes," Abner said, "that can be established by your testimony, which is corroborated by the inscription on her tombstone at Lawsonville and by the record in your family Bible—both of which give the date of her death as that of August 21, 1782, three months after the will was written."

"And," added the doctor, "even should the will not stand, you, the only child of your mother, are justly entitled to this bequest; for all that Andrew Hite possessed, save that Kentucky land which he in my presence promised your mother at his death, came through his father, your great-grandfather, Abner Hite; and Sarah Jane Pepper is connected only through her mother, Andrew Hite's half-sister, Sarah Thornton, who was not a descendant of old Abner Hite. Therefore, you need have no uneasiness on the score of either the justness or the validity of your claim; and you should at once take steps to put you in possession of your legacy."

"That I shall certainly do," said Abner; "and I shall do so, not as Abner Dudley, but as Abner Dudley Logan. In fact, Uncle Richard, aside from all question of this bequest, I had already determined to assume my full name; for, much as I honor you who have been a second father to me, I think it but justice to my own father's memory, now that I have arrived at man's estate, that I should wear his name. You know I wished to do so before I went to Kentucky; but you were so averse to the idea that I yielded for the time, contrary to my convictions of justice to my father's memory and against my own preference. But now I am fully resolved to be known in future by my full name, Abner Dudley Logan."

Dr. Dudley sat silent with downcast eyes, a gloomy, perplexed look upon his face; and his nephew went on:

"Uncle Richard, I wish you would tell me more about my father and about my mother's early life. You have always been singularly reticent on the subject. Why! I was a boy of eleven or twelve before I even knew that my real name was Logan, and then I discovered it by accident; and it was not until I read this will of Uncle Hite's that I learned that my mother had married a second time. The time has now come, I think, when you should tell me all that you know of my father and mother."

"Of your father," said Richard slowly, and, it seemed to Abner, reluctantly, "I know little more than the facts already in your possession. Briefly told, your mother's history is this: Her mother, Mary Hite, married John Hollis, of Plainfield, New Jersey. To this union were born eight children, of whom your Aunt Frances, my first wife, was the eldest, and your mother, the youngest. The six children intervening died in early childhood. Your grandfather, John Hollis, died when your mother was two months old, and his wife survived him but one month. Her half-sister, Sarah Thornton, who had just been married to Jackson Pepper, of Chestnut Hall in northern Virginia—a widower with one son—took

your mother to raise as her own child. This Sarah Thornton Pepper died ten years later. She had but one child, Sarah Jane Pepper. Your mother, after her aunt's death, still lived at Chestnut Hall until she was about sixteen. Then she greatly offended Jackson Pepper by refusing to be betrothed to Fletcher Pepper, the son of Jackson's former marriage. Her home was rendered so unpleasant by Jackson Pepper's anger and Fletcher's persistence in his suit, that she went to live at Crestlands with her old bachelor uncle, Andrew Hite, until a few years later—in 1775, I think—when he went with a party of adventurers to Kentucky. He expected to be gone a year, and, before setting forth, he took your mother to Morristown, New Jersey, to find a temporary home with some of her Hollis connections, two maiden ladies, her father's cousins. When, however, Andrew Hite returned to Virginia, he, instead of recalling his niece and settling down with her at Crestlands, joined the Continental army. So your mother continued with her distant relatives at Morristown until the winter of 1776-77. After the battles at Trenton and Princeton, Washington's army, as you know, went into winter quarters at Morristown. In this army was a young soldier, John Logan. He and your mother met and immediately fell in love with each other; and in March, after an acquaintance of only five weeks, they were married. It was an ill-advised, imprudent marriage. Mary had nothing of her own, nor had John Logan; and, besides, he must necessarily be away from his young wife a great deal, and leave her unprotected and illy provided for while he was encountering the dangers and hardships of a soldier's life. Mary's relatives at Morristown were bitterly offended because of her marriage to a man of whose antecedents she knew nothing, and who was poor, and, still worse, a hated Continental soldier, for they were strong Tory sympathizers. They would have nothing whatever to do with Mary after her marriage. In the spring, when Washington left his winter quarters, Logan, of course, went with the army, and his wife was left alone at Morristown with a poor old couple of whom your father had rented lodgings. After the departure of the troops from Morristown, Logan very rarely could find opportunity to visit his wife, nor could he make adequate provision for her comfort. You were born there in the home of the old couple at Morristown, February 25, 1778. There your mother continued to live until after your father fell in the battle of Monmouth Court-house in June, 1778. Then she made her way with you, her four-months-old babe, back to your Aunt Frances and me. She lived with us until after the death of your Aunt Frances in March, 1781. Then that fall, and about five months before my marriage to Rachel Sneed, your mother was married to Marshall Page, and both she and he died the following August."

"What of this Marshall Page, my stepfather?" asked Abner. "Where was he from? Was he a man calculated to make my mother happy?"

"He was a brave, honest, hard-working fellow," acknowledged Richard, "from Maryland; but he had only a limited education, and had not been gently reared. I was not well pleased with the marriage; and had your Aunt Frances lived, I do not think Mary would have married him. But as I was a widower, and no blood relation to your mother, my house was hardly any longer a suitable refuge for her and her babe. When she and Marshall Page died the following summer, we—my second wife, Rachel, and I—took you as our own. It was your mother's dying request that you should, if possible, be spared all knowledge of her sad history, and be reared as our own child."

"Nobly have you and Aunt Rachel tried to fulfill that dying request!" said the young man in a choked voice and with tears in his eyes, as he arose and threw his arm across his uncle's shoulder.

"And nobly have you repaid our love and care, my boy," the older man answered huskily. "You have given us filial love and obedience, and have never crossed our wishes in anything, except when you persisted in going off to Kentucky, instead of staying here and becoming a lawyer. But there! there! you were right, I dare say. You had no liking for a legal profession, and that new country across the mountains is a better place than this old, aristocratic State for a young, energetic fellow who has nothing but his native ability and a good education to assist him forward. So enough of these saddening recollections," he added in a more cheerful tone, rising briskly and crossing the room to a table whereon were scattered various papers. "Now for the business pertaining to this fine fellow, Abner Dudley Logan, as he must be called in future, I suppose, and who has just come into a rich inheritance."

"Of which inheritance," said Abner, joining his uncle at the table and picking up one of the papers, "the most valuable part, I'm inclined to think, will prove to be this Kentucky land. As for this Virginian estate, I fear from what you tell me that I can realize very little from it."

"That is true," agreed Richard. "Owing to the recklessness and prodigality of Stephen Hite, and the neglect and mismanagement of Col. Andrew Hite during the last ten years of his life, the estate is well-nigh worthless. Besides being heavily mortgaged, the land is worn, and the grand old brick mansion built over a hundred years ago by your great-grandfather, Abner Hite, is sadly out of repair—in fact, is almost in ruins."

"'Lord of Crestlands, an ancestral estate in the proud old dominion of Virginia,' sounds rich and grand," laughed Abner; "but is only as 'sounding brass and tinkling cymbals,' after all, without money to lift mortgages and to repair the breaches made by the prodigality and carelessness of my predecessors. And, uncle, how about the negroes I am to inherit?" taking up the copy of the will, and reading therefrom, "'I give and bequeath all houses, lands, slaves, live stock, goods and chattels of whatsoever nature of which I die possessed, etc.' How many of these dusky retainers are there remaining in my ancestral halls?"

"Only three," the doctor answered, "out of the troops of slaves which Andrew Hite owned twenty years ago. The others, I find, have been sold from time to time, to pay the gambling debts and for the other vicious habits of the precious Stephen, I presume. And of the three negroes still left, two are old and decrepit, which leaves but one of marketable value. But, Abner, my boy," jokingly added Dr. Dudley, "when you have realized a fortune out of that Henderson County land which you think so valuable, you can use this wealth to lift mortgages and to rebuild this home of your forefathers; so that you will be, after all, 'lord of Crestlands,' the ancestral home of the family."

"That plan doesn't appeal to me," said the young man, stoutly. "For one thing, I do not consider Crestlands as my ancestral estate. My Grandmother Hite lived there only until her marriage, and neither Hollises nor Logans had part or lot in it. No, my ancestral halls shall be of my own rearing," he said promptly. "I intend indeed to be one day known as 'Logan of Crestlands;' but not of that ramshackle old manor house in southeastern Virginia, but of a new Crestlands in that transmontine paradise, Kentucky. Crestlands!" he said musingly. "Yes, I like the name. It has a pleasing sound, and I mean that in its symbolical sense it shall be appropriate; for I intend that life in this home I shall found shall be one of purity, truth, love, and high ideals."

"And from the light in your eyes, and that hopeful, exultant smile, I suspect," said Uncle Richard, "that you have found the fair damsel who is to reign queen of this goodly domain, this new Crestlands. Is it not so?"

"I see visions and dream dreams of such a consummation," acknowledged the young man, flushing warmly; "but at present I am on probation with this lady fair. I shall know my fate when I return in November for her verdict. But, uncle, whatever my hopes in that direction, there's another hope almost equally dear—that my loving foster parents should share my prosperity. Leave this old home which must be lonely to you and Aunt Rachel now that I am gone and your daughters both married and gone from the home nest. You have toiled hard, and have borne the burden and heat of the day, and now in your declining years I would have your life all ease and sunshine. Come to me, and share my new home. I promise you comfort, cheer and happiness. Will you not come?"

"No, my boy," answered his uncle. "'Ephraim is joined to his idols.' I am too old to transplant to a new soil, however vigorous and genial it may be; and your Aunt Rachel would never consent to go so far from her daughters and their children. But some day, when that saucy, black-eyed siren (I'm certain she is saucy and black-eyed) shall have come to reign as mistress of your hearth and home, I'll cross the mountains, old as I am, to spend a few months with you. But all this is far in the future, and we have too much business still to transact before we can hope to get you thoroughly established in your rights, to plan so far ahead."

"As to this Kentucky land, Uncle Richard," said Abner, presently, "when and how did Uncle Hite acquire it?"

"Back in 1775, I believe, when he went out there on that exploring trip. Under the provisions of the 'Henderson grant' made that same year, Andrew Hite purchased, as I see from these papers, a tract of four hundred acres in that part of the Green River valley now known as Henderson County. But, instead of remaining in Kentucky and settling on his land, he returned to this State and joined the army. Now, this 'Henderson grant' was annulled in 1778 by the Virginia Assembly, but the next year, when the war burdens were beginning to press heavily on the country, the Assembly enacted a new land law which, besides arranging for the sale of lands in her western territory, also offered as military bounty tracts of these western lands to her soldiers. So, Hite, then a colonel in the Continental army, applied for and received from the State of Virginia this same land he had purchased under the old Henderson grant, and sixty acres adjoining. His title, therefore, was made doubly secure, and he seems to have been little troubled, as so many others were, by rival claimants. He was wounded in the battle of King's Mountain, and after his wound had healed, before rejoining the army, he managed to make another short visit to Kentucky. Upon his return, on his way to join Lafayette at Yorktown just before Cornwallis' surrender, Hite stopped at Lawsonville. It was soon after your Aunt Frances died, and when your mother was on the eve of marrying Marshall Page. After the war, Hite went to France, where he found this waif, Stephen Balleau, and brought him home as his adopted son, a year or so later. That is all I know about Andrew Hite. After that flying

visit to Lawsonville I never saw him, nor heard anything more directly of him, until I was notified last May of his death, and asked to be present at the reading of his will.

"This paper shows me," said Abner after a pause, "that Uncle Hite placed the management of his Kentucky affairs in the hands of an attorney, Anson Drane. Now, I know a young lawyer of Lexington named James Anson Drane. It must be the son of this old attorney."

"Yes," said Dr. Dudley, handing his nephew another document, "and from this paper you will find that this son, your James Anson Drane, was employed after the death of the father to act as Hite's factor. So your first step, when you return, will, of course, be to communicate with this young Drane."

CHAPTER XVII.

AT CANE RIDGE AGAIN

Abner returned to Kentucky early in October. At Pittsburg, on his return journey, he had again fallen in with Judge Sebastian, who intrusted him with a packet containing a sum of money, and with a package of books, requesting him to deliver them to Judge Innes. Arriving at Lexington, he delivered the money and books, and then went on to Cane Ridge, reaching Mason Rogers' about nightfall.

The next morning he set out for his farm, intending, after he had looked after affairs there, to ride on to Bourbonton to post a letter, as it was the day on which the once-a-week mail-coach passed through the village.

Over three months had elapsed since he had seen Betsy Gilcrest; and although he meant to obey her hint and wait until November to renew his suit, he felt that there was no prohibition against his seeing her. Accordingly, he purposed to return from Bourbonton by way of Oaklands.

On the way to the farm he met James Drane. Abner had not made known to the Rogers family the nature of the business which had called him to Virginia, nor did he now say anything to the lawyer about consulting him professionally; for he had resolved that Betsy should be the first to be told of his good fortune. Drane, after congratulating Abner upon his safe return, and expressing an intention of calling soon to learn the particulars of the visit to Virginia, added that he must now hasten forward, as he had business to transact at Bourbonton. Whereupon, Abner, thinking to save himself a ride to the village, handed him the letter to post, and then went on towards his farm.

As soon as Abner was out of sight, Drane took the letter from his pocket. When he saw its address, Judge Benjamin Sebastian, he uttered an ejaculation of surprise and pleasure. He rode on slowly for a time, in deep thought, then turned and galloped rapidly towards Oaklands. In a field adjoining the road was Hiram Gilcrest, superintending some negroes gathering corn. Drane, riding up to the fence, hailed Gilcrest, who advanced to meet him. Drane then took the letter from his pocket, and, showing its address, said, "You see, Major, my suspicions regarding your neighbor are well founded."

"Has Dudley returned?" asked Gilcrest in some surprise.

"Yes, last evening. He passed through Lexington yesterday. While there he doubtless gathered important information from others of the band, and this morning he asked me to post this letter, which, of course, transmits this information to Sebastian."

After some further conversation, Drane exacted a pledge from Gilcrest of absolute secrecy in regard to the letter, and, declining an invitation to dine at Oaklands, rode away.

Much to Abner's chagrin, he found, on arriving at Oaklands an hour after the interview between Drane and Gilcrest, that Betsy was on a visit to her friend, Mary Winston, who lived near Lexington. Mrs. Gilcrest, however, was unusually animated, and evinced great interest in his recent journey, and questioned him about people and places, changes and fashions in Virginia. Yet Abner could not but notice the lack of cordiality in Major Gilcrest. Thinking this due to recollection of the discussion just before the trip to Virginia, Abner tried to avoid all topics even remotely approaching church matters. He described his visit to Blennerhassett Island. Gilcrest, becoming interested, melted perceptibly, for a time; but when the young man, in the course of his narrative, mentioned the names of his two

traveling companions from Lexington to Blennerhassett Island, Gilcrest's manner not only lost its lately recovered geniality, but became harder and more frigid than ever.

After striving vainly to bring his host back to a more pleasant mood, Abner felt that he could not, in the face of Gilcrest's increasing sternness and coldness, prolong the visit. Although it was raining heavily, he declined Mrs. Gilcrest's timid invitation to remain to dinner, and left a little before noon. As he rode home through the rain he thought over every trifling incident of his hour at Oaklands. He recalled every topic of conversation, without finding a clue to the enigma. "He's harking back to my old transgression in upholding Stone," was his conclusion. "Interest in the account of my journey did for a time beguile him into forgetfulness of my offense, but his mind at last reverted to it; hence his return to the Frigid Zone. It was a regular freeze-out toward the end. If he were not Betty's father, I'd have nothing more to do with him. But what a fool I was to discuss theological matters with him in the first place! After all, this church trouble is no affair of mine, and Stone did not need my advocacy; he's quite able, single-handed, to play St. George to the dragon of sectarianism that trails its length through this region. A pretty time I'll have now, trying to reinstate myself in the old gentleman's good graces! I hope to heaven something will happen to call him out of the way the first of November; for see Betty then I will, no matter what happens."

When James Drane, after his talk with Gilcrest, reached the main thoroughfare, instead of choosing the turning towards Bourbonton, he took the opposite course towards Lexington. As soon as he was in his office, and had barred his door, he carefully cut around the seal of Abner's letter. It contained merely a few lines stating that the money and books had been delivered to Innes.

"The devil take it!" he ejaculated. "This shows nothing as to whether Sebastian and Murray took advantage of their opportunity to sound the schoolmaster; and I now very much doubt if the self-sufficient young prig can be drawn into our schemes. However, showing the address to Gilcrest this morning did my own personal cause a good turn. Now, how to follow up this advantage? I wonder if I could counterfeit Sebastian's peculiar chirography." From an inner locked drawer of his escritoire he took a small metal box, and from a number of papers contained therein he selected a letter which he examined closely.

"No use to try imitation, when the original document will serve my purpose as well or better," he finally concluded. "The initials fit perfectly; and, thanks to Sebastian's cunning and to our cipher code, this letter is so obscurely worded that Gilcrest can gain from it no knowledge of our plans. But I'll have to wait some time yet in order to tell him a plausible tale. In the meanwhile, it would be well to try my skill at counterfeiting Dudley's writing. His precise, schoolmasterly hand would surely be easier to imitate than Sebastian's queer, crabbed characters, and there's no telling how or when my skill may be of use to me. But how to get more material to work upon? This short note to Sebastian isn't enough. Couldn't I get Dudley to copy some law papers for me?" He rose and paced the floor in deep thought. Finally he succeeded in elaborating a plan which would suit his purpose.

CHAPTER XVIII.

DRANE PRACTICES PENMANSHIP

One morning in October, Drane, who at this time seemed to have business demanding his frequent presence at Cane Ridge, passed by the Rogers' homestead just as Abner was coming from the house. The two conversed for a time at the stile, then Drane, as he was preparing to ride on, asked, "Any commissions I can execute for you in town, Dudley?"

"No," Abner replied, "I believe not; I was in Lexington myself Thursday. But stay," he added, "you may post a letter, if you will be so kind. Wait a minute," and he ran to the house and soon returned with a letter which he handed Drane.

This missive, which the lawyer opened as soon as he was in the privacy of his room, was addressed to Chas. M. Brady, Williamsburg, Virginia, and read as follows:

CANE RIDGE, Oct. the 5, 1802.

Honored Sir;—I was in Lexington again on Thursday; saw Morrison, and del'v'd y'r enclosure containing recommendations, etc. But just now,

owing to the absence of two of the trustees, John Meeks and Israel Power, I can accomplish nothing. Judge Barr favors y'r appointment, but he is so handicapped that he can do very little. I learn from a trustworthy informant that Ezra Spaiter, of Milledgeville, is also an applicant for this professorship. Therefore, it would not be advisable to open negotiations with Ingraham, for I know that he is strongly in favor of Spaiter. Nor do I think it would be well to make application through Brown, who, I learn, contemplates withdrawing altogether from the University. Consequently, I advise that you make no further move in this matter until you are apprised of Power's return. I will see him and Tarr as soon as possible; and you may rest assured that I will do all I can for you.

Y'r ob't, humble serv't to command,

Abner Dudley Logan.

To Charles M. Brady,
Williamsburg, Va.

"Now, what does this mean?" Drane thought as he saw the full signature, Abner Dudley Logan. "Has the fellow been adopting an alias? I must investigate this matter. But meanwhile I've another task before me," and he spread the letter before him on the table, drew forth writing materials, and set to work. The next evening and the next found him similarly engaged, until by dint of repeated effort and close observation, aided by natural aptitude for such work, he produced a fair counterfeit of Abner's writing. While thus engaged, another scheme presented itself to his fertile brain. To carry out this scheme, he first made a copy of the letter to Brady. The wording was the same as that of the original, and the penmanship so good an imitation that only a suspicious and close observer could detect the difference.

"As this Brady is far away, and probably not so well acquainted with the schoolmaster's fist as Gilcrest is, it will be safer to send my copy to him," Drane decided, "and manipulate the original for the Major's benefit. If this, in conjunction with that other document I shall show at the same time, doesn't put an end to that upstart's chances with Gilcrest's daughter, I'm much out of my reckoning. Ah, Betty! bewitching, tormenting Betty! I'll have you yet in spite of your stand-off airs and half-veiled scorn of James Anson Drane."

The next afternoon found this unscrupulous plotter closeted with Major Gilcrest in the pleasant library at Oaklands.

First pledging Gilcrest to absolute secrecy, Drane submitted a letter beginning with the address, "Dear A. D.," and signed with the initials "B. S." Much of the letter was couched in language so obscure as to bear no precise meaning without a verbal interpretation which, the letter stated, would be given by the bearer, S. Swartwourt, to whom "A. D." was referred. The letter alluded to the confidence the writer had hitherto placed in "A. D.," and to the former correspondence between them. It also mentioned an enclosure from "Gen. W.," written in cipher, to which cipher "B. S." stated "A. D." had a key. "B. S." ended his letter with the request that the enclosure from "W." be shown to Messrs. "M." and "A.," and then promptly forwarded to "T. P."

Before showing this communication from "B. S." Drane had torn off that part which bore the date, "May 2, 1802," and at the bottom of the page had added in a fair likeness of the handwriting of "B. S.," the date, "Oct. 12, 1802."

It will be remembered that at this period there was a renewal of the old rumors in regard to Spanish intrigues, and that Gilcrest on April court day had seen Abner in what had appeared to be a confidential conversation with Wilkinson, Sebastian and Murray; and also that Abner, when calling at Oaklands after his return from Virginia, had mentioned traveling in the company of Sebastian and Murray and stopping with them at Blennerhassett Island. Moreover, early in the year, Gilcrest, through his friend, Dr. Bullock, of Louisville, had been apprised of a conspiracy in which Thomas Power, a Spanish emissary, and the three prominent Kentuckians, Wilkinson, Sebastian and Murray, were suspected of being involved. So great was Gilcrest's infatuation for Drane, he had violated his promise made to Bullock, and had hinted of these intrigues to Drane, who thus had much material to work upon in his attempt to prejudice Gilcrest against Betsy's lover.

"How in the world did this paper fall into your hands?" was Gilcrest's first query, after examining the communication of "B. S."

"Wait," Drane answered, "until you have seen this," placing before the old gentleman the following torn and crumpled fragment:

Honored Sir:—I was in Lexington again
and del'v'd y'r enclosure containing reco
owing to the absence of two of the
Power, I can accomplish nothing. Jud
but he is so handicapped that he ca
a trustworthy informant that Ez
also an applicant for this pro
be advisable to open negotiation
he is strongly in favor of Spai
well to make application through B
withdrawing altogether from the Uni
that you make no further move in th
ed of Power's return. I will see him
and you may rest assured that I will

Y'r ob't, humble serv't to

Abner Dudley

After this, too, had been examined, Drane explained. A short while before, he said, he was returning from a ride to Frankfort, and as he was on the road just by the woodland pasture belonging to Mason Rogers, had dismounted to dislodge a stone from his horse's foot. As he was preparing to remount, he spied a folded paper peeping out from some underbrush on the roadside. He had examined it. It was this enigmatical letter from "B. S." to "A. D." "I had my strong suspicions," Drane continued, "as to the identity of both writer and recipient; but, of course, not being sure that the document belonged to Abner Dudley, I did not think it wise to give it to him. Furthermore, it seemed that in view of what you had revealed to me in regard to certain malignant conspiracies with the Spanish Government, it behooved me to be cautious. It was too late in the day to see you; so I returned home, resolving that at the first opportunity I'd advise with you. The very day after finding that letter, last Thursday afternoon, Dudley rushed into my office and asked for writing materials. I furnished what he required, and he sat at my desk to write. He made several attempts and ruined several sheets of paper, which he tore up and tossed into the fire—all save this scrap," indicating the fragment shown above, "which lay on the floor under the desk and escaped his notice. He finally wrote a letter to suit him. This he sealed and directed, and then, saying a messenger was waiting, he thanked me hurriedly and rushed out. I have little doubt that this messenger was the 'S. Swartwourt' mentioned in 'B. S.'s' letter; for Swartwourt was in town that Thursday. I had seen him at noon at the tavern in close converse with William Murray, Isaac Adamson (in all likelihood, the Messrs. 'M.' and 'A.' of 'B. S.'s' letter), and Abner Dudley, who is as certainly 'A. D.' as 'B. S.' is Benjamin Sebastian; and that torn fragment before you is that shameless young hypocrite's answer to Sebastian's letter of October 12."

"You are undoubtedly correct in your surmises," said Gilcrest when Drane had finished. "The 'Power' referred to in this torn piece, and the 'T. P.' referred to in the letter signed 'B. S.,' both mean that vile and most dangerous diplomat, Thomas Power; and, see, Dudley mentions 'the enclosure,' too, which he had probably shown to Murray and Adamson, and then forwarded to Thomas Power. Notice, too, the expression in Dudley's letter, 'he is strongly in favor of Spai'—meaning, of course, Spain; and also this line, 'withdrawing altogether from the Uni', which last word, with its missing letters supplied, would be Union. Why, man, this is a most dangerous conspiracy against the Federal Government! We must be very wary indeed, if we would succeed in bringing the whole matter to light. But how careless of Dudley," he continued after a moment, "to lose that letter by the roadside! It is unlike his usual caution, and certainly not in keeping with the diabolical cunning and consummate skill with which the movers in this plot appear to be working. However, as the enclosure was already forwarded, and as the letter itself without the verbal interpretation is so obscure as to have no real meaning for one not in the scheme, I presume Dudley was not as cautious as he would have been had he dreamed that any one in this neighborhood had an inkling of these nefarious plots they are concocting."

After some further consultation and further pledges between Drane and Gilcrest as to caution and silence, the former prepared to leave.

