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The Tobacco Tiller

A Tale of the Kentucky Tobacco Fields

By Sarah Bell Hackley

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"I dunno but what we'd better move to Texas."

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FOREWORD

Behold, friend, a multitude traversing a road shaded at its edge by mighty plants whose leaves are thick, broad, and rank in their odor,—the nicotiana tabacum. Who are they of the multitude?

They are those who have had to do with the making of the history of the weed whose cousins are the thorn-apple, and the night-shade, from the time its existence came to be known to the civilized nations.

Listen, friend, to the roll-call.

Ye whose bread was the banana,—whose garb was the sunshine,—whose gods were worshiped in the smoke-cloud from the burning leaf of the Petun,—whose weapons of war were arrows, poison-tipped in the oil of tobacco,—ye red barbarians of Central America, of the off lying islands, and of the farther northward country; ye from whom the world learned to use tobacco,—answer to your names!

Sir of the silken robe and waving plume,—dizzy with visions of the wealth of the Montezumas to be conquered,—you who in the beginning of the sixteenth century, presented the Indian weed to your Sovereign at Madrid,—Fernando Cortez—answer to your name!

Sir Frances Drake, the first son of Old England to look to the borders of the Peaceful Ocean,—bring forward Ralph Lane, starving pearl-hunter of Roanoke Island, whom you rescued. Answer, Lane, you who introduced the Indian custom of "drinking tobacco" into your country!

Noble prisoner of the Tower,—chivalrous subject of Her Sovereign Majesty, Elizabeth, in whose honor was named the sunny land which grew the herb of enchantment,—you who made the herb fashionable in Britain,—Sir Walter Raleigh, answer to roll call!

Silversmith, maker of the pipe of silver of the Queen's Favorite, and of the scales that enabled him to ascertain the weight of the smoke of a pipeful of tobacco, and win his majesty's wager,—answer to your name!

You, whose name, by courtesy of the great Swedish student of nature, the Indian's weed bears,—John Nicot, of the Country of Charlemagne, answer roll-call!

And you, Madame, of the day-fair face, and the night-black heart, wife to one King, and mother to another,—huntress, builder of the Tuileries,—you, at whose feet lie the victims of that mid-summer night of horror, the eve of St. Bartholomew's Day,—you, Madame, first snuff-taker of Europe, and christener of the Herbe de La Reine,—Catherine de Medici,—murderess,—answer to roll-call!

Mariners of the Mediterranean, Merchants of Venice, Genoan tradesmen,—ye who enlightened the Levant, and the wide Continent to the borders of the deepest ocean, as to the intoxicating delights of the plant solanaceae,—your names are called!

Hear all ye, who by might of Sovereign rule, of priestly power, and example, have endeavored to drive the weed of the West from your domains,—answer to your names!

Unhappy prisoner of St. Helena, who in your day of power, secured to your Government the exclusive right of making and selling tobacco,—answer to your name!

Governor of Virginia,—compelled to adjust the proportion between the corn and the tobacco to be raised in the cleared lands,—when the colonists, mad with thoughts of gold, neglected the culture of that which they could eat, for that which they could sell,—Sir Thomas Dale,—answer roll-call!

Ye one hundred young women of "agreeable persons and respectable character," whose over seas passage was paid with the tobacco of your husbands-to-be,—answer to your names!

All ye vast multitude concerned in the making of the past history of tobacco,—answer to roll-call!

They have answered, friend! they have passed beyond our vision, and yet the tobacco shadowed highway is traversed by a great throng.

Who are they? They are the present day consumers of the weed of the red children of the woods,—they are the subjects of Edward, men of the Fatherland, of France, of Spain, of the cold barren steppes of Russia, of the parched plains of Africa, of the Americas, and the islands of the seas; soldiers, sailors, civilians, barbarians, infidels, Christians, the earth over, and their number is hundreds of millions!

Tobacco! Tobacco for the millions of the past! Tobacco for the millions of the present! Whence come the supplies for these? Whence come the supplies for these?

For a time, Virginia supplied the world, but the culture of the weed spread with its use, until it came to be grown in many parts of the old world.

The United States, however, produces more tobacco than any other country in the world, and of her great output,—Kentucky, possessed of the soil combined with conditions of climate that makes good tobacco in greater measure than any other of the States, raises more than one-third.

Within Kentucky's borders, friend, the number of the agricultural folk who depend for daily bread on crops of tobacco, is great. Every year's August sees more than three hundred thousand of Kentucky's rich acres, yellow green with the growing tobacco, and every year's March sees near three hundred millions of pounds of matured tobacco sent away.

The central and north central parts of the State, embracing the Blue Grass region, wherein lies the home of the great Pacificator, is known as the White Burley District, and is world-renowned for the quality and quantity of the famous White Burley tobacco, largely used in the domestic trade. Here this tobacco is produced at its best.

In the western part of the State, the lands south-bounded by the waters of the Cumberland, and over which, in the olden day, annual prairie fires swept, are known as the Regie, or Dark Tobacco district, and here are grown the dark heavy varieties of tobacco, adapted to the export trade.

A hard life the tobacco tiller's, friend. He who has not seen the tobacco grown, can have no conception of the physical hardships endured, the ceaseless toil, the care and the anxiety as to the likelihood of failure, that enter into the growing of a tobacco crop.

It is a crop that requires the very best quality of land on which to cultivate it, and the most arduous of toil in its cultivation. Work may be hard in another crop, but set the work necessary to raise any crop beside the labor entailed in a tobacco crop—from its beginning until it is ready for the manufacturer—and friend, it will be as the labor of the little lad who digs a miniature trench in the beach sands, beside the completed digging of the canal that will unite two oceans!

THE TOBACCO TILLER

CHAPTER I

MR. DOGGETT AT HOME

"Awake, awake my lyre, and tell thy silent master's humble tale."

"Dock and me went out this mornin' and scraped up about three tablespoonfuls o' frost offen that plank a layin' right thar by the fence,—yes, sir, three tablespoonfuls, nigh about. Ef we don't watch, some o' our terbaccer's a goin' to git ketched a standin'. Frost a holdin' off ontel the last o' September hain't seasonable. What you thenk about hit, Mr. Brock?"

The pale blue eyes, half-hidden by the bushy red side-burns that floated wildly out on either side of Mr. Doggett's face, like sunburnt bunches of broom sedge blown in a high wind, included all his audience with a comprehensive beam of agreeability. Finally these pleasant eyes rested, in the enforced deference due the most prosperous guest, on the thick-set man with the hog-like neck, and the enormous mole, that stood, sentinel-like beside the left nostril of his rose-colored, aquiline nose.

For reasons domestic and infantile, a portion of the Doggetts' Sunday's company,—Susie Dutton and Hattie Leeds, the two daughters, and Lem and Jim, the two married sons, the four spouses and the eight babes, had taken a reluctant mid-afternoon departure.

The unfettered guests, Mr. Nathan Lindsay, Gran'dad Doggett, who was staying with his daughter, Lindy Gumm, over on the River,—and Mr. Galvin Brock (he of the mole and the nose) who had been young Callie Doggett's second husband, lingered.

Mr. Lindsay, who held himself a step above the Doggetts, but was not averse to a Sunday's visit to that hospitable household, had suggested that it was warmer outdoors than in the house. The three guests, with their host and his youngest son, sat in the pleasant warmth of the late afternoon's sunshine, at the woodpile on the west side of the house.

Mr. Brock's usual manner of answering a question was by an assenting or dissenting grunt. This time, however, his mouth left its grim line an instant.

"If it keeps as dry as it is now," he observed, "nobody's tobaccer will see a killin' frost unhoused."

During the Civil War, Gran'dad Doggett, on account of what he called "a leetle shootin' scrape, but nothin' criminal," had brought his young family from Bell County, in the Kentucky Mountains, to the Blue Grass. Before this flitting of necessity, he had been a Justice of the Peace, which fact, ever afterward caused him to affect an air of conscious superiority toward his son.

"More than that, Ephriam," he remarked, corroborating Mr. Brock's observation, "more than that, frost don't never kill in the dark o' the moon. I'd 'a' thought in the thirty year you've been a raisin' terbaccer, you'd 'a' learned that!"

"That's right, old man, yes, sir"—Mr. Doggett's slow drawl was affable in the extreme—"that's jest what I told the boys. A body hain't no use to cross a bridge afore they gits to hit! Jim now, he wuz might' night' wilted down along in July, afeerd the best part o' his crop wuz a Frenchin', but hit growed off all right, and now hit's the best terbaccer he's got! I'm afeerd he'll have too much fer his barn and he'll want to put some in mine.

"I says to Jim and Mr. Castle last week, 'I hain't a aimin' to let you scrouge up and burn up my terbaccer.' Although a heap o' men, when they are a leetle short o' room, they'll push up the sticks together, hit's a poor way! Terbaccer'll rot, ef you crowd hit, ever' time. The rot'll start up whar the stem jines the stalk, and hit'll drap off ef you don't watch.

"Yes, sir, Jim's got a fine crop. Ef he could save ever' leaf, he'd have two thousand pounds to the acre, jest about. Some o' this farm's mighty tired, but I 'low they hain't no sech land as them ten

acres in the world fer richness!

"Although when I wuz in town on a Court day last—Monday wuz a week—a Texas feller wuz a tellin' about how rich the ground is *thar*. He says the crops *thar* is astoundin', the dirt is so rich; he says he raised one punkin'—jest an ordinary sized one too, fer Texas,—and his old sow, she made a bed in hit fer her peege! Yes, sir!"

Mrs. Doggett, a large, spare, and comely woman, with high cheek bones and olive skin, lifted the battered zinc buckets she was filling with chips.

"Well, Eph," she vouchsafed, "ef that's the truth, I dunno but what we'd better move to Texas. Ef anybody's any worse needin' a betterin' o' their condition than us, I dunno who ner what hit is! Look at the house we have to live in, will you, front and back! It'd be mighty late when Mr. Castle'd durst offer to put *you* in sech a house, wouldn't hit, Mr. Brock? He knows better. He couldn't put hit off on none his terbaccer men but Eph!"

The house, had it been a thing of feeling, would have shrunk before the scrutiny of the five pairs of eyes lifted to it, so disreputable was its aspect. Panes were dropping from the time and weather-gnawed sash in the windows of the two rooms below; rags stopped the holes in the one window above that had a sash in it, and the lank old pine leaning over the stone-paved walk that led to the little hingeless gate assisted a wide board to keep the wind out of the other window.

"Seems to me, Ephriam, Castle ort to pervide a better house fer ye, er make out to fix up this un," quavered the old man.

"He ort now, he ort," assented his son, "though he's been a promisin'—"

"Promisin'll be all!" broke in Mrs. Doggett. "He's never kept nary promise yit, about the house, ner nothin' else! But Eph, he'll jest stay here and put in another three years a grubbin' canes and choppin' roots—a clearin' up a thicket, and then git jest half the terbaccer he raises on hit, like ever'body else does on ready-cleared land!"

"The old lady, she's a poppin' hit to me and Mr. Castle, hain't she?" Mr. Doggett smiled indulgently in the direction of Mrs. Doggett as she went across the rotting planks that served for a back porch floor, with her chips. "Although," he went on, "hit's might' night' the truth. Mr. Castle is mighty close.

"'Doggett,' he says, 'don't bring in nothin' but one cow and a horse er two on me to pastur fer you,' and that's the way he talks, and me a lookin' after his mar's and colts, and fixin' up his water-gaps, and all sech like work outside the terbaccer crop, all the time, both afore and sence he tuck to livin' in town.

"I says to him one day—I says, 'Mr. Castle, here you are a gittin' rich offen our work, able to have a conquick mansion, with burssels cyarpetin', and a brick hin-house, and me and the boys is a workin' our finger nails off, and in the house I have to live in I can't hardly find a dry place to hang my hoe!' (And hit's the truth, yes, sir, though Mr. Castle says sence terbaccer is so low, he has to make a livin' on his other investments.) Mr. Castle, he never said nothin', jest tuck up my hoe and went to lookin' at hit,—my old hoe *thar* I've used in the terbaccer fer twenty-five year."

Mr. Doggett pointed to where against the side of the patched weather-boarding hung a hand-made hoe, shining like polished silver, its hickory handle worn to the hard glossiness of Japanese lacquer.

"I says, 'Mr. Castle, ef that hoe could talk, hit'd tell o' enough sweat to drownd a elephant in, and o' enough warrysome back-aches, and arm j'int aches, and ginerall *all-over* aches to keep one them *thar* rest cyores Joey wuz a readin' about, a runnin' at full blast fer all time to come. Yes, sir, hit could! And, although a body has a heap to be thankful fer anyhow, hit's mighty little I've got to show fer all that sweat and them aches.'

"Mr. Castle looked at me mighty hard; then he says, 'Doggett, you've had a livin'.' 'Yes, sir,' I says, 'but Mr. Castle, I've had to git out and sometimes work fer other people!'"

"'Pears like to me, Ephriam, takin' your words fer what they're wuth, movin'd be a good thing fer ye," suggested Gran'dad at this moment.

"No, sir, I hain't a needin' none them way-off States," Mr. Doggett shook his head emphatically: "thar's too many quair creeters in 'em fer me. That feller Fletch Keerby I had a workin' fer me last spreng, him and his brother Larkin, they lived out in Texas fer a while, and Fletch he said one day they wuz goin' 'long together sommers, and on the way they ketcht sight o' a beeg snake. Hit wuz fifteen foot long and beeg as a post, and hit wuz layin' plumb acrost the road a sunnin'! Hit wuz one them buoy instructors.

"Keerby, he told me he says, 'Larkin, ef a feller had a kag o' damanite, he'd be all right, but we hain't got hit, so what can we do? Hit won't do to shoot him; I'm afeerd to, because ef we don't git *him*, he'll git *us*!' Yes, sir, that's what he said. And Larkin he went and got a club and slipped up on the snake and hit him back o' the head about eight inches. Yes, sir! And that snake jest swapped eends! But he wuz dead, yes, sir, he wuz dead. He wuz a instructor, a buoy instructor!"

"Well, Ephriam," Gran'dad slapped the new gray jeans that covered his thin legs, with a prolonged cackle of derisive mirth, "you wouldn't be no fust rate hand to kerry on a funeral—you'd tickle the ondertaker. They don't have none them buoys in Texas. They don't live nowhars

but in *Africy!*"

Mr. Doggett rubbed his narrow forehead reflectively, ignoring the correction.

"Whar is hit them mare-maids lives, er is hit *marry-maids*? I fergit the name. Keerby, he said he seed a pair o' 'em onct—in Floridy Gulf hit must 'a' been. He said they had a woman head and a fish body hitched onto hit somehow, and ever' scale on the fish part wuz as beeg as a sasser, and a shinin' like the sun! He said he never looked at 'em perticular *clos*, considerin' they wuzn't dressed fer company ner cold weather, but they wuz ondoubtedly the purtiest creeters a body ever seed!"

"Did Keerby mention anytheng that *wuz* dressed fer winter out thar?" asked Gran'dad with a covert wink at Mr. Brock.

"Well, Keerby, he said they wuz b'ars—them kind that'll hug like a courtin' feller, and their meat's as sweet as a courtin' feller's tongue. Keerby says you can p'intedly eat all the b'ar's fat you can git around ef you pepper and salt hit right good, and instid o' sickenin' you, hit'll fatten you."

"Keerby'll never see as much b'ar's fat ner nothin' else as he can git around!" jeered Gran'dad.

"I'm afeerd he won't," agreed Mr. Doggett. "I'd 'a' kept him longer, he had sech a good sleight at turnin' off work,—done more'n three thirds o' the feedin' ginerally, and ever'theng else accordin'—but the old lady 'lowed she wuzn't goin' to be et out o' house and home ef *I* wuz. Onct he et so long I thought I'd have to hitch up the team and pull him away from the table."

Dock, the twelve-year-old, small and scrawny, but tough as a hickory withe, who had up to this time lain stretched on his front by a hollow log, skilfully executing with his barlow a colony of ants as fast as they crawled from the rotting section of buckeye, gave a wicked glance at the slender and hollow-cheeked man of fifty sitting near him.

"Mr. Lindsay, he ort to have some o' that b'ar's fat Keerby wuz a tellin' about to make him sortie plump up and look purty to Miss Lucy."

A slow red crept into Mr. Lindsay's sensitive face.

"I don't reckon I need any bear's fat yit, Dock," his voice was low and gentle: "My mother always told me whatever I done, never to starve a woman, and I ain't ready to starve one yit, ef I could git one to have me."

Mrs. Doggett who had come out again with her improvised chip baskets, turned toward him, her black eyes sparkling mischievously.

"Now Mr. Lindsay, ef I wuz a single man like you, that'd been to Texas and Missouri, and seed all over the country you might say,—a man that knows how to keep on the good side o' women folks—a not a trackin' in mud no time, ner never spittin' on the hearth, and always washin' his feet at night in plowin'-time—I'd be plumb ashamed to say I couldn't git no woman to have me!

"Been here in this neighborhood might' night' six year, too, and hain't never said nary word yit as anybody's ever heerd tell of, to keep Miss Lucy Jeemes from settin' thar always with her pa and Miss Nancy! I think hit's time he wuz doin' a little courtin' in that direction, don't you, Mr. Brock?"

The best beginning of a man's enmity is the suspicion that another man has a better chance of the regard of a woman he has selected for his own, and though Mr. Brock had sat during Mrs. Doggett's speech with stern inscrutable face that conveyed no hint of his feelings, his heart beat with angry tumult, and within its inmost chamber was born a lusty beginning of hatred toward the pale man sitting on the beech log.

Callie had been in her grave only six weeks, but when a man has been twice married, and twice bereft, may he not, after six weeks, begin to consider a third partner with propriety, if the consideration is done in secret? And after the convenient pattern set by other widowers, Mr. Brock had selected a neighbor, the kind-faced woman who had been a ministering angel at the death beds of both his wives, for that third partner. His pale grey eyes gave their sidewise glance at Mr. Lindsay. The warm color on that gentleman's cheek irritated him strangely; he rose precipitately, and with a mumbled word of farewell, took his departure.

"Mr. Brock got in a mighty hurry all to onct," said Mr. Doggett, gazing in some wonderment after the departing figure: "I can't think what tuck him off so suddent."

After the departure of Mr. Lindsay and Gran'dad, a few minutes later, Mr. Doggett, with a pleasing idea in his head, strolled out to the barn-yard, where Mrs. Doggett milked the red muley.

"Ann," he remarked, "I been a thenkin' about Mr. Lindsay a not havin' no settled home, ner no nigh kin to take keer o' him, ef he ever wuz to git down sick. Hit would be a sorter nice theng fer him and Miss Lucy Jeemes to marry now, wouldn't hit?"

Mrs. Doggett looked uncertain.

"Maybe Miss Lucy wouldn't marry him, Eph," she advanced. "Sometimes I think she's one o' them women that wouldn't marry any man."

Mr. Doggett took a few steps out of range of the milker.

"Don't you fool yourself, Ann," he chuckled, "thar's jest one woman in the world that won't marry!"

"Who is she?" Mrs. Doggett asked curiously.

"She's a dead woman!" responded Mr. Doggett.

"Aw, shet up, Eph!" Mrs. Doggett spoke with some acerbity. "You jest go git me some stovewood, ef you want any supper tonight!"

CHAPTER II

THE MYRTLE BUDS IN MISS LUCY'S GARDEN

"No spring or summer's beauty hath such grace,
As I have seen in one autumnal face."

For more than a half-hour old Milton James had limped up and down the gravelled drive that led through the grove of poplars in front of the lead-colored, one-and-a-half storied house that was his home, alternately watching the fat old bay mare and three cows that pulled at the fodder scattered in the pasture field over the fence, and the muddy road that ran across the foot of the avenue and disappeared over the hill beyond.

"Lucy Ann beats ever'theng a stayin'," he muttered, irritably pulling at his sparse white beard; "jest now in sight, and hit nigh twelve o'clock!"

The dark object at length resolved itself into an old-fashioned and much mud-bespattered buggy, drawn by the counterpart of the bay in the pasture, and driven by a woman in black.

"Lucy Ann, don't drive ag'in the gate-post!"

With a hand that slightly trembled, both from weakness and nervous irritability, the tall old man, leaning on his stick, his bald head shining in the December sun, held open the side gate of the yard, while his daughter, measuring the space between the white-washed gate posts with an anxious eye, drove cautiously in.

To a person of fifty years, agility is ordinarily a stranger. Miss Lucy, carefully protecting her new black etamine dress skirt from the wheel, climbed slowly out of the buggy, and gathered up the numerous bundles from the floor of the vehicle. Then, while her father fumbled with the straps of the harness, she lingered for a moment, watching him.

"Pa," she ventured in the apologetic manner of one who expects a rebuff, "spose'n you let *me* help take out old Maud. I'm afraid you'll hurt your bad knee."

"Naw, I won't," answered her father testily: "you'd better jest take them thar bundles in the house, and put on your ever' day clothes and help Nancy about the dinner! Nancy's been a workin' hard all the time you've been a gaddin' about town."

When Miss Lucy came out of the front bedroom into the sitting-room behind it, an imaginary speck of dust on a pane of glass in the door of the tall cherry "press" filled with gay-colored dishes, caught her eye. She rubbed the glass carefully with a corner of her apron, and catching up the little hearth-broom, stooped to brush up a microscopic cinder that had fallen from the grate on the green and red striped rag carpet. Her sister greeted her with a look of reproach.

"Do you think, Lucy, I ain't done no cleanin' up while you was gone?" she asked.

Both the Misses James were alike tall, but what was angularity in the uncompromisingly erect figure of Miss Nancy, who had never known a sick day, was slenderness and delicacy in her elder sister. Miss Nancy's rugged face found no redeeming beauty in her eyes, which were gray and cold as the foundation stones of the house, and carried in their depths a perpetual look of rebuke to the world in general, and to her sister in particular; but the irregularity of Miss Lucy's features seemed akin to beauty in the light of her dark-blue eyes, shining with loving kindness,—eyes that despite their owner's years, held a look of singularly childlike innocence, and a sort of timidity that appeals to the chivalry of men.

According to Mrs. Doggett, the James' nearest neighbor, for whom spinsterhood in one she did not admire required a just reproof, but in a friend necessitated an explanation and an apology, "Miss Nancy's never had any notice as I ever heerd tell of, but to the best o' my belief, Miss Lucy'd 'a' been married long ago, ef hit hadn't 'a' been fer skeer o' them old thengs,"—the "old thengs" in question being Miss Nancy and her father.

"How do you like Pa's overcoat, Nancy?" asked Miss Lucy, opening the great bundle she had laid on the middle star of the sitting-room bed, and holding up the garment. Miss Nancy looked at the

neat gray beaver with cold disapproval.

"Why'n't you git black?" she demanded: "you wanted a black one, didn't you, Pa?"

The old man looked at the coat and then over his steel-rimmed spectacles at his elder daughter whose hand went up to her face in a nervous, defensive movement,—an acquired gesture that told of a life lived under the lash of rebuke.

"I taken this one, Pa, because I got it cheap; it was a young man's overcoat, left over from last spring. Jest see how fine quality it is, and Pa, I wisht you'd look at the linin'!"

Mr. James fingered the soft nap of the garment, and examined its handsome lining with reluctant eyes.

"Yes," he admitted grudgingly, "hit *is* fine quality. A blind hog will stumble on an acorn sometimes!"

Miss Lucy helped him into the coat.

"Wall," he grumbled triumphantly, "I knowed thar'd be somethin' wrong. Hit don't fit: I hain't a goin' to torment myse'f squeez in sech tight armholes as them is! You'll jest have to take hit back! Go to town one day to git thengs,—go to town next day to swap 'em! I think next time you start out to town, you'd better let Nancy—a person with some judgement, go with you to keep you from actin' like a chicken with hit's head off!"

"Ef you'd jest go along and try a coat on, Pa, like I want you to, you might git a better fit and be better suited too," remonstrated Miss Lucy mildly, although her lips trembled, as she carefully folded the coat, and laid it on a bottom shelf of the press, and smoothed the wrinkle on the bed where the bundle had lain. "And Pa," she added, "Brother and Sister Avery's a comin' out this evenin' to stay all night. I told 'em you'd be awful glad,—you got so lonesome a settin' 'round since you'd had the rheumatism so bad and the doctor told you not to work any."

"Why'n't you git some crackers, Lucy, ef you knowed comp'ny was comin'?" asked Miss Nancy. "We won't have no time to bake no lightbread between now and the time they git here, and we ought to have somethin' to eat with the beef soup."

"I did," replied Miss Lucy following her sister to the big, low-ceiled kitchen whose woodwork, cupboard shelves, biscuit board, and puncheon floor were alike white and immaculate with much scrubbing. Miss Nancy emptied the sugar into its jar and poured out the crackers.

"Why'n't you git square crackers?" she grumbled, as the round soda biscuits rattled in the tin can.

"They didn't have none, Nancy, where I took the butter, no kind but the round ones," explained Miss Lucy: "I didn't have no time to go nowhere else then, it was so late, and I had to go around through Plumville to get the money the colored woman owed me on the last dress I made her. I wanted to order that safety razor for Pa for Christmas, with the money." She lowered her voice, so the old man, partially deaf, could not hear. "Then I wouldn't go back through town; I thought I ought to save the mare all the pullin' I could. The apples I took made a right heavy load goin'—"

"I don't think you tried to save her much," broke in her father tartly, laying a scant armful of stovewood by the little cracked stove whose high polish would have led even a stove-dealer to strike off ten years from its real age: "that thar mar's mighty nigh into the thumps. I lay you driv' her too fast!"

"Why, Pa, I walked her all the way back from town." Miss Lucy's voice was gently deprecativ.

"Wall, hit's a good theng you did, because she's got a shoe off, and her foot's all turned up like a cheer rocker now."

"The stock seems to be enjoyin' their stalks. Who foddered for you today, Pa?" ventured Miss Lucy, thinking to divert his thoughts.

"Whar's your mem'ry, Lucy Ann?" fretted Mr. James. "Didn't I go down to Doggett's yistiddy and git Marshall to promise to come? He's the only one o' the Doggetts that I can ever git to do anytheng fer me. He's been about more'n the others, a workin' up thar in Ohawo, and he's learnt the value of a promise. Old Man Doggett'll promise you anytheng when he hain't got no notion he's goin' to have time to do hit,—he's so afeerd o' bein' disagreeable, then he'll tell you he hated hit awful, but he jest possible couldn't come!"

"It's a pity more people ain't afraid of bein' disagreeable," thought Miss Lucy with a sigh: "if they was, this'd be a pleasenter world."

To Miss Lucy, the minister and his bride were creatures far above ordinary clay. Months before his marriage, the young man, quite alone in the world, had made the gentle Miss Lucy the confidant of his hopes and fears, and the marriage of the handsome and magnetic young lover to the pretty sweetheart, whose wealth and social position had threatened to be unsurmountable barriers, was a romance dear to her heart. She went about her work of preparing for the expected guests in a glow of pleasure, but the charmed spell of her thoughts was presently broken by a call from Miss Nancy in the kitchen.

"Lucy Ann, I know you've done had time to change them spreads and shams, and 'tain't no use a

puttin' *all* the ever'day thengs away! Mother used to say, 'nobody can't put hand on nary ever'day towel when comp'ny's around. Lucy's hid 'em all,' and hit looks like you're bent on keepin' up your reputation. Come on here and bake them pies, ef you're a goin' to!"

Miss Lucy sighed, and went about the task of pie making with the ready skill of one whose fingers had fashioned pastries before they measured the length of the bowl of the spoon with which she mixed them.

"Pa, I had a new boy to help me milk this evenin'."

This bit of information imparted by Miss Lucy, when after the early supper, while Miss Nancy attended to the dishes, she and her father sat around the sitting-room grate with their guests, was met by an infectious trill of laughter from the minister's wife.

"O Glen," she gurgled, "you would have been a widower this evening if the milk-bucket had not saved me! I went on the wrong side of Miss Lucy's black cow and raised her ire. *She* raised her *foot*, Miss Lucy said, but I think it must have been her *feet*!"

"I am afraid you won't do for a chore boy," laughed her husband, "if you begin by antagonizing the cows. Have you in view any more suitable boy, Miss Lucy?"

The question of a small boy to be paid for his services in food and in raiment, was a constant and unsettled one in the James family. Five youths had been its portion in one year, and the last one had left by the light of the moon two weeks before.

"No," Miss Lucy looked away from her father as she spoke: "Cousin Becky Willis told me where she thought I could get one, and I tried today, but the childern are all goin' to school—"

"Hit's hard to git a boy to stay," interrupted Mr. James, smiling affably at the minister, "but I shan't let the girls do the work by theirselves no way this winter. I've got the promise o' a mighty good man."