"No, James," said Gilcrest, when the lawyer reached out to get the two documents, "you are impetuous and rather thoughtless; and besides, you are frequently away from home; so I had better take these papers into my charge for safe-keeping. You'll be showing them to some one, or, rather, somebody may get at them while you are out of town, and——"

"But, Major Gilcrest," remonstrated Drane, secretly much frightened at this unexpected move on the part of his confidant, "I—I found them, and they belong to me. I assure you they will be perfectly secure with me, and—and—I——"

"But they'll be safer with me," persisted Gilcrest.

James argued and remonstrated as much as he dared without endangering by overeagerness his own nefarious little plot; but he could not shake the old gentleman's purpose, and at last he had to depart, thoroughly discomfited. Much enraged he was, too, as he rode homeward, and fully determined, as he said, "to regain possession of those two documents, in spite of that blamed, stubborn old blockhead, Hiram Gilcrest."

CHAPTER XIX.

THE BETROTHAL

"For I'll believe I have his heart,
As much as he has mine."

Betsy came home the last week in October. Even her mother, the least observant of women, noticed her daughter's unusual silence and restlessness for the first few days after her return, and, attributing it to loneliness, wished Betty had brought Mary Winston home with her for a visit.

"Rantin' 'roun' 'mong fine folks doan seem to 'gree wid you, honey," old Aunt Dilsey said one morning when she found Betsy in the parlor, her hands folded listlessly on the unheeded sewing in her lap, as she gazed dreamily before her. "You'se all onsettled sence you'se come home. Things would go tah rack an' ruin heah, wid yo' ma allus ailin', an' you so no-'count, ef 'twan't fur ole Dilsey tah keep dese lazy niggahs frum gwinetah sleep en thah tracks. I usetah think you'd be a he'p an' a comfo't to yo' old brack mammy, an' turn out ez fine a man'ger an' housekeepah ez Miss Abby; but you hain't been yo'se'f sence thet camp-meetin'. I 'lowed et fust 'twuz too much 'ligion wuckin' in you, an' thought it would bring you all right to go to Miss Mary Winston's fine place; but you'se come back wussen evah. You hain't gwinetah be sick, is you, chile? One minit you looks lak thah warn't a drap o' blood in yo' body, then suddent lak, you flash up an' look so narvous an' so excited thet I fears you'se tekin' the fevahs."

"No, mammy, I'm not the least sick. Nothing ails me, except that I feel the change a little from the gay times I've been having at Maybrook. I'll be all right presently."

Soon after dinner upon the first day of November, Betsy, evading Aunt Dilsey's watchful eyes, called Jock, the old house-dog who was dozing in the south porch, and set off for a ramble. The balmy air and the brisk walk refreshed her, and by the time she reached the bars separating the upper from the lower woods, she felt lighter hearted than she had for a long time. Her eyes glowed with exercise, a bright tinge showed in her cheeks, and her red cloak and brown quilted bonnet lined with crimson made a warm bit of color in the landscape, and blended harmoniously with the rich shades of the trees. Nature was steeped in that tender, dreamy haze peculiar to Indian Summer, and the air held a pleasing odor like that of burning leaves. The songbirds had gone away to winter homes in the South, and the stillness of the forest was broken only by the dropping of nuts from the hickory-trees.

"The first day of November!" she thought, as she stood leaning on the bars, with old Jock lying at her feet. "I wonder how soon he will come," and she smiled tenderly. "Not to-day or to-morrow, I know; for he has gone to Lexington again, so Susan said, and will not be back until the last of the week. It has been four months since I saw him. Perhaps I should not have kept him so long in suspense, but a girl should not be too easily won, and he must never know how nearly I came to complete surrender when he rode by my side that May day. How hard it was to resist the pleading tenderness of his eyes! Oh, Abner, Abner! how I love you!" she murmured, leaning her head upon the bars.

Approaching footsteps made no noise on the carpeting of leaves and moss in the pathway over which she had come; and Betty, absorbed in her love and yearning, did not look up, even when Jock gave a joyous bark of welcome to the young man standing behind her.

"***I have come for my answer, Betty.***"

"I have come for my answer, Betty," he said, laying his hand over hers clasped on the topmost bar.

Her eyes lit up with gladness as she raised her face, suffused with crimson, toward him; but she uttered no word of welcome.

"You surely expected me," he said; "you did not think I'd wait one hour beyond the time, did you? Ah, sweetheart, did you but know what a torment of suspense and longing these last six months have been, you'd—— But now it's November, your favorite month, you said, because Thanksgiving comes in it. So now, my darling, say the word that alone can give me a thankful heart. You'll listen to me now, won't you, dear?" he asked of her as she still stood in trembling silence.

"I suppose I must, sir," she said, dimpling and blushing, with a saucy toss of her head. "I can't very well stop my ears, seeing that you have imprisoned both hands. Oh, don't! don't! I haven't pledged myself yet," she stammered, as he, raising her hands, drew them around his neck, folded her in his arms, and kissed her brow. Then, still holding her closely in one arm, with the other he turned her face to meet his, murmuring, "Not just your forehead, sweetness—O sweetheart! darling! wife!" as his lips closed over hers in a clinging kiss. "It is thus I take my pledge. You are mine, mine, you bewildering, tormenting Betty."

"No! no!" she protested stammeringly, as she struggled to free herself. "Oh, you're too—too—you hold me so close! You lose count of time and season, sir," she added presently with an attempt at playfulness, and trying to assume an ease and nonchalance she was far from feeling. "This is November, remember—solemn, quiet Thanksgiving time. The summer of fulfillment hasn't come yet."

"Yes, it has," boldly asserted her lover. "Winter is past, and summer is here—glorious, satisfying harvest time—and—and—it is thus I garner in my wealth," he murmured with tender rapture, gathering her still closer, and kissing the sweet eyes and throat and mouth. "No more half-way measures between us now! No more tormenting reserve! You trust me, sweetheart? You give yourself to me, do you not?"

"I don't seem to have much liberty of choice," she replied with a resumption of her old sauciness, as she again freed herself from his embrace. "As you have already stolen my heart, I may as well trust you with the rest—and I do, I do," she added solemnly. "My welfare, my happiness, my life itself, I commit to your keeping," placing both hands in his. "I give all unreservedly. You are worthy the trust."

"No," she said presently, in answer to the inevitable question as to when she had first begun to love him; "I shan't tell you that. You're too conceited and masterful as it is."

"But you have promised to tell me everything," he said teasingly.

"No, some things are better left unsaid, and if I were to tell you that, I'd never be able to get the upper hand with you again."

"But you know you always did obey me," he answered, smiling reminiscently, "though it was often with a sweet rebellious look in your eyes; and besides, a wife is bound to obey her husband."

"I don't know about that, sir. If that is the rule, I mean to be the exception that proves it; for I fully intend that you shall be the submissive one in our future relationship."

"In that case, fair lady mine, the sooner you marry me, the better; for even with so competent a ruler as yourself, it will take long and close application on my part to learn the role of submissive husband. You see, my position of schoolmaster has weakened my natural talent for meekness and submission, so that at present these qualities are far from being in perfect condition."

"You needn't tell me that," rejoined Betsy, with a demure smile and nodding her head sagely. "Cupid hasn't so blindfolded me but that I can still see a wee bit out of the corner of my eye—well enough, at least, to perceive that my lover has several imperfections in addition to a lack of meekness."

"That, my dear, isn't the fault of Cupid's bandages, but it is due to your always having held me at a distance," he answered placidly, drawing her nearer to him. "Seen at close range, these little peculiarities of mine, which you have labeled defects, will turn out to be budding virtues of the finest quality."

"Ah, then, most perfect and approved good master, you must give me back my pledge. I could stand a few faults and minor vices in my future lord; but such an array of excellencies appals me. I wed you not, Sir Paragon," she said, looking him full in the face and then dropping him a mocking little courtesy.

"'By my troth and holidame,' I could have better spared a better Betty!" Abner exclaimed with mock fervor. "No, no, sweet mistress mine, rather than resign this dimpled hand of thine, I'll begin at once to uproot all my promising little sprouts of virtue, and plant in their stead an assortment of fine, robust misdemeanors, for which, in truth, the soil is well adapted."

"Very well, then," she said with an air of resignation, "I foresee that I shall have to grow a few additional faults myself, to compete with you."

"And I don't think, my dearest, that you'll have much difficulty in doing so," was his audacious rejoinder, as he pinched her cheek. "Natural aptitude counts for a great deal, you know."

"Methinks, my lord, too much happiness hath weakened thy brain; what nonsense thou dost chatter," and she laughed with joyous abandon.

"Oh, anybody can talk sense, but it takes a heap o' sense to talk nonsense sensibly," he said suavely, with a fine air of self-complacency. "Until to-day I did not know I had it in me to be so brilliant a conversationalist. Happiness is bringing out all my latent abilities. Ah, Betty, sweetest, dearest, most bewitching of girls," he added, fervently, "how happy you have made me!"

They were now seated on a fallen tree, he indulging in a blissful sense of happiness realized, she sitting quiet and somewhat pensive. Presently he asked: "Of what are you thinking? Your brown eyes are filled with something that is almost sadness. Have you any regrets, any unfilled wish? I haven't—except that November might have come sooner."

"Yes, I have a regret," said Betty, laying her hand upon his shoulder and looking wistfully at him. "I give you everything—my present, my future, and my past; but you—I know you love me now, but I am not the one you loved first. That is what makes me sad. I want your past as well as your present and future. Perhaps you think I didn't see. You supposed, when you were so miserable after Abby went away, that I didn't understand! Many and many a night have I lain awake, sorrowing over your sorrow and my inability to help you."

"Listen to me, Betty dear. My feeling for your cousin, though pure and tender, was as nothing compared to what I have for you. Even when I was most under the spell of her beauty and sweetness, I thought of you as one who might well stir the pulse and thrill the heart of any man not made armor-proof by love for another."

"But you did love Cousin Abby?" she questioned with another wistful, half-timid look.

"Yes, I did, in a dreamy, poetical way. Or, rather, I was in love with love and romance, and all that, and she seemed the embodiment of beauty and poetry. But I never touched even the outer edges of her susceptibilities, and it was this complete unresponsiveness that healed my wound, even before I was aware. A man, warm-blooded, ardent, as I am, must have an answering love to keep his own alive. There was nothing in that first romantic feeling that need give you a pang of regret. It was a mere boyish fancy; this, dear, is the love of my manhood. And in fact, my darling, I don't believe there is so much as a kiss to choose between your love for me and mine for you. If there is," he added humorously, "this will restore the balance," and he kissed her fondly. "And now, my dear girl," he went on, speaking soberly, but with a glad light in his eyes, "I have great news for you; but first, let me ask, by what name do you propose to be known when we are married?"

"Well," exclaimed the girl in some bewilderment, "I said awhile ago that happiness had addled your brains; but I really did not suspect the trouble to be so serious as this. By what name, pray, should I be known but that of Mistress Betsy Dudley—ugly though it be? Oh, I see!" she cried, thinking she understood his meaning. "You don't like the name Betsy. Neither do I. It's perfectly horrid; and it is my standing grievance against my parents that they saddled upon their innocent babe so uncouth a prenomen. If father did wish to honor his mother by endowing his first-born with the name, why could he not have softened it into Betty, or Bettina, or Bessie, or, better still, have christened me Elizabeth, instead of insisting, as he always does, that I shall be called Betsy? I'll tell you what," she added archly, "when I'm married, I shall insist that everybody shall address me as Elizabeth. Isn't that more to your taste, my lord?"

"Elizabeth what?" he persisted.

"Upon my word, I begin to think you really are daft! Why, Elizabeth Dudley, of course," she said, flushing and looking shy and embarrassed; "that is, unless you mean for me to wed some saner man than this Abner Dudley, Esquire," she added saucily.

"Would not the name Elizabeth or Betty or Betsy Logan suit you better?" asked her lover, who then proceeded to tell her all.

She was greatly astonished, and rejoiced to learn of his brightened worldly prospects; but when he told her his full name, her countenance changed.

He was too absorbed to note this, and went on: "The question now is, my dearest, how soon will you marry me? I need you now. Every day, every hour, I long for you, my pet. So I shall speak to your father at once. For some time he has been rather cool with me—ever since last summer, when I argued with him about Barton Stone's views. But he's too just and reasonable to refuse me your hand, upon no other objection than that I did not side with him in a church quarrel. I will see him to-morrow, and——"

"No, no!" Betsy interrupted, "do not speak with him yet; and please do not let him know that your name is Logan. Let me tell him that, and also about your new inheritance."

"But, my dear girl, why should not I tell him?"

"I can't make it plain to you, I'm afraid," answered Betty; "but I have an instinctive feeling that things will not run at all smoothly—just at first, you know—when he learns your news."

"All the more reason, then," Abner said, "for my telling him at once, and thus get over this rough part as soon as possible."

"No, please let me speak to father first," urged Betsy.

"I fail to see why you should wish to do so," Abner said; "and it certainly is my duty to speak to your father myself. Nor would it be manly in me to shirk this duty off upon you."

"As I said," Betsy persisted, "I can't make my meaning clear to you. In truth, I can't understand myself why I wish this; but of one thing I am quite sure, both my father and mother, for some unknown cause, are greatly prejudiced against the name 'Logan.' Mother, in particular, abhors it. At some period of her life, she must have had some terrible knowledge of some one of the name—you know there are many Logans in this State and in Virginia—but whatever the reason for her extreme aversion to the name, that aversion certainly exists. Therefore, it behooves us to be very tactful in telling father and mother that you are a Logan. Just now I feel sure it would be unwise to tell them; for mother is unusually weak and nervous this fall, and father is so harassed over this church trouble that he is irritable and unreasonable, even with mother and me. We can't very well be married before spring, anyway; and long before then father'll be as cordial as ever with you; and he and mother will be fully reconciled to your new name, too. I'm your promised wife, and—and—I love you with all my heart. Isn't that happiness enough for you for awhile?"

"But, dearest, I think your parents should be told at once that you are my betrothed wife. I don't like any appearance of secrecy. I'm too proud of my love for that."

"No," Betsy still urged, "I know father better than you do. Please be guided by me in this, and say nothing to him for awhile."

"But I can not delay much longer to make public that my name is Logan, and about my newly acquired property. There's business to be transacted in regard to this Henderson County land; and your father must inevitably soon hear of my name, from some one; and it would be better from me than from an outsider."

However, Abner finally yielded to Betsy's pleadings, and agreed that they should take no one into their confidence at present in regard to their engagement; and that he should tell the Rogerses and James Drane about his real name, and of the inheritance left him by the will of the late Colonel Hite.

"And you mustn't even come to see me," said Betty. "In father's present mood it would only irritate him to have you come. Besides, if you did come, they'd be sure to find us out; for we couldn't act toward each other just in the old, quiet, friendly way—at least, I couldn't and—and—oh, I know it will be hard, this restraint, this secrecy; not to see you, and not to let every one know that we are pledged to each other. But for my sake, and because it is for the best, you will be patient, won't you?"

"I will try; but Heaven send your father a speedy change of heart toward your poor lover!" Abner fervently exclaimed as he kissed Betty good-by.

CHAPTER XX.

THE LONE GRAVE IN THE MOUNTAINS

That same evening, Abner took Mr. and Mrs. Rogers into his confidence concerning his name, and the business which had called him to Virginia. The good couple were greatly excited, and they could not have been more delighted had the inheritance fallen to one of their own children.

A few days later, Abner went to see James Drane.

"So old Colonel Hite is dead, and you are his heir," was Drane's astonished exclamation when his client had explained his business, and had shown a copy of the will. "I congratulate you most heartily upon your good fortune. Of course, I know all about this Henderson County tract; for my father was employed to survey it, and to record the claim, and afterwards to transact all business pertaining to it, until his death, five years ago; then I was employed as agent. I have here in my escritoire all papers relative to the business, and copies of all correspondence which passed between father and Colonel Hite. Colonel Hite visited Kentucky in '80 or '81, when I was a small boy; but I remember the circumstance. From what I can recall of him as he appeared then, and from what I gather from his correspondence since, I judge him to have been a very eccentric man. For several years after the tract came into Hite's possession, my father had considerable difficulty with rival claimants—squatters, you know, who claimed it by right of first settlement; but all such difficulties were adjusted long before the agency fell into my hands, and now I can foresee no trouble, nor any very great delay, in establishing you in your rights—to this part of your inheritance, at least. As to the Virginian estate, of course, you have already placed your interests in the hands of some competent attorney in that State, and have complied with all the necessary legal formalities. Now, in regard to this land of which I have been acting as factor," Drane continued, examining some papers which he had taken out of his desk. "Samuel Whitaker, whose claim adjoins the southeastern boundary of the Hite section, pays a yearly rental of forty-six dollars for 258 acres of the Hite land; and Daniel Pratt, who owns the homestead adjoining the southwestern boundary, holds a ten years' lease (three of which are unexpired) to 285 more acres. The remainder of the section—ninety-seven acres—lying on Buffalo Creek, is low and swampy, and has never been reclaimed."

A few more business details were explained, and then Abner told the lawyer, as he had already told the Rogerses, that for the present—until all business relative to the winding up of the Hite estate was completed—he preferred to be known only as Abner Dudley. He then took his departure, leaving with Drane a copy of the will.

When his client had gone, the lawyer barred his door, and then carefully examined the will. Although he had had the art to hide his feelings during the interview just closed, he was more astonished and puzzled than he had ever been before. Several months before this, in looking through some documents pertaining to the Gilcrest property, he had made two startling discoveries: First, that Mrs. Gilcrest's maiden name was Sarah Jane Pepper, instead of Jane Temple, as even her own children supposed it to be. Second, that she was a widow when Hiram Gilcrest married her, and that her first husband had been a John Logan who was killed in the battle of Monmouth Court-house. At the time when Drane had made these discoveries, Gilcrest had explained that Mrs. Gilcrest's first husband had been a worthless, bad fellow, and that for that reason her desire was that her children should be kept in ignorance of her ever having made this first marriage. On this account, and for another reason which Gilcrest did not confide to Drane, she had led her children to believe that her maiden name was Jane Temple, her maternal grandmother's maiden name.

Abner had stated that his father was John Logan, a soldier in the Continental army, who was killed in the battle of Monmouth Court-house. "It may be a mere coincidence," thought Drane, "that two men named John Logan were killed in that battle; but, then, why should this fellow have, until now, worn the name of Dudley? Then, there's the unusual wording of the will," and he seized the document and read the words, "'to her' (Mary Belle Hollis Page) 'legitimate offspring, if any.' 'There's something rotten in the state of Denmark'," was Drane's conclusion; "but how to discover it? Let me see, I'd better not mention this to old Gilcrest yet awhile; and certainly I must let no inkling of my suspicions escape to this Abner Dudley, or Abner Logan, or Page, or whatever his right name may be —why, good Lord! I don't believe he has a legitimate right to any name whatsoever. And this is the fine gentleman who dares lift his eyes to the peerless Betty! I needn't have run the risk I did in forging that letter, it seems; this will, I suspect, settle the schoolmaster's pretensions even more effectually, and with no danger to myself, either. But here, if his father and Madame Gilcrest's first husband were one and the same man, I must work very cautiously until I ascertain the exact date of the John Logan alliance with Sarah Jane and that of his connection with Mary Belle. It would be a pretty kettle of fish if I should take old Hiram into my confidence, and it should afterwards be revealed that Sarah Jane was the paramour and Mary Belle the true wife. Pshaw! that's not probable. Then, there's Hite's singular expression, 'to her legitimate offspring.' What a fine thing it would be to discover that Mrs. Gilcrest is Hite's lawful legatee. To do the schoolmaster justice, though, I believe him entirely innocent of intentional deception in this matter; but I'd stake my reputation for acuteness that this old Richard Dudley knows—only, of course, he bases his nephew's claim upon the fact that Mary Hollis Page was still living at the time Hite made this insane will. Abner Dudley, or Abner Logan, as the case may be, stated that she died in August, 1782. My first step must be to ascertain if this be correct. Let me see, Tom Gaines used to live in Lawsonville, and is still living in Culpeper County. I'll write him for information. On account of his connection with our Spanish schemes he can be trusted to mention my letter to no one. I'll write him immediately, and, while waiting his reply, I'll hover about Oaklands as much as possible, and try to ascertain the date of the Logan-Pepper alliance; and at the same time make another effort to recover possession of Sebastian's letter and that dangerous little specimen of forgery."

The postal system of our country was a slow business in that day and time; but, in due course, Drane had Gaines' reply. From this he learned that a certain old tombstone in the Lawsonville graveyard bore this inscription:

MARY BELLE HOLLIS PAGE
born Feb'y 16th, 1758
died Aug. 21st, 1782.

Other information contained in Gaines' letter was this, Mrs. Page had not died at Lawsonville, notwithstanding the tablet erected there to her memory. She had married Marshall Page in October, 1781, and she and her husband and the little Abner had migrated to Kentucky. Late in the next year, a brother of Marshall Page, who had accompanied them to Kentucky, returned to Lawsonville with the little boy, Abner Logan, and the intelligence that Marshall Page had been killed by Indians, and that Mary Page had died at Bryan's Station. The child had been committed to the care of Mrs. Page's relations in Lawsonville, the Dudleys, who had adopted him. Drane's informant also wrote that it had always been the impression with the people of Lawsonville that Mary Hollis had not been legally married to Abner's father, but that she had been entrapped into a form of marriage with John Logan at a time when he had a wife still living.

"By the heavens above, this is the strangest affair that ever came within my ken!" said James Drane after reading Gaines' letter. "Why, I verily believe that the dainty schoolmaster is a bastard; and, what is more, that he has no claim to the Hite fortune. He

certainly has not, if my surmises concerning that half-forgotten episode of that hamlet in the Cumberland Mountains be correct."

The episode to which he referred was this. He, when a boy of ten, had once accompanied his father on a visit into southwestern Virginia. On the third day of their journey night had overtaken them near Centerton, a little settlement of five or six cabins in the Cumberland Mountains. They had stopped for shelter at one of these cabins, owned by a family named Wheeler. The next morning there was a terrible rain storm which had detained the travelers in the village until the following day. While there James had seen a neglected grave marked by a wooden slab, on the mountain-side, just back of the Wheelers' cabin. He was filled with boyish curiosity concerning this lonely grave, and had asked its history.

Several years before, so Mrs. Wheeler had told him, some emigrants on their way into Kentucky had stopped at the Wheeler cabin. The wife of one of these emigrants had been bitten or stung on the cheek by some poisonous reptile while the party was camping in the mountains the night before. The poor woman was suffering horribly when they reached the Wheelers', and she died there the next day from the effects of the venomous wound in her face. They buried her under the trees back of the cabin, and her husband cut her name, age and the date of her death upon that oak slab, and placed it as a headstone to mark the last resting-place of his wife. He and the other emigrants then continued on their journey.

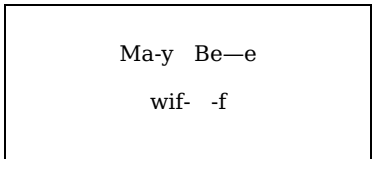
This sad story and the lonely grave on the mountainside had made a deep impression upon the lad, James Drane. He now recalled the story, and he was sure that the name upon that slab was Mary Page. Moreover, he believed that the date recorded on the wooden slab was that of a day of the spring of 1782. After much reflection, Drane decided to tell Major Gilcrest of these discoveries and surmises.

To say that Hiram Gilcrest was amazed at the story which the lawyer related would but feebly express his state of mind. "If our suspicions are correct," he said when he had thought over Drane's story, "as to the date of this woman's death, and if this son of hers is illegitimate, he has no rights at all, under the provisions of this will, to the Hite estates. My wife, in that case, is the heir; and, by heaven, she shall have her rights! It is not that I care so much for the monetary value of what this Andrew Hite left. I am not prompted by mercenary motives; for I have plenty to keep my wife and children in comfort, nor would I covet aught that lawfully or justly belonged to another; but I do not mean to be cheated, or to allow my wife to be cheated, out of her just rights by the crafty schemes of this Dr. Richard Dudley in behalf of his base-born nephew. I must say, though, that I have considerable commiseration for this young fellow, who is, I believe, not a party—that is, an intentional party—to this fraudulent scheme, notwithstanding his undoubted entanglement in those political plots of Sebastian, Wilkinson and Powers. I protest, I was never in all my life so deceived in a man as I have been in Abner Dudley, or Logan, if he pleases; and I flatter myself, too, upon being a pretty good judge of character. I was much taken with him when he first came to this community. I liked his face, his conversation, and his general bearing, and would have taken oath that he was one to be trusted in all things."

"We must move warily in this matter, James," was the Major's caution, after musing awhile, "until the affair is in shape to be proven in court. I would spare my wife all agitation, if it were possible. She is in an extremely weak, nervous condition, and until it is absolutely necessary to do so, I wish her to know nothing of this matter; and even when it must be brought up in court, I want to spare her all the details of the affair—if that can be done; for any mention of the matter will cost her much excitement and will bring before her again all her old troubles."

After further consultation and many admonitions from Gilcrest as to caution and secrecy, it was agreed that the lawyer should go at once to Centerton.

He started the next morning. Reaching there three days later, he could find no trace of the Wheelers. Their cabin was now occupied by another family who knew nothing of the former occupants except that they had moved away eight years since, and that their present habitation was supposed to be somewhere in the mountains of northern Georgia. No one now living at Centerton could give any information about the grave on the mountain-side. Drane visited it. It was now but a sunken spot covered with a tangle of vines and weeds. The slab was still there, but it was prone on the ground, face downwards, and was much worn and defaced. Drane copied in his note-book all of the inscription that was legible:



Mar—— Page

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Ma-ch 9 1-82

-ged 22

CHAPTER XXI.