"Who've you got, Pa,—Mr. Lindsay?" hazarded Miss Nancy as she economically extinguished the small lamp she had just brought in from the kitchen, and slightly lowered the flame of the large one on the mantel.

"Yes, Lindsay," assented her father. A little pleased gasp escaped Miss Lucy, but no one noticed it but little Mrs. Avery, sitting next her.

"Lindsay, he come by here this mornin' a goin' to my nephew, Simeon Willises, and stopped a few minutes. He's lookin' mighty puny: said he hain't felt well all this fall, not sence he got p'izeded with Paris green in Archie Evans' terbaccer last August. Archie, he would have him to spray fer him, wantin' a man o' judgement to do hit. Lindsay's been plumb laid up fer about two weeks, he said. I told him he ort to 'a' come here and staid while he wuz laid up, but he's been a stayin' at Doggett's.

"He said he didn't allow to do no regular work this winter, and I put at him to come and stay with us ontel spreng and help the girls out. I told him ef he'd jest come and stay, I'd give him his board, and his washin' shouldn't cost him nary cent, and he agreed to breng his trunk and come day after termorrer—Saturday.

"Lindsay's a mighty fine man—raised down hyonder whar I wuz, in Wayne, though I never knowed him ontel he come to Simeon's to work. He used to keep store down thar ontel he got burnt out, and sence then he's been a croppin' in terbaccer part the time, and part the time travellin' around fer his health, helpin' folks with their farm work and terbaccer when he feels like hit."

"He's a mighty nice man," volunteered Miss Nancy: "Cousin Becky said when he was workin' there, her stovewood box was always full, and when she wanted to clean hit, she had to empty hit. They ain't many men that'll do that!"

Miss Lucy said nothing, and the lights were too low for the warm color in her face to tell any tales.

"Hit's a wonder, too," went on Miss Nancy, "he'd be so nice, bein' a tobacco man: most them tobacco people are awful rough: they don't seem to care for church goin' ner nothin' that way, and all their idy of pleasure is crap shootin', and drinkin', and dancin' at them all-night parties they have around among theirselves durin' the winter."

"Mr. Lindsay ain't no regular tobacco man, Nancy; he jest learned how to raise hit when he was stayin' in Fayette," corrected Miss Lucy. "And besides," she remonstrated, flushing at her own temerity, "I don't think you ought to blame the tobacco folks so much; they don't have much chance to learn refinement and genteel ways, but they ain't all rough. Mr. Doggett's folks are as polite as anybody. And as fer goin' to church, I reckon ef me and you was to work in the tobacco all day ever' Saturday, we wouldn't feel much like dressin' up on Sunday. Some of 'em ain't got suitable clothes to wear to church neither, and sometimes they have to work on Sunday, too."

"It's hard for any one of us to put himself in a brother's place," remarked the minister gently. Miss Nancy said no more, and Mr. James resumed his theme.

"Lindsay hain't no trouble to wait on nuther: he's jest as tidy as a womern," he remarked, "and that's one reason I got him to come. I want to spar' the girls all I can."

"You are right, Brother James," commended the bride, dimpling seductively, "they're so good to you! You are surely to be congratulated for having two such good daughters to care for you."

"Thar hain't no danger o' me a losin' 'em, nuther." Mr. James' tone was confident. "I've allus been mighty good to 'em, and I've paid 'em fer teckin' keer o' me!"

Miss Lucy looked up from the sock she was knitting,—one of a dozen pairs she had knit to pay for her winter hat.

"Why, Pa," she protested mildly, "I've never saw any of the money you ever give anybody for takin' care of you!"

"Money fer takin' keer o' me?" cried the old man in a tone of surprise: "I've been a feedin' you I reckon, and a feedin' you a mighty long time too!"

When the minister and his wife were safely upstairs in their room, her clear, low laugh filled the little apartment.

"I don't mean to be disrespectful," she cried out softly, "but Glen, I'm worried about the pay those two women received for their trouble in getting up that delicious supper!"

"The pay?" The Reverend Avery's puzzled face sent his helpmeet off in another gurgle of laughter.

"Their food, Stupid," she railed softly, "what a high estimate our brother must put on his '*feed!*'"

"That isn't what's troubling me," responded the young man in mock trepidation: "I'm worried lest when we are in a house of our own, I shan't be able to come up to Miss Nancy's wood-box standard!"

Miss Lucy crept cautiously to her bedroom on the ground floor, lighted only by the moon. In the kitchen Miss Nancy took down the papers she had hung the day before on the wall nails on which to hang her skillets and pans, and replaced them with fresh papers, and laid the morning's sticks in the stove by the light of the only lamp she would permit to be lighted beside the one in the guest-chamber. Miss Lucy pressed her face against the window and looked serenely out in the moonlit yard.

"Them two are so happy together," she said to herself as a sound of laughter came to her ears, "I wish—"

A shade of regret saddened her face for an instant.

"But a body has always got somethin' to be glad over," she mused: "there's havin' *them*, such pleasant company, here tonight, and Pa and Nancy so agreeable, and—and Mr. Lindsay a comin' to stay with us a Saturday."

The sudden warmth that came into her heart brought a faint heat to her cheeks. She remembered something Mr. Lindsay had said to her when he sat beside her in her buggy on the way to Callie Brock's burial, in the last month of the summer. On that occasion, he had no way to go and some one had pointed out to him a vacant seat in Miss Lucy's buggy.

It was something about the loneliness of a man with no home ties, and the look that accompanied the words was responsible, though Miss Lucy did not realize it herself, for the various soft-hued and pretty "remnants" she had bought and made into waists for everyday wear for herself,—waists Miss Nancy supposed were long since sold to the negroes in Plumville, to whose trade Miss Lucy catered. In reality they were locked in Miss Lucy's trunk, away from chance of Miss Nancy's revilement of their colors and rebukement of her for extravagance. Miss Nancy herself wore prints, patched, and faded to a nondescript brown, for everyday.

Miss Lucy went to the end window of her room and looked wistfully out on the coal-shed with its meager pile.

"I wish," she said to herself, "considerin' we ain't got no wood hardly on the place, Nancy and Pa'd agreed to get a little more coal, so's we could have bigger fires when we are all a settin' around when the work's done up, and could set up later of nights."

CHAPTER III

AT THE STRIPPING-HOUSE

"It is easy to tell the toiler
How best he can carry his pack:
But no one can rate a burden's weight
Until it has been on his back."

It was the last of January and every snow-laden twig in the little thicket that fringed the brook back of the Castle barn that stood across the road in front of the James dwelling, shimmered like an oriental woman's tiara in the brilliant sunshine that suggested a not far distant thaw. The thaw was not today however; the icy air nipped the fingers and sent a trail of vapor after little Dock Doggett, carrying sticks of tobacco from the south end of the barn to the stripping-house twenty yards away.

But the stripping-house stove was a dull red, and the atmosphere of the room was eminently satisfactory to the strippers standing by the high platform that ran the length of the house under the eight window sashes ranged in a long single row. Four of Mr. Doggett's sons,—Jim, the second married son, Jappy, Joe and Dock, who lived at home, and Bunch Trisler, a short, trim, and amiable little man of thirty worked at the stripping, while Gran'dad Doggett sat, an interested spectator, on a box beside the stove.

"I declare," Trisler remarked wearily, about two o'clock in the afternoon, "my feet is plumb blistered a standin' so long!"

"He wants a stool,—a cushion' stool like one them store counter stools, Pap," grinned Dock facetiously.

"We are sorry not to be able to accommodate you, Bunch," averred Mr. Doggett, smiling, and his long hand dexterously lifted some leaves Trisler had wrongly graded to their proper places on the platform along the opposite side of the room where the stripped and tied "hands" were placed: "but we jest possible couldn't. Thar hain't no room ner place fer seats in a strippin'-house. Though ef you'd pay a leetle more 'tention to your fengers, so's not to git a green leaf in ever hand, maybe hit'd draw your 'tention offen your feet. A man can't hardly study about two thengs at the same time right handy, and we don't want people a sayin' 'Bunch, he don't *strip*, he jest takes the terbaccer offen the stalks!'"

"How you thenk terbaccer prices'll be this time, Mr. Doggett?" queried he of the sore feet after the laugh that went around had ended in a titter from Dock.

"Better'n they're been, I am in hopes," answered Mr. Doggett: "Mr. Castle, he says sometimes, 'Less hold our terbaccer a while, Doggett,' but hit looks like I'm jest bound to sell ever'time as soon as I git done strippin', bein' in debt. A feller has to buy his flour and groceries, and clothes, and most his meat on the credit, and ef I don't pay up my store debt onct a year, the store-keeper, he can't credit me. He has to live, too. And then, after ever'theng's counted in, I don't have nary dollar left ahead. Hit's 'howdy money,—good-bye money,' with me, when I sell my terbaccer, Bunch. The old lady blames me fer stickin' to hit, but I don't know nothin' else but terbaccer. Been at hit so long, I wouldn't know how to quit croppin'."

"Prices don't come in a hundred miles o' the hard work that hit takes to raise terbaccer," observed Bunch: "them buyers—"

"Them buyin' companies does mighty curis and onreasonable," interrupted Mr. Doggett. "Fer a long time now, they've been a sendin' out a agent er two to each County, er givin' one man all the ground, say on one side the pike, fer his territory, and orders not to go on t'other man's ground. Ef your barn happens to be on the t'other side from him, hit's the hardest matter in the world to git him to come anigh hit. A many a time, Mr. Castle, he's had to go out on the pike, and bag, and persuade a buyer to come and jest *look* at the terbaccer. Sometimes he wouldn't come neither, and a body'd jest have to buy hogsheads, and prize and ship hit, and then maybe, after he'd went to the extry expense o' paying fer prizin' and shippin' and ware-house charges after he got hit shipped, he would git less'n somebody else got right here at home.

"And some them buyers don't keer what they say to a body neither. Last sprenge wuz a year, when that thar man, Garred, wuz goin' 'round, he acted as independent as a couple o' hounds settin' by a dead hoss, yes, sir!"

"He called Mr. Castle and Mr. Evans a pair o' softheads because they wuzn't willin' to sell at *his* price at first askin', and when he come through the barn thar, he 'lowed the crop looked mighty pore to him. I says, 'Hain't thar somethin' the matter with your eyes, Mr. Garred? My terbaccer looks mighty *good* to men that raises hit: they say I ginerally always beat 'em all in growin'!"

"He never sampled none hardly, neither,—jest pertended to know what I had without hardly lookin' at hit, and when he put his hand on my *bright* terbaccer, my *ceegar* terbaccer, and I had some o' the purtiest a body ever seed, he 'lowed hit wuz house-burnt! Said he smelt the smoke whar we'd had fires in the barn a dryin' out the damp (and, ef you remember, Bunch, we never had no rain the fall before). And he jest offered me six cents fer my bright, and five cents fer the rest, tips, flyin's, trash, and all, him to do the gradin'. You know, Bunch, that a way I wouldn't 'a' had no bright to speak of!"

"I says 'I've got some mighty fine terbaccer, Mr. Garred, and five cents is a mighty pore price, considerin'. Can't you do a leetle better fer me?' Then he ast me ef I thought he wuz born yistiddy, er the day afore, er wuz out a buyin' terbaccer fer his health, and jest ripped out the cuss words. 'Anytheng over six cents fer your terbaccer'd be an adstortionate price to pay,' he says: 'hit hain't worth no more, and I'd see hell froze over before I'd pay you another cent!'"

"Then he 'lowed ef I didn't let him have hit, what wuz I goin' to do with hit? Wuz I goin' to feed hit to my hogs, er make hit into pies fer myse'f to eat?"

"Yes, sir, that's jest the way he talked, and t'other buyer, Bishop, a buyin' the year before, wuz might' night' as insultin'.

"When he wuz over at Archie Evans' terbaccar barn, he tuck out his gold watch with jewels a stickin' up like rats' eyes in the back of hit, and told the old Dutchman a croppin' with Mr. Evans, he'd give him jest three minutes to come to his price. The old Dutchman says: 'Me and your price can't agree dat queeck!' Bishop got mad and told him to go to hell, but old Christenson, he don't git mad at nobody—he jest spoke up and says: 'Dat is de first time I have efer been invited to your fader's house, sir, but eef you vill come along vid me, ve vill go dere togedder!'

"Yes, sir, them buyers acts mighty quair. At them ware-houses they mix the good crops they buy all through them that hain't as good. One year I hauled the best crop I ever raised to a ware-house whar the old lady's brother wuz a workin'. He said ever' time one the men'd come to a pertic'lar extry good, bright hand, he'd say, 'Here's a hand o' Eph Doggett's terbaccar!'

"Yes, sir, and what you reckon I got fer that crop?"

"I have no idy!" averred Bunch.

"They jest give me seven cents fer hit, leavin' out two thousand pounds they didn't give but five fer—and one pound wuz jest as good as t'other. My brother-in-law said the reason the buyer done that, wuz he wuz a *evenin'* up, a makin' up offen me, fer bigger prices he give on some other crops!"

"Thank you'll sell your terbaccar loose, and haul hit to a ware-house, this time, er prize hit, and ship?" asked Bunch presently.

"I dunno, Bunch." Mr. Doggett pulled his beard reflectively: "I dunno hardly what to do. A feller's bound to go with his terbaccar whenever the buyer sends word fer him to haul hit, and, no matter what sort o' weather hit is, he's got to load his waggins—his and them he's hired—and go. Ef he's got *fur* to go, say thirty-five miles to a ware-house, like me, two o'clock in the mornin'll ketch him a startin', and I tell you, Bunch, ef the weather's dry, the terbaccar loses weight ever' mile! Ef hit's windy, the wind jest whoops and tears the leaves, and sucks the weight out scandalous: and ef a snow comes on, a body's mules balls up, and they legs twists around 'tel thar's plumb danger o' hockin' 'em.

"And when you git to the ware-house long about night, the buyer jest as apt as not, he won't weigh hit sometimes 'tel the next mornin', and by then, hit won't be no heavier layin' loose on the waggins dryin' out. Then a feller's got to pay fer stablin' and feed o' the teams, and hotel bills fer him and his men, yes, sir!

"And shippin' a body's terbaccar is about as onsatisfactory as sellin' hit at the barn and haulin' hit to a ware-house: yes, sir, Bunch, a body has to sell the best way they can, and has to take what they can git, fer all their hard work! Although hit's plain to be seed, somethin's wrong when a body has to sell to one man and then bag him to buy,—as I wuz a sayin'—I'm a livin' in hopes us terbaccar fellers'll sometime git prices that'll give us somethin' more'n a bare livin'."

"What about the Equity Society that feller was a speakin' on here last summer, a helpin' prices?" observed Bunch.

"The Equity?" repeated Mr. Doggett. "Mr. Archie Evans—he's one o' them Equity men. He kept that Equity speaker a week when he wuz in the neighborhood a speakin'. Bedded him in one them gold-papared rooms, and fed his hoss oats three times a day. He said, ef a cause wuz good and jest, he wuz the man to holp in the h'istin' uv hit! I asked Mr. Evans what the Equity wuz, and he said hit wuz a society with the object to git profitable prices fer thengs raised on the farm, garden and orchid. He says he j'ined hit mainly because he saw hit had got so sober fellers that put in ever' lick o' time they possible could a workin', couldn't make enough to keep their famblys in anything that wuz any kin to comfort. Yes, sir!

"Mr. Evans, he says hit's the theng fer us terbaccar man to jine hit,—ever' livin' soul of us, tenants and landowners, and jest hold our terbaccar as hit says, ontel we git feeften cents: quit a raisin' hit one year, and we'd come out on top.

"Them manufacturers used to give us somethin' like a livin' price, afore they all j'ined together in one buyin' comp'ny and put the price down jest as low as they wanted to, and they'd have to give us a livin' price agin, yes, sir, to git us to raise hit.

"Mr. Evans, he says, hit hain't no use to try to git the Gover'ment to holp us out, by a takin' the rev'nue offen the terbaccar so we could stem hit and twist hit and sell hit that away to anybody, jest as we pleased. He says ever' time the terbaccar raisers has tried to git a law takin' the tax off, them beeg manufacterer fellers has sot down on hit so hard, hit jest died ez quick ez me er you would, ef a elephant wuz to mistake us fer a cheer and set down on us! Yes, sir!

"He says we've jest got to lay to them manufacturers by a holdin' our terbaccar, and cuttin' out the raisin' o' hit: says them fellers of us that's not a j'inin' the Equity, is jest a stavin' off the good day fer all of us. Mr. Sam Nolan and Mr. Dick Leslie over here, they say thar hain't no good in the Equity, but Mr. Evans, he says the reason they talk that a way is: the buyin' Comp'ny, thenkin' 'em beeg fellers, and influency, give 'em prices away up yonder on their terbaccar, so's they'd talk agin the Equity! Yes, sir!

"The comp'ny could easy do that, Bunch, and not feel hit. Jest thenk o' a gittin' a dollar and a half a pound fer terbaccer! Hain't that what *Black Jack* sells at, Joey?"

"And all them fellers does to the terbaccer is jest to sweeten hit a leetle, and put a leetle liquish in hit, and maybe a leetle opium, so as to set the cravin' fer more on a feller that uses hit!"

"And talkin' about hard work, us fellers up here in the Blue Grass ortn't to complain nigh as much as we do about havin' to be in the terbaccer from one year's end to t'other, and jest gittin' a gnat's livin' outen hit! Now down yonder in the Green River country, the Dark Terbaccer country, whar they don't raise *nothin'* but terbaccer (no leetle corn patches to fall back on fer stock feed and bread, like we've got) hit's wuss off with them fellers than with us. Hit's work all the time reg'lar, and in the cuttin' and housin' time, hit's work day and night too, come Sunday, come Monday! Fer they're jest bound to save hit, hit bein' their whole livin'!"

"I've worked in the terbaccer from daylight to dark and hit rainin' hard all day, wormin' and a suckerin', and expect to ag'in: I've worked on Sunday considerable—planted on Sunday in a settin' season, and cut in a press,—skeer o' frost er somethin', on Sundays, and *some nights*, but my cousin, Columbus Skeens, down thar, he says Sunday is week day to him, and the moon is the sun, all August and September nigh about.

"And Columbus' women folks, they have to git out in the fields considerable, too.

"And yit Bunch, on account o' the dark terbaccer not brengin' as much as our'n, they're wuss off than we are. One feller can't raise more'n four acres o' terbaccer, ginerally, and he has to halve hit with the land-owner, so ef he raises a thousand pounds to the acre, and gits seven cents, he don't git but a hunderd and forty dollers fer his year's work in terbaccer. Yes, sir!"

"And 'tain't been so long sence the buyers, when they all j'ined together in one buyin' Comp'ny, pinched them fellers down thar in the Black Patch down to *three* cents, when their sellin' time come. Somethin's wrong, Bunch.

"Hit's jest as bad, I've heerd in some the Counties up naixt the Ohio River, too. Columbus, he keeps a sayin' ef thengs don't git no better, somethin's a goin' to happen down thar!"

"Thar's already been thengs a happenin'," remarked Gran'dad, taking a sudden interest in the conversation, "that is, in some parts o' the State. I wuz a readin' yisterday about people a bein' turned back home with waggin loads o' terbaccer the buyin' Comp'ny'd sneaked around and bought,—terbaccer that was pooled in the Equity, and they had no right to sell. And more than that, some barns o' pooled terbaccer, the buyin' Company has persuaded some pore fellers with more emptiness in their stomicks than brains in their heads, to sell to hit, has been burned down, by what the papers calls 'night riders.'"

"A heap a body sees in the papers hain't so, though," put in Mr. Doggett. "That's the failin' o' human critters—they believe most anything they see in print!"

For an instant the silence in the stripping house was unbroken, except for the soft swish of the tobacco leaves.

Then Gran'dad, who was evidently not pleased with his son's comment on the failings of a newspaper reader, spoke again.

"How does hit happen, Ephriam, that Castle and Brock always git the highest market price on the Louisville breaks, when they ship theirn and yourn? Brock and Castle both says Brock's terbaccer sold yourn last spreng."

The red in Mr. Doggett's face deepened as Gran'dad flung out this taunt.

Mr. Brock, at one time, before a spirit of moving, and losing, took possession of him, had been a land-owner: he furnished his own teams altogether in making his crop, and, contrary to usual custom, required no advancement of money before the sale. In addition, he was not troubled with humility.

For these reasons, probably, he was held in greater respect than Mr. Doggett, by their landlord. Then, too, Mr. Doggett was a good servant, and perhaps Mr. Castle felt that it was not the part of wisdom to allow an idea of his worth to get into his head, lest with this idea, an aspiration to seek another master might also come. At any rate, his long-continued and undue praise of Brock's tobacco, and unjust disparagement of Doggett's, had set a thorn of dislike in the heart of the latter gentleman toward his former son-in-law.

"I've seed a heap worse terbaccer," Mr. Doggett informed his hearers, when, after a moment of silence, his cheeks had paled to their normal color; "but Mr. Brock's terbaccer wuz mighty sorry last year,—the meanest crop he ever raised. We had a beeg frost in the spreng before he raised that crop and hit ketched Brock. Reub, he went away that Sunday mornin' to stay 'tel next day, and he told his pap afore he started, ef hit got any colder afore night, to be *shore* to kiver the beds over with hempherds er straw er somethin'. Mr. Brock, he's mighty se'f deceived, nobody can't tell him nothin'; he 'lowed the frost wuzn't comin', but old Jack showed him, yes, sir. And he had to put in his crop with mixed-up late plants, all the kind them that didn't know hit all, wuz able to spare him.

"And then he put too much Paris green on his terbaccer, which some men will do, ef they hain't no more in love with work than Mr. Brock; besides he hauled some o' his'n in, in sech a rush, and

drug and beat hit about ontel hit looked like hit had been lapped around a tree, and part of his wuz shore house-burnt. Them September rains done fer him, yes, sir. But mine wuz ever' stalk Stand-up Burley, and nigh about as good as ever I raised, ef I do say hit myse'f.

"The reason he got sech a price wuz the way he packed his hogsheads. You know the inspector, he takes a jobber, and fishes out one hand down about the middle o' the hogshead, and thar's whar Brock packs his brightest terbaccer; although he denies hit, yes, sir.

"Mr. Lindsay, he holped Brock strip last year, and pack, too. Mr. Lindsay, he's got a good sleight at strippin' terbaccer: I've never seed him put a leaf out o' place, even when I've been a carryin' fourteen grades. He jest can't be beat in a strippin'-house. I'd back him ag'in anybody you might breng, I don't keer who: but, as I wuz a sayin', Mr. Lindsay, he told me, that's the way Brock packed his hogsheads.

"And Mr. Brock, he nestes his too, when he sells hit loose. He nested hit one year,—put all the bad in the middle o' his seven piles o' bulked down—and Mr. Castle sold hit to a buyer, and agreed to let the buyer prize hit in hogsheads at the barn, yes, sir. And afore the man come, Brock had to rebulk the whole theng to keep from bein' ketcht up with, yes, sir. I don't never nest none."

"Tain't no penitentiary refence, Pap, to sorter put your best wher' hit'll be saw first," remarked Jim Doggett, a tall man of twenty-eight.

"Ephriam bein' possessed frum experience of information o' what hit takes to constitute a penitentiary offence," gibed Gran'dad.

"Sorter throwin' off on you, ain't he, Mr. Doggett?" Bunch palliated.

"Yes, sir, Bunch," admitted Mr. Doggett pleasantly: "yes, sir, 'taint no use denyin' hit, I've shore been to the pen."

"Somethin' that happened a right smart while back when you'd had a dram too much?" suggested Trisler, who was eager for the tale, in a tone of apology.

"Yes, sir, Bunch, you've hit the nail on the head. Hit wuz when I lived in Bourbon, sixteen years ago, come two weeks afore Christmas."

"I'd love to hear you tell hit," Bunch invited.

"Hit's too late this evenin'": Mr. Doggett was mindful of the afternoon slowness of Bunch's hands, when his ears were actively employed: "less git done the terbaccer we got out, and come extry early in the mornin', and I'll tell you how 'twuz."

CHAPTER IV

A COMPACT

"Come Philomenus: let us instant go,
O'erturn his bowers and lay his castle low."

Trisler did not make his appearance at the stripping-house the next morning, but came limping in at noon, giving his sore feet as his excuse for his failure to do a whole day's work. Late in the afternoon Mr. Doggett's promise of the day before occurred to him, and he insisted on its fulfillment.

"I 'lowed hit'd 'a' went out o' your mind by this time, Bunch," confessed Mr. Doggett, "but I reckon I'll have to tell you, bein's you're so pressin'.

"Hit wuz a Saturday night hit happened. The old lady and the chillern (wuzn't none of 'em grown then), they went to bed *soon*, plumb wore out from buryin' cabbage. Hit'd been a mighty reasonable fall—least cold weather I ever seed up to that time, and we'd left the cabbage a standin' 'tel then. I'd been to Paris a collectin' a leetle a man owed me thar, and come home late: didn't git in ontel ten o'clock, me and the old lady's cousin, Trosper Knuckles.

"Trosper, he lived up on Maple Ridge, and seein' me passin', he hollered to me to wait and he'd go home with me, which I did. Trosper wuz one them kind o' fellers that'll hit the pike ever' time they git a new shirt, jest to show hit off, and this time he'd sold his place fer seven hunderd dollars more'n he give fer hit, and wuz jest on the p'int o' movin', and he wuz crazy fer me and the old lady to hear about hit, bein's we lived in another neighborhood.

"We got in, two o' the hongriest fellers you ever seed. I says, 'Trosper, you jest go 'long into the kitchen while I 'tend to the hoss', and when I come in, he'd done laid a few sticks on the coals and had a good fire a goin'. The old lady, she'd set up victuals in the cupboard fer me, and we got 'em out and et hearty. When we got through eatin', Trosper, he tuck out a quart bottle, plumb full,

and says, 'Eph, don't that look somepin' like hit?'

"I says, and I'd ort to 'a' knowed better, fer, though Trosper wuz a good, clever feller, the cleverest feller you ever seed, sober, he wuz mighty mean when he got a leetle too much, and he wuz one o' them kind o' fellers that never stops when he gits a taste 'tel he does git too much,—I says, 'Less have a taste, Trosper,' and he retcht up in the cupboard, and got two leetle tumblers, er mugs they wuz, Lem and Jim's Christmas mugs, and poured 'em about a quarter full, and we sot that fer a good while a talkin',—him a pourin' out more and more ontell thar wuzn't skeercely enough left in the bottle to keep the stopper damp!

"The old lady says she waked up hearin' a mighty noise in the kitchen, and Lem, and Jim, them and her, they run out (the kitchen wuz one them old log ones built sorter off from the house) and the fust she heerd when she got in the yard wuz two shots might' night' together, and when the leetle fellers busted the door open, fust she seed wuz Trosper a layin' crumpled up 'crost the hearth, a clinchin' a smokin' gun in his stiffenin' hand, and me a standin' gazin' at him, a clinchin' a smokin' gun in *my* hand.

"I never knowed how we got to fussin' ner nothin', but when I seed a leetle ball o' white yarn that'd got knocked off the fireboard, a turnin' red whar somethin' creepin' acrost that old limestone hearth-rock teched hit, and heerd the old lady screamin', I come sober mighty quick, I tell you, Bunch, but hit wuz too late, then."

A shade of burning regret crossed Mr. Doggett's face and some heavy drops came on his forehead.

"The jury jest give you four years, didn't they?" asked Bunch, speaking in cheerful haste.

"Six years wuz my sentence—fer manslaughter they sent me—but I jest staid twenty months, and two weeks, and one day, up thar."

"How'd you git off before your time wuz out?" asked Bunch, curiously.

"They's a paper a hangin' on the wall at my house, got John Young Brown's name to hit, and a eighteen carat gold seal on hit, that'd tell you better'n I could ef you could see hit. The old lady, she would have my pardon framed, bein's hit had a tasty and ornymental look.

"I wuzn't at Frankfort more'n a month afore they made me a trusty, on account o' purty behavior, the guards said, and afore long, Mr. Miller—whar we'd been a livin' seven year, he got up a partition to git me out, and I put in my application fer a pardon. The old lady and Callie, and the boys, they worked and done tollable well them two year, but hit wuz mighty hard on her and the leetle fellers—yes, sir, hit wuz!

"The Governor sometimes he'd walk through the pen, and onct, several months after I'd put in my application, I ketcht him a lookin' at me, like he wuz a sizin' me up—tryin' to make out the kind o' feller I wuz—but he never said nary a word.

"Then one day when we wuz in the cheer-factory a workin' whar the dust wuz a flyin' like the pike onder a drove o' sheep in summer, a gyard come to me and says: 'You're wanted, Doggett, in the Governor's office,' and he marched me up thar. Sorter oneasy I wuz, although I knowed I hadn't done nothin'. Thar wuz a man settin' at a desk a writin', and when he heerd me come in, he never turned his head, but jest said, 'Be seated, Doggett.' I sot down and he writ, and he writ. Finally he turned his whirlin'-cheer facin' me and begun a questionin' me, and a talkin' to me jest like a father.