GILCREST'S ATTITUDE

Several weeks wore away, and still no one except Major Gilcrest, his daughter, the Rogers family and James Drane was aware of the change in Abner's worldly prospects. As to his business affairs, he felt no uneasiness; for he knew that his interests in Virginia were being looked after by Dr. Dudley; and in regard to the Henderson County land, he agreed with Drane that as it was still in the hands of tenants, nothing need be done at present towards making known his ownership. But he became extremely impatient over the unsettled state of his love affair.

Major Gilcrest, instead of growing more like his former self, became sterner, if possible, and had little to do with his neighbors. Betsy, strong in the belief that time would effect a favorable change in her father's attitude, still pleaded with Abner not to speak with him.

James Drane was often at Oaklands, and Abner, aware of this, while he, Betsy's betrothed husband, was prohibited from visiting her, grew more and more moody and impatient, and sometimes in his despondency he pictured the girl as listening with growing interest to Drane's entertaining talk, and yielding more and more to his fascination.

"With her headstrong old father so set against me, and so confoundedly wrapped up in Drane, it would be no great wonder if Betty were finally stolen from me," thought Abner bitterly, one afternoon when he knew that the lawyer was at Oaklands. He had little heart for social gayeties of the neighborhood, although he sometimes went to these gatherings in the hope of seeing Betsy. Yet these meetings amid a crowd of young people were very unsatisfactory.

"I reckon Betsy holds herse'f above common fo'ks, now she's visitin' 'mong the big bugs," Abner heard Mrs. Rogers say one day in answer to Lucy's remark that Betsy never came to see them now.

"No, ma," Susan ventured, "Betsy is not one to change. She loves us as well as ever, I feel sure."

"Well, ef she ain't too stuck up to notice us, her ma's too proud to let her," retorted Mrs. Rogers. "I allus said thet in spite uv Jane's meechin' ways, she felt herse'f above us. We ain't got blue blood in our veins. We ain't kin to the Temples an' Blairs an' Goodloes, and the rest uv them ristahcrats."

"Mrs. Gilcrest always treats me well when I go there," answered Susan, "and as for Betsy," she continued, her cheeks flushing and her eyes shining, "she's the truest, sweetest girl that ever lived."

"Then, why don't she come to see us lak she usetah?" demanded Mrs. Rogers.

Susan said nothing, but involuntarily glanced at Abner. Their eyes met; Susan quickly averted hers, and he thought, "I wonder if Susan knows!"

"Thah's her pap, too," Mrs. Rogers went on, "he's gittin' crusty an' stiff-lipped ez a sore-eyed b'ar."

"Hiram ain't hisse'f jes' now," interposed Mason; "he's plum crazy kaze folks ain't ready to jump on Brothah Stone an' t'ar him limb frum limb. Hiram's daft on whut he calls pure faith an' docturn, an' is allus boastin' thet his ancestry wuz burnt et the stakes, way back in them dark ages, fur ther religion."

"Religion! sich carryin'-on ain't no religion," exclaimed Mrs. Rogers. "'Tain't nothin' but stubbunness an' devilment, an' it'd be a good thing, I say, ef Hirum could be tied up an' sco'ched a bit hisse'f."

"Well, well, he's a good man et bottom," replied her husband. "We hev lived neighbors ovah twenty year, an' he's allus been ready to do us a good turn, in sickness, in health an' in trouble. As fur his wife, I wondah, Cynthy Ann, thet you kin find it in yer heart to say aught ag'in her. Hev you furgot thet wintah the twins wuz borned, an' I wuz crippled up with rheumatiz, an' the niggahs down with the measles, how she sent ole Dilsey (though Jane hed a young baby herse'f, an' could ill spar' the niggah) to wait on us? Ez fur Betsy," with a sly look at Abner, "I agree with Cissy; she's the smartest, purtiest gal in these parts, an' good an' true ez she is purty."

One Saturday afternoon in February, Betsy did come to see Susan Rogers. Mrs. Rogers had gone to spend the afternoon at a neighbor's, and Abner, who had been felling trees at his own place, did not return to the house until just as Betsy was leaving. With a timidity born of self-consciousness, Betsy grew still and embarrassed, and soon afterwards rose to go. "It gets dark so early now," she said, "and I came alone through the fields."

Abner caught up his hat while she was donning cloak and hood.

"Let's walk part way with Betsy," cried Lucindy. "Come, Lucy, an' you too, Cissy. Maybe we'll meet ma comin' home." But Susan said she must attend to supper; nor would she let the twins go.

"Instead of taking the short cut through the fields, let's go around by the woods, dearest," Abner proposed as soon as he and Betsy had set out on their walk.

"Very well, we have plenty of time," she agreed happily. "There's no telling when we may have another such chance, and I have much to say to you. You may walk as far as the upper woods with me, if you are good."

"No farther than that?" he asked reproachfully.

"Only to the bars this time, I think, dear," she answered gently, slipping her hand into his.

In spite of her loving little gesture, he still looked gloomy. "Oh, these long, wretched weeks when I have so hungered for a sight of your face and the sound of your voice!" he presently exclaimed. "And now when I am at last alone with you, you appoint boundaries and limits, and place restrictions upon my walk with you!" and he grasped her hand in a tighter clasp and looked at her somewhat sternly. "Oh, my darling," he broke off, as she turned a wistful, tearful gaze upon him, "forgive my harsh words," and he gathered her into his arms and kissed her tenderly. "It is only because I love you so passionately, my life, my sweetest one. Won't you speak to me, dearest?" he asked, as she continued silent.

"'Speech is silver, silence is golden,' according to some wise authority," Betsy at last said meaningly and rather reproachfully, although she smiled faintly and looked at him with love-lit eyes.

"But the oracle, when he uttered that bit of questionable wisdom, wasn't, I dare say, walking with his sweetheart after dreary weeks of separation," said Abner, squeezing her hand. "If he had, he would have preferred silvery speech to golden silence—or, rather, the utterances of his beloved one would have been to him as doubly refined gold; and I'm perfectly certain that his sweetheart could not have compared with my piquant, peerless Betty. Besides, you declared awhile ago that you had much to say to me."

"So I had, Sir Flatterer," the girl answered with a radiant smile, her momentary sadness completely banished by his fond words, "but at the present moment the delight of being in your improving society has robbed me of all desire to talk. And what greater proof could I give that I love you?" she continued with an arch glance. "It is surely a mighty power indeed that makes a chatterbox like me to revel in silence."

"How I love this dear old forest!" was Abner's exclamation presently. "Every tree, every stick and stone, every foot of ground, seems sacred. Do you not love it all, my darling?"

"I do indeed," she acknowledged. "In fact," she added laughingly, "I think, by rights, this woods belongs exclusively to us and our love, and I consider any one else guilty of sacrilegious effrontery in even walking through its sacred precincts. But you don't appear in especially radiant spirits, my friend, even though we are together in our hallowed woods," she said presently as he walked silently by her side.

"How can I be in radiant humor, Betty?" he retorted sadly. "This restraint and concealment are becoming unendurable to me. We are nearly to the bars now where you say I must turn back, and I must first have some serious words with you. For three months and more, I have obeyed your behest and have kept aloof from your house; but patience ceases to be a virtue. I am no nearer winning your father to a more cordial frame of mind

than I was at first. On the contrary, in the few times I have encountered him of late, he has appeared to be getting colder and more formal, and I really believe this is due in a great measure to his suspecting that there is a secret understanding between you and me. He is a straightforward man and likes straightforward courses. Moreover, how can I ever win his consent to our marriage unless I ask him? That's only common sense; and furthermore, anything underhanded or clandestine is as obnoxious to me as to him."

"Oh," she begged with a frightened look, "please wait a little longer. He's sure to be in a more pliable humor after awhile, when this horrid old church difficulty is settled. Oh, Abner, my love, I know it is hard, but——"

"How hard," he interrupted gloomily, "you are far from realizing. These miserable weeks of suppression and concealment have worn my patience and self-control to the breaking-point. Now," he went on firmly, "I will wait no longer. I will see your father to-morrow. Patience, forsooth!" he ejaculated in answer to her further pleading, "when I'm debarred from entering your home, must be satisfied with an occasional stolen interview like this; when, too, I know that James Drane is a frequent and welcome guest at Oaklands! How can I help being moody and bitter and harassed? Sometimes I think I have overcome my former dislike for Drane; for he is, to give him his due, invariably cordial to me—in fact, he seems to seek and to enjoy my company—but when I think of him as a favored guest at your father's house while I'm prohibited from entering its doors, and while you, my betrothed wife, beg me not to come near the house, is it any wonder I am harassed? He was at Oaklands again yesterday, was he not?"

"Yes, he was; but that is of no moment," Betty answered frankly. "He is dad's friend, not mine. I treat him courteously, of course; but that——"

"Your father may consider himself the magnet that draws Drane to Oaklands," sneered Abner; "but I know better, and so do you, my girl. The attraction for him is very different. The fellow's in love with you. That's plain. 'He who runs may read.'"

"And he who reads had better run!" retorted Betsy, now thoroughly nettled, "if this reading construes anything I do or say into encouragement of this lawyer." And her eyes snapped wickedly, she drew herself up haughtily, and her face grew pale and set.

"No, dear," Abner replied, undaunted by her anger. "I do not mean that. You must not catch up my words in that way. I know the truth and steadfastness of your nature too well to believe that you encourage or coquette with Drane or any other man. My meaning is this: your father likes Drane and thinks so highly of his brilliant prospects that the mere fact that he is a possible suitor for your hand will dispose your father to think with the less favor of my pretensions. And indeed, Betty dear, though I do not for a moment think you encourage the fellow, still what I have said of the situation is true in regard to his feelings and intentions; he wears his heart upon his sleeve."

"That he does not!" returned Betty with spirit; "not all of his heart, at any rate; only such portions as are fit for public perusal. There's much in his heart that would, I'm convinced, make queer reading, if one could see into the depths of that well-controlled organ of his. You see, I haven't got over my original instinct of distrust of James Drane, if you have. Let him make love to me! Bah! I'd sooner listen to the uncouth love phrases of the veriest clodhopper in Bourbon County than to his honeyed, courtly utterances. Oh, there comes father!" she broke off abruptly, looking across the woods.

When Major Gilcrest came up to the couple, his conduct fully justified what Abner had been telling Betty. He nodded curtly to the young man, asked Betty where she had been, and appeared little pleased when she told him. Then, reminding her that it was getting late and that her mother would be anxious, he advised her not to linger.

When the three reached the stile, Gilcrest, instead of inviting Abner in, gave him another cool nod, and with a wave of his hand indicated that Betty was to enter the house. Abner, however, detained him a moment to request an interview on the morrow, which Gilcrest hesitatingly granted, and in a way that boded ill for the lover's hopes.

At the appointed hour next morning, the young man, screwing up his courage to the sticking-place, knocked at the door of Oaklands. The servant ushered him at once into her master's private office. Gilcrest received his caller with extreme hauteur. Abner at once made known his business.

Gilcrest heard him through without question or comment. Then, after a pause, he said, "I have other plans for my daughter, Mr. Dudley."

"But—but—if—if—she herself—" stammered poor Abner, striving to find the right words for Betty as well as for himself.

"There are no 'buts' nor 'ifs' about it, sir," Gilcrest answered haughtily. "Betsy will do as I wish. She's at times rather self-willed, and no doubt has been led away for the moment by

some romantic nonsense; but she's a sensible girl in the main, and knows what's best for her. If she doesn't, I do, and I'm master of my own household, I assure you."

"Has she other suitors?" Abner ventured.

"That, sir, if you will permit my saying so, is no affair of yours. She shall not marry any one against my will, you may be sure; and when she does marry, it will be a man whose social position and worldly prospects are such as to preclude all suspicion of his seeking her from any selfish motives."

"Sir," Abner broke forth hotly, "do you mean to insinuate that I have self-seeking motives in wishing to marry your daughter?"

"I mean to insinuate nothing, young man."

"But you do, sir; by God, you do insinuate that my love is founded upon self-interest, and that is something I can not permit."

"Come, come, Mr. Dudley, keep your temper, and don't talk to me about not permitting. Let your motives be what they may, we will not discuss that. Suffice it to say, I refuse my consent."

"At least tell me this, Major Gilcrest: do you object to me personally, or is your refusal due to other reasons? I'm of as good blood as yourself, and I can maintain your daughter in comfort."

"Understand this, young sir, once for all," replied Gilcrest, "I decline positively to accept any proposal from you. If you will have a plain answer, I now tell you that aside from any other matrimonial views which I may or may not have for my daughter, I should in any case decline the honor of an alliance with you. I bid you good morning, sir. Polly, open the door for Mr. Dudley."

From an upper window Betsy was watching for Abner; and the angry flush on his face, and the way he flung himself into the saddle, told her that he had fared ill. She raised the window, and he looked up. He gazed at her yearningly, then, with a wave of his hand toward her father's room, rode down the long avenue.

Betsy waited in her room an hour, then sought her father. He was fumbling with some papers, too busy to take any notice of her. Finally, as he would not speak, she went to him. "Father, why have you sent Abner away?"

Major Gilcrest was proud of his only girl, and, in his own way, extremely fond of her; but he would listen to no plea in behalf of her lover. He gave no reason, but simply said that the young man was no suitable match for her, and that she would one day be thankful that she had not been allowed to marry him.

Betsy, at first gentle and pleading, grew indignant. Her father, even more indignant, finally ordered her to her room, forbidding her to hold further communication with her lover.

Next day, Abner wrote her. He assured her of his unchangeable love, and bade her have courage. He wrote also to Major Gilcrest, stating that although he would not at present seek Betsy or urge his claim in any way, he nevertheless considered that they were pledged to one another, and that he would never give her up unless she herself asked for her release.

One day, a month after this, Betsy from her window saw Mr. Drane riding up the avenue. She got her bonnet and stole out the back way to where her horse was saddled. Coming back after a gallop, she met Abner, and they rode together a short while. Then her father overtook them. Without even a bow to her escort, Major Gilcrest told his daughter she was wanted at home, and, laying hold of her bridle, compelled her to ride on with him. This was intolerable to Betty's lover, and, after tossing all night in a tumult of indignation, he again sought her father.

CHAPTER XXII.

BANISHMENT

When Abner reached Oaklands next morning, Gilcrest, just returned from a ride to the lower farm, was standing on the stile-block, and a negro boy was leading his horse toward the stables. Gilcrest scowled at the young man as he rode up, and gave him no word of greeting, nor asked him to alight.

Abner began at once: "Major Gilcrest, I have come this morning to have a talk with you."

"Very well; state your business," was the curt rejoinder.

"It is private business and of grave importance. Can we not seek a more retired place than this?"

"Either here, or not at all, sir," answered Gilcrest.

"Major Gilcrest, no man has a right to treat another as you have me without some cause, and I demand the reason for your conduct."

"I'm answerable to no one save myself and my God for my conduct," returned Gilcrest. "Demand, indeed!" he continued with a short laugh. "What right has a popinjay like you to demand?"

"Well, then, I do not demand; I entreat you to assign some reason. I am willing to believe your motives to be good, but that you are laboring under some mistake."

"I have good reason for what I do, Mr. Dudley. Your conscience, if it be not already too much seared and deadened, ought to tell you why. I know more than you think, young man."

"My conscience certainly acquits me of any serious misdemeanor," answered Abner. "So far as I can see, my only offense is in loving your daughter and seeking her hand in marriage; and surely that is not an unpardonable crime. When I came to this community you treated me most cordially, inviting me to your house, and treating me when I did visit you with the utmost kindness, and even affection. In fact, up to the time of my return from Virginia, we were on terms of intimate friendship, notwithstanding the difference in age and position. But since my return all this is changed, and I'm convinced that this change is due to some far graver cause than disapproval of me as a suitor for your daughter. The matter is inexplicable to me; and so guiltless do I feel, that I'm certain you are but laboring under some egregious mistake."

"Young man, I'm laboring under no mistake."

"Then, what are your reasons for this course?" Abner asked again.

"That you have no right to ask. Moreover, it is quite unnecessary; for, in spite of your pretended ignorance, you know quite well to what I refer."

"As God in heaven is my judge, I do not, sir," exclaimed Abner.

"Do not call upon your Maker to witness your false protestations. Do not add blasphemy and perjury to the rest of your iniquities. Marry my daughter! You! I'd see her in her grave first!" By this time he had worked himself into a frenzy; his face was purple and the veins of his forehead were swollen and knotted like cords.

Abner, still apparently cool, though he could with difficulty restrain himself, replied stoutly, "Nothing which I have done or intended can justify your language to me, Major Gilcrest."

"Don't lie to me!" roared Gilcrest, "Don't I know what you have been about, plotting vagabond!" and he shook his cowhide riding-whip in Abner's face, causing the horse to rear and plunge.

The young man quieted his horse, then looked straight into Gilcrest's eyes, his own blazing and his face gray with passion. "Hiram Gilcrest, put down that whip. By God, sir, you shall retract your words!"

"I retract nothing," shouted Gilcrest, still brandishing the whip. "Get out of my sight, before I demean myself by striking you!"

Abner leaned over, and with a sudden movement snatched the whip from Gilcrest's hand, then flung it far over the fence into the adjoining field. Trying to master his anger and speak calmly, he said: "Now listen to me, Major Gilcrest. I love your daughter with an honorable love—stop! stop! You shall hear me through! I love your daughter, and the dearest wish of my life is to make her my wife; yet I should have accepted your decision, painful though it would have been, hoping that in time I could overcome your objections—be quiet! You shall listen to me!—but now, when you will give no reason for objecting to me, and in addition to this injustice heap opprobrious epithets upon me, I tell you emphatically that I shall pay no regard whatsoever to your wishes. Only Betsy herself

shall decide. So long as she loves me and considers herself my promised wife, I will see her whenever I can, and will write to her whenever I have opportunity. But when she wishes to be free, I will then, and not till then, return to her her plighted word. As for you, you have forfeited all claim to consideration; you have grossly, wantonly insulted me, and without the shadow of reason."

"Out of my sight, you impudent impostor!" cried Gilcrest, choking with rage and shaking his fist at the young man. "You sneaking bastard, with no right to the name you bear!"

"You are so led away by passion, old man, that you are scarcely responsible for what you say—bastard and impostor, indeed!" he ejaculated, quivering with indignation. "Those epithets are as false as foul, and you know it. You shall not——"

"If they are false, prove them so, you insolent puppy!" shouted Gilcrest.

"Not even your gray hairs should protect you from the chastisement you deserve, were you not Betty's father; but I love her too well to forget consideration for you, on her account."

"Out of my sight! Go! this instant!" cried the old man, beside himself with fury. "If you ever set foot on this place again, my negroes shall drag you through the hog wallow. I would not demean my own hands by touching you."

Abner, feeling that, if he heard any more, he would forget his antagonist's gray head, his age and fatherhood, and strike him, wheeled quickly and rode away, leaving Gilcrest still shouting and gesticulating until horse and rider were out of sight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

MASON ROGERS' DIPLOMACY

Ever since Stone's memorable sermon in June of the preceding year, Deacon Gilcrest, who really believed that the young minister was subverting the truth and teaching dangerous heresies, had urged that the synod investigate the matter, and that until such investigation should be made, Stone should not be allowed to occupy the pulpit at Cane Ridge. But the majority of the members were convinced of the truth of Stone's teachings, and had, moreover, too warm a regard for their minister to permit them to listen to Gilcrest.

These were bitter days for the old man. In the main just and kindhearted, despite all his narrowness and vindictiveness, it was no small element of his trouble that his brethren with whom until now his opinions had been highly esteemed and his influence paramount, should pay no attention to his views. Especially did he sorrow because of Mason Rogers. The intense regard which these two men, so contrasted in culture and worldly position, had always felt for each other, was both strong and pathetic. More in sorrow than in anger had Gilcrest argued, reasoned and pleaded to bring Rogers to his own way of thinking. Rogers did not attempt to combat any of Gilcrest's arguments, and rarely protested against anything he said, except when he attacked his own beloved minister personally. Each valued the other too highly to lose self-control in these talks, both seeming determined that no matter what their differences of opinion with respect to church and minister, they themselves would live in neighborly harmony. But what neither minister nor religious difference could effect was presently brought about by the schoolmaster.

Abner, knowing the long friendship between Gilcrest and Rogers, and not wishing to be the means of causing a rupture, for some time told his kind host nothing of Gilcrest's altered demeanor toward himself. But after the encounter at the stile-block he informed Rogers of his engagement to Betsy and of her father's opposition and bitter enmity. Rogers accordingly went to Oaklands.

Several days had elapsed since Abner had been so grossly insulted. Gilcrest had had time for reflection and for realizing that he had said many things in that stormy interview which good feeling and prudence should have forbidden. He was at heart a gentleman, and since his passion had cooled he bitterly reproached himself for his brutal taunt in regard to Abner's probable illegitimacy; for Gilcrest was sure the poor boy was entirely ignorant on this point. Gilcrest also acquitted him of being knowingly a party to any fraud

in claiming to be heir to the Hite estate. The Major likewise reproached himself for lack of caution; for until he and Drane had made full investigation into Mary Page's history, it behooved them to be absolutely silent concerning Mrs. Gilcrest's claim. Moreover, it was essential that for the present his suspicions of Abner's connection with political plots should not be revealed. So now that Mason Rogers was here, eager to set matters right between Betsy's father and her lover, Gilcrest was in a quandary. He refused to give his reasons for opposing Abner's suit; but he hinted darkly of nefarious schemes and dangerous, even treasonable, plots in which the young man was implicated.

"I nevah hearn tell uv sich an outrageous thing in my borned days," exclaimed Rogers, "I thought too high uv you, Hiram, to believe you'd listen to whispers an' insinerations ag'in sich a man as Abner."

"But, Mason, I tell you I have not heeded mere whispers and insinuations; I have clear proof, proof, man, for what I hold against this schoolmaster."

"Then, fur the sake uv common jestice, out with yer proofs!"

"I can not, Mason; I am pledged to silence; moreover, it would be dangerous to the peace of the commonwealth, and frustrate the ends of justice, to reveal anything now. I had intended to let no hint of my suspicions reach him, but when he presented himself as a suitor for my girl, and would demand my reasons for refusing him, and was altogether high-headed and arrogant and impudent, I was carried away by indignation, and hinted that I had knowledge of his intriguing schemes."

"High-headed he may be," said Rogers, "an' who hez a bettah right, I'd like to know? But arregent an' imperdent he ain't; an' not even you, Hiram, shell call him so to my face, 'thout me denyin' it."

"Mark what I tell you, my friend," interrupted Gilcrest; "I could with truth say even harder things of that young man. He has hoodwinked you finely, but the time is not far distant when you yourself will say that I am right."

"The time won't nevah come," said Rogers with homely dignity, "when I shell hev cause to think anything but good uv that deah boy. He's eat o' my bread an' sot et my h'arth fur three year come nex' October, an' he's lak my own son."

"Ah! he's deceived you grandly," retorted Gilcrest with a sneer, losing all patience. "I tell you he's a political schemer and traitor, and if he ever dares show his face on my premises again, I'll have him flogged."

"Yes, Hiram Gilcrest, I am deceived," Rogers answered slowly, but with rising anger, "an' it's in you, not him. I've stood a heap frum you lately. I've held my lip while you've been dissercratin' religion, an' tryin' to turn ole Cane Redge chu'ch upside down, inside out, an' wrong eend foremos'; but, blame yer hide! I won't stand ev'rything, an' I draw the line et yo' abusin' Abner Dudley."

"Why, Mason, old friend——" began Gilcrest.

"Don' you 'Mason' an' 'ole friend' me, Hiram Gilcrest! I'm done with you. Ef Abner hain't good 'nough to set foot on yo' place, you hain't good 'nough to set foot on mine; an', by glory, ef you evah do, I'll sick the dogs on you. You need hoss-whippin' to fetch you to yo' senses. You've got so et up with proud flesh an' malice, kaze you can't be high cock-o'-the-walk in Cane Redge chu'ch, thet you're gittin' rabid ez a mad dog."

"Not even from you, Mason Rogers, will I stand such words," exclaimed Gilcrest, furiously.

"Then, don't stand 'em!" retorted Rogers. "Set down on 'em, or lay on 'em, or roll ovah on 'em—jes' ez you please! I'm done with you," and, without once looking back, he strode wrathfully out of the house.

He was in a towering rage as he rode homeward, but, before reaching his own gate, he had cooled down sufficiently to plan what he should and should not say at home about his visit to Oaklands.

"'Twon't do to tell Abner whut thet ole sea skunk hinted 'bout plots an' treasons. Hiram'd be tortured by Injuns befoh he'd tell out plain whut he'd promised to keep secret; an' ef Abner knowed he'd hinted et sich damnation things ag'in him, he'd t'ar up the airth to mek him tell; fur Ab in his own way's ez stubbo'n an' sot ez the ole Scratch hisse'f. With the two uv 'em to manidge, I'm betwixt tommyhock an' buzzard, so to speak, an' I won't hev a minit's peace tell I wollop 'em both, an' mek 'em behave therse'ves. So I reckon I'll hafto talk in kindah gen'ral terms, or in par'bles, ez Brothah Stone would say, when Abner axes me 'bout my intahview with Hiram."

The opportunity for Rogers' diplomatic use of "par'bles" came that evening. "The angel Gabriel hisse'f couldn't mek heads or tails o' whut Hiram means," he said in answer to a

question from Abner. "He don't know hisse'f whut he means. He's bittah an' sore ag'in ev'rything an' ev'rybody whut hain't ready to fall on Brothah Stone, an' eat him ha'r an' hide. You teched him up fust on thet p'int; then while he's still kindah riled with you—fur it teks him a long time to fergit a man's darin' to sot up opinions 'ginst his'n—up you prances ag'in 'bout Betsy. No, you didn't beg him sortah bashful an' meechin' lak—I know you so well, Ab—but you jes' demands his gal's hand in marridge. This riles him still futhah. Then, instid o' bein' meek an' lowly, an' smoothin' him down, an' axin' him to please be so kind ez to reconsidah the mattah, you puts on yo' I'm-ez-good-ez-you-an'-a-blamed-sight-bettah air, an' axes him to explain his conduc'."