"He says: 'Doggett, you're a free man now and I don't want you to never do nothin' to lose your freedom ag'in. Don't you never let me peck up a paper and see wher' you've been in some scrape that'll make people say, Look at Doggett now: John Young Brown made a mistake when he pardoned him!'"

"And you've done like he told you, ain't you, Mr. Doggett?" Bunch remarked in a tone of flattery, at this juncture.

"Well, I hain't never kept no gun about me sence," Mr. Doggett agreed with a half-smile.

"Ner drunk none," suggested Gran'dad.

Mr. Doggett grinned easily. "Well, Pap, I jest drink a leetle now and then,—at Christmas times, and New Years, and Thanksgiving, and Fourth o' July."

"And at Ground-hog day, and old Abe Linkern's and George Washington's birthdays in February, and at Deceration day in the spreng, and 'long about Labor day in the fall, and between times whenever you're needin' a leetle medicine, and whenever my darter Ann goes away visitin' fer a day er two," amended Gran'dad, with a leer.

"He don't git out and hoe, and cut cord wood, and do sech like work all week, like an old feller o' your and my acquaintance, Gran'dad, and then go up town ever' Friday evenin' and let them big lawyer fellers that loves hit, git friendly with him, and git him to treat away ever' cent o' his week's earnin's on 'em!" Jim, who never drank at all, spoke pointedly. Gran'dad colored hotly.

"This here room's hotter'n a ginger mill!" he stuttered, making a dash at the door of the stove; but in his flurry the poker fell clattering. Dock giggled disrespectfully at his crestfallen grandparent, but Bunch, seeing the old man's discomfiture, hastened to change the subject.

"How's Mr. Lindsay a gittin' along at Jeemeses now?" he asked.

Bunch lived two miles away, but managed to keep in reasonable touch with the affairs of the neighborhood on lower Silver Run creek.

"Mighty well, hit 'pears to me!" Dock's wizened little face lighted up knowingly. "He give Miss Lucy a purty box Chris'mus. Hit wuz a sortie blue lookin' box—got a purty white-backed lookin'-glass (one them with a handle you hold in your hand) and a white comb and bresh in hit!"

"When a bachelor-man gits to givin' a lady Christmas presents," sentimentally remarked Gran'dad, who had recovered his equanimity, "somethin's up besides cherity. Ef Miss Lucy'll have Lindsay, he'll have her, I can tell that by his actions."

"And ole Zeke, their ole shepherd," continued Dock, "he hain't been able to walk none sence 'long in the summer, on account o' ole age. They kep' him at the barn all the time, and he'd done quit barkin', but, sence Mr. Lindsay's been thar, he's been a carryin' him to the yard in the daytime, and puttin' him on a bed o' leaves in the corner whar the back porch jines the front o' the house, and then a packin' him back to the barn ag'in at night. Old Zeke's a barkin' peert ag'in, and Miss Lucy, she says she jest knows he wouldn't 'a' never barked no more, hadn't 'a' been fer Mr. Lindsay!"

"I dunno as I'd keer to take that much trouble on mysef to humor an old wuthless dog," declared Gran'dad, "but I've knowed many a courtin' man to do more worrisome thengs. Bein' in love'll make most ever' feller tromple his own inclinations, ef hit'll pleasure her."

"I dunno whuther Mr. Lindsay's in love er not," interposed Dock, "but when I went up to Mr. Jeemeses, a Friday night, wuz a week, to take back his shoe-last, and they wuz all a settin' in the settin'-room, Miss Lucy wuz a braggin' about pickin' on some sence Mr. Lindsay's tuck all her work away from her, and she didn't have to fetch in no coal, ner make fires, ner feed the stock none, ner milk, and tellin' about Miss Nancy never havin' to carry in a stick o' stove wood, ner cobs from the barn, and hevin' the water allus ready drawed. Mr. Jeemes, he looked at Mr. Lindsay as agreeable as Ma's old sow used to when she'd see Ma comin' with a bucket o' slop, and he said: 'I dunno what we'll do to pay you, Lindsay, fer the trouble you've been a takin' fer us, onless we pick you out a sweetheart sommers. Don't you reckon maybe I could hunt up somebody down hyonder that'd suit you?'"

"And Mr. Lindsay he answered Mr. Jeemes, but he looked straight acrost the fire whar Miss Lucy wuz a knittin' on the other side o' the hearth, and he said with his eyes sorter twinklin': 'Hain't ther' no nice woman a livin' nowher' closter than Wayne, you could pick out fer me, Mr. Jeemes?'"

"What'd Miss Lucy do?" queried Bunch.

"She didn't do nothin'," giggled Dock, "but jest pick up stitches hard as she could, and her face wuz as red as one them pressed leaves they got pinned over the fireboard."

"What'd the old man say?" inquired Gran'dad.

"He jest said, 'Well, I can't thenk of nary one jest now that I reckon would suit you,' and jest then ole Zeke howled, and Mr. Lindsay went out to pack him to the barn. I started with him, and Miss Lucy, she follered him out to the aidge the porch with a lamp. 'Lemme hold a light fer you, Mr. Lindsay,' she says, 'so you won't stumble over nothin',' and he says, 'Thank you, Miss Lucy, I wisht you would,' and says right low, but I heerd him, 'what makes you a allus thenkin' o' tryin' to do somebody some good?'"

"Well, now, hit wouldn't be nothin' out o' the way, ner no bad idy fer them two to court now, would hit?" Mr. Doggett extended his comprehensive smile, from Bunch at one end of the bench, to silent Joe at the other. At that moment there was a rattle of the door latch, and Mr. Brock looked hesitatingly in, his face red with cold.

"Come in, come in, Mr. Brock. How you makin' hit?"

Mr. Doggett's welcome was hearty: Joe placed a nail keg by the stove for the new-comer who sat down without a word of thanks, and removing his thick, black yarn gloves, shapeless as the foot of a cinnamon bear, held his chilled fingers in the genial warmth of the hot stove.

"We wuz jest a talkin' about old man Lindsay a settin' to Miss Lucy, Mr. Brock," volunteered Mr. Doggett, hospitably hastening to put his guest in the drift of the conversation. "Hit wouldn't be a bad idy now, would hit? He could stay thar and run the place fer the old man."

A close observer would have detected a deeper shade of red in the rubicund face by the hot stove, but the strippers were too busy for more than a casual glance at it: the stove pipe loomed between it and Gran'dad, and Mr. Brock's grunt revealed neither pleasure nor dissatisfaction.

"Hit might not be a bad idy," hazarded Gran'dad, "but Nancy, she's got to be reckoned with. My opinion is, she'll soon be a keekin' and a keekin' high, ef thar's courtin' and she hain't in hit!"

"Thar hain't nobody here that's heerd Nancy's opinion that I know of." Mr. Doggett's tone was one of inquiry rather than assertion.

"Henrietty, she sent me down to Miss Lucy's one day last week," testified his son Jim: "Mr. Lindsay wuzn't at the house, and while I wuz a waitin' on the porch (my feet wuz muddy) fer Miss Nancy to wrap up some boneset fer me in the kitchen, I heerd Miss Nancy fling out: 'Lucy, what

you wearin' your Sunday shoes fer? You thenk Mr. Lindsay looks at your feet all the time?' And Miss Lucy stuttered out, 'Why, Nancy, my ever'days has got a hole in 'em, and hit's so cold I thought I'd put on these 'tel I got a chance to go to town!' 'Why'n'y you patch 'em?' Miss Nancy snapped, and then she come out with the stuff fer Henrietty."

"'Twuz enough to show the way the wind'll blow, ef hit hain't a blowin' that away now," chuckled Gran'dad.

That evening, to Mr. Doggett's surprise, for Mr. Brock had claimed that he was in a great hurry, and had only just stopped in a few minutes at the stripping-house to warm, he accepted with unaccustomed alacrity Mr. Doggett's invitation to go to the house with him, and remained and took supper with the family, to the great satisfaction of Mrs. Doggett, who held him in profoundest respect. Might he not be of possible future benefit to little Lily Pearl, her grandchild, and his step-daughter, the child of Callie's first husband?

All the passionate regard Mrs. Doggett felt for her first-born, young Callie Brock, at her death was transferred to Callie's child, the pale Lily Pearl, blue of eye and confiding of nature, and in *her* lay the hope of Mrs. Doggett's heart.

All her days, Mrs. Doggett had known poverty, and a social position that was next the ground, but with an intensity, that, if secret, was all the more fervent, she longed for wealth and social position,—not for herself, for she knew that was impossible, but for Lily Pearl, which she felt was within the bounds of reasonable hope.

If, when Mr. Brock married again,—a contingency most likely,—he married a good woman, higher socially than himself, and to his continued interest in the child was added the interest of this good woman of Mrs. Doggett's conception, might they not educate and accomplish Lily Pearl?

And, might she not, in the possession of learning and social graces, secure a husband among the well-to-do?

To further the elevation of Lily Pearl, Mrs. Doggett would have made a Juggernautian offering of herself, or would have sacrificed the happiness, or the welfare of her dearest friend, not excepting even that of Mr. Doggett.

When Lily Pearl raised her plate at the supper table, a new silver dollar glistened on the whiteness of the well-darned cloth, put on in honor of the guest.

"Ma," grinned Dock, "Mr. Brock says thar's more whar that dollar come from."

Mrs. Doggett's lean face fairly beamed. "Now hain't that nice?" she cried: "Lily Pearl, child, wher's your manners?"

But Lily Pearl was dumb in the contemplation of her treasure.

"Lily Pearl wuz a sayin' yisterday, maybe she'd git ten cents fer her hoss bones when the peddler come 'round, but now she can recruit 'em up a while longer!" Mrs. Doggett smiled at Mr. Brock, then turned to her husband with a countenance full of disparagement.

"See that, Eph? The man that put that money thar, he hain't one o' them that has to call on Castle fer money to live on while his crop's a growin', and pay intrust on the money, a takin' up all his crop aforehand! *He's* got money in the bank, I'll warrant, hain't he, Mr. Brock?"

"I ain't a denyin' it," Mr. Brock answered her.

"In the same bank Mr. Lindsay's got his'n?" asked Dock, innocently.

"I don't know where Lindsay keeps his money, ef he's got any," Mr. Brock answered shortly. "I hear, Mrs. Doggett, Lindsay's a settin' to Miss Nancy James."

"I dunno about that," objected Mrs. Doggett: "I'd thenk, though, Miss Lucy'd look higher'n Mr. Lindsay,—him sorter delicate, and not well off, and jest workin' around."

"There's others that she could git I reckon," said Mr. Brock with a meaning look.

Into Mrs. Doggett's quick brain sprang the pleasing thought that Mr. Brock was ready to marry again and himself wanted Miss Lucy,—a lady whose father owned one hundred acres of land, and whom even the Castles respected and occasionally visited. If Mr. Brock were to marry Miss Lucy, Lily Pearl's fortune would be made! Mrs. Doggett's head swam with delight. She returned Mr. Brock's look with a smile of encouragement.

"You're right, Mr. Brock," she declared with emphasis: "Miss Nancy is of a quair distant turn—one o' them kind that smiles about as often as a cow—and ef she's ever had a beau, hit hain't never been found out on her; but Miss Lucy, ef she *is* older'n Miss Nancy, she's a heap sightlier and agreeabler, and I know thar's men better off than Mr. Lindsay that'd do *well* to git her!"

In the expression of her pleasure, she solicitously pressed the viands on Mr. Brock.

"Do eat somethin' more, Mr. Brock; you shorely can live fer one meal on what I have to live on all the time, ef you'll jest eat enough o' hit! Have another aig."

"Eggs are high," remarked Mr. Brock as he lifted two poached eggs to his plate.

"Now, Mr. Brock, I don't disfurnish my fambly, let alone my comp'ny, to sell a few aigs! Let me porch you another un: I'm afeerd them's too hard b'iled fer you!"

After supper, when the men gathered around the big wood fire in the living-room Mr. Brock went back to the kitchen, ostensibly seeking a match, really for a private word with Mrs. Doggett.

"Lily Pearl ought to be a goin' to school before long," he suggested, as he lighted his pipe: "and ef Reub and me had any housekeeper besides that old darky, Jane Smick, she could stay at my house and go, as it's closer to the school-house, and I'd put up the money for the teacher when the pay school went on."

"Lord, I wisht she could!" cried Mrs. Doggett.

Mr. Brock reached up for his overcoat and his hat.

"You hain't a goin', Mr. Brock? Lemme fix the lantern fer you, then; hit's as dark as a dungeon out, and the moon won't be up fer an hour yit!"

Mr. Brock watched her fill the lantern contemplatively.

"Mrs. Doggett," he brought himself to say, presently, "certain persons talk against widowers marryin' again. You haven't got that kind of a feelin' have you?"

Mrs. Doggett held up the glass globe, clear and clean.

"I'm one as'd never say a word ef a man'd jest marry the right kind o' woman," she purred.

"A widower I know has got his eye on a good woman, and he can git her he thinks, if somebody else don't git too much encouragement from the neighbors."

"That somebody'll git none from a neighbor that *I* can answer fer," Mrs. Doggett assured him with a wink.

Nameless and enigmatical as was the last of this conversation, these two former law kinsman and kinswoman understood and appreciated. When Mr. Brock stepped out in the yard, the lantern was not more cheerful than his countenance in the darkness, and when Mrs. Doggett returned to the bosom of her family, she wore the complacent look of the cat that has just returned from the pigeon's nest.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO THE SEERESS

"When things are come to the execution, there is no secrecy comparable to celerity."

"Ef hit hain't done turned plumb warm ag'in! Lord, that jest suits me to a T!"

Quick changes come in the weather in Kentucky, and when, at four o'clock the next morning after the visit of her whilom son-in-law, Mrs. Doggett poked her head from the door over which the gaunt pine leaned, a summer-like breeze met her thin cheek.

She began her preparations for a journey with a rejoicing spirit, and by the time the men arose, her gallon tin bucket of butter, and half-peck basket of eggs were weighed, counted, and safely packed under the seat of the rickety "no-topped" buggy that occupied the leaky shed,—formerly the kitchen of the house; her kitchen that shone with cleanliness was swept and dusted, and a hot breakfast of coffee, biscuit, and fried slices of a shoulder of fresh pork, smoked on the green-figured oil-cloth.

"You're up a half-hour ahead o' time, hain't you, Ann?" mumbled Mr. Doggett, with his face in the meal-sack towel which hung at the end of the kitchen mantel.

"Yes," assented Mrs. Doggett, "I am. I got to studdyin' in the night about pore Bob Ed House. Susie said when Gil wuz over thar last week, Bob Ed tuck a sinkin' spell, and they like to 'a' never brought him to! Sometimes they'll live deceivin' with consumption, but he might drap off any time and me never see him no more, so I tuck a notion I'd go today: I been threatenin' to go long enough. Jest step out and ring the bell fer me, will you?"

The boys had come in from the barn lot, and were on the porch, but the big farm bell that came to be her's when the Castles moved to town, and which she had had hung in the top of the highest locust in her back yard, was Mrs. Doggett's crowning glory of possessions; it gave her a certain feeling of equality with "well-off" people, and she would have sooner sat down to her table without plates, than to have omitted the ringing of the bell.

"Gona take Bob Ed anytheng to eat, Ma?" asked Dock, using a big biscuit for a gravy swab.

"I'm gona take him a sack o' sausage, and that squirrel Joey killed yistiddy, to make him a nice

stew, and considerin' I have to pass the store, I thought I'd as well take my butter'n aigs. I've got ever'thing ready in the buggy, and jest as soon as somebody gits Big Money hooked up fer me, I'll be off. Hit's a good five miles over to Bob Ed's, hain't hit, Eph?"

"Six, nigh about," corrected her husband: "hit's a mile yonside town; but, old lady," he looked at her in surprise, "hain't you a goin' to take Lily Pearl?"

Mrs. Doggett looked out of the window, contemplating the clear sky.

"I'm afeerd we're a gona have fallin' weather afore I git back," she averred: "and I wouldn't have Lily Pearl to git wet fer nothin'. She's puned around so much lately, I 'lowed maybe the worms is sorter workin' on her. You can take her over to the strippin'-house with you, and she can take her doll quilt and piece on hit.

"They's plenty victuals in the press,—I baked three dried apple pies last night, and thar's stewed punkin, and a dish o' lye hominy, and a cold hog's head, and sorghum molasses, and plenty milk and butter. The corn-bread'll be cold by dinner, but I made dodgers, and put a whole lot o' cracklin's in hit, so hit'd eat good, anyhow. Thar won't be nobody here to ring the bell fer you, but you can hear Mrs. Bratcher's. Sence we got ourn, she rings hern at half-past 'leven."

At half-past six, Mr. Doggett held open the back gate for Mrs. Doggett's exit.

"Well, old lady," he congratulated her, "this time next year, you'll be settin' on a different lookin' set o' wheels, ef them two peegs thar keeps a growin' like they're a growin' now!"

Mrs. Doggett looked proudly toward the hovel in the corner of the yard—the habitation of her pet pigs, "Baby" and "Honey"—which together with their progeny were dedicated to the cause of a new buggy.

"Hain't they a growin'!" she agreed. "Eph, fer goodness sake, don't fergit to slop 'em at dinner, and see the door is shet. Them smart thengs, they know I'm a goin' away," she added, as a succession of melancholy squeals came over the half door of the piggery.

"Big Money," named by Lily Pearl, who heard her grandfather say when he was a new acquisition, that he was "worth big money," was raw-boned and angular, and his coat was an unbeauteous dirty white, but he was a horse of spirit, and in a half hour's time, Mrs. Doggett had crossed the pasture field, passed the rocky "dirt-road," and was well on her way on the turnpike toward the store.

The merchant was a slow clerk, and her trading occupied considerable time, however, so that the two who purposed to accompany her on her journey, had ample time to overtake her. When she came out on the platform of the store-house, she was horrified to see two familiar glossy-backed creatures rubbing against the rear wheels of her equipage.

"Great day in the mornin'!" she exclaimed, "ef thar hain't my pigs! The outdacious pieces has rooted their door open and trailed me down! The wind shorely blowed the pastur gate open, and now what *am* I to do?"

"Better just let them follow you on, Mrs. Doggett," suggested the pleasant-faced keeper of the store, "if you haven't far to go, and you can shut them up until you get ready to go back home."

"Oh, I hain't goin' but a little ways," lightly equivocated Mrs. Doggett, "jest yonside the covered bridge, and I guess I can hold Big Money to a walk, that fur."

Once well past the bridge, seated in her present carriage, with her future carriage tagging contentedly behind, Mrs. Doggett in real vexation, drew rein to consider. Her intention had been to stop a few minutes at the house of sickness, then to continue her travels two miles further; but by leaving off her visit to the sick man, crossing the river at a deep ford a hundred yards below the bridge, and driving over a fearfully rocky and steep road, she could cut off three miles of the way.

"Now hain't that the awfulest fix a body ever wuz in!"

She shook her fist at the two black scape-graces that had lain down contentedly when she stopped. "Ef I wuz to go on by town, I wouldn't git to whar I'm goin' by dinner, let alone reskin' bein' tuck up fer a wanderer from the ejut-house! Ef I wuzn't afeerd o' them mean thengs a drowndin' I'd cross the river and take the nigh cut to ole July's. I b'leeve I'll resk hit anyhow!"

She lifted the bundles to the seat beside her, and with shaking fingers clutched the reins, and turned her horse down the steep slope into the river. It was both wide and deep, and in her ignorance of the exact ford, Mrs. Doggett drove a yard below it. The water rose in the bed of the buggy, baptizing her feet: Big Money, when his front feet went down in an unexpected hole, floundered momentarily, but in an instant, he recovered himself and breasted the water gallantly.

When, from the safety of the opposite bank, Mrs. Doggett dared to look back, she was filled with new consternation. The pigs had not crossed, but were running along the bank in evident search of a less watery highway!

"O mercy goodness!" she lamented, "a body can't have no luck, no how! Now Hewitt Jefferson—a claimin' ever'theng that's loose—he'll come along and swear they're his, and I'll never see 'em ag'in! I ought to 'a' tuck 'em back home anyhow!"

In an agony of apprehension, she leaped from her vehicle from whose bed the water was running off in streams.

"Come on Baby! Come on Honey!" she pleaded shrilly: "come on to Mammy!"

The pigs heard and, after a moment's hesitation, came to the edge of the water, plunged in and swam across. When they crawled up the bank and shook themselves, Mrs. Doggett, unmindful of their wet hides, hugged them in her delight, climbed into her buggy, wiped her eyes, and chirruped to Big Money. It was a long hard pull; the highway was a succession of rocky ledges up hill a quarter of a mile, and down hill there was more than a mile of the same rugged road. But the aged and twine-mended harness had mercy on the shaken driver, and held together: Big Money did his best, and the pigs climbed valiantly.

Mrs. Doggett was quite herself again when the foot of the hill reached, she came in sight of a mud-daubed log-cabin in the valley, with a mighty clump of cedar trees a hundred yards to the left of it, and a section of scattered beeches and undergrowth to the right. The hut was set quite in the open, with no yard fence about it, and looked a lonely and melancholy place.

Hanging on the front wall of the cabin, under the newly-built lean-to porch, with its pillars of cedar trunks, from the freshly cut knots of which came a pungently sweet smell,—a long snake's "shed" dangled, and beside it swung a dried beef's gall.

In lieu of a porch floor, flat rocks were placed irregularly about. The door of the cabin hung open, revealing walls papered with newspapers. A corner cupboard occupied one corner of the room: a lounge covered with a calico quilt, another, and, drawn up before the blazing wood fire, over which smoked a steaming pot, were a wooden stool and a small table. A little baking-oven, covered with live coals, sat on one end of the hearth, and over everything was a decent air of cleanliness.

As Mrs. Doggett neared the cabin, a fat old negress, wearing a faded black calico mourning-dress, and carrying a bundle of sticks, came out of the wood. This was July Pullins, whose living was her pension, and whose pastime was fortune-telling. Her seamed light-brown face wrinkled itself in smiles when she recognized her old acquaintance.

"*Is dat you, Mis' Doggett?*" she cried, as she waddled up. "I am shoah a proud crittur to see you! Laws, I sees you ain't had no easy time a gittin' heah!" she added in ready sympathy, noting Mrs. Doggett's wet skirts, her sweating horse, and panting swine.

"Law mercy, July, I hain't had sech a time sence I was borned!" exclaimed Mrs. Doggett, and while old July unharnessed Big Money, and blanketed him with an ancient linsey quilt, she related her trials.

"I knows what you come for: you's worried about a marriage, and wants to consultify me about hit, doan' you?" cackled July, as she helped her guest unlace her wet shoes in front of the fire: "but wid yoah p'mission, dat'll keep ontwell de last theng after dinner. I wants to talk ober de news some wid you! Lawd, 'scuse me, Mis' Ann, heah I is, settin' up, talkin' to white folks wid my head-rag on!" She lifted her hand to pull the white rag from her wrapped hair, but Mrs. Doggett interposed.

"Now, Aunt July, let your head-rag alone! Eph says he can tell when hit's comin' winter by *my head*. I take to wearin' a rag on my head in the house then!"

"Ef yoah foots and skeerts is done dry," remarked the old negress, breaking a half pod of pepper from the string suspended from the end of her mantel, "I'll set you a bite on de table."

She lifted the lid of the boiling pot and dropped in the pepper pod with a chuckle. "Heah my honeys, cool yoah moufs wid dis."

"Man alive, Aunt July!" Mrs. Doggett's face assumed a look of horror. "Ef you are a fortune-teller, you hain't tuck to eatin' cooked snakes, have you?"

"Mussy, no!" laughed Aunt July. "Them's chit'lin's—hog guts. Ain't you never et none? I's plumb ashamed o' my poah eatin's, Mis' Ann," she went on when she had spread the table with a piece of embroidered damask, and set on a steaming bowl of the chitterlings, a pone of brown cornbread from the oven, a pitcher of buttermilk, and a jar of blackberry jam from the cupboard, and had poured coffee from a little pipkin: "but I ain't got no flour this week. I got mighty little use for wheat-bread, myse'f, but I loves to have hit for company! Set up, dough, and eat: hit'll take de aidge offen yoah hunger, and lay yoah stomach 'tel you git home: I'll go corn de beasties."

While she was engaged in feeding Big Money and the pigs, the mistress of the house heard a shriek from within. Blowing like a scared sow, she rushed to her guest. Mrs. Doggett stood in her stocking feet on the stool.

"I've put my foot on a snake!" she screeched: "hit's under the table! I feel like I'm bit!"

Aunt July reached under the table and, grinning, lifted out an enormous brown toad. "Hit's Jeremiah, my pet," she explained soothingly: "Jeremiah, hain't you 'shamed yo'se'f, skeerin' de lady!"



"Hit's Jeremiah, my pet," she explained soothingly.

"Did you 'broider this cloth, Aunt July?" asked Mrs. Doggett when the old negress was folding the cloth.

"Naw'm, I wuz a field gal in de ole times: I nuvver larnt much o' de needle. Dis heah kiver," she said oracularly, "*come* to me! Hit used to belong to a town lady what allus has a passel o' gal company a hankerin' after dey fortunes!"

"*I* used to do 'broidery and all sech," sighed Mrs. Doggett. "I made ever' thread o' my onderclothes 'broidered; but, after I married and got to havin' chillern, I quit all nice work!"

"You's had yoah sheer o' hard times wid work and young uns, ain't you?" commiserated the old negress, with her eyes on Mrs. Doggett's long slender hands, with their big veins, and curved thumbs.

"Hain't I, though!" agreed Mrs. Doggett: "not two years between none o' 'em. I'd 'a' ruther had five pairs o' twins than ten chillern so clost together, but I didn't have my ruthers. I used to have to put the bed post on the baby's dress when I went to the spreng, to keep hit from crawlin' in the fire, and lead the next youngest one with me! Law, hain't chillern warryin' on a woman!"

"They plague a body worse'n the each a gittin' in thengs! 'Ma,' I'd say when I used to go to my mother's, and she'd have to put up her aigs and ever' theng out'n the way o' the chillern: 'Ma, I'd give anytheng ef my chillern wuz all grown! I'd have so much more pleasure a visitin' you!' And Ma'd say: 'Aw hush, Ann, they're a trompin' on your toes now, but after a while they'll be a trompin' on your heart!'"

"But 'tain't turned out that way altogether with me. My boys hain't got no education, nary un but Joey, and he used to slip off to school, and learnt some. They all spent their school days in the terbaccer. I used to bag Eph a many a time to quit raisin' hit, and let the chillern git some schoolin', but he wouldn't, and ef I hadn't jest spread out and nigh killed myse'f, a doin' all the work at the house myse'f, so's the girls could go to school in the falls, they'd 'a' been like the boys.

"Eph, he never insisted on the girls workin' none in the terbaccer like a heap does, but pore Callie, she wuz the oldest of our chillern, and she wanted to holp her pap when the others wuz little, and she'd work in the patch in the summers, and after she quit goin' to school. And gittin' wet all over ever' mornin' after the terbaccer got up, a wormin' and a suckerin' while the dew wuz on, wuz the startin' o' the consumption that killed her—I know hit wuz.

"I used to say when she come in, sengin', makin' like she wuzn't tired ner warried, so's not to pester me,—'Callie, child, I'm afeerd fer you to git wet this away,'—but she'd jest say, 'Ma, I don't reckon hit'll hurt me, and maybe ef we have a good crop this year I can save enough from hirin' to git us a new sewin'-machine!' But we never have got able to git no new machine yit, and Callie, my little Callie—"

Mrs. Doggett's lips quivered and the tears streamed down her face.

"Doan' grieve, Mis' Ann, honey, doan' grieve," besought old July, laying a soothing hand on Mrs. Doggett's slender shaking shoulder,—a tear of sympathy standing on each withered cheek: "de

chile ain' seein' no moah hard times, nuvver no moah."

Mrs. Doggett wiped her eyes and cleared her throat. "Callie wuz my best child, but my chillern are all good chillern, and," she added, a little pathetic note of defiance as to the world's opinion in her voice, "they've got pride about their clothes, and they know how to behave in comp'ny, ef they hain't got schoolin',—though some the boys is learnin' some sence they married: their wives is a teachin' 'em a little."

"Well, anyway," broke in Aunt July, "dey's de mannerest boys I knows. 'Scuse me for sayin' so, Mis' Ann, 'foah you, but most dem ole 'baccer folks, dey don't teach dey young uns *nothin'*. De old uns ain't got a speck o' manners deyselves. Sometimes I passes 'em out on de road, and dey'll be drunk, reelin' and a fallin' in fence corners. Dey'll holler at me disrespectful like, 'How are you, honey? Hi da', granny!' I nuvver 'turns 'em no answer—jest looks t'other way.