"But indeed, Mr. Rogers, I was both respectful and deferential to Major Gilcrest."

"Oh, yes, ez meek ez Moses, I s'pose you think yo'se'f," ejaculated Mason, with a shrewd smile.

"I don't know exactly how meek Moses really was when he was courting Jethro's daughter," Abner began.

"Oh, go to thundah with yo' Moses an' yo' Jethro's daughtah!" laughed Mason, impatiently. "Mayby you thought you wuz meek an' differential; but don't I know you? Then, thah's anothah p'int," he added after a pause. "Thah's thet sneakin' fellah, Drane. Buttah won't melt in his mouth, an' maple syrup hain't ez sweet ez his ways. He's rich an' fine ez a fiddle, too, an' is all respect an' 'umbleness with ole Hi, who thinks jes' kaze the daddy, ole Anson Drane, wuz a honest man, thet the son is natchelly obleeged to be honest too. But with all this drawin' uv the wool ovah ole Hiram's eyes, Jeemes hain't succeedin' egzactly with the gal, an' he's cute 'nough to see whah the hitch is; so he uses his influence with her pap to belittle an' backbite the one she does favor. Mark my words, thet slick-tongued lawyer is et the bottom uv a lot o' this devilment."

"I never did thoroughly trust that fellow," exclaimed Abner, "but I've no proof against him; so what can be done?"

"No, you hain't no proof," returned Rogers, thoughtfully, "and mayby we mistrust him wrongful. So, fur the present," he added with quaint humor, "whut you got to do is to jes' fire low an' save yo' waddin'. 'Sides, ef Betsy loves you, an' you're both patient, things is bound to come out right in the eend."

"As for patience," Abner rejoined, "just think how long I've waited already. This state of things must not go on much longer, for Betty's sake as well as for mine."

"See here, my boy," said Rogers, quickly, a new gentleness in look and tone, "you hain't thought uv this thing in all its bearin's."

"Yes, I have. I've thought of nothing else for months," Abner responded gloomily.

"No, thah's one p'int you've ovahlooked," pursued the older man. "It's how ole Hiram will treat her, ef you an' her persists in goin' ag'in him; an' ef you love Betsy strong an' tendah, you'll hafto begin to think on it. Why, boy, that's the only way to spell love—to kiver self out o' sight, an' think only uv the peace an' well-bein' uv the gal whut hez given her heart intah yer keepin'. Hiram's a kind fathah usually, an' thet gal o' his'n is lak his very eyeballs to him; but thet very love an' pride he hez fur her will mek him more ovahbearin' an' obstrep'rous, ef she persists in open disregawd o' his wishes an' commands; an' thah's no tellin' how mean he might git. He might even lock her up."

"If I thought that——" cried Abner. "But he's not so much of a villain as that, for all his dictatorialness and his insulting treatment of me."

"But he hain't in his senses jes' now, I tell you," replied Rogers, judicially. "Thah's no tellin' how much uv a brute he may act, an' it's her we should be thinkin' uv."

"By heaven," Abner exclaimed, starting up, "if I thought he'd ever mistreat Betty, I'd——"

"You'd whut?"

"I'd run away with her," he answered, facing Rogers as he spoke. "If a father abuses his authority, he no longer merits consideration on the ground of his fatherhood."

"Well, my boy," said Rogers, kindly, "I advise patience an' prudence; but ef the wust comes to the wust, an' he begins to act mean to the gal, you'll do right to tek her away. I'll holp you all I kin; leastways, I'll wink et whut you do. Betsy's too fine a gal—bless her sweet face—to be made onhappy jes' bekaze her ole daddy's et up with spitefulness ag'in you an Parson Stone."

Rogers, knowing his wife's old feeling against the Gilcrests—a feeling compounded of envy on account of the superior social position of the family at Oaklands, jealousy on account of the friendship between her husband and Hiram Gilcrest, and resentment

against Gilcrest's treatment of Stone—did not give her an account of his encounter with Gilcrest, but merely told her that Betsy and Abner loved each other, that her father did not favor the match, and that he had forbidden Betsy to have anything more to say to the young man.

"Reckon Hirum an' Jane expaict a dukedom or a king ter marry ther gal," remarked Mrs. Rogers, scornfully. "Abner not good 'nough! He's wuth the whole kit an' bilin' o' Gilcrests an' Temples; an' ef Betsy lets 'em threaten an' coax or skeer her inteh breakin' her word to him, she hain't the gal I tek her to be. But, pore thing! she must be havin' a hard time. An' who'd 'a' thought uv them two a-lovin' each othah lak thet? Come to think on it, though, it's a wondah I hain't suspicioned 'em foh this; but, la! they're both so young. Abner hain't more'n twenty-four or twenty-five, an' Betsy hain't but two yeah oldah'n our Cissy."

"You furgit, Cynthy Ann, thet Betsy's ez old or oldah then you wuz when you fust begun to mek eyes et me," observed Mason, with a droll smile.

"La, now, I wouldn't wondah ef Cissy didn't know all about Abner an' Betsy right 'long; her'n' Betsy wuz allus so thick," commented Mrs. Rogers, ignoring her husband's remark.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE BAR SINISTER

Not even to Mason Rogers could Abner bring himself to mention Hiram Gilcrest's most insulting insinuation; but the memory of that base epithet, bastard, cut deeper and deeper into the young man's soul. "What could the vicious old man possibly have heard or imagined about my history to lead him to utter so foul a charge?" he thought again and again. "'A bastard who has no right to the name he bears,' those were his very words. I wonder I did not throttle him then and there—if he is the father of my betrothed wife. But, by heaven, he shall apologize and that right humbly, or else I'll—but pshaw! the old fellow was so enraged that he didn't know what he was saying. The epithet was simply a gratuitous insult which he in his anger was scarcely responsible for. But what could have turned him so completely against me?" Thus Abner tormented himself, his thoughts ever revolving about the puzzling question. At times he would find some comfort in the belief that the allusion to his parentage meant nothing but that Gilcrest was senselessly enraged when he made it. Then again, when he remembered that it was by accident that he himself had discovered his father's name, or when he thought of Richard and Rachel Dudley's singular reticence, and of Dr. Dudley's evident uneasiness and reluctance when pressed for the details of the life of Mary Hollis and John Logan, a sickening foreboding of he knew not what would seize him. "There's something about my father's and mother's life that Uncle Richard has always concealed from me," he would conclude, "and whatever it is, I must learn it. It's no use to write; I must see uncle face to face, and demand a full revelation. Much as I dread another long, lonely journey, it must be made, and that at once, if I am ever to know peace again. Everything is at a standstill: my hopes of Betty, my farm work, my other business. In no direction can I proceed, until I have solved this mystery. There may be nothing in it—surely there isn't, and I am tormenting myself unnecessarily. Still, if what Gilcrest said, meant nothing more, it certainly indicated most forcibly his extreme animosity to me; and I am convinced that the solution to his altered demeanor can best be discovered by another journey to Williamsburg."

It was getting late in the season, and farm work was pressing; but Mason Rogers promised that he would superintend the two negro men Abner had hired from Squire Trabue for the corn-planting, and that he and Henry would do all in their power to see that affairs at the farm on Hinkson Creek went on smoothly.

In addition to the facts already narrated in regard to Abner's parents, this was the story he heard the evening of his arrival in Williamsburg, as he and his uncle sat together in Dr. Dudley's office:

After an absence of several months, John Logan came to see Mary in the spring after the birth of his child. Mary had endured great privations and had led a lonely life during the last few months. Moreover, she was weak and nervous and broken in health. When her husband paid this brief visit, she bitterly reproached him for having drawn her into so

imprudent a marriage, and for the hardships of her lot. Logan, who was weary and careworn, and had suffered many privations with the struggling army during the disastrous spring campaign, was in no mood to endure patiently Mary's tears and upbraidings. Hard words were exchanged, and he took his leave after but a partial reconciliation. She never saw him again. Late in June, she received tidings of his death on the battlefield at Monmouth. The comrade who brought this tidings was by Logan's side when he fell, had received his last messages, and brought Mary a letter from Logan, written the night before the battle. In this letter Logan acknowledged that he had wronged Mary, asked her forgiveness, and promised that if his life was spared he would try to atone to her and to their little son for all the wrong, assuring her that in spite of everything all the love of his heart was hers and their babe's. He also urged her to find refuge until the war was over with her sister Frances at Lawsonville.

Mary wrote Frances, telling of her sad plight, and asking shelter for herself and her babe. Richard Dudley could not come for Mary, but he sent a trusty messenger with money for her journey; and he assured her of a loving welcome and a home for herself and her boy.

She left Morristown at once, and on her way to Virginia, she stopped at Philadelphia. While there, she learned of a young woman in that city claiming to be the widow of a soldier, John Logan, who had been killed at Monmouth Court-house. Mary, in great foreboding, went to see this woman, who proved to be her cousin, Sarah Pepper. The two had heard nothing of each other during the years that had elapsed since Mary had quitted Chestnut Hall. Sarah was not penniless, but otherwise her condition was as pitiable as Mary's. The story she told Mary was this: She had first met John Logan in the summer of 1776. They fell in love with one another; and on account of her father's opposition and his threat of disinheritance if she did not renounce her lover, she and Logan were secretly married on her seventeenth birthday, November 19, 1776, at the house of Samuel and Ellen Smith, tenants on the Pepper estate. Her father was in Maryland at the time. The only one beside the Smiths, who was privy to this marriage, was Sarah's former nurse, Aunt Myra, a negro belonging to Jackson Pepper.

Logan remained in the neighborhood, meeting his wife at the Smiths' until early in February, when he left to join Washington's troops at Morristown. A week after his departure, Jackson Pepper returned home, and died suddenly of apoplexy a month later.

But even before Logan left the neighborhood, poor Sarah had cause to bitterly repent the step she had taken. Logan had proven a violent-tempered, dissolute, selfish man. He was constantly in want of money, and when Sarah supplied him, he would resort to the tavern in the village, and drink and gamble with a lot of low companions whose society seemed more congenial to him than that of the poor, deluded Sarah.

In April, Logan returned to the neighborhood, and he and Sarah were then quietly but openly married. Immediately afterward she quitted Chestnut Hall, and went to live in Philadelphia, her husband returning to his regiment. She only saw him after that at infrequent intervals and for a few hours at a time. His only object on these occasions appeared to be to extort money from her. Then, in June, came tidings of his having fallen in the battle of Monmouth.

"Were there two John Logans?" Abner asked huskily, his lips pallid, the shadow of a great horror upon his face.

"That was what both these poor women at first thought," answered Dr. Dudley, sadly; "but they were soon convinced otherwise."

"How was that?" asked Abner, feeling as if the ground which had hitherto seemed solid was giving way under his feet.

"Your mother," Richard continued, "had with her a miniature of your father. She showed it to Sarah, who recognized it as that of the man she had married. A further description of the man tended to prove this more conclusively—age, height, build, all corresponded. Logan, according to both women, was very tall and slender, had wavy dark hair, dark gray eyes, was a native of Kenelworth, Pennsylvania, and was twenty-eight years old at the time of his death. Soon after your mother came to us, I wrote to an old resident of this village, Kenelworth, and learned from him that he knew of but one family of Logans who had ever lived in the place. That was the family of Ezra Logan, who had been dead several years, and had left two daughters and one son. Both daughters had married and removed to a distant section of the country, and the son, John Logan, had been killed at the battle of Monmouth, in June, 1778."

"My God, my God!" Abner exclaimed, turning faint and sick, while the perspiration stood in great drops upon his forehead and about his drawn lips. He threw himself into a chair, and buried his face in his hands.

"My poor lad! my dear son!" said his uncle, sobbingly, standing over the stricken boy, and

laying a hand tenderly on the bowed head. "Would that you could have been spared this. I have tried, God knows I have tried, to hide this from you."

"Yes, yes!" muttered Abner, grasping his uncle's hand, but not looking up, "you have done the best you could for me. You are all I have left now, you and Aunt Rachel. All else is gone. I a bastard! My father, whose memory I have revered as that of a brave soldier who gave his life for his country, a dastardly libertine! And my precious young mother—oh, my God in heaven! I can not bear this. Would that I were lying by your side, my poor, innocent, deceived mother; or, better still, that I had never been born! I have no name, no place in the world!" and as he thought of Betty, his heart was wrung with such agony as few can ever feel.

After a time, when the first storm of grief and horror had subsided somewhat, he again spoke. "Uncle Richard, if that clandestine marriage with Sarah Pepper was valid, why the open marriage five months later?" he asked, clinging to this straw of hope.

"Your poor mother asked that, my boy," Dudley replied, "and Sarah told her this: Several years before Sarah met Logan, her father had disowned and driven from home his son, Fletcher, on account of dishonorable conduct. The will, made soon after Sarah had been forbidden to have anything to do with Logan, left everything to her who, as this will read, 'had been a loving and dutiful daughter, ever ready to yield her own will in obedience to her father.' When the purport of the will was made known, after Jackson Pepper's death, Logan urged upon Sarah that the clandestine marriage ceremony must never be revealed, lest Fletcher Pepper should try to break the will on the plea that Sarah had not been a dutiful and obedient daughter."

"But why," asked Abner, "if she had discovered in the interval between the two marriages that this man Logan did not love her, and was a reckless, bad man, did she still wish to have more to do with him? Why, instead, did not she still hide the fact of the clandestine marriage, and refuse to go through with the open ceremony?"

"Because," answered Dudley, "she had discovered in the meanwhile that she was to become a mother; and on that account, although she had managed to hide her condition from every one except the negro woman, old Myra, she dared not refuse to be openly married to Logan. As soon as this second marriage ceremony was performed, she left Chestnut Hall, taking the faithful Myra with her. They went to Philadelphia, where they were strangers; and there, in September, 1777, Sarah gave birth to a child which, mercifully, was born dead. She told your mother all this, and also that once Logan, in one of his rages, because she had been unable to supply him money, had struck her, and had taunted her with having been his mistress before she had become his wife, asserting that the secret marriage was a fraud, the man who performed the ceremony not having been a real clergyman. He also told her that he had always loved another woman, and that his only motive in marrying herself had been that he might get control of her wealth. Then, at other times, when he was in better humor—so Sarah told your mother—he would deny all that he had asserted when angry, and would assure Sarah that the clandestine marriage was valid. Your mother, remembering that Logan in that last letter to herself had acknowledged that he had wronged her, was convinced that the clandestine marriage to Sarah was valid; and in that case, of course, her own marriage, three months later, was not."

"Was no trace of the scoundrel, if scoundrel he was, who performed the clandestine marriage ceremony, ever found?" asked Abner.

"Sarah never succeeded in locating him; but, years after, I, by accident, ascertained that without a doubt——"

"What?" eagerly asked Abner, his heavy, bloodshot eyes lighting with renewed hope.

"I found, my boy," answered Richard, sadly, "not what you hope, but the contrary. Thomas Baker was the man's name, and he was undoubtedly an ordained clergyman when he married Sarah Pepper to John Logan, November 19, 1776."

"What became of Sarah Pepper, or Sarah Logan?" Abner inquired after a long, miserable pause.

Dr. Dudley did not know where she was, nor whether she was still living. She had written once, he said, to her cousin, just before Mary's marriage to Page, and had said in her letter that she herself was on the eve of marrying again; but Dudley could not now remember, if he had ever heard, the name of her intended husband. "But," Richard continued, "the letter is no doubt in the package which your mother left with your Aunt Frances. When you feel equal to the painful task, you should go over these papers—they are in that old oak box in the garret—and then, perhaps, they had better be destroyed. You know," he continued presently, in explanation of his being unable to give any information about Sarah Pepper's whereabouts, "I never saw Mary's cousin. I married

your Aunt Frances, who was seventeen years your mother's senior, at Plainfield, New Jersey, just before the death of John Hollis and his wife, and before Sarah Thornton, your mother's aunt, married Jackson Pepper. I brought my bride to Lawsonville, and she never saw her Pepper connections, who lived, as you are aware, in quite another part of the State."

"There is another fact in regard to your mother which I had better tell you now, Abner," Dr. Dudley went on after a time. "She did not die at Lawsonville, although I erected a stone there to her memory." He then related to his nephew what James Drane had already learned from Tom Gaines; namely, that Mary Hollis and her second husband, with her little son, then four years of age, had emigrated to Kentucky in the spring of 1782. Dudley likewise told Abner that Marshall Page had been killed the following August, at Blue Licks; that Mary had died at Bryan Station two days later; and that Marshall's brother had brought the little Abner back to the Dudleys late in that same year.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE PACKAGE OF OLD LETTERS

"I think you once told me, Uncle Richard," Abner said, later in the conversation with his uncle, "that Andrew Hite visited Lawsonville while my mother was living with you."

"Yes, he did," Dudley replied, "a week or so before she and Page were married."

"Did he learn of the cruel deception of which she was the victim?"

"Yes, I told him that, and of her approaching marriage and intended removal to Kentucky. She was in poor health, and I feared a decline, but she and Page thought her best chance for recovery was to marry, and to find a new home far from anything that could remind her of her connection with your father."

"This," said Abner, "explains Andrew Hite's will. He thought that my mother, being his nearest relative, had the first claim upon him; but, in case she died before he did—which doubtless appeared probable, owing to her frail health—he preferred that his property should go to his half-sister's child, rather than to me, the bastard son of a dastard father. I have, therefore, morally no claim whatsoever to this inheritance, and I will never touch a farthing of it. Oh, why," he went on bitterly, "was I not told, years ago, my true history? Had I always known it, the burden of shame which is my only lawful inheritance would have gradually adjusted itself to my strength, and would not now have such crushing weight. It is the contrast between what I thought I was and what I am that is the bitterest ingredient in my cup of misery."

"I deserve your reproaches, my poor boy," said Richard Dudley, sorrowfully; "but Heaven is my witness that my only motive in keeping this from you was to spare you shame and sorrow."

"Ah, I know that," cried Abner, "and it is ungrateful and cowardly to reproach you, my more than father. It was the suddenness of the shock that made me utter that unmanly plaint. Forgive me. I know you have been actuated in all that you have done by your regard for me."

"As to this inheritance," said Dudley presently, "it is lawfully yours. It was left to your mother, and you inherit it, not directly from Andrew Hite, but from her."

"No, no! The whole tenor of the will was to cut me out of all share in the estate. It would be infamous in me, knowing what I do, to claim it. Besides, my mother died before coming into possession of this property. How, then, could I inherit through her, when it was never actually hers?"

"Who, then, is heir under the will?" argued Dudley. "Not Sarah Pepper; for it is clearly set forth in the document that she inherits only under the condition that your mother be dead, leaving no legitimate heirs, before the date of the will."

"Then, the will must be declared null and void," firmly asserted the young man. "It is a mad will, anyway."

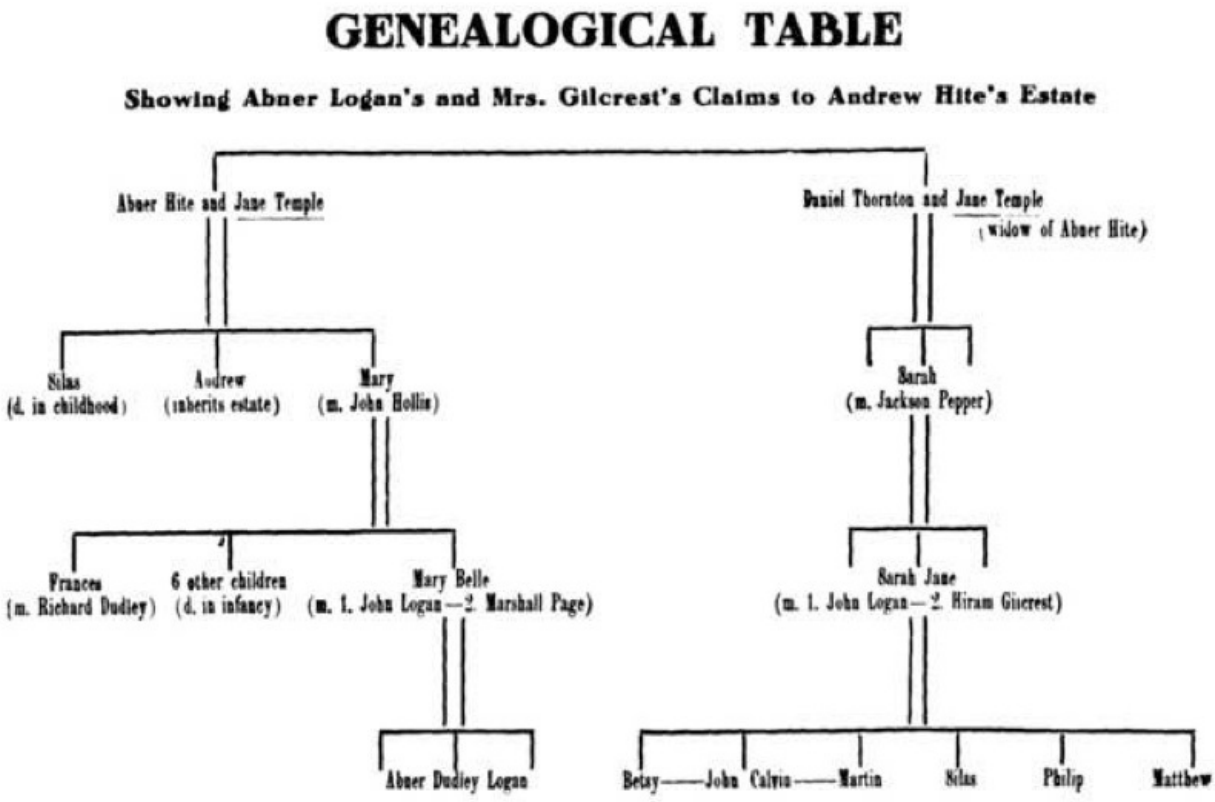
"In that case," retorted the doctor, "you being the only child of your mother, the next of

kin, are, as you once pointed out, the rightful heir—at least, you are co-heir with Sarah Pepper."

But Abner stoutly adhered to his determination to have nothing to do with the property. It, therefore, became imperative to ascertain the whereabouts of Sarah Jane Pepper, or her heirs, if any.

That night Abner looked through his mother's papers. He found several letters beginning, "My Darling Wife:—" or, "My Own Mary:—." The signature to each of these epistles was, "Your affectionate husband, John Logan." The tone of each letter was thoughtful tender, solicitous. "These do not read like the letters of a villain," Abner thought, a momentary gleam of hope penetrating the thick gloom; "but then, the evidence to the contrary is conclusive. I must not allow myself to hope. I do not wonder, though, that my poor mother was deceived; for such words as these would mislead any simple, trusting heart like hers. He did love her, I suppose, as well as his craven, selfish nature would admit of his loving any one."

The last letter in the package gave the young man, alone in the low attic room, a shock of amazement. It was dated "Chestnut Hall, February 1, 1782," and was signed, "Your affectionate cousin, Sarah." It stated that the writer had returned to Chestnut Hall, after the death of the faithful Myra, and that she was now living alone with the negro attendants, in the home of her childhood; that she was betrothed to a man who held the rank of major in the Continental army. This man, she wrote, had been badly wounded the spring before in a skirmish with Arnold's raiders, near her home. He had been carried to the Hall, and she had nursed him back to complete recovery; and he was now in Kentucky looking for a suitable location for their future home. He intended to return in the course of a year, marry her, and remove to the new home across the mountains. The name of this man was Hiram Gilcrest. The letter likewise said that Major Gilcrest knew her to be a widow Logan, whose husband had fallen in battle, but that she had told her future husband none of the miserable details of her connection with John Logan except that he had treated her with great cruelty. She had extracted a promise from Major Gilcrest that no one in their new home in Kentucky should know that she had been a widow, and in order that this fact of her widowhood might the more easily be concealed, she had induced him to agree that if ever the question arose as to her maiden name, it was to be given as Jane Temple. Another motive, Sarah wrote, for this change of name from Pepper to Temple, was in order to prevent anybody knowing of her relationship to Fletcher Pepper, who had rendered the name of Pepper odious to all who had ever heard it, by his desertion of the patriot army to join the traitor Arnold.



Until he read that letter, Abner had, half unconsciously, clung to the hope that even though his father had been a dastardly villain who had wrecked the happiness of two trusting women, it might still be possible to establish his own legitimacy. Now, even that shadowy hope must be abandoned. "What!" he thought despairingly, "prove my right to

wear my father's name at the cost of the fair repute of Betty's mother! Never, never! Rather will I accept the bar sinister for my own escutcheon."

He could bear no more. Thrusting the papers roughly aside, he rushed down the stairs and out into the darkness. Here, throwing himself face downward upon the ground, his hands dug into the sod, he cursed the day upon which he was born. But at last the soft serenity of the starry June night soothed him into a better mood. He arose, and, with a prayer for strength and guidance, re-entered the house.

"My first duty must be to write to Major Gilcrest and Betty," was his first waking thought next morning. "My precious, loving Betty, I must give you up; for even should you, after knowing my history, be willing to marry me, I love you too well to allow one so sweet and pure, so high in worldly position, to link her fate with a base-born earthworm such as I am. O Father in heaven, give me strength to do the right! Uncle Richard must take the necessary steps toward establishing Mrs. Gilcrest in possession of the Hite estates," he concluded after more reflection. "Not that she has any claim under the will, but because she (barring myself) is Andrew Hite's next of kin. However, all this is Uncle Richard's affair, not mine; but I hope the business can be accomplished without revealing to any one that dark page in Jane Gilcrest's early life. Betsy, at any cost, must be spared the knowledge."

Abner wrote to Major Gilcrest, renouncing all claim to Betsy, and enclosing a note for her, which he requested her father to give to her.

After this duty was performed, the young man fell into a state of dull despair which benumbed every faculty. Holmes has said, "A great calamity is as old as the trilobites an hour after it has happened. It stains backward through all the leaves we have turned over in the book of life, before its blot of tears and of blood is dry upon the page we are turning." For weeks after Abner had learned the secret of his birth, it seemed to him that this blighting, blackening misery which had laid low his pride, and killed every hope, permeated, not only all his past, but all his future. He seemed to have been born for nothing else but to experience this agony of loss and shame. He could make no plans. The future stretched out before him a desert waste; for, with the downfall of family pride and the loss of Betty, his ambition likewise had perished.

He was finally aroused by a communication from James Anson Drane. This communication stated that, owing to certain facts which had recently come into the writer's possession, he must decline to act any longer as "Mr. Logan's" agent. These facts, as Mr. Drane wrote, were as follows: The Mary Belle Hollis Page named in the will of the late Colonel Andrew Hite, of Crestlands, Sterling County, Virginia, had died and been buried at the village of Centerton, Virginia, March 9, 1782, nearly two months prior to the execution of the will; she had left no legitimate issue; and, therefore, Sarah Jane Pepper, daughter of Sarah Thornton, and now the wife of Hiram Gilcrest, of Cane Ridge, Bourbon County, Kentucky, was the sole lawful heir to the estates of the said Colonel Andrew Hite, deceased.

Mr. Drane then went on to give an account of the manner of Mary Page's death, and to explain that it was not until immediately after her burial at Centerton that her husband, Marshall Page, accompanied by his brother and sister-in-law and his little stepson, had gone on into Kentucky. Enclosed in Drane's letter was a loose slip of paper containing a copy of the half-effaced inscription upon the oak slab which marked the grave at Centerton. The slip was headed "Copied at Centerton by James Anson Drane, from the slab marking the grave of Mary Belle Hollis Page."

This communication served to awaken Abner from his apathy; for the statement conveyed in it respecting the time and place of Mary Page's death, if not proven false, would tend to very seriously reflect upon the integrity of Richard Dudley, executor of the Hite will, and would probably render him liable to arrest and trial on the charge of being party to a fraud.

Abner was thoroughly convinced that the statement in Drane's letter, concerning Mary's death, was false. He had full confidence in Richard Dudley's clear-sightedness and uprightness. Moreover, his own intuition and his faint recollection of episodes in his own early life made him sure that his mother had died that August night in the stockade fortress of Bryan Station. These dim, tantalizing recollections which had been first partially aroused that November night by Gilcrest's and Rogers' recital of the horrors of the famous Indian uprising of 1782, had been kindled into stronger life by what his uncle had recently told him of the attack upon the cabin of the Pages, the flight to Bryan's, the death there of Mary Page, and the return of her little orphaned boy to his Lawsonville people. But, although his faith in his uncle's honor and in his own intuitions and memories were to himself "confirmation strong as Holy Writ," they would not be accepted as evidence in a court of law. Hence it now behooved him and Dr. Dudley to learn something more of Marshall Page's brother.

Neither Richard nor Rachel Dudley knew anything of the man—not even his Christian name.

"This Page and his wife did not start for Kentucky from Lawsonville," Dr. Dudley said. "They came from Maryland, and joined Marshall and Mary at some appointed place—I do not now recall—on the road, many miles from Lawsonville."

"But when the man returned with me," asked Abner, "did you not then learn his full name, and something of his history?"

"I did not see him," was Dudley's reply. "I was away from home, and he stayed only an hour or so after committing you into your aunt's care. She was too shocked by the tidings he brought and by her pity and care for you, cold, sick, half starved, and bewildered as you were by the long, rough travel, to think of anything else."

"Could it be possible," thought Abner, "that the man deceived the Dudleys in regard to the woman who had died at Bryan's, and that it was his own wife instead of Marshall's? No, that could not be," he concluded; "he could have had no possible motive for the deception. Surely, there must be numbers of persons still living who were in the siege of Bryan Station, or the battle of Blue Licks, and who could not only remember this man's full name, but other circumstances that will be of service to us now. Mason Rogers can, I'm certain, find some person or persons who can give the evidence we need. I will communicate with him; and, in the meanwhile, I will go to Centerton."

Abner returned from Centerton without having gleaned any information that would throw additional light upon the mystery. He was further perplexed that no reply to his letter to Rogers had reached Williamsburg.

"I suppose I will have to go to Cane Ridge for information," he concluded when another month had passed bringing no word from Rogers, "although my soul revolts against revisiting the place of my lost happiness. But go I must, unless I soon hear from Mr. Rogers. I will tell everything to dear Mr. and Mrs. Rogers. They are noble-hearted, discreet and sympathetic, and they will still be my staunch friends. I will also while there make some disposition of my farm—I think I can easily find a buyer or a renter for it. Afterwards, I do not know what I shall do, nor does it matter much, either, what becomes of a nameless, baseborn—no, no!" he broke off, ashamed of his momentary weakness. "I will not let such unworthy sentiments master me. It is unmanly to give way like this, and is a wrong to my noble, unselfish foster mother and father. And even if they were not still left me, I must still be true to myself, and rise above the shameful circumstances which would pull me down. It would not do for me to return permanently to Cane Ridge. It would try my strength too far, to be daily in the neighborhood of my lost darling; nor would it be kind to her and her family for me to do so; and it would be a source of embarrassment and trouble to the Rogers family, and would perhaps estrange them still more from their old neighbors at Oaklands. But I will not hide my head in some far-away, obscure corner where my birth and antecedents are unknown. No! Here is my battleground. Here, where I received the blow which bereft me of my love and my position, will I fight the fight, and attain the victory. I will take up the study of the law, as Uncle Richard always wanted me to do; and I will strive to become useful and honored in my profession. I can nevermore be happy; but I can, and I will, make the name of Logan an honored one, in spite of all."

CHAPTER XXVI.

SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY

Against the jealousy and strife which arose after the religious excitement induced by the revival meetings of the previous year, Barton Stone and other ministers lifted up their voices in protest, urging that the bitter discussion of doctrinal points should cease. This only turned the tide of warfare against themselves, and they soon became the objects of bitter invective, because they had ceased to teach speculative theology, and labored instead to show the people a more liberal view of the redemptive plan.

Among the ministers who at this time taught a free salvation offered to all men on the same conditions, was Richard McNemar, a member of the Presbytery of Ohio, which had carried him through a trial for preaching what was deemed to be anti-Calvinistic doctrine.

By this presbytery his case was referred to the Synod of Lexington. Stone and three other ministers of the same views, perceiving in this trial of McNemar a blow aimed against themselves, drew up a protest against such proceedings. Then, declaring their freedom from synodical authority, they withdrew from the jurisdiction, but not from the communion, of the organization; although several unsuccessful attempts were made, before the synod convened, to reclaim them in view of their record as able and influential ministers.

In due time the synod met in Lexington, and took up McNemar's case. Stone and the other three ministers presented the protest to the synod through its moderator. A committee was sent to confer and to reason with the protesting ministers. One immediate result of the conference was that Matthew Houston, a member of the committee, became convinced of the justice of the views of Barton Stone and his associates, and became an advocate of their cause.

After prolonged discussion, the synod suspended the five ministers, upon the ground that they had departed from the established creed of their church. The ministers insisted, however, that as they had already protested and withdrawn from the jurisdiction of the synod, that body had no power to suspend them—"no more," to quote Stone's words, "than had the Pope of Rome to suspend Luther after he had done the same thing; for if Luther's suspension was valid, then the entire Protestant succession was out of order, and in that case the synod had no power; so that the act of suspension in this case was utterly void."

The action of the synod created great excitement and much dissension throughout the country, and not only churches, but families, were divided. Many persons, convinced that the turmoil was produced, not by the Bible, but by human, authoritative creeds, were henceforth set against such creeds, as being disturbers of religious liberty and detrimental to Christian unity.

At the first regular appointment at Cane Ridge, after this action of the synod, Barton Stone tendered his resignation of the ministry of that church. It was not accepted, however, for he had, during his six years' ministry, labored to good purpose, and, with the exception of Hiram Gilcrest and Shadrac Landrum, the church-members were all in harmony with their minister.

As soon as the church refused to accept Stone's resignation, Hiram Gilcrest demanded that his name and that of his wife should be stricken from the church books. The church would have granted them letters of dismissal, but these he would not accept. Shadrac Landrum, though equally bitter in his opposition to Stone's teaching, did not, when it came to the test, withdraw from the church. Thus Gilcrest stood alone; and it was a bitter day for the stern and narrow, but conscientious, old man, when he found himself thus deserted by his only ally, and turned adrift from the church of which, until two years before, he had been the most influential member.

Soon after their separation from the Lexington Synod, the five ministers constituted themselves into a separate organization, which they styled "Springfield Presbytery." In a pamphlet entitled "The Apology of the Springfield Presbytery," they stated the cause which had led to the separation from the Lexington body; their objections to confessions of faith of human origin; their abandonment from henceforth of all human authoritative creeds; and their adherence to the Bible alone as the only rule of faith and practice. It has been asserted that this pamphlet was the first public declaration of religious freedom in the western hemisphere, and the first in the world since that of Martin Luther was set at naught by the act of nullification of Augsburg. The pamphlet produced much inquiry throughout the country. It was speedily republished in several other States, and it soon found many adherents among both preachers and laymen of all denominations.

Under the name of "Springfield Presbytery," the ministers who belonged to the organization continued to preach and to plant churches for about one year. Later, perceiving that the name and the organization itself "savored of a party spirit," they, in the words of Barton Stone, "with the man-made creeds threw overboard the man-made name, and took the name 'Christian' as the name given to the disciples by divine appointment first at Antioch."[1] "Thus divested of all party name and party creed," continues Barton Stone, "and trusting alone to God and the word of his grace, we became at first a laughing-stock and a byword to the sects around, all prophesying our speedy annihilation.... Yet through much tribulation and opposition we advanced, and churches and preachers were multiplied."

This was the beginning, in the dawn of the nineteenth century, of that great reformatory or restoratory movement, of which another writer says: "The first churches planted and organized since the grand apostacy, with the Bible as the only creed or church book, and the name 'Christian' as the only family name, were organized in Kentucky in the year 1804;"[2] and of these churches so planted and organized, Cane Ridge, Bourbon County,

was the first.

[1] See Appendix, p. 269.

[2] John A. Gano.

CHAPTER XXVII.

BETSY DECLINES THE HONOR

For Betsy Gilcrest the year of 1803 dragged along in dreary monotony. All through the radiant freshness of June, the rich glow of July, the intense, white heat of August, and the mellow charm of early autumn the temperature in her veins had been steadily declining; for she had no message from her betrothed.

In June her father had received Abner's letter. Its manly resignation of Betty, and its undertone of hopeless sadness, touched Major Gilcrest; for now that his soul was no longer vexed with apprehension for his daughter's future, his better nature asserted itself, and he felt the most profound pity for the unfortunate youth in his undeserved disgrace. For the time, Major Gilcrest even forgot his suspicions that Abner had been in league with Wilkinson, Sebastian and Powers in any traitorous designs against the Government.

A note for Betsy had been enclosed in the letter to her father. He thought best to withhold this note, lest its tender sadness might have the opposite effect to that which he desired; and, instead of causing her to forget her lover, it might make her cling the more tenaciously to the memory of her lost happiness.

During all these months Major Gilcrest had taken no steps toward establishing his wife's claim to the Hite inheritance; nor had James Drane made any move toward this end, since his letter declining to act as Abner's agent. The reason for this stay of proceedings was due to Mrs. Gilcrest. Her husband, while refraining from entering into full particulars, had told her enough of his hopes and intentions to cause her the greatest apprehension. If this claim was pushed forward openly, she thought, not only must the world learn her real maiden name, and that she had been a widow Logan, but, what was far worse to the weak, timid woman, her husband would learn that she had deceived him all these years about her clandestine marriage, and regarding all the shameful details of her connection with John Logan. She begged and prayed Major Gilcrest to make no claim to the inheritance. They did not need it, and the publicity and comment and surmise that would follow, if he tried to enforce her claim, would kill her, she said. He did not consent at once, but finally, when she became so agitated as to fall really ill, he, fearing that further agitation in her weak condition might prove actually fatal to her, decided to make no public move in the matter, for the present, at least—until her nerves and strength had recovered their usual tone.

Thus time wore on, and each succeeding day as it passed, bringing no tidings to poor Betty, carried hope and love and happiness further from her grasp. Oaklands had never before seemed desolate and drear; and she could not have believed, had she been told, that she could ever look with ungracious eyes upon the stately home of her childhood. She missed the boisterous gayety of her brothers. John Calvin and Martin were students at Cambridge University, Silas and Philip were absent all day at the neighborhood school, and only little Matthew was left at home. None of the family were allowed to attend services at Cane Ridge meeting-house; Betsy was forbidden to hold intercourse with the Rogers family; and she had no heart for any of the little merrymakings of the neighborhood. Her parents urged another visit to Mary Winston, but to this Betsy would not consent; for at the Winstons James Drane would be an almost daily visitor, and Betsy now shared fully her lover's distrust of the young lawyer.

One morning in early October, Betsy, sitting languidly with her sewing in the long side porch, saw Mr. Drane ride up the avenue. She at once gathered up her work and slipped away to her room, where she sat expecting every moment a summons to come down.

When an hour had passed, she supposed that the visitor had departed, and she was folding up her work, intending to go for a ramble through the woods—for her chief solace now was to revisit the spot where she, nearly a year before, had plighted her troth—when little Matthew came with a message from her father that she was to come down at once to the parlor. "An' I mussen tum back wid oo, pappy says," added the little fellow; "I'se to doe to Mammy Dilsey an' det my face washed, an' my hair turled, an' a c'ean apawn on."

"Who's there, baby, besides father? and where's mother?"

"Her's dere too, an' Mistah Drane, an' he tissed me, an' say I'se a fine 'ittle man, an' he will tek me a nice wide on his pitty b'ack hawse; so huwy up, sisser, an' tum an' see him, so's we tan doe a-widin'."

When the girl entered the parlor, she saw at once that this was to be a momentous interview. Her mother, dressed in her best silk gown, but looking pale and nervous, was talking to Mr. Drane, who was seated beside her on the sofa; while her father, looking more bland than she had seen him for a long time, was slowly pacing the floor.

Mrs. Gilcrest gave her daughter an appealing, deprecating look as the girl entered, and then sank back on the sofa with her hands twitching nervously. Drane rose at once, and, stepping briskly across the room to meet Betsy, bowed long before her, and then extended his hand. After a moment's hesitation, she gave him hers in return, which he with graceful gallantry carried to his lips. Then, still holding her hand, he led her across the room and placed an arm-chair for her facing her father. After a slight hesitation, Drane was about to leave the room, but Major Gilcrest quietly invited him to remain, whereupon the young man retired to a position in a window-seat.

"My daughter," said Gilcrest, in his most stately manner, "our esteemed young friend has done us the honor of seeking an alliance with this family by a marriage with yourself; and, like the honorable gentleman he is, he has, before addressing you, laid his proposal before your parents. I have desired him to remain in the room that he may hear me tell you that there is no one to whom I would more willingly intrust my daughter's future. You have known him long, and, I dare say, esteem him highly; for he has everything to recommend him to your favor. Your mother and I have given our cordial approval, and we will now leave him to plead his cause with you. Knowing him as I do, and knowing you, I feel sure he will not plead in vain. Come, my dear," he said to his wife, "we will now withdraw."

If Gilcrest by this confident manner thought to overawe his daughter and surprise her into acceptance, he was speedily undeceived.

"Stop, father! Stop, mother!" Betty cried, rising from her chair and facing her father, her lips firmly set, her face pale, determination in every line of her graceful figure. "What I have to say to Mr. Drane must be said in your hearing." Gilcrest, surprised at the firmness of her voice and the determination and dignity of her bearing, stood still, facing her; Mrs. Gilcrest sank limply into the nearest chair. Betsy continued: "I am sensible of the honor Mr. Drane does me in seeking my hand; but I am surprised at his persisting in a suit which he must know is displeasing to me. More than once has he so plainly intimated his intentions that I could not fail to understand, and just as plainly have I intimated that I could not favor his suit. I now, in your presence, say what I have so often hinted to him—that I can never be his wife."

"Tut! tut! girl, have done with these unseemly airs!" said her father, sharply. "You are not capable of judging. Your parents know best what is good for you."

"No, sir," said Betty, firmly, "in this matter which involves my whole future, not even my parents shall choose for me. And you know, too, that my love is given and my troth plighted to another."

"Stop such maudlin raving! Your 'troth plighted'! Tut! you do not know what you are saying; and as for your love, it is but the puling sentimentality of a silly girl, which you will soon outgrow."

"Sir," said Betsy, turning toward the crestfallen young lawyer, "I beg that you leave us. I have given you my answer; it is irrevocable. Though humbly thanking you for the honor you would confer upon me, I can not be your wife."

"No, no! don't go, James. The girl does not know her own mind; but, by heaven, she shall be made to hear reason!" exclaimed Gilcrest, furiously. "Wait, man, I beg of you; I wish to confer further with you. As for you, you undutiful, foolish girl, you may leave the room while I talk with Mr. Drane."

"No," said James, "it will be better for me to leave you now," and, bowing low, he took up his hat and departed.

"But, James, I—we——" stammered Hiram; but the discomfited suitor was out of hearing.

Gilcrest turned angrily to his daughter. "You self-willed, troublesome baggage!" he ejaculated.

"Father," said Betty, quietly, "it is of no use for you to storm in this way. I have always been a dutiful daughter; but in this matter I mean to decide for myself."

"Why don't you speak to her, Jane?" he asked, turning to his wife. "Why do you sit there listless and dumb? Have you no influence over the girl?" But Mrs. Gilcrest was dissolved in tears, and leaned back tremblingly in her chair, saying never a word.

"Is everything going against me?" groaned the old man, pacing the room excitedly. "I'm thwarted and set at naught on every hand—church, neighbors, friends. I'll sell out and go back to Massachusetts. To think that my only daughter!—Truly a man's worst foes are often those of his own household."

"I grieve to cross you, father," answered Betsy, "for you have until lately been fond and indulgent."

Trying to control himself to speak gently, he continued: "Betsy, my daughter, believe me, I know what is best for you. As James Drane's wife, you will be tenderly loved and indulged in every luxury, and have every whim gratified; and I do think that my heartfelt desire in this matter should incline you to at least consider well before you reject a man whom any other girl in the State would be proud to accept."

"Dear father," said Betty, going up to him and laying her hand beseechingly upon his arm, "I can never marry James Anson Drane."

The old man wavered as he saw the tears in his daughter's eyes, and felt the clinging touch of her fingers. "There, there!" he said soothingly, as he tenderly touched her wet cheek, "dry your eyes, dear, and be comforted. It is only your welfare and happiness I seek. We'll say nothing more just now; after awhile you'll see differently; and I predict that before many months have gone by, you will not only be reconciled to marrying James, but will be happy in the shelter of his love, and will thank me for having urged you to accept him."

"Never!" exclaimed Betsy, drawing back defiantly. "I shall never again listen to him, nor to you even, upon this subject. I dislike him exceedingly, and I love Abner Dudley with my whole heart. Marry James Drane! The very thought of such a thing fills me with loathing. I have no confidence in his truth and integrity. I would beg my bread rather than be his wife."

"I'll lock you up!" cried Gilcrest, exasperated beyond bounds, his momentary tenderness completely vanquished by the girl's words. "I'll starve you on bread and water, you insolent, outrageous fool!"

"O Hiram! Hiram! don't!" wailed Mrs. Gilcrest. "Don't be so hard. I can not bear it! Oh, what shall I do! what shall I do!" and she wept and trembled, and wrung her hands, until her husband and her daughter were alarmed.

"This is your work," he said to Betsy, as he bent over his hysterical wife. "You are breaking your mother's heart, you obstinate vixen. Ring the bell for Dilsey, at once. Remain where you are, until I return," he added to Betsy when Aunt Dilsey had obeyed the summons, and was assisting him to carry his wife upstairs.

His anger had cooled somewhat when he returned to the parlor half an hour later. "I can not, of course, force you to marry any one," he said to his daughter; "nor for the present will I urge upon your consideration the suit of Mr. Drane, against whom you have taken so unreasoning and unjust a prejudice; but there's another point upon which I must do my duty without shrinking. I command you to give up thinking of Abner Dudley, now and forever."

"I can give you no such obedience," Betsy replied. "I am his promised wife; but even though loving him as I do, I would give him back his troth, if you could show just and adequate reason why I should. Instead, you give no reason whatever."

"Is not my wish reason enough?" he asked, desiring to spare her the humiliating knowledge of Abner's low birth, and the fact that he had given her back her freedom.

"No, sir, it is not. I am no longer a child, to be made to obey you blindly and unquestioningly."

"Then, if you will insist upon knowing my reasons, you willful girl, you shall be enlightened. Your precious lover has renounced you; and, what is more, he will never show his face in this community again."

"No, no! It can't be true. He is loyal. I will believe in him above all the world. He will

return. I know he will," cried Betsy, shrinking and paling, but still strong in her faith.

"But he has renounced you, Betsy, my daughter. He has written me that he must give you up."

"Let me see the letter," said Betsy, still unbelieving.

Gilcrest crossed the hall to his office, and in a few seconds returned with Abner's letter. "I would have spared you this, my child, if possible," her father said as she eagerly seized the letter.

"Oh, what lie is this they have told you, my persecuted, darling Abner?" she exclaimed. "You, my proud, high-minded, noble lover, a bastard! Never, never, never! It's all a vile plot to cheat you of your betrothed wife and your inheritance. Ah! I know whose work this is. It is that smiling, treacherous Judas, James Anson Drane. I feel it, I know it."

"You rave, my miserable, deluded child," Gilcrest said sadly, "but even though you are for the moment well-nigh bereft of reason by the shock of hearing that your lover has given you up, you must not in your bitterness utter so wicked, so utterly unfounded an accusation against an honorable man who loves you truly and would make you his wife."

Nothing her father could say could induce her to believe that Abner was not laboring under some delusion about his being base-born. She could give no reason for this belief, she said; but her own heart and her own instincts told her it was all a mistake, or else a scheme to separate her and her lover. "This will all be cleared up, I feel that it will," she said again and again, "and he will come back to me soon, and without a stain upon his name. I intend to write to him at once, and tell him that though all the world should forsake him, I will still be true to him, and will believe, too, in his right to wear an honorable name."

Her father reasoned and pleaded in vain. He finally lost all patience, and grew angrier than he had ever been with her. "Go to your room, you unreasonable fool," he finally said. "Go! No longer offend my sight by your presence—but listen, first, and remember I will be obeyed. I forbid your writing one line to that base-born vagabond. Further, I forbid your leaving these premises or holding any communication with any one except members of this household, until you pledge me your word of honor to have nothing more to do with Abner Dudley."

"Then, I'm a prisoner for life," answered Betty; "for so long as I live and breathe, I shall love him. I mean to write to him as soon as I can manage to escape your vigilance and tyranny long enough to post a letter to him, and when he comes back to claim me, I will marry him in spite of you and that villain, James Drane."

CHAPTER XXVIII.

AT THE "BLUE HERON"

Upon the evening preceding Abner's contemplated return to Kentucky, to wind up his business there, and to hunt for evidence in regard to the Page brothers, he strolled down to the "Blue Heron," a tavern in an adjacent street. Entering the tavern, he found himself in the midst of rather an exciting scene, occasioned by a bet just made as to the relative height of two men who were standing leaning on the bar. Both men were of unusual height. At a casual glance the younger of the two, a frequenter of the tavern, would appear to be the taller, by reason of his extreme slenderness of build. The older man was a stranger. The two took their places in the center of the room, back to back; and it was then found that the older man was the taller by nearly an inch. Upon being measured, his exact height was ascertained to be six feet, two inches.

"Seems like I've shrunk some sence I wuz a young man," said the old fellow in a jocular tone, as he pocketed the stakes; "for then I measured six foot, two an' a ha'f, in my sock feet. Thar wuz only one feller in our reg'ment taller'n me, an' that wuz John Logan—'long John' we called him to 'stinguish him frum t'other John Logan, who wuz oncommon tall too, but nigh two inch shorter than 'long John.'"

For a moment Abner was unable to utter a word; then, under cover of the noise made by the hilarious group standing at the bar, drinking at the expense of the man who had lost the wager, he drew the old man to one side, and asked, "Were the two John Logans you

speak of related?"

"Not thet I knows on, stranger—yes, sence I come to think on it, they wuz said to be cousins. I remember, too, thet they hailed frum the same place—somewhars in Pennsylvany."

"Can you tell me any more about them?" asked Abner, by a mighty effort managing to control his excitement, and to speak calmly.

"I don't know much uv Jack Logan, as the shorter uv the two wuz called," replied the stranger, who gave his name as Sam Butler, "'cept thet he wuz a fine feller, an' a brave soldier who wuz killed on the same day, in the same fight, as long John wuz. They both fell at Monmouth Court-house. But I knew long John well. He wuz my messmate an' marchin' comrid, an' we slept many a night side by side on the ground, under the same blanket, when we wuz fortunit 'nough to hev blankets to kiver us. Why, I wuz by his side when he fell, killed by a bullet through his heart. I drug him offen the field, an' thet night holped bury him in the trench whar we laid so many uv our men whut lost ther lives in thet hot, awful fight."