"But ef one yoah boys is out anywha' and don't see no moah o' me dan my coat-tail, he'll holler at hit, and speak and axe me how I comes on, and lif' his hat when he goes on, as respectful as you please; and de gals is jest de same. How is de gals gittin' along now, Mis' Ann?"

"The best kind, both of 'em!" replied Mrs. Doggett. "Johnny, Hattie's man, he's a clerkin' in a store now, and gits her a heap o' new thengs. Don't you thenk, he's got her a new orgin! Got hit cheap on account o' one o' the peddlers bein' a little out o' prepare; but 'tain't one o' them cheap orgins that don't sound no better'n a hog rubbin' agin a splinter! Hattie can't play on hit, but then company can, and an orgin's nice furnichur anyway."

"Yes, 'tis dat!" agreed Aunt July. "I seed one when I wuz on my trip. I reckon you ain't heerd 'bout me bein' on a trip 'foah Christmas? I rid' on de cyar-train for de fust time!"

"O mercy goodness, you know you didn't!" Mrs. Doggett gaped incredulously. "Did you go to see your gran'chillern in Indianopolus?"

A look of the liveliest scorn enveloped Aunt July.

"What'd I go to see dem black rapscaillions for? *Dey* don't keer nothin' for dey folks now,—done gone off after style and fast livin'! Last sprenge when dey pap, my Jimmy, wuz sick in town wid de typhoot fever, I had a letter son't 'em, and Jimmy mout 'a' died and been th'owed to de buzzards for all dem ciderette-smokin' clothes hosses keered. Dey nuvver son't de scratch o' a pen p'int *den* nor *sence* to esquire about his edition!

"Naw'm! I went to see Bru'h. Bru'h, he'd been desistin' on me comin' for a long time, but I wuz feerd—feerd de cyar-train. Dat big storm dey had down da' las' Februray wuz a year, blowed down de meetin'-house,—de ole one wha' Bru'h kep' his membership—plumb demoralized hit, hit bein' on a hill top, and when dey got de shengles on dey new meetin'-house, Bru'h writ me be shoah to come down, dey wuz gwine offer dey new church to de Lawd, and gwine hold a big 'traction meetin' right after de des'cration—and son't me a ticklet to come on. Jimmy—he desisted so, I give up and went."

"I do thenk!" ejaculated Mrs. Doggett.

"Yes'm," continued Aunt July: "my cousin what sweeps at de depot-house, he offered resist me on de cyar-train, bein's I's sorter stove up wid de rheumaty, and can't clamb extry. When de cyar-train kim a steamin', a tootin', and a cavortin' up, I looked 'round for de conductor man he said would help him resist me in de cyar-train; but I didn't see nobody but a big soldier man and atween 'em, dey resisted me to climb de steps, and den de General, he toted in my cyarpet satchel.

"Lawd, I wuz so skeered! My laigs give way and I sunk down on one de red cordumeroy sofys, limber as a piece o' rennet what's been in soak. When de startin'-out pull kim, I cotched hold dem wooden arms of de divan and held on like a bull-dog to a hog's hind leg. Den de conductor man (him I mistook for a Brigadier General) axed me for my ticklet.

"'General,' I managed to sorter gasp out, dough my dry tongue wuz stuck to de ruff o' my mouf, 'you kin look in my cyarpet-satchel, I dast resk lettin' go!'

"Den he say when we git to de next stop, he'll come back and I kin git hit out myse'f. O mortal man, how I suffered in my mind whilst we wuz flyin' along! Ever' onct in a while, I'd look out'n de winder and ef you'll believe me, Mis' Ann, de cabbage heads in folks' patches we passed didn't pear no bigger dan good-sizes marbles! De train run 'long all right 'bout fifteen minutes, and my top insides 'gun to sorter ease down out'n my swallow, when we kim to a bridge; den I seed a little thread o' water 'way down below de trussle works.

"Den a young man who had been doin' a power o' laughin' and talkin' to a young gal settin' 'longside him on de sofy behind me, he axed de gal didn't she know de bridge we wuz on been condemned as dangerous. I 'lowed ef dat wuz de trufe, we wuz gone den, shoah. I give one sque'l, 'good-bye, world!' Den I let go de sofy arms and slid down on de floah and hid my head onder de sofy.

"Terrectly de conductor man teched me on de shoulder. 'Aunty, are you skeered?' he said. I wuz so bad off in my feelin's, I couldn't answer. Den a nice white lady on de settee in front (she had on sech elegant clo'se, I know she must 'a' been de richest woman dat ever wore a dress!) she kim 'round and told me da' wouldn't nothin' hurt me, and 'suaded me to git upon de divan ag'in: den

she tuck some lemon pie out'n a little basket (de best pie I ever wrapped lip around), and I kindah come to myse'f and wiped my eyes. And befoah I knowed hit, de sun wuz nigh down, de conductor wuz a hollerin' out 'Mansfield!' and we wuz da'!

"I wuz so happy I blowed out real hard, and I wuz mighty oneasy for fear I'd busted de band o' my cashmere skeert, but de stitches helt tight. De fust theng I done after I sot my foots on de firm groun' wuz to set my cyarpet satchel down on de platform and feel o' my arms and laigs to see ef dey wuz all da after dat forty miles churnin'.

"Thank de lawd, I's all heah!" I says sorter loud like, and den sich a titterin' as come from dem cyar-train winders from dem young folks what sot behind me, I nuvver heerd. I says, 'Missy be shamed! Who gwine b'leeve but what de fust time *you* rid' on de cyar-train, you felt to see ef you wuz all da too!' And, ef you will b'leeve me Mis' Ann, de tightness o' his skin wuz all dat kept dat young man settin by her from bustin' hisse'f!"

"The onmannerly theng!" scoffed Mrs. Doggett, sympathetically. "Some them town folks is mighty biggety."

The subject on her mind was pressing, and she hastened to lead up to it by a judicious question.

"Have any them town gals been out lately to find out about their futures, Aunt July?"

"Dat gal o' de widow Russell's—she wuz de last one out. Da's a new young man what's come to de town, and she's got acquainted wid him at one dem church s'ciety meetin's. I nuvver kin call de name right, so I jest gives hit de *sound*, and lets hit go at dat—de Christian devil s'ciety. I could see she'd be willin' to give all de shoes in her shop for him. Her high-steppin' ma, dough, she said 'foah she'd see her gal married to a poor man like him, she'd ruther see her dead, and buried in de colored folks' graveyard, wid only one mouner to foller her to de grave and dat one her mother, on foot a walkin'!"

"Did the young lady go home satisfied with what she heerd from you?" queried Mrs. Doggett.

"Did de moon change las' month? Do de ground git wet when hit rain?" laughed the old negress.

"I got some terbaccer and a squirrel, and a sack o' sausage on the buggy seat fer you, Aunt July: s'pose we breng 'em in, and then I'll git you to tell me some thengs. Hit's gittin' late, and I'll have to git along soon."

"De weddin' trouble! Dat's hit—dat's hit!" nodded the old seeress, when after a voluble flow of thanks for the presents, she brought out a coffee-cup and peered solemnly at the grounds in its bottom. "I sees a dark-haired woman, a kind woman, wid two beaux. One of 'em a slim man, t'other un's a big man. De woman gwine marry one dem men, but not widout de resistance o' a black-haired woman. Dis black-haired woman bound to resist de makin' o' dis marriage. She jest *can't* holp hit. A brown-haired woman too, gwine resist de makin' o' de marriage. I sees letters in de cup. Dar's gwine be found and handed over to de right person a letter dat'll hasten de marriage."

"Can you see which *one* the men'll git the woman, Aunt July?" Mrs. Doggett leaned forward eagerly.

"De most worthy man—he gwine win her—dat man dat's travelled much, dat's seed a heap o' de country, *he's* de one!"

"What will the black-haired woman have to do, Aunt July?" besought Mrs. Doggett.

"Why, she'll jes hab to keep her eyes open, and do what she kin. She'll hab to walk and talk, and bofe bemean and brag! But she must be cunnun' like de sarpent, and act quick like de sarpent, or what she tryin' to breng about won't come to pass."

"But hit *will* come to pass, ef the woman acts right?" persisted Mrs. Doggett.

"Yes, I sees a marriage. I sees a man half distracted 'long 'bout de time de blue grass gits ripe, but he'll git her, he'll git her. I sees a couple standin' afore de preacher. He'll make her a good livin'."

"Like he's done his wife afore this one?" suggested Mrs. Doggett, hopefully.

"I don't see no marriage befoah dis un," said July, vaguely: "de grounds is too black to see back, but I see from de weddin'-day on, dey gwine live in happiness and contempt!"

Mrs. Doggett drove homeward in a state of ecstasy. In the prophetess' vague words she saw the certain marriage of Miss Lucy James and Mr. Galvin Brock. Of a surety Mr. Brock was the man who would "make a good living" for her, and was he not the most worthy? Perhaps Mr. Lindsay had travelled as much as Mr. Brock, but Mrs. Doggett cast this uneasy thought aside. Surely Mr. Brock was the fortunate man.

Mrs. Doggett reached her home in a drizzling rain: her bonnet was drooping, and her vehicle, and dress were heavily splashed with mud, when she drove slowly in the yard, the pigs trotting placidly behind.

"How's Bob Ed?" asked Mr. Doggett as he assisted her to alight.

"Now Eph," Mrs. Doggett's voice was full of remonstrance, "did you thenk I wuz a goin' yonside

town with them pigs a trailin' me?"

"I hadn't missed them peegs: did they foller ye?" Mr. Doggett's grin irritated Mrs. Doggett.

"I reckon they *did!*" she complained, "and I jest had to creep! I wuz afeerd ef I went through town they'd be picked up on Wild Cat Row, maybe, so I jest went across the river to see old July Pullins, and tuck the pigs with me."

"Over that road? Well, I do know!"

"Yes, over that road!" Mrs. Doggett jerked out resentfully: "and I had a plumb skeer a comin' back. Don't you thenk, yonside the bridge, I met one them aut'mobile waggins—a red painted one—the reddest theng this side o' predition! Big Money, he 'lowed that horn the feller blowed when he seed us, wuz old Gab'el's trump, I reckon. He come a one o' killin' me! He tuck to backin', and ef that man hadn't jumped out and ketcht holt the bridle, and helt him while t'other man driv' that red devil past us, he'd 'a' backed plumb over into the river!"

"Well, that wuz kind o' him!" remarked Mr. Doggett.

"He wuz a mighty polite, takin' kind o' man," continued Mrs. Doggett. "They must 'a' been a couple them Northern milli'n'ers out on a ja'nt. They wuzn't our kind o' people. I wished I'd 'a' asked that un that helt Big Money, who he wuz, but I wuz so pestered, hit never come in my mind onct!"

"I thought after you started, I'd ort to 'a' went with you," condoled Mr. Doggett, "although the terbaccer needed me mighty bad; but you got back all right fer all your trouble, ef I didn't go. A body has a heap to be thankful fer, now don't they?"

"Well hit hain't no matter now," Mrs. Doggett philosophized, taking off her forlorn bonnet, "though ef I'd 'a' knew hit wuz a gona rain I wouldn't 'a' went."

CHAPTER VI

A NEIGHBORLY CALL

"With the lips meanwhile she can honor it! Oil of flattery, the best antifricition known, subdues all irregularities whatsoever."

A slight stiffness of limb next morning held Mrs. Doggett an unwilling prisoner in bed, until a somewhat later hour than she arose on the day of her visit to the seeress, and by eight o'clock, when she had gotten her morning's work done, the snow, which had begun to fall at daybreak, was full six inches deep.

The exigencies of the case, however, according to the seeress, permitted no delay, and Mrs. Doggett's purpose was not to be thwarted by any sort of weather, or sundry twinges in her joints.

She slipped on an old pair of Mr. Doggett's brown woolen socks over her Sunday shoes, tied her head carefully in a little gray breakfast shawl, in lieu of the clover-stitched sun-bonnet (drooping on its nail from the exposure of the day before), and wrapped herself in an old thick, black "dolman."

Lily Pearl seized the broom.

"Lemme sweep you a little road out to the gate, Mammy!"

"No honey, I don't want you to do that," her grandmother, who still struggled with the hooks of the dolman, answered her. "Sweepin'll spread your hands so's they won't look nice to play chunes on the orgin!"

The child ran to her grandmother and buried her face, quivering with ecstatic anticipation, in her neck.

"Oh Mammy," she breathed, "*will* I have a orgin to play on, sometime?"

Mrs. Doggett forgot her hurry, and sat down with the child clasped close in her arms.

"Lord, yes, darlin'," she assured her, "and maybe a pieanner, too'll be a settin' in t'other corner o' your parler. I don't never intend these little hands shall ever tech a cow's teat, ner do nary theng that'll rough 'em! I want 'em to be slim and delicate like them little bird claws o' Mrs. Castle's, when you air a grown lady! You won't never thenk hard o' Mammy when she wants you to wear your bonnet clost, and keep your shoes on in summer, will you, honey? She don't want your feet to never git big, and wants you to be raised white complected, agin the time you git to wearin' silk dresses with trails on 'em ever' day!"

Lily Pearl clasped the prospective "bird claws" in a thrill of delight. "Will I have money to buy

candy fer Dock and me, when I git big, Mammy?" she queried hopefully.

Mrs. Doggett smiled, as remembering her errand, she put the little girl down. "Lord, yes, you'll be goin' 'round a tradin' in the stores, maybe carryin' a roll o' bills so big a cow couldn't swaller 'em!"

After cautioning the child to watch the fire until her return, with skirts held well aloft, Mrs. Doggett took the path that led over the hill a quarter of a mile to the James' house.

To her infinite satisfaction, while she divested herself of her wraps and her unconventional overshoes on Miss Nancy's kitchen hearth, where that lady sat, with a pressing-board on her lap, and a basket of scraps beside her, Mrs. Doggett learned that Miss Lucy had gone to town with the marketing, and that Mr. Lindsay had ridden to the store, two miles away, for the mail.

"You ain't been up lately, Mrs. Doggett," Miss Nancy remarked, reluctantly drawing her three flat-irons aside, so that her visitor might share a portion of the meagre fire with them: "ain't you been well?"

"Me? No, I hain't been well. I been a complainin' ever sence Christmas, from the top o' my head to the sole o' my foot. I think I must have bile on the liver, I complain so much with a ketch in the back."