"Where was he from?"

"He wuz borned in Kenelworth, Pennsylvany; but his folks moved 'round consider'ble. They wuz sort o' sheftless, I should jedge, an' never stayed long in any place."

"Was he married?"

"He hed a wife in Philadelphy, though I hed never hearn him speak uv her. After he wuz dead, I found in one uv his pockets a worn letter, months old, frum her, dated Philadelphy; and I got her word uv his death, though frum her letter I gethered thet they hedn't been gittin' on well together, an' thet she 'peared to think he had misused her, an' keered nothin' fur her. He wuz a reckless, drinkin', high-tempered, rough feller; but, Lordee! how brave, when it come to fightin'! He wuzn't feared o' old Nick hisse'f or eny uv his imps."

"What was his wife's name?"

"Blest ef I kin re-collect, stranger. It's twenty-odd year ago, an' you see, I——"

"Was it Mary?"

"No, I don't think thet wuz it."

"Was it Sarah?"

"Yes, thet's it. Sarah—Sarah Jane, thet's it. I'm pos'tive it wuz Sarah Jane. Did you know eny uv her people?"

"Yes, I think so," Abner replied, "but I'm still more interested in the other John Logan."

"Well, sir, ez I said, I knew nothin' uv him, more'n whut I fust told you; but, stop, Peter Stump wuz his comrid, an' he——"

"Is this Peter Stump living, and, if so, where?" was the next anxious inquiry.

"Why, yes, he's alive an' a-kickin'; leastways, he wuz last Monday three weeks ago, when I seen him at Pockville. He lives two mile south uv thar, on the road to Richmond."

That night our much-tried hero went once more to the old box in the garret, and took from it the miniature of his father, and the letter to Mary, written the night before the battle. With these in his pocket, Abner the next morning went to Pockville. He had no difficulty in finding Peter Stump, and was soon in possession of information which filled him with renewed life and joy. Stump recognized the miniature as that of his messmate, John (or Jack) Logan. Stump remembered the other John Logan, and said that in features and sometimes in expression the two Logans were much alike, but that in complexion and disposition they were utterly dissimilar. Jack Logan was of dark and sallow complexion, had curly black hair, and was about six feet, one inch in height. He was reserved, quiet, sober in his habits, and peaceably inclined. The other John had a ruddy complexion, hair a shade lighter than his cousin's, and a temper so fiery and quarrelsome that he was forever in some broil with his comrades. He was a hard drinker, too, and a gambler. He was nearly two inches taller than Jack Logan, and was the tallest man in the regiment. Jack Logan, up to the beginning of the war, had always lived in Kenelworth, but the other John Logan, although born in Kenelworth, had lived a wandering life. Other facts which Stump revealed explained the message in Jack Logan's last letter to Mary. Stump and Logan had been close friends, and the former had learned from his friend the reason of the hasty marriage. Mary Hollis, at the time, was living with her cousins, two old maidens, who were ardent British sympathizers, and, therefore, did their utmost to prejudice the young girl against her lover, until he, fearing that if his sweetheart remained under the influence of her Tory relatives, she would finally be estranged from him, persuaded her to marry

him at once. It was just after the battles of Trenton and Princeton, and Logan, elated by these two victories for the American cause, was inclined, like many other hopeful young patriots, to believe that the war would soon be over. So, although he knew that for the present he must be separated from his bride much of the time, and that he was but poorly able to provide for her, rashly persuaded her to marry him. As the months went by, and the Continental army, instead of achieving fresh victories, was suffering loss and increasing hardship, Logan grew more and more remorseful and unhappy about his young wife and infant son. The night before the battle of Monmouth, he seemed to have a premonition of his fate on the morrow, and was more than ever troubled over the future for his wife and babe. He wrote his wife, asking forgiveness for having persuaded her into the imprudent marriage, promising that if his life was spared, he would try to atone to her for all she had suffered, and begging her in any case to find shelter with her sister until the war would be over. After Logan was killed, Stump had himself managed to convey this letter to Mary at Morristown; but he could only stay a few minutes with her, as his regiment was hurrying eastward. During the Virginia campaign several years later, when Stump's regiment was with Lafayette around Yorktown—about twenty miles from Lawsonville—he had intended to ask for leave of absence, and go to see how it fared with his former comrade's widow; but, hearing that she had married again and removed to Kentucky, he did not go to Lawsonville.

When Abner Logan returned to Williamsburg the day after his conference with Peter Stump, he found a letter from Mason Rogers. Mr. Rogers wrote that he had questioned several men who had been in the fight at Blue Licks and who remembered the Page brothers well. The elder brother was Marshall, the name of the younger was Marcemus. Rogers further wrote that two women who had been in Bryan Station during the siege and who were now living in Fayette County, remembered that Marcemus Page, after his escape from the Indians, had come back to Bryan's for the little orphan boy whom he took to the mother's people in Virginia. These witnesses could swear that it was Marshall Page's wife who had died at the station in August, 1782, while the men were in pursuit of the Indians. Moreover, one of the women remembered that Marcemus Page had told her that he intended, after placing Marshall's little stepson in the care of the boy's Virginia relations, to go on to Maryland. The woman also said that Marcemus had told her that his own wife, who had died that spring on the way into Kentucky, was a native of Maryland, from Charles County.

After hearing what these women said, Rogers, knowing that Barton Stone was a native of Charles County, Maryland, had then gone to see him. Stone, though but a lad when his family had removed from Charles County, remembered the Page family. There were two brothers, Marshall and Marcemus, and Marcemus had married Mary Beale, a cousin of Stone's mother; and soon afterward had left Maryland with his wife to join his brother somewhere in Virginia, intending to go on with him to settle in the backwoods of Kentucky.

After receiving Rogers' letter, Abner Logan lost no time in returning to Kentucky. The day following his arrival at Cane Ridge, he sent Major Gilcrest a note asking for an interview. The messenger brought back the note unopened and the verbal message from Gilcrest declining to hold any intercourse with Abner or to receive any written communication from him.

Rogers then advised communicating with the Major through a lawyer, but Abner felt that he must see Betty before he could decide upon this course. He contrived, through Aunt Dilsey, to convey a note to the girl. She wrote back that she would meet him that afternoon at their former trysting-place. Here, accordingly, the two lovers met, after a separation of over half a year, and renewed their vows of love and fealty.

Abner gave Betsy a full account of everything, and consulted with her as to the best way to communicate with her father; for it was imperative that Major Gilcrest should immediately be made acquainted with Abner's true history and his right to the Hite inheritance. Betsy urged her lover not to place his affairs in the hands of a lawyer until she had first tried what she could do with her father. She also thought that her mother, first of all, should be told everything. To this Abner agreed.

That night Betsy had a long talk with her mother. Poor Mrs. Gilcrest, who for many years had been oppressed by the dark secret of her early life, felt now, when she had learned all that her daughter had to reveal, as if a great burden was lifted from her spirit. She rejoiced not only in the certainty that her own clandestine marriage was valid, and that her cousin had been a lawfully wedded wife, but also because of the knowledge that Abner Logan, whom she had always greatly liked, was the son of her well-beloved cousin and foster sister, Mary Hollis, and that he was in every respect a suitable mate for Betsy.

In her relief and joy she felt that she now had courage to confess all to her husband. The next evening she nerved herself for this ordeal.

Mrs. Gilcrest could not have chosen a less favorable occasion for her purpose; for Major Gilcrest had just learned, through one of the servants, that Betsy had met her lover the afternoon before. He was furiously exasperated that his daughter had thus set at naught his commands; and he raved in so frenzied a style of disobedience, deception, and of the infamy of any girl who would hold clandestine meetings with a man, that poor, cowardly Mrs. Gilcrest's newly acquired valor evaporated before the fire of her husband's wrath, and she dared not confess the secret she had withheld during all their married life. She did, however, intercede for Abner, venturing her conviction that in birth and character he was fit to wed with Betsy. But the poor creature was so cowed by her habitual awe of her lord and master, and by his present irascible temper, as well as by the burden of her own yet unconfessed secret, that the stammering, incoherent tale she told of the two John Logans, of the time and place of Mary Hollis' death, and of Abner's being Andrew Hite's legal heir, was anything but convincing. Her feeble attempt at explanation and intercession, instead of softening the obstinate Major, only wrought him up to a still higher pitch of exasperation.

Mrs. Gilcrest's effort to enlighten her husband having failed, young Logan engaged an attorney, through whom the lord of Oaklands was perforce convinced of Abner's legitimacy and right to the Hite possessions.

But there still remained in the secret drawer of the Major's escritoire those documentary proofs against "A. D.'s" political integrity, and in the Major's mind those convictions of the young man's connection with dangerous Spanish intrigues. More than that, there was the Major's ingrained obstinacy and his aversion to confessing himself in the wrong. So that, although he was not unduly covetous of the Hite inheritance, and although, had he not been so harassed and imbittered by his daughter's defiance, he would have rejoiced that Abner Logan was well born and prosperous, just now he was in a humor the reverse of rejoicing or yielding. Therefore his opposition to Betsy's suitor was as firm as ever; and the two lovers appeared as far as ever from the attainment of their hopes.

CHAPTER XXIX.

AUNT DILSEY TO THE RESCUE

"Send Miss Betsy to me at once," was Gilcrest's order to a negro girl who was sweeping the hall one cold, snowy morning in December, as he strode into the house, whip in hand, clad in overcoat and riding-boots. "Where's your mistress?"

"In the settin'-room, marstah."

"Then send Miss Betsy to me there. Put down that broom, and go at once—move quickly, nigger!" With a grim look he went into the sitting-room, where his wife was dawdling over her tambour frame; and Polly sped up the stairs. In the upper hall she encountered Aunt Dilsey.

"Whut's the mattah, gal?" asked the old negress. "You look lak a rabbit skeered outen a bresh heap."

"Marstah's stompin' an' ragin' 'roun lak a mad bull down thah," panted the girl. "He say teh fotch Miss Betsy to him to oncet in the settin'-room. She's gwine kotch it sho 'nough this time."

"'Deed she hain't, long's her brack mammy's heah teh p'otect her! Marse Hi's losin' his las' grain o' sense; but he bettah min' how he capers 'roun'. He's been pussecutin' thet bressed chile long 'nough—all kaze she's true teh her 'fections, an' woan give in when he say she shan't hev thet nice, rosy-cheek, perlite young gemmin she's begaged to. Ole Dilsey's done kep' still long 'nough; it's time fer her teh lay down de law a bit. I hain't feared o' Marse Hi, ef he does stomp an' rumpage. You heahs me, doan you?"

In this, as in all other large households throughout the Southern States, the "black mammy" was an indispensable part of the family. The real mother usually gave her children careful attention and superintended their training; but she took upon herself little of the drudgery and burden of their upbringing. A subordinate nurse was the children's guardian and companion when they went out for play or exercise, but the "black mammy" ruled over this negro and was the highest authority on all matters pertaining to the nursery. Even the real mother humored this foster mother in the

management of the children; and when, as in the case of Mrs. Gilcrest, the mistress was frail of health and unassertive by nature, the black mammy's authority became almost paramount. And such was the nature of Dilsey's authority.

Silas Gilcrest, Hiram's father, had bought Dilsey from a Massachusetts slave-ship when she was a child of twelve years. She was just from Africa, and could not speak a word of English. Silas Gilcrest brought her at once into his own house, where she served first as nurse to the infant Hiram, and later as upper house servant. Her skin was black as ebony, but she was of superior intelligence and of stout and loyal heart. She nursed Hiram Gilcrest in his babyhood, was his caretaker and faithful attendant in boyhood, and his loyal adherent in early manhood. When he married, she went with him from Massachusetts to Virginia, and from there she and her husband and two children accompanied Hiram and his wife to Kentucky.

When Betsy, Hiram's first-born, was laid in old Dilsey's arms, she had just buried her own baby, and all the mother love of her passionate nature went out to this tiny scion of the house of Gilcrest. Thenceforward, the unreasoning, self-sacrificing devotion which in former days Dilsey had lavished upon Hiram was transferred to his daughter.

As time went on, and her cares and responsibilities multiplied with the advent of each new baby to her master and mistress, Mammy Dilsey, though still faithful and devoted, became more and more self-important and dictatorial. She felt herself superior in education and position to the other negroes, and almost, if not quite, as important a part of the household as the master himself. As for Mrs. Gilcrest, Dilsey's regard for her was compounded of admiration and pitying patronage. She loved and tended and ruled over all the children, but Betsy was her idol, for whom she would cheerfully have laid down her own life. Throughout Betsy's disagreement with her father, Dilsey had been her confidant and comforter; and her indignation against her master for the past few months had only thus far been restrained from actual outbreak by Betty's entreating her to be silent, lest by want of tactful patience she might still further provoke the irascible spirit of the master of Oaklands. On this particular morning, however, Aunt Dilsey's spirit was stirred within her, and she felt it high time to assert herself.

When Betsy reached the sitting-room she found her mother crying helplessly and her father fuming up and down the room.

"What do you mean by this, girl?" he asked, flourishing a folded paper in her face. "Did I not command you to have nothing more to do with that worthless fellow? And here you are actually writing to him, and bribing my servants to fetch his letters and to take him your answers! What do you mean?"

"I mean, sir," Betsy answered, facing him bravely, "that I'll not submit to your tyrannical treatment any longer—keeping me a prisoner in these grounds, and forbidding me to hold any communication with the man I love and honor and mean to marry. I have been for weeks under restraint; not even allowed to walk about the yard without a spying black slave at my heels. More than this, two weeks ago you intercepted a letter addressed to me, and you now hold in your hand—without any right whatever—a note of mine to Mr. Logan. What if I did 'stoop to bribe a servant' to carry a message to my lover? That is little in comparison with your keeping me in durance, and intercepting my letters. And you talk to me of 'stooping' and of dishonor!"

"Betsy! Betsy! my dear, my dear!" wailed her mother, "don't use such language. Oh, oh, you and your father are killing me!"

"Mother, mother, have you no feeling for your daughter, that you have said no word to help her in all these months? Are you so under the thrall of that tyrant that you meekly submit without a protest to such treatment of me? Yes," she said, turning to her father, who stood motionless, his eyes blazing, his face white with passion, "you are a tyrant, but I defy you. You shall not break my spirit. I mean to marry Abner Logan as soon as he says the word."

"Be silent, before I strike you!" cried her father, advancing toward her. "Go! Fling yourself into your lover's arms as soon as you please. I wash my hands of you, you willful, passionate hussy!"

"Stop! stop! this instant, Hiram Gilcrest," shrieked his wife, rising from her chair and stamping her foot. Then she rushed to him, caught his arm and actually shook him, crying: "You shall not heap such abuse on my child! I have been silent long enough."

If the portrait of old Silas Gilcrest, hanging above the mantel, had opened its mouth and spoken, father and daughter could not have been more astounded than at this outbreak. In the whole course of her married life this was the first time that Jane Gilcrest had ever asserted herself, or raised her voice against her lord and master. "Yes, you are a brute to use such language and to treat your daughter so! And now, I suppose you'll beat me, next;

you look as though you'd like to fell us both to the earth with that whip—oh! oh! oh!" she shrieked, and fell back in a swoon.

Betsy, white, unnerved, and more frightened than she had ever been in her life, sprang to her mother's aid, who recovered from her faint only to go into violent hysterics. Gilcrest stood dazed and motionless, staring at his wife, with the riding-whip unconsciously clenched in his hand.

At this juncture the door was flung open by old Dilsey.

At this juncture, the door was flung open by old Dilsey. She stood a second on the threshold, as though paralyzed at the tableau before her. Mrs. Gilcrest leaned back in her chair, moaning and trembling; Betsy crouched by her side, in reality trying to pacify her mother, though apparently seeking shelter from her father, who stood before them with the uplifted whip. Then, her black eyes blazing, the negress sprang forward with the swiftness and fierceness of a tiger; and charging upon her master with such force as almost to throw him down, she seized his arm and wrenched the whip from his grasp.

"I said you had done gone plum crazy," she cried, "but I nebbah thought I'd lib teh see the day you'd raise yo' arm ag'in yo' own wife an' chile. Don' you dar' tech 'em! I'll p'otect 'em wid my life's blood!"

"Shut up, you old harridan!" returned Gilcrest. "Nobody's going to strike your mistress, or her daughter either. Take your Miss Jane to her room, and attend to her."

"I doan lebe dis room tell I speaks my min' 'bout yo' ongodly carryin' on an' yo' shameful 'buse ob my sweet lamb, my own Miss Betsy."

"Shut up, I tell you!" again cried Gilcrest.

"I woan shet up. I will speak my min'!"

"I'll cowhide you, you black witch!" shouted her master, threateningly.

"Whip me? Ole Dilsey? 'Deed you woan! Ef you lays de weight ob a fingah on me, I'll t'ar you limb f'um limb!" She faced him, arms akimbo, eyes snapping, and defiance in every line of her tall figure and in every fold of her red turban. "Does you think I'se feared ob you? Me, whut nussed an' tended you when you wuz a pore, sickly baby, an' bossed you, an' spanked yo' back sides many a time when you wuz a streprous, mis-che-vous boy?"

"Leave the room this instant!" cried Gilcrest, white with anger.

"Nary step does I budge tell I frees my mind," answered Dilsey with determination. "Hain't you no bowels ob marcy fur yo' own flesh an' blood? Is you done persessed by de Debble, dat you treats dat pore lamb so, whut hain't done nuthin' but be true to her sweetheart? Yo' fust borned chile, too, yo' leetle gal whut you kissed an' cried obah fur joy when ole Dilsey fotch her to you; an' you tuck her in yo' arms, de tears runnin' down yo' cheeks an' yo' voice trem'lin' an' a-shakin', ez you thanked de good Lawd fur yo' purty black-eyed baby gal, an' fur bringin' yo' pore young wife safe frew her trial!"

"There, there, Dilsey," said Gilcrest, moved in spite of himself by her rough eloquence.

"You have entirely misconceived the situation. I had no intention of striking either your mistress or Miss Betsy. Leave off your foolish raving, and help me get your Miss Jane to her bed. Don't you see she is not able to stand?" Then to his daughter he added, "If all this excitement and trouble make your mother really ill, it is your fault, you rebellious girl."

CHAPTER XXX.

YOUNG LOCHINVAR

"So light to the croup the fair lady he swung,"
So light to the saddle before her he sprung;"
'She is won! we are gone—over bank, bush and scaur;"
They'll have fleet steeds that follow,' quoth Young Lochinvar."

The next afternoon, Major Gilcrest, from the window of a back room, saw his daughter coming in alone through the shrubbery, and strongly suspected that she had been meeting Abner Logan again. Gilcrest, however, said nothing to her, and she went upstairs. She remained in her room, busy over some needlework, about an hour. Then, as it was getting too dark to sew, she put aside her work to go downstairs; but just then she heard the key turned in her door, and found it locked from the outside. She was a prisoner in her bedchamber.

She remained there for two days, without seeing any one but the negro girl Polly, who three times a day came to the room to replenish the fire and to bring her meals. From Polly, Betsy learned that Mrs. Gilcrest was ill and confined to her room, and that Major Gilcrest was preparing for a journey, and purposed taking his daughter with him. He sent by Polly a curt note which further enlightened Betty of his intentions. She was directed to pack her clothes and be in readiness to start with him for Massachusetts as soon as her mother's health would allow him to leave home. He also informed Betsy that he meant to leave her in Massachusetts at a boarding-school.

Instead of obeying her father's command, Betsy spent her solitary hours in trying to hit upon some mode of escape from her prison, or at least for some means of communicating with her lover.

On the third night of her imprisonment she retired early, feeling that she would need all her strength for the morrow's struggle; for she was fully resolved that no power on earth should be strong enough to compel her to leave home with her father. She was exhausted, and soon fell asleep. In the night she was awakened by some one shaking her and calling her name softly. She opened her eyes, and found Aunt Dilsey standing over her with a lighted candle in one hand.

"Sh—, sh—, honey, don't mek no noise!"

"How did you get here?" asked Betsy, sitting up in bed and now thoroughly roused.

"I stole de key f'um de nail in de hall, an' den slipped up de sta'rs. I allus walks jes lak a cat, you knows, so Marse Hi didn't heah me. But nebbah min' dat now. Git up quick, an' do whut I tells you. I'se gwineteh he'p you 'scape to Marse Abner, dis berry hour. He's waitin' fur you on his nag down to de bars at de eend ob de leetle woods pastur', an' he'll tek you straight to de preachah's house, an' you kin be married right off."

"But, mammy," began Betsy.

"Shet up, chile, an' do ez I says. It's yo' on'y chance; fur onct Marse Hi gits you 'way f'um heah, it'll be many a long day foh you sees yo' sweetheart ag'in. I tell you yo' pap's thet desprut dar's no tellin' whut he woan do teh keep you an' yo' sweetheart 'part. So doan let me heah no 'jections, but jes' listen to me. You'se to slip out frew de ole log-room heah—you carn't git out frew de hall; fur yo' pap'll heah you, shore, kaze his door's open, an' you knows he allus sleeps wid one eye an' bofe years open. But you go inteh de log-room, an' clamb out by de windah. See! Heah's a rope I done mek outen bedclothes. We'll tie it to de bed-post, an' it's plenty long 'nough to reach most to de groun' frew de windah, whut hain't more'n twelve or fou'teen foot f'um de groun'. 'Sides, dar's notches all down de wall outside whah de chinkin's done fell out. So you kin hold ontah de ropes, put yo' foots in de gaps, an' git down ez easy ez ef 'twuz on sta'r steps."

The chamber Betsy occupied was in the ell of the house, and communicated through a

closet with the upper room of the old log house of two rooms which had been left standing when the new house was built. The lower apartment of this old structure was now used as a weaving-room.

"But why not go down through the window of the lower room?" asked Betsy.

"Kaze I carn't fin' de key to de door et de foot ob de sta'rway intah de loom-room. But you woan hab no trouble, noways, climbin' down dat wall. So hurry, an' while you dresses, I'll pack up some ob yo' clo's in a bundle. I'se done shet ole Jock an' Ponto up in de woodhouse to keep dem f'um barkin' an' rousin' yo' pap. Soon's you'se down safe, I'll go out an' lock yo' door ag'in, slip down de sta'rs, an' Marse, when he fin's you'se skipped, will think you'se 'scaped by yo'se'f. But, anyways, I doan much keer ef he does fin' dat ole Dilsey holped you; I hain't feared. He woan dar' tackle me."

"It seems hard," said Betty, "that I must steal out of my father's house in this way like a thief; but it's my only chance."

Aunt Dilsey's plan worked successfully. Betsy, by means of her bed-quilt rope and the chinks in the wall, had no difficulty in making her escape. Old Dilsey, as soon as her young mistress reached the ground, softly dropped the bundle after her, and then the girl sped across the snow through the side yard to the little woods, where at the bars her lover awaited her. She climbed up behind him on his brown mare, Bess, and in a short while reached Barton Stone's house.

Logan had already related the circumstances of the case to the minister, who said that the young couple were fully justified in the step they had taken; and so they were married. Stone and his wife urged them to remain the night with them, but Abner said that Mr. and Mrs. Rogers were expecting them. Accordingly they rode away, and reached the Rogers home about midnight. Late as it was, the entire family were up and fully prepared to receive them.

CHAPTER XXXI.

A NOVEL BRIDAL TOUR

The next morning the young couple, accompanied by Susan Rogers, with Rache in the capacity of serving-woman, set out on their bridal tour, a three-mile ride over the snow, to their future home. A stout sledge drawn by a yoke of oxen was the primitive equipage of the bridal party.

The wedding presents, though the gifts of but one family, were many and useful, if not beautiful and costly. A feather bed and a pair of fat pillows were Mrs. Rogers' most valuable gift. "No, Betsy," she said as she tied them up in an old quilt, "we hain't robbin' ourse'ves; we've got more beds an' pillahs then we hev people to sleep on 'em; besides, hain't we got plenty geese?"

"Nevah you mind, Betsy," chuckled Mason Rogers; "Cynthy Ann knows better'n you do whut she kin spar' tow'ds settin' you an' Ab up to housekeepin'. The real offus uv a bride is to be ornamental. So, all you got to do this mawnin' is to set up on thet ther sled, an' look purty."

A coarse but well-bleached tablecloth, a gourd of lard, a cheese, half a loaf of cake, a skillet and a coffee boiler completed Mrs. Rogers' list.

The gifts of her husband were no less generous: a side of meat, a supply of meal, potatoes, hominy, sugar, a jug of cider vinegar, and another of molasses, concerning which gifts he declared, in answer to Abner's protest: "Of course, you'n' Betty kin live on love; so I jes' put in them eatables fur Susan—pore gal, she ain't got no husban' yit to mek her fergit she's got a stommick. Besides, even you an' yer bride will find livin' on love a weak'nin' exper'ence artah the fust few days; an' this snow looks lak it hed come to stay all wintah. The roads 'tween heah an' Bourbonton won't be broke through 'nough fur you to haul a load o' things frum thar befoh March, mayby. Allus feed yer husban' good, Betty. With all the men whut evah I seen, the stommick 'pears to be the seat o' the affections; an' Abner hain't no exception. He kin mek an ash cake or a hunk o' middlin' disappear 'bout ez fast ez the nex' one; an' when it comes to tacklin' a stack o' flitters seasoned with maple merlasses, he kin beat all creation, unless 'tis Tommy an' Buddy, an' the amount o' vittels

them two shavers kin manidge to stow 'way is 'nough to mek a pusson think ther laigs is holler. These two cheers," he continued as he tied them in place on the sledge, "air fur me an' Cynthy Ann to set on when we come ovah nex' Sunday to pay our bridal call an' to fotch Cissy an' Rache home. Abner hain't got but two cheers, Betty—one fur Susan, an' one fur you an' him; but me an' Cynthy Ann's done got pas' the time when one cheer kin 'commerdate us both comf'table. Whut you got thar?" he asked the negro Tom, as he came forward, while Rube lingered bashfully in the background.

"Me an' Rube wants tab gib somethin' ter spress our 'gratulatins ter Miss Betsy an' Marse Ab; so we presents dese ax-handles whut we'se made oursel's, an' dis bowl whut we'se hollered outen a ash-tree fur a nice bread-tray; an' we wishes you bofe much joy in de road you'se dis day sotten out on in double harnish." Grinning and bobbing, he presented the offerings, and then stepped back to make room for Uncle Tony. "Marse Ab, you'll 'cep' dis bunch o' brooms f'um ole Tony; kaze he wuz yer fus' 'quaintunce when you come ter dis kintry. Dese brooms will 'min' you ob yer ole home; kaze dey's tied wid de same twist an' loop jes' ez dey mek brooms wid in ole Virginny. An' I wishes you 'n' yer purty bride all de hap'ness an' prosp'ity whut kin come ter us pore morsels trablin' frew dis vale ob tears."

"Well, Ab," said Mason, gleefully, as Abner, after gratefully thanking the darkeys, proceeded to find a place for the things on the well-loaded sled, "you'd bettah walk straight now; a broom's a dangerous weepon in a woman's hands. You know the ole sayin' 'bout brooms, Betsy? 'In fair weathah use one eend; in foul weathah use t'other!'"

Susan's contributions were a pair of blankets and a supply of tow-linen sheeting and toweling, all of her own weaving. The twins, not to be outdone, begged Betsy to accept all their nine-patch pieces, "which only lack a few more squares," they said, "to mek a quilt big 'nough fur any bed."

"Tek 'em, Betty," laughingly urged Mrs. Rogers; "Lucindy an' Lucy air only too glad ter git 'em off ther hands; they know they'd hev ter finish thet quilt this wintah, ef them pieces stayed heah, an' they hate sewin' wussen a mad dog hates watah."

"We want you to have these, too," said Lucy, handing to Betsy a pair of plaster-of-paris angels. "Lucindy an' me bought 'em of the packman with our own money. They'll look mighty sweet settin' up on your mantel-tree. One of 'em's got its wing broke off, but thet won't show much when it's set facin' the room."

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Rogers. "The twins presents you with angels, an' Tommy an' Buddy contributes live stock." The two little boys advanced, Tommy with a curly black pup under his arm, Buddy with two half-grown kittens in his apron.

"Yes, yes, tek 'em," urged Mrs. Rogers; "you'll do me a favor to tek thet mis-che-vous pup, an' will save them kittens frum a grave in the hoss-pond; I've done said I'd drown the whole litter. Heah's a sack fur the kittens, an' you kin put the pup undah this heah kittle; 'twon't smothah undah thar; an' 'twon't mek no diffruns ef it does."

Every negro on the place, elated and excited by the romantic event of a runaway marriage, brought offerings. Rache gave gourds and a cymbling bowl; Eph, a string of red-pepper; the other little darkeys, gifts of maple sugar, walnuts and hickorynuts; while Aunt Dink presented a large blue-flowered platter which until now had been the chief ornament of the chest of drawers in her cabin, and was none the less precious to her because of the big crack through the middle and the nick out of one corner.

"The coach and four is now waiting with the bride's outfit already packed in the boot; so bride, bridesmaid and waiting-woman will please take their places," laughed Abner, happily, helping Betsy, Susan and Rache into the sledge. "You've loaded us so heavily with your generous gifts that I fear the bridal equipage will break down before reaching the end of the first stage, and bury bride, bridesmaid, waiting-woman and dowry in a snowbank."

At this moment, out came little Buddy again, carrying a tiny arm-chair which he had long since outgrown, and insisting that it should make part of the bridal outfit on the sledge.

"That's right, sonny," said Rogers, as he placed the chair. "They don't need it yit awhile, but 'tis likely it'll come in handy in a year or so. Hold on thar a minit," Rogers exclaimed, as Logan was hastily preparing to start off. Rushing into the house, he emerged in a few minutes, carrying a pine cradle with deep, sloping sides and broad, rough rockers. "Heah's a companion piece fur thet cheer. Hope you'll hev use fur it befoh we do ag'in," and nothing would do but that the cradle should be placed on the sled. "Ha! ha! ha!" Rogers laughed uproariously as he surveyed the outfit. "This turnout looks lak a emigrant wagon mekin' a journey frum Cumberlan' Gap to the settlements."

Good-by's were exchanged, and the train started. The bride with her two attendants sat bravely on the sledge surrounded by her household goods, while the groom stepped

proudly on to guide his awkward team, his own faithful dog, Toby, following at his heels. His house was not on the main thoroughfare, and the shrubs and tangled vines, weighted down with snow, bent over the narrow, little-used roadway, making it in places almost impassable; but the cavalcade proceeded safely, if slowly, until about half the journey was accomplished. Then, as they were going down a steep hillside with a considerable slant to the left, the groom came back from his post at the head of the team, to the side of his bride. Susan was looking out across the landscape; Rache was engrossed with her efforts to keep the various small articles from falling off the sledge. The moment seemed propitious; he leaned over to give Betty a reassuring kiss and embrace. Just then the vehicle ran over a stump which was hidden, but not protected, by the snow, and it careened sharply to the left. Abner, on the right, instantly threw his weight to stay the tottering ark. This only added the proper impetus, with, as the result, a complete overturn.

Out tumbled bride, bridesmaid and servant in the snow.

Out tumbled bride, bridesmaid and servant in the snow, with feather bed, chairs, table utensils, skillet, kettle, coffee boiler, buckets, brooms, provisions on top. The two kittens, escaping from their sack, and frightened out of at least four of their eighteen lives, scampered madly up the nearest tree, in which house of refuge they sat with arching backs and bristling tails, spitting and hissing. The pup, liberated from his kettle, and confident that Toby was somehow to blame for this melee, charged rashly at him. Toby, resenting this insinuation, met the curly pup with gaping jaws and bristling back. A terrific dog-fight ensued, in which the self-confident puppy was routed with great damage. During the excitement, it fortunately never occurred to the mild-eyed oxen to make a bolt with the sledge; on the contrary, they stood still in their tracks the whole time, gazing with placid indifference straight before them. No one was hurt, and the wintry woods rang with the merry laughter of the party as they righted the sledge, collected the scattered wedding outfit, and replaced it securely. The vanquished puppy was again confined in his iron dungeon. The kittens, after much coaxing, at last ventured upon a limb low enough for them to be reached by Abner's long arm; and the bridal car then proceeded, without further hurt or damage, to the future home.

Betsy, though the child of rich parents, was used to work and to household management; but here was housekeeping to be begun under an environment quite different from that to which she had been accustomed in her father's well-ordered house. It was a heavy draft upon the young bride's faith and love to gaze undaunted at the prospect before her; but she was of a brave and hopeful spirit, and soon her blithe laugh chimed in with that of Abner and Susan, as they talked over the ludicrous mishap on the wedding tour. Presently, however, as Abner looked around the uninviting interior of his future abode, and then glanced at his young bride, he was sobered.

"An empty hovel with unwhitewashed walls, stoneless hearth, and dirt-encrusted windows and floors, is certainly no fit welcome for you, my dearest," he said to her as they stood alone a moment, while Susan and Rache were taking a survey of the inner room. "Do you regret the step you have taken?"

"Regret? Not for one instant," she bravely answered. "'Better a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith'—and how dare you slander my new abode by calling it a hovel?" she added playfully. "Instead of belittling this commodious mansion, set to work at once, sir, and build us a fire."

In a short time Logan had collected fuel. His flint yielded the ready spark, and fagots and logs soon blazed cheerily in the wide fireplace in each room.

"That big kettle which pa insisted upon our bringing, does come in handy right at the start," exclaimed Susan. "We'll have it filled and hung on that crane, so that Rache can scrub the floors; and while the water is heating, let's get something to eat. I'm as hungry as any bear that ever prowled through these woods."

"I'll lay the hearthstones, whitewash the walls, and put up some shelves over in that corner to-morrow," said Abner.

"When that is done, the windows cleaned and curtained, and the things all arranged, it will be quite a cozy place," added Susan.

"Yes," assented Logan, "it will do, I suppose, until I can get to town to buy whatever we need."

"Oh, it's good as it is, and we will soon make it a very inviting home," interrupted Betty. "Don't worry because you haven't a stately mansion for your bride. It's bad enough to have a wife thrust upon you in this unceremonious style, without your impoverishing yourself to fit up a luxurious home for her all at once."

The work went merrily forward during the next two days, although the season was hardly propitious for housecleaning. Rache, who enjoyed it all as much as any one, declared with a grin, "It's de fust time I evah hearn uv folks doin' ther spring cleanin' when de snow am two foot deep, an' it am so sinful cold thet it mighty nigh freezes de nose offen yer face."

The floors, by dint of repeated scrubbings, were soon, as Rache declared, "clean 'nough ter eat on." The walls and rafters were whitened, and the windows curtained with snowy dimity. At the foot of the bed, in one room, stood a packing-case to serve as a wardrobe, a valance of calico tacked on its top, concealing the true nature of the contrivance. Another box, set on end and similarly attired, served as a dresser; still another as a washstand. This room was sitting-room, parlor, library, and Susan's sleeping apartment. The other room was dining-room and kitchen, where Rache was accommodated with a pallet upon the floor in front of the fire; while, for the present, the rude loft over the two rooms, reached by means of a ladder in the sitting-room, was the bedchamber for bride and groom.

Consternation reigned at Oaklands when Betsy's flight was discovered the morning after the elopement. Her father, after giving orders that everything on the place which could be considered her personal property should be packed and sent to her immediately, then assembled the entire household, struck Betsy's name from the family Bible, and commanded that no one in his presence should ever again mention her name, and that no one on the premises should ever dare to hold any communication with her. Later, that same day, he drove to Lexington, sought a lawyer, and made a will disinheriting her.

Upon the third morning after the marriage there came to the new home a sled driven by a negro man from Oaklands. On the sled was Marthy, a negro woman of thirty-five; also a huge packing-case containing Betsy's clothes, books and ornaments, some bed quilts which she had pieced herself, some bright-colored rugs she had woven, besides china and a set of silver spoons which had descended to her from her maternal grandmother. Behind the sled rode Sambo on Betsy's saddle-horse, driving a young cow which was also considered the girl's property. The two negroes, Marthy and Sambo, had belonged to Mrs. Gilcrest, to do with as she pleased, and she sent them as a gift to her daughter.

CHAPTER XXXII

EXIT JAMES ANSON DRANE

"Treason doth never prosper, ... for, should it prosper, none dare call it treason."

During the spring of 1806 the country became greatly agitated over rumors of secret expeditions and conspiracies of a most startling nature, in which many men of prominence were concerned. The old difficulty over the free navigation of the Mississippi River, and the schemes which grew out of this difficulty, although already settled in a large measure

by the purchase of the Louisiana Territory, had been too much agitated in Kentucky not to leave much material for conspirators. Hence, Kentucky became the stage upon which were enacted many of the incidents of that dramatic episode of American history known as "Burr's Conspiracy."

Opinion was then, as it will ever be, somewhat divided as to the exact nature of the schemes which Aaron Burr was at that time maturing. According to his own statements and to the extracts from his journal of that period, his designs were not actually treasonable; but they were certainly dangerous to the future well-being of the States along the southern Mississippi.

In 1805 this brilliant, ambitious and fascinating man, whose term as Vice-President had just expired, and who had, by his ill-advised attack upon the administration and by his duel with Alexander Hamilton, forfeited much of his political prestige, as well as the sympathy of most of his adherents in the North, came to Kentucky. He spent some weeks at Frankfort in an apparently quiet manner, and next proceeded on a tour down the Mississippi, visiting all important points from St. Louis to New Orleans. The following year he again appeared in the West, this time paying several visits to Lexington and Louisville. His headquarters on both these Western tours was the romantic, ill-fated island home of Harman Blennerhassett, where he was met more than once by many prominent men of Kentucky and other Western States. Soon after these visits, rumors began to be circulated that boats were being built in Kentucky and Ohio; provisions and military accoutrements ordered, which, when furnished, were stored on Blennerhassett Island; and that some daring military expedition was planned in which many were to be engaged.

Presently the "Western World," a newspaper published at Frankfort, came out with a series of articles in which the old Spanish intrigues and these later projects of Aaron Burr were blended in a confused manner. Mingled with hints and vague innuendoes, some facts were stated and some names given that created no little sensation. Sebastian, a judge of the Supreme Court; Brown, United States Senator from Kentucky; Innes, a judge of the Federal Court; Wilkinson and Adair, generals in the regular army, and many other Kentuckians of more or less prominence, were implicated by these articles, which also plainly denounced Aaron Burr as a traitor and his scheme as a treasonable design against the United States Government. Truth and error in these articles were so mixed together that no one was able to separate the two, and people all over the country were bewildered and excited. Friends of those implicated resented the attacks, and demanded a retraction of the charges; but the paper sturdily adhered to its policy. Other papers began to take up the matter, until the public awoke to the fact that some dangerous movement was on foot; and the unsettled condition of the country, and the unsatisfactory relations between the United States and Spain, caused these rumors to arouse alarm.

In November, 1806, Joseph Hamilton Daviess, United States attorney for Kentucky, brought at Frankfort an indictment against Burr for high treason; and Wednesday, December 2, was set for trial. Burr succeeded in convincing Henry Clay and John Allen, another able lawyer of the Lexington bar, of his innocence, and secured them as counsel.

Shortly before this movement of Daviess, however, Graham, a detective in the United States employ (though not known to be such at the time), came to Kentucky; and, after spending some time in Fayette and Woodford Counties, came out to Cane Ridge. He represented himself as a land agent, and in this capacity called on Abner Logan one evening about sunset. He was invited to stay the night, and accepted. After supper, taking up a copy of the "Western World" which was lying on the table, he naturally turned the conversation upon the charges which the paper had been making. He said that, as a stranger in the State, he was of course ignorant in a great measure of the charges, whereupon Logan enlightened him as well as he could, discussing the matter with him at some length. The next morning Graham took his departure, and the Logans attached no importance to the visit.

James Anson Drane had by no means severed his friendly relations with Hiram Gilcrest. He was at this time employed by Gilcrest to settle some old and troublesome land claims, and this business called him to Oaklands on the Thursday before the day set for Burr's trial at Frankfort. While Drane and Gilcrest were in the latter's library, one of the little negroes about the place brought Drane a note which the little darkey said had been left at the kitchen door by a peddler. The two men were seated at a center table littered with papers and documents. As Drane read the note, Gilcrest noticed that he appeared greatly disturbed; his cheeks and lips turned ashy pale, and the hand holding the note shook with agitation. He quickly commanded himself, however, thrust the note into his pocket, and explained that he was called to Lexington at once on urgent business. Gilcrest, seeing that the business must be of a grave and peremptory nature, did not urge Drane to stay, but gave the order for the lawyer's horse to be brought immediately. Telling his host that he would call again in a few days, Drane gathered up his papers which were scattered about the table, and hurried into the hall for his hat and great coat. He tried to thrust the papers into his breast pocket, but there were too many for one pocket, and, in taking some of

them out to put in a different receptacle, the little note which he had just received fluttered to the floor unperceived either by himself or his host.

Shortly afterwards, Polly, the housemaid, brought her master a crumpled slip of paper, explaining that she had found it on the hall floor, and thought it might perhaps be something important. Without glancing at the address, or thinking much about the matter, Gilcrest opened the paper and read the contents before he realized that it was the note which had been handed to Drane a few minutes before. It read thus: "A sincere and disinterested friend warns 'A. D.' that he is to be summoned as a witness in the trial of B —— at F——, and advises him to leave the country at once, taking with him or destroying all compromising papers which he may have in his possession."

After gazing at the note in amazement for a few moments, Gilcrest crossed over to the secretary in one corner of the room, and took from a locked receptacle the two papers which James Anson Drane, four years since, had exhibited to him in that room.

As Gilcrest now sat musing with the two documents in his hand, he recalled several points which, had he not been so completely under the influence of the wily lawyer, would have aroused grave suspicions. One was the exceeding reluctance Drane had shown in regard to leaving the two papers at Oaklands; another was the singular fascination which, of late, the old mahogany secretary had seemed to hold for the lawyer; and still another was this, that once when Drane and Gilcrest were in this room, the latter had been called out. Returning unexpectedly, a moment later, he found Drane with his hand on the knob of that little locked inner drawer, as if he were trying to pull it open. At the time, Drane had averted suspicion by saying that he was examining the peculiar mechanism of the old and valuable secretary, and admiring its beautiful carving and workmanship.

Major Gilcrest now also remembered that for several months prior to the showing of the two papers—in fact, ever since Logan's visit to Virginia—Drane had been dropping hints and insinuations against Abner. But Gilcrest recalled, too, that even earlier than this, Logan had once, in a conversation at Rogers' house, expressed the greatest admiration for Aaron Burr; also that he had been seen in what appeared to be close counsel with Wilkinson, Sebastian and Murray at the tavern on court day, and that he had visited Blennerhassett Island in company with Sebastian and Murray. So that for several years Gilcrest had entertained no doubt that his son-in-law was to some degree implicated in this treasonable movement. But now, having read that anonymous warning which Drane had dropped in the hall an hour since, Gilcrest was altogether puzzled. There could be no doubt that the initials "A. D." in the anonymous note stood, not for Abner Dudley, but for Anson Drane, who probably for greater security had dropped his first baptismal name in the correspondence with the intriguers. "Can it be," he thought, "that both men are implicated in this nefarious matter? For even if this letter from B. S. to A. D. was written to Anson Drane instead of Abner Dudley, this torn fragment, which is undoubtedly in Logan's handwriting, seems suspicious; but, perhaps, if I had the whole letter, the references in it would bear an entirely different construction to that which I have placed."

Early Friday morning Gilcrest called for his horse, and rode to Lexington. Arriving there, he went straight to Drane's office, but found it locked. He then made inquiry at the young man's tavern, where he was told that Drane had left town very hurriedly the evening before, and had not said when he would return.

That was the last time that James Anson Drane was seen in Kentucky. When the day set for Burr's trial in Frankfort arrived, Drane was sought in vain. Later, when Burr, Blennerhassett, and other conspirators, were arraigned at Natchez, and still later at Richmond, Drane was again in demand, but he had completely disappeared; and his exact connection with that famous episode of American history, the Aaron Burr conspiracy, was never known. About twelve years later, a man said to be very like him was reported as an influential and wealthy lawyer of St. Louis.

Upon the same Thursday that Drane received at Oaklands the anonymous warning, Abner Logan, while at work in a field near the road, received from a passing packman a note which, the bearer said, had been given him for Logan, by a man whose name the peddler had forgotten, but who, as the peddler said, "lived down that way," pointing vaguely down the road. The messenger was not Simon Smith, the packman who periodically visited the neighborhood to sell his wares to the housewives thereabout, but a stranger. The note which he gave Logan was worded exactly as the one Drane had received an hour earlier at Oaklands.

Abner's first feeling upon reading this missive was bewilderment as to the identity of the friend who had sent it; his second, indignation that any one should think him in any way implicated in the Burr affair. "'A sincere and disinterested friend,' indeed," he thought; "it's some ruse to get me into this queer business."

Before receiving the anonymous communication, Logan, being desirous of hearing Clay and Daviess speak, had partly promised Mason Rogers, who felt a lively interest in the trial, to go with him to Frankfort. Logan now fully determined to let nothing prevent his going; and, fearing to alarm his wife, he resolved to say nothing of the warning he had received.

Upon the following Tuesday evening Graham, the detective, came to Oaklands, and spent the night there. He was able to supply to Gilcrest at least one missing link of evidence—the fellow to the torn piece of letter to Charles M. Brady. This, with one or two other documents of a more or less compromising nature, Drane had overlooked in his haste to get out of the vicinity of Frankfort; and Graham, when he searched the apartment a few hours after Drane's escape, had found the papers in the escritoire.

Early Wednesday morning Logan, in company of Mason Rogers, Samuel Trabue and William Hinkson, set out on horseback for the State capital. On the way they were overtaken by the Gilcrest coach-and-four driven by Uncle Zeke. In the coach sat Hiram Gilcrest, a strange gentleman from Louisville, and the pretended land agent, Graham. As the vehicle passed the four equestrians, Gilcrest gave a distant salutation to Trabue and Hinkson, who were riding on the left, but did not turn his head to the right where rode his son-in-law and his former bosom friend, Mason Rogers.

The trial at Frankfort did not come off, because of Daviess' failure to secure the attendance of some important witnesses; but those people who were gathered at the court-house were by no means defrauded of entertainment; for they heard a brilliant debate between Henry Clay and Joseph Hamilton Daviess. The crowds that filled the floor, windows, galleries and platform of the big court-room remained for hours spellbound while these two renowned men, each stimulated by the other's thrilling oratory, and glowing with the ardent conviction of the justice of his cause, met in intellectual combat. Henry Clay was the leader of the popular political party in the State, and had the sympathy of the audience on his side. Daviess was a Federalist, and his prosecution was regarded by many of his hearers as simply a persecution of an unfortunate and innocent man who, from motives of political hatred only, was here arraigned as a traitor. Daviess, however, was made strong by his full conviction of Burr's guilt; moreover, this very infatuation of the audience, and the smiling security and self-assurance of the suspected traitor who sat before him, spurred Daviess to brilliant effort. But all was in vain, for the present at least; for, on account of the non-appearance of proper witnesses, the prosecution was dismissed—to the great rejoicing of the friends of Burr, who were at that time so under the spell of his fascinating personality that even had the court found a true bill against him, they would still have believed him innocent. To show their admiration and sympathy, these friends and admirers gave a grand public ball at Frankfort the next evening to celebrate "Aaron Burr's triumph over his enemies." This ball was followed by another equally brilliant given by the friends of Daviess, to show their admiration of him and their belief in the justice of his suit against Burr.

Logan and his three companions returned from Frankfort late Thursday afternoon. On Saturday, as Logan was leaving the house after an early breakfast, he was astonished to see Hiram Gilcrest on horseback at the front gate. Abner hastened down the walk to meet him; but, instead of accepting the invitation to alight and enter the house, Major Gilcrest with stern dignity replied that he preferred to remain where he was, having called that morning, not to pay a visit, but to atone for an injustice of which he had for a number of years been guilty.

Logan, thinking that the "injustice" had reference to Gilcrest's opposition to his daughter's marriage, replied that no explanation or apology was necessary, as the very fact that Major Gilcrest was there at Crestlands was apology enough. He again invited the Major to come in, urging the pleasure it would be to Betsy to welcome her father in her own house, and to have him see her little son William, now a fine little fellow two years old, and the tiny baby daughter. Hiram, however, again refused the invitation.

"Mr. Logan," he said, "I have for some years back been greatly in error with regard to you, as the result of the base representations and lying statements of James Anson Drane, in whose character I have been most woefully deceived." Handing Logan the anonymous note that Drane had dropped in the hall, the letter from "B. S." to "A. D.," and the two torn parts of the letter to Charles Brady, he then entered into a full explanation of all the circumstances which had influenced him to think Logan a political traitor.

When Gilcrest had finished his explanation, Logan replied that he was fully satisfied, and that he could not wonder that, under the circumstances, Major Gilcrest had been deceived. "But now," he went on, smiling cordially and extending his hand, "let us forget all hard feelings, and be to each other henceforth as father and son should be. Betty will be wild with happiness to welcome her father into her own home."

But the stubborn old fellow would neither grasp his son-in-law's hand nor accept the invitation to enter the house. "No, Mr. Logan," he said firmly, "I am an honorable and, I hope, a just man; and my sense of honor and of justice prompted me to apologize for an unjust suspicion of you; but, sir," and his deep-set eyes flashed as he spoke, "though you are exonerated from all blame in this political intrigue, you are still guilty of a far greater wrong—that of alienating the affections of my child, my only daughter, of basely abducting her from her father's house, and well-nigh breaking that father's heart. That wrong, sir, I can never forget, and for that, sir, I can never forgive you."

"But—but, Major Gilcrest, I beg of you," began Abner, earnestly; but Gilcrest would not listen, and, with a wave of his hand to command silence, he continued: "No explanation, no apology, no reparation, or prayer of either you or your wife, can atone. I shall never under any circumstances enter your door; but I will no longer forbid my wife to visit her daughter, nor object to you and your wife returning those visits. I bid you good morning, sir," and the proud and unyielding old man rode away.

Several years later, Logan, while on a trip to Louisville, again encountered Graham, and learned from him that the strange peddler who had delivered the anonymous note to him and the one to Drane was Graham himself in disguise. He had employed this ruse to ascertain which of the two young men was the guilty one. When, in the guise of a land agent, he had in 1806 visited that region, his suspicions had already been slightly aroused against Drane. He had therefore managed to be much in the company of the young lawyer, who, if he suspected that Graham was other than he claimed to be, had the art to hide his suspicions, and in pretended unconsciousness and innocence had also managed to instill into the stranger's mind much doubt of Logan. These doubts were in a measure allayed by Graham's visit to Logan; but, to be entirely sure as to which was his man, he had resorted to the device of sending the two warnings, intending that the one who took alarm should be arrested. Drane, however, had been too swift in his movements, and had thus escaped.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE STRANGER PREACHER

One Thursday in June, several years later, Major Gilcrest was returning from a business trip which had called him to a distant county. His road led him by a little log schoolhouse on the banks of Shanklin Creek. Here he found a meeting in progress in the locust grove surrounding the schoolhouse.

When last he had been through this region, the little school building had been used occasionally as a Presbyterian meeting-house, there being no church building in the neighborhood. Accordingly, Gilcrest, thinking this a meeting of brethren of his own faith and order, tied his horse to a sapling, and, joining the congregation in the grove, sat down on a log not far from the speaker's stand, just as a minister was finishing his discourse. When he had concluded, a man who seemed to be the moderator of the meeting rose to speak.

"We are sorry indeed to announce that our beloved Brother Elgood, who was next to have addressed us, is providentially hindered from being here to-day. This is a great disappointment; for we who know how powerful and eloquent Brother Elgood is, had hoped to be greatly edified by his discourse. It still lacks an hour and ten minutes to noon; and while we await the time for dinner to be spread in the grounds, another brother, a stranger from a distant part of the State, will speak." Thereupon, a tall, ungainly man of about forty years rose from a seat at the back of the platform and came forward. He was clad in copperas-dyed jeans trousers, ill-fitting cotton coat, and homespun shirt. He wore neither stock nor waistcoat, his trousers were baggy and too short for his long legs, and his cowhide shoes were covered with dust. His face was pale, his eyes deep set, his hair long and straggling, shoulders stooping, form gaunt to emaciation. The moderator's mode of introduction had not been one to reassure a timid man, nor to prepossess an audience favorably toward a speaker. The stranger came forward with ungraceful hesitation, and stood silently facing his audience. The people stared an instant at the uncouth figure; some laughed, and many turned to leave the auditorium, thinking that a stroll about the grounds, chatting with friends, would be a more agreeable pastime until lunch was served than to sit before this awkward fellow.

Suddenly the stranger regained self-possession, and, drawing his figure up to its full height, he pointed a long forefinger at a group of people standing near, who were evidently making sport of him, and called out, "Thus cried Job unto his revilers, 'Suffer me that I may speak, and after that I have spoken, mock on.'" His penetrating tones reached every one in the grove. Some who had risen to leave, sat down, curious to know what manner of man this might be; but many more, after a moment's hesitation, started off again. He then cried in still louder tone, "'Hear, O my people, and I wilt testify unto thee, O Israel, if thou wilt but hearken unto me!'"

Many more, now smiling and willing to be amused, returned to their places; but the speaker, seeing many groups still hesitating in the distance, cried out for the third time, with all the strength of his powerful lungs, "'Hear my words, O ye wise men; and give ear unto me, ye that have understanding; for the ear trieth words as the mouth tasteth meat.'"

Then, as the last straggler returned to his seat, the speaker said with a winning smile which utterly changed the expression of his gaunt visage: "And now, friends, you are doubtless beset with curiosity as to who this strange fellow in butternut jeans and cowhide shoes may be; but it mattereth not who he is, whence he came, or whither he goeth. The message, not the man, is the important thing."

Without a Bible he quoted his text, "'Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner-stone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall never be confounded' (1 Pet. 2:6); 'Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 3: 11)."

He described the church of apostolic days—its trials, its zeal, its simplicity, its oneness of aim. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and one soul," and "continued with one accord in prayer and supplication." He pointed out that this unity was not merely a spiritual and invisible union, but tangible, visible, organic, a union in which caste and nationality were ignored, and where Judean and Samaritan, Israelite and Gentile, Greek and barbarian, rich and poor, free and bond, formed one common brotherhood, working together with such harmony and power that, despite stripes and imprisonments, persecutions and tortures, they multiplied and strengthened, until idolatry was crushed, paganism vanquished, heathen philosophy confounded, and unbelief abashed.

For a time, Hiram Gilcrest sat upon his log and listened to the speaker's vivid eloquence with a satisfaction which amounted to enthusiasm. "Would that this man," Gilcrest mused, "had been our pastor at Cane Ridge, instead of that mischief-brewer, that pestilent heretic, Barton Stone. Then our church would not have been led off into this schism." But as the stranger proceeded in his discourse, Gilcrest awoke to the fact that he was listening to what was in his opinion most dangerous doctrine.

"To-day," the preacher said, "the church is so bound by the shackles of dogma and doctrine, so crippled by doubtful disputations over 'mint, anise and cumin,' that she is well-nigh powerless to carry on the task assigned to her, the evangelization of the world. Sectarianism, with her vermin swarm of envy, hatred, error, waste and confusion, devastates the land. In the kingdom of the 'Prince of peace' is heard the drum-beat of party warfare, where theology prevails against Christology, dogma against devotion, partyism against piety; and where the dictation of ecclesiastic councils is obeyed rather than the voice of Christ."

His musical tones fixed the attention and thrilled every heart. Without gesture or excitement, his manner was quietly forcible, until he reached the second head of his theme. Then his spirit seemed to overleap all impediments; and, as if inspired, he proclaimed the sovereign efficacy of the sacrifice upon Calvary.

"The existence and development of the church," he said, "rests not upon the acceptance of any system of opinion or tradition or interpretation, but upon the acknowledgment of Jesus as Redeemer and Messiah. 'Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it,' was the reply of Jesus to Peter's confession, 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.' This is the one basic truth upon which rests all the testimony of prophet and apostle. This is the one sure foundation upon which the whole superstructure of the Christian life must be built. It is the one inspired creed and summary of the entire purpose and plan of the gospel.

"Since the foundation of our faith," he continued, "is not a set of doctrinal tenets or a system of theological opinions, but a divine personality, it follows that the spirit of Christian unity must be as liberal and as broadly catholic as the spirit of Christ; and if we, the scattered hosts of the Lord's people, are ever to be brought together into one common bond of fellowship, we must each first learn to magnify our points of agreement upon all matters of Scriptural interpretation and exegesis, and to minimize our points of difference. Let us bear in mind that whether our own particular system of theology be based upon Calvin's predominating doctrine, the sovereignty of God and the unchangeableness of his decrees; or whether we, like Arminius, lay greater stress upon the doctrine of the freedom of the human will and man's individual responsibility; whether

we be Calvinist or Arminian, Presbyterian or Methodist, Baptist or Quaker—we all worship the same God, and through the same Mediator. Therefore, laying aside all malice and envying and evil speaking and sectarian strife, let us preserve the 'unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.'"

Thus the stranger reasoned, and ere he had finished, Hiram Gilcrest, stripped of the armor under which he had so long battled for his stern creed, was left helpless and wounded; and the sharpest item of his defeat was this, that the Wellington of this Waterloo was proclaiming substantially the same doctrine as that of the hated Stone.

His armor broken, his weapons captured, himself wounded, the old man sat with bowed head, too weak and crushed to quit the field until the sermon was finished. Then, unheeded, he threaded his way out of the throng. Awe at last stole over him as he rode slowly along the quiet lanes, with his hat slouched low over his face; and he was conscious of a deeper meaning in his favorite texts of Scripture than he had hitherto felt. Presently, however, he returned to his own habitual and (to him) more reassuring reasoning. "That fellow seems to think the whole ocean of God's eternal purpose and decree can be caught up and held in one little pint cup; and in his self-confident ignorance he looks upon the Lord's ways as though they were a child's reading-book which any man could learn at once. Even if there be truth in what he says, the simple gospel is too mild and too broad to be used thus freely. It would make the road to salvation toe easy for the transgressor. The Westminster Confession and the Shorter and Longer Catechisms are the skillful condensation and concentration of all Scripture truth. They are the framework of the church; and one might as well try to build a house without beams and rafters as to try to hold a church together without creeds and covenants and confessions of faith."

He said nothing to any one of that sermon in the grove; but the next few weeks he searched the Scriptures as he had never done before. At first he sought to find texts to bolster up his preaccepted tenets, but as the weeks went by, and he grew more and more absorbed in the search, he began to study the Bible impartially and comprehensively; and, instead of being satisfied with fragments of truth taken here and there from disconnected texts, he studied the different passages with reference to their connected meaning. Reading, studying, pondering thus, his reason and judgment could not but admit the force of what Barton Stone and the other "New Light" ministers were teaching. Yes, his reason and judgment were at last convinced; yet this did not produce submission and a desire to acknowledge his error, but rather a feeling of resistance and defiance.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE CUP OF COLD WATER

In August of that same summer, Hiram Gilcrest, the man of strong nerve and iron constitution, whose boast it had been that he had never known a day's real sickness, was stricken down with disease, and after a few days of wasting illness, he was muttering in the delirium of typhus fever.

He had never forgiven his daughter and her husband their runaway marriage. True, since the partial reconciliation of five years before, which had removed the ban of total non-communication between the two households, Betsy had occasionally visited her mother; but always, when at Oaklands, her father's manner, cold, distant, formal, had made her feel that not as a child of the house, nor even as an honored guest, but merely as a stranger, would she ever again be received in the home of her childhood. This was a great sorrow to her, the one dark cloud in the otherwise serene sky of her married happiness; and Logan, although he cared little on his own account for the cold looks and haughty demeanor of his father-in-law, loved his young wife too tenderly not to sorrow at her sorrow.

Now that Major Gilcrest was ill, however, Abner and Betty forgot all his harsh injustice, and hurried to the bedside where he lay battling for life against the fire that filled his veins, sapped his strength and consumed his flesh. Mason Rogers, too, although he and Gilcrest had not spoken to each other since their stormy interview eight years before, now hearing of his old friend's illness, forgot all harsh words and thoughts, and hurried to Oaklands to offer assistance. Of Gilcrest's six children, only Betsy and Matthew, the first-born and the youngest, were there. Silas and Philip were in Massachusetts, students at Cambridge; John Calvin and Martin Luther, who had been among the first of those brave

Kentucky volunteers to march to the defense of the territory of Indiana against the depredations of Tecumseh and the Prophet, were now with General Harrison at Vincennes.

During the day, Betsy, who had left her three little children in the charge of the negress Marthy, shared with Aunt Dilsey the care of the sick man; and during the night watch Abner was his most constant attendant. Although Gilcrest was too delirious to recognize any one, it soon came to pass that no one else could influence him as could his once despised son-in-law; for poor Mrs. Gilcrest could not bear the sight of her husband's sufferings, and was hardly ever allowed to enter the room.

All that the medical erudition of the time prescribed was done for the patient. He was bled twice a week, and smothered in blankets; he was poulticed and plastered, blistered and fomented; he was dosed with concoctions of fever-wort, boneset, burdock, pokeberry, mullein root, and other medicaments bitter of taste and vile of smell; and kept hot, weak, and miserable generally. Our forbears are represented to this generation as a brave, vigorous and healthy race; and no wonder, for disease in that heroic age was simply a question of the "survival of the fittest;" and the stringent remedies prescribed under the old dispensation were well calculated to eliminate all but the strongest members of the race.

August and September passed, and still the master of Oaklands lay helpless, while fever raged in his gaunt frame with unrelenting violence. One thing was constantly denied him, fresh, cold water; although he pleaded with such pitiful agony that his nurses wept when they refused him. In delirium he talked of the old spring at his far-away childhood home—of the babbling music of the water as it sparkled over its pebbly bed and trickled down the rocky hillside—and again and again he pleaded for one draught of its reviving freshness. "Water! water!" was the burden of his plaint from morn till night, and from night till morn; and when too weak to speak, his hollow, bloodshot eyes still begged for water.

Finally he was given up to die. "He can not last through the night," was the verdict of the two physicians to the mourning ones around the bedside. His fainting wife was carried from the room; and his daughter, not able to endure the sight of his dying agonies, allowed her husband to lead her to her old room, where she threw herself across her bed in a paroxysm of grief. "Oh, father, father, my poor, dear old father!" she wailed, "if only you could speak to me again before you die, and tell me that you forgive me and love me. And my brothers, so far away! Oh, if you could be with us in this dark hour! It is so hard, so hard!"

The doctors had left. Aunt Dilsey was upstairs in attendance upon her stricken mistress. The night wore on, and when the gray dawn was just beginning to creep into the chamber where Hiram Gilcrest lay unconscious and scarcely breathing, Mason Rogers and John Trabue, worn out with their long night's vigil, stole into an adjoining room to snatch an hour's rest. Only Abner Logan and William Bledsoe were left in attendance upon the dying man. Presently he opened his eyes and fixed his gaze on Abner.

"Do you know me, Mr. Gilcrest?" asked Logan, tenderly touching the shrunken, parched hands.

"Water! water!" was the reply; "for God's sake give me water! Have mercy, and let me have one drop before I die!"

"You shall have it, sir," said Abner, his eyes filling. Then, to a negro boy who was just entering the room, he cried, "Run quickly to the spring-house, and fetch a bucket of water."

"Are you not rash, Logan?" whispered Bledsoe. "You know the doctors have all along forbidden that."

"But they have pronounced him dying; in any case the water can make no difference, and I can not resist his plea any longer."

The water was brought, and Abner gave the sick man one sip, which was all he would take. To his fever-parched palate the water tasted a vile draught; and he turned from it in loathing and despair. With a tiny mop Logan then moistened the parched mouth with a solution of slippery elm. Presently the moan for water was again uttered, and now the fevered palate at last began to feel its coolness. With unnatural strength he seized the gourd, and drained its contents. "Bless you, my boy!" he exclaimed faintly; then fell back on his pillow exhausted, and dropped immediately into a deep sleep.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Bledsoe, as he saw the perspiration gathering upon his brow. "He will never wake from this stupor," and again the sorrowing family were summoned. The solemnity of death reigned in the chamber, where the watchers restrained their weeping, and waited in awe-struck silence the approach of man's last grim foe.

"He may live," Abner said at last as the moments passed and Gilcrest breathed on in quiet slumber.

"If he does," responded Bledsoe, "that water will have saved him."

Gilcrest slept on. Dawn gave place to full day, morning glided into afternoon. Late in the evening he awoke of his own accord, weak as a new-born babe, but with the fever gone and the light of reason once more in his sunken eyes.

During the long weeks of convalescence that followed, while his body was slowly regaining vigor, his heart, too, was gradually expanding into a new spiritual life. He had ample time for reflection as he sat propped with pillows in the cushioned chair in his quiet room; and in those long hours of solitude and feeble helplessness, he first began to feel the need of a religion more healing and cheering than that which showed God only as an avenger, stern, partial and dictatorial. Gradually, and as naturally as a plant turns to the sun, his mind turned to that all-loving Father who, being "touched with a feeling for our infirmities," ever tempers his righteous judgments with tenderest mercy, and is ever yearning to deliver all from the penalty of sin.

CHAPTER XXXV.

CONCLUSION

Upon the third Sunday in November, while the congregation in Cane Ridge meeting-house was singing the opening hymn, Hiram Gilcrest entered, and, walking slowly down the aisle, seated himself upon the steps of the pulpit platform. All eyes were turned upon him, and for a moment there was a perceptible pause and break in the singing. Then Mason Rogers lined out the fifth stanza, and the congregation sang with redoubled zest.

"Let us pray," said Barton Stone, coming forward with uplifted hands at the conclusion of the hymn; but Gilcrest arose, and, arresting him, stood facing the assembly. "Brethren," he said, "before we pray, allow me a few words. I have been a professor of religion for over forty years, and for twenty years of this time I was identified with this church. My walk was orderly, my conversation seemly. I gave tithes of all that I possessed, I was instant in season and out of season, and ever jealous for the well-being of the church. In things outward and, I thought, in things spiritual, I was a Christian; and though I was as self-righteous as any Pharisee, I was not a hypocrite, for I was self-deceived. In all these years I was as Simon the sorcerer, still 'in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity,' having neither part nor lot in true Christianity. But, brethren, the Lord in his mercy did at last reveal unto me the dark places of my soul wherein lurked pride, prejudice, vindictiveness, and all uncharitableness; and, like the publican, I cried, 'God be merciful to me, a sinner!'

"For several years I have had at times an idea that in the position taken by this church in 1803, you were perhaps right and I wrong. A sermon by a strange preacher in a distant county last June further tended to convince me of this; but still I struggled with stubborn hardihood against the truth that was threatening to crush me. It was reserved for the Lord's own stroke to smite the rock and bring forth the sweet waters of repentance and confession. To-day I am here not so much because I have surrendered one jot or tittle of my former doctrinal tenets, as because of the conviction that no system of dogma, however true and logical, is of importance compared to this, that the professed followers of Jesus Christ should be a united people. I now see that whether the doctrines formulated by Calvin or those promulgated by Arminius be true, the acceptance of either interpretation of these disputed points does not constitute the vital essence of salvation. They are but matters of opinion, instead of the one supreme article of saving faith—belief in the redeeming efficacy of the sacrifice upon Calvary.

"As I now understand the position taken by this congregation in 1803, I see that so far as it may be considered a distinctive religious movement, it is distinctive only in its denial of the binding authority of human organizations, and in its renunciation of humanly devised creeds as unscriptural and as opposed to the simplicity and unity of Christian people. Therefore, leaving out of the question all matters of opinion upon doctrinal theology, and standing, as you do, upon the one sure foundation-stone, faith in and reliance upon our crucified Redeemer, I come to you to-day, begging forgiveness for my opposition and vindictiveness, and asking that my own and my wife's name be replaced upon your church

book, and that we be restored to your fellowship."

Before he had finished, Barton Stone was beside him grasping his hand, but too overcome to utter a word. The congregation sat a moment in breathless silence, tears of sympathy and thankfulness in the eyes of even the most stolid. Then Mason Rogers, striding down the aisle, and facing the people, with one arm thrown over the shoulders of his old friend and comrade, lifted up his voice in thanksgiving. He prayed in his own homely words, but with fervency and fire as though his lips had indeed been touched with "a live coal from the altar."

"Amen!" and "Amen!" were the exclamations from all parts of the building. Then, in a clear, full voice, he started the hymn:

> "I'm not ashamed to own my Lord,
> Nor to defend his cause."

The congregation quickly joined in; and as the melody of noble old "Arlington" resounded through the building, the people left their seats, and, filing down the aisle, each in turn grasped the hand of the returned brother, and welcomed him again into fellowship.

Thus, like a sincere and peace-loving Christian, Hiram Gilcrest once more took his place among his brethren, humbly and lovingly, with never again a trace of his former spirit of prejudice and dogmatic intolerance.

As for the various other characters of this story, little more need be said.

Barton Stone labored for many years in various fields of usefulness in Kentucky, Tennessee, Indiana and Missouri. In 1843 he returned for a last visit to Cane Ridge. He was then an old man, bent and palsied, and so feeble that he had to be helped into the pulpit; but his eyes kindled with the old-time light, his bent form straightened with something of the old-time vigor, and his voice became full and vibrant as he stood facing that assembly where many seats were now occupied by the children and grandchildren of those who in this old meetinghouse forty years before had as a church renounced all human authoritative voice in matters of religious worship, and had resolved that henceforward the Bible should be their only rule of faith and practice, and belief in Jesus as the Christ their only creed. Stone preached this last sermon from the text of Paul's farewell to the brethren at Ephesus, "And now behold I know that ye all among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God shall see my face no more." He was truly the old man eloquent as, standing for the last time in that pulpit, he reviewed the past, spoke approvingly of the present, and admonished to future zeal. He died in 1844 in Missouri, and the following spring his remains were brought to Kentucky by the members of Cane Ridge Church, and reinterred in the old churchyard.

Cane Ridge meeting-house is still used as a regular place of worship. Its log walls have been weather-boarded, its clapboard roof replaced by one of shingles, and its rough-hewn puncheon benches have given way to more comfortable seats. The quaint little window over the pulpit and the slaves' gallery opposite have been removed, and more modern heating appliance substituted for the old fireplace. Otherwise, the building is the same as it was one hundred years ago.

To one who knows the history of its venerable walls and of those who rest in its old-fashioned graveyard, where, underneath the arching boughs of walnut and pine, oak and maple, there sleep Barton Stone and many others who took part in the first great religious movement of the nineteenth century, it is indeed a hallowed place. "What Geneva was to Calvin, Wittenberg to Luther, Edinburgh to Knox, and Epworth to the Wesleys,"[3] this beautiful nook of Bourbon County is to that great reformatory or restoratory movement inaugurated in 1803, whose plea was and still is the restoration of the simplicity, the freedom and the catholicity of apostolic Christianity; and whose dominant effort has ever been for the union of God's people upon the only efficient platform of Christian union, faith in Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

Mason Rogers and his bustling, kind-hearted wife lived to a ripe old age, happy in home, children and children's children, and in the affectionate regard of all who knew them. The warp of their daily life was plain and homely, but the bright threads of integrity and loving-kindness running through it, made it into a beautiful pattern, approved of all men.

Henry Rogers, after finishing his course at Transylvania, dedicated his splendid talents to the ministry, winning many souls to Christ, enduring many trials, encountering much opposition from those professed Christians in whom the spirit of sectarian intolerance still held sway. Bravely he endured, and nobly he deserved, at the end of his long life of unselfishness, the plaudit, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

The strong bond of friendship between the Gilcrest, Rogers and Logan families was made

still closer and stronger when John Calvin Gilcrest, at the close of the war of 1812, returned to Kentucky and married Susan Rogers.

For Abner and Betsy Logan, the years as they sped onward brought an ever-increasing measure of happiness; for their love for each other had that steady, faithful, fireside quality which endures, and fills the daily life with peace and charm long after the first blaze of passion has sunk into the smouldering glow of sympathetic affection.

Where once had stood their first humble log cabin, there arose in the course of a few years the new "Crestlands," a stately mansion of brick with spacious rooms, broad halls and pillared porches. This noble, historic homestead is to-day occupied by the fifth generation of Logans. Its founder, Abner Logan, realized his ideal; for his home became a center of peace and order, love and content—a radiating point, ever widening into increasing circles of beauty and usefulness; and the name, "Crestlands," is still a synonym for hospitality, integrity and Christian culture in that green and beautiful portion of "God's Country" called Cane Ridge.

[3] J. T. Sharrard.

THE END.

APPENDIX

(See Chapter XXVI.)

In June, 1804, the several ministers of the new organization met at Cane Ridge meeting-house, and drew up the "Last Will and Testament of Springfield Presbytery." A copy of this quaint and remarkable document is here subjoined:

THE LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT OF SPRINGFIELD PRESBYTERY

The Presbytery of Springfield, sitting at Caneridge, in the county of Bourbon, in more than ordinary bodily health, growing in strength and size daily; and in perfect soundness and composure of mind; but knowing that it is appointed for all delegated bodies once to die; and considering that the life of every such body is very uncertain, do make and ordain this our last Will and Testament, in manner and form following, viz.:

Imprimis. We *will*, that this body die, be dissolved, and sink into union with the Body of Christ at large; for there is but one body, and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope of our calling.

Item. We *will*, that our name of distinction, with its *Reverend* title, be forgotten, that there be but one Lord over God's heritage, and His name one.

Item. We *will*, that our power of making laws for the government of the church, and executing them by delegated authority, forever cease; that the people may have free course to the Bible, and adopt *the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus*.

Item. We *will*, that candidates for the Gospel ministry henceforth study the Holy Scriptures with fervent prayer, and obtain license from God to preach the simple Gospel, *with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven*, without any mixture of philosophy, vain deceit, traditions of men, or the rudiments of the world. And let none henceforth take *this honor to himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron*.

Item. We *will*, that the church of Christ resume her native right of internal government—try her candidates for the ministry, at to their soundness in the faith, acquaintance with experimental religion, gravity and aptness to teach; and admit no other proof of their authority but Christ speaking in them. We will, that the church of Christ look up to the Lord of the harvest to send forth laborers into His harvest; and that she resume her primitive right to try those *who say they are apostles, and are not*.

Item. We *will*, that each particular church, as a body, actuated by the same spirit, choose her own preacher, and support him by a freewill offering, without a written *call* or *subscription*—admit members, remove offences; and never henceforth *delegate* her right of government to any man or set of men whatever.

Item. We *will*, that the people henceforth take the Bible as the only sure guide to heaven; and as many as are offended with other books, which stand in competition with it, may cast them into the fire if they choose; for it is better to enter into life having one book, than having many to be cast into hell.

Item. We *will*, that preachers and people cultivate a spirit of mutual forbearance; pray more and dispute less; and while they behold the signs of the times, look up, and confidently expect that redemption draweth nigh.

Item. We *will*, that our weak brethren who may have been wishing to make the Presbytery of Springfield their king, and know not what is now become of it, betake themselves to the Rock of Ages, and follow Jesus for the future.

Item. We *will*, that the Synod of Kentucky examine every member who may be *suspected* of having departed from the Confession of Faith, and suspend every such suspected heretic immediately; in order that the oppressed may go free, and taste the sweets of gospel liberty.

Item. We *will*, that Ja—— ——, the author of the two letters lately published in Lexington, be encouraged in his zeal to destroy *partyism*. We will, moreover, that our past conduct be examined into by all who may have correct information; but let foreigners beware of speaking evil of things which they know not.

Item. Finally we *will*, that all our *sister bodies* read their Bibles carefully, that they may see their fate there determined, and prepare for death before it is too late.

Springfield Presbytery,
June 28th, 1804. } L. S.

ROBERT MARSHALL,
JOHN DUNLAVY,
RICHARD MCNEMAR,
B. W. STONE,
JOHN THOMPSON,
DAVID PURVIANCE,
} Witnesses.

There seemed to be throughout the United States at about this time a growing realization among Christian people of the fact that the one essential principle of Protestant Christianity—belief in and acceptance of Jesus as Redeemer and Christ—was already held in common by all evangelical denominations. Hence, soon after this there began in widely separated parts of the country various other movements similar in aim and method to that inaugurated in Kentucky by the dissolution of the Springfield Presbytery.

It is only needed that these various movements become known to each other in order to become united. This union was effected in 1882; and rapidly crystalized into a body whose only distinguishing name is "Christian" or "Disciple," and whose differential character lies not in its advocacy of any new doctrine or theological tenet whatever; but in its rejection of that which in the way of human speculation, human interpretation and human dogma has been added to the original simple and all-comprehending faith of the apostolic church.

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