"Mother used to use plasters for her back, sometimes," observed Miss Nancy.

"These here Polish plasters, I reckon," volunteered Mrs. Doggett: "I've bought 'em too, but they never done *me* no good. They's a new-fashioned kind o' plasters, I fergit the name. They writ on and wanted Marshall and Dock to be agents fer: I don't know how in the world they ever got holt o' their names. I been aimin' to try *them*, but a heap o' them remedies hain't nary bit o' count after you pay your money fer 'em.

"Whenever I go up to Susy's, when the bell rings, me and her always takes down the receiver, and evedraps the tillephorm, and last time I wuz thar, I heerd Mrs. Fetter a 'phoamin' to Miss Maud Floss about Bottum's medicine a bein' good rheumatiz medicine, and I got a little bottle, and tuck hit jest as prompt as I could, and hit never done nary bit o' good. I tuck hit by the directions, too. I dunno what causes me to have the rheumatiz so, fer I always wear red flannel underwear next to my skin, bein's hit's so good fer the rheumatiz."

Miss Nancy was not patient with Mrs. Doggett's health history.

"I heard Jim'd been complainin'," she cited without comment.

"Yes, Jim's been broke out all over his body. It tarrified him awful fer a while; he jest couldn't git nary minute o' rest ontel he got somethin' from the doctor fer hit. The doctor said his blood was out o' fix.

"He hadn't never been so bad off sence he quit killin' cats! He used to love to kill cats, Miss Nancy, better'n *anytheng!* And he never had no luck at nothin'. He tuck stomach trouble, and jest drinneled away to nothin', and I jest made him quit killin' cats. Sence he's had this eruptive spell, though, he's been a workin' all the time jest the same! Seems like a body jest has to keep a goin', sick er well, ef they 'spect to have anytheng!"

"That's what I tell Lucy," Miss Nancy commented briefly, with considerable emphasis.

"I've got to do a big ir'nin' termorrer, fer though I wuzn't no ways able," explained Mrs. Doggett, "I done a big washin' the first o' the week. Ever' blessed theng wuz dirty. How many shirts you reckon I put out?"

"I have no idy," acknowledged Miss Nancy.

"Twenty-five white shirts, besides three apiece o' their ever'days!"

"That's a mighty big washin'," observed Miss Nancy, stooping to pick up a piece of green cashmere.

"Now hain't hit?" Mrs. Doggett went on, in genial disregard of the unbelief in her listener's tone: "but laws, that hain't nothin' to the big washin's I done along in the early fall at terbaccer-cuttin' time. I like to 'a' killed myse'f then. Their shirts and overhalls wuz all over gum offen the terbaccer, the awfulest lookin' sights that ever you seed: and I had to bile half the thengs in Jimpson leaf tea to git the stain out'n 'em. And when they got through housin' the terbaccer, and I had the beds to strip, and the bed clothes to wash, my clothes line wuz a plumb sight to see!"

Thinking her conversation on general topics had been of sufficient length, Mrs. Doggett began adroitly to lead up to the object of her visit, by a little judicious flattery.

"You're a lookin' well, now, Miss Nancy"; she fastened her keen black eyes on Miss Nancy's dun-colored hair and forbidding eyes: "me and Mr. Brock wuz a talkin' about you night afore last, and I says: 'Actually and candidly, Miss Nancy is the best lookin' and the finest lookin' of any that family!'"

Miss Nancy uttered no word to indicate that she heard this bare-faced compliment, but the pleased red that crept slowly over her countenance was sufficient encouragement for Mrs. Doggett.

"Somebody wuz a tellin' me t'other day," she continued, "I believe hit wuz Henrietty, Jim's wife,—that Mr. West'd tuck to lookin' around ag'in, and he'd been a sendin' word he wanted to come to see you er Miss Lucy."

"Wantin'll be all then!" Miss Nancy gave a slight toss of her head.

"I don't blame you fer sayin' that. As little a chunk as he is, and as low to the ground, ef him and a fine tall woman like you wuz to walk in church together, he'd look like a reticule a hangin' onto your arm." Mrs. Doggett measured Miss Nancy's ungainly figure with an approving eye.

"More than that, ef looks wuz suitable," Miss Nancy spoke abruptly, "I ain't a wantin' no widower with eight childern! When I marry, ef ever I do, it'll be a man without a family, with a good home, and money, but I ain't—"

"You're satisfied like you are, hain't you?" broke in Mrs. Doggett. "You hain't one o' them kind to jump off and marry jest to have hit said you're married! A heap marries, a thenkin' ef they jest have a husband, they'll never have need fer nothin' else, but when they're married, they find they need ever'theng but the husband, and they don't need him at all! I told 'em all t'other night, *you* wuzn't a pickin', but ef you wuz, hit'd be somebody like Vaughn Castle, er Frank Arnold, your cousin, Effie Esther Willises' man,—not a man like,—"

"Like who?" Miss Nancy looked up quickly.

"Well, Miss Nancy, people will talk, you know, and when a single man's a stayin' wher' thar's two ladies that hain't married, folks will connect their names. Of course you wouldn't give no encouragement to sech as him—"

At Mrs. Doggett's tentative venture, the red blood came in a flood in Miss Nancy's face, and spread from her faded brown calico collar to the roots of the unlovely hair on her high forehead.

"And, seein' no prospect of gittin' your notice, he turned wher' his attentions wuz more welcomer," concluded her guest.

"You're a talkin' about Lucy and Mr. Lindsay, ain't you?" jerked out Miss Nancy, finally, when the tell-tale blush had partially faded.

"Yes, I am," admitted Mrs. Doggett: "the talk is they're a courtin'."

"I haven't saw no courtin' goin' on," insisted Miss Nancy in half hopeful prevarication, "have you?"

This was Mrs. Doggett's opportunity, eagerly seized.

"Well, Miss Nancy," she answered, laying a propitiatory hand on Miss Nancy's lap, "I'll tell you what little I know. As fur back as August,—the day my pore Callie lay a corpse, Miss Lucy wuz at her house, and Henrietty wuz thar, and Mr. Lindsay drapped in a few minutes. Henrietty says they looked courty *then*. I asked Henrietty: 'Did they say anytheng lovin', Henrietty?' 'No, Ma, I can't say that they did,' she says: '*she* set down on the aidge o' the bed, a pinkin' up like a bashful young girl, and *he* crossed over the room, and stood by her a minute er two, and they talked about the weather and sech like.'

"But Henrietty, she says they *looked* love, to the best o' her belief, and a body can might' nigh tell what's up by the way folks looks and acts! And Gran'dad, *he* says one day when him and Mr. Lindsay wuz in town, they seed Miss Lucy a goin' in a store, and Mr. Lindsay pointed towards her, and says: 'That's my woman, Gran'dad, ef I can git her!'"

The knee on which Mrs. Doggett's fingers lay, stiffened, and its owner's whole frame grew rigid under the intensity of her emotions at this verification of her suspicions.

"Maybe, they are a keepin' hit hid from you and your Pa, Miss Nancy," Mrs. Doggett hazarded. "Mr. Lindsay is mighty sly: he knows you all know he's a puny man—nigh as sickly as a consumptive, and hain't got nothin' laid by!"

"Lucy's weakly herse'f, and it'd be plumb foolish fer her to thenk about marryin'!" Miss Nancy cried out sharply: "and ef she wuz to—to marry old Lindsay, it'd be jest the settin' up of another poor-house, and the County's got poor-houses a plenty now. Besides, Lucy owes it to me and Pa to stay here!"

"Well, yes, Miss Nancy," soothed Mrs. Doggett, "but your Pa's old, and may be tuck any time! Ef Miss Lucy wuz persuaded now to look a little higher—Mr. Brock, he hain't rich enough fer *you*, but he wouldn't be a bad match fer Miss Lucy, considerin'. Miss Lucy's about fifteen years older'n you, hain't she?"

"Nine years, three months, and five days," corrected Miss Nancy.

"Now Mr. Brock, he's got money laid up. He says sometimes Mr. Castle when he's got all his'n invested er somethin', actually borry's from him!" equivocated Mrs. Doggett. "And Mr. Brock's jest the best man in his famby: Evy and Reub jest worships him. And he's sech a good pervider, and a high standin' man in the community, too."

At that moment old Zeke barked: Miss Nancy stepped to the window.

"Hit's Lucy a comin' down the lane," she informed Mrs. Doggett who had arisen: "Zeke's saw the

buggy."

"Hain't that somebody on a hoss a ridin' 'longside the buggy?" Mrs. Doggett peered close to the glass: "the snow is so blindin' a body can't skeercely see."

"Hit's Mr. Lindsay," answered Miss Nancy shortly, "a comin' from the store."

"Well, I got to go." Mrs. Doggett drew on her wraps. "Ef you're shore you won't need 'em, I'll borry a couple your ir'ns fer termorrer."

When the rider, and the driver reached the yard, Mr. Lindsay, innocent of the two pairs of critical eyes that watched him from the kitchen window, turned back the top of the buggy carefully, and with a hand that all the hard work in the world could not make other than gentle, assisted Miss Lucy to alight.

"Jest watch him, will ye?" Mrs. Doggett inveighed: "a handlin' Miss Lucy like she wuz aigs! Hain't he a puttin' on a good pious face, and him what he is, now! You hain't heerd I reckon, about him a goin' to Owensboro ever' onct in a while?" She lowered her voice to a meaning whisper.

"No!" Miss Nancy waited expectant.

"Well, you've heerd tell o' married men with big famblies a passin' off fer single men, hain't you, afore today, and ever' onct in a while a sneakin' off to see their wife and childern?" With this last pointed remark, Mrs. Doggett opened the side door of the kitchen.

"No, thank you, Miss Nancy, I can't stay nary 'nother minute," she declared in a tone of regret: "jest tell Miss Lucy fer me I'm still a lookin' fer her, and both of you come down real soon!" The door closed behind her, leaving Miss Nancy in anything but an amiable state of mind. At the buggy-house in the corner of the back yard, Mrs. Doggett encountered Mr. Lindsay putting away the buggy, and his saddle, and greeted him effusively.

"Eph's been a lookin' fer you down, Mr. Lindsay," she tendered him in smiling farewell, as Mr. Lindsay courteously brushed the snow aside and opened the gate for her, "but you're a flyin' too high fer us now, I reckon!"

Late that afternoon, when Mr. Lindsay took the milk-buckets from Miss Lucy's hand, and went with her to the barn lot, to assist her at the milking, as he had done each time since the beginning of his stay with the Jameses, Miss Nancy stood looking after him with a rigid air of offended propriety. Mrs. Doggett's whisper, suggesting vague possibilities of evil, had been accepted with due allowance by Miss Nancy, but for many days, a worm had found an abiding place in her bosom, and the other information Mrs. Doggett had given her to which she could give credence, fed this worm into a mighty thing that bit her heart cruelly.

She angrily watched Miss Lucy and her aid, as they moved about the barn-yard, to the serious hindering of the supper preparations. On her second unnecessary trip to the sitting-room, she threw the door open wide.

"Jest look!" she sneered. "Jest look, Pa! How does that look, him and her out there a milkin' together? Ef I was you, Pa, I'd stop it!"

"Hit *hain't* modest lookin'," agreed the old man: "Lucy'd orter know better'n to allow that. She'd aggrivate the patience o' Job with her foolishness. I sha'n't let her milk no more while he's here!"

After that, the pleasure of the evenings spent around the sitting-room fire was marred by the unpleasant insinuations directed at Mr. Lindsay by Miss Nancy, and the covert stabs she inflicted on Miss Lucy. One unusually cold evening Mr. Lindsay came in with a slight chill and flushed cheeks.

"Bein's hit's so cold, Mr. Lindsay, and you ain't well," remarked Miss Lucy kindly, placing a smoothing-iron on the fender, "I'll heat this iron for you to take to bed with you. Them upstairs rooms havin' no fire in 'em, is awful chilly these nights."

Presently Miss Nancy pushed the iron away from the fire.

"You're jest a burnin' that ir'n up, Lucy Ann!" she scolded.

Miss Lucy said nothing, but when Miss Nancy left the room a moment, quietly put the iron nearer the fire again, and when her sister returned and once more moved it away, she lifted it off the fender.

"I'll jest take your iron to the kitchen, Mr. Lindsay," she said in a low tone, "and get a flannel rag to wrap hit in,—that is," she looked at him with apologetic eyes, "ef you are about ready for hit!"

Mr. Lindsay arose and followed Miss Lucy to the kitchen.

"Miss Lucy," he said gravely, "I see I'm a causin' trouble a stayin' here: I'm a makin' a disturbance in the family."

"Why no, Mr. Lindsay," Miss Lucy's voice shook in eager denial of his assertion. "No, you ain't—you ain't a doin' nobody nothin' but good. We all ain't been so happy sence Mother was taken away."

"Miss Nancy," began Mr. Lindsay, but Miss Lucy interrupted him.

"Don't you pay no 'tention to Nancy, Mr. Lindsay," she supplicated: "Nancy, she has to work so hard, and she gits so tired and nervous: Nancy don't mean no harm!"

"You can't fool me, Miss Lucy," Mr. Lindsay's forehead knotted itself in a frown. "I hain't blind and I hain't deaf, and I can't holp seein' the way she does, and a hearin' her bemean *you* about me all the time nearly. I don't want to make no disturbance, so I'll jest leave!"

In the winter of the year before, an unusually severe winter, Miss Lucy and Miss Nancy, without help (they could get none in the time of tobacco stripping, and their father was not allowed to work by the doctor's orders) had been compelled, with damp skirts, wet by the deep snows, and fingers frosted by the cold, to feed the stock, hauling shocks of fodder from the field. At Mr. Lindsay's words, Miss Lucy's hand went up to her face in the familiar worried gesture, and a look of anxiety widened her eyes. But it was not the thought of the work that brought a hoarse sob to her throat.

"O Mr. Lindsay," she begged with dry lips, "don't leave us! We can't do without you. Don't leave us before spreng comes noway!"

Mr. Lindsay took her cold hand and held it between his own, hot and feverish.

"Ef you feel that away about hit, Miss Lucy," he said soothingly, "I reckon I can make out untel then."

Miss Lucy hastily drew away her hand, stooped to wrap the iron that he might not see the flood of joy in her face.

The hall with the stairway that led to Mr. Lindsay's room, and the sitting-room also, opened on the back porch. When they had crossed the porch, Miss Lucy paused with one hand on the sitting-room doorknob.

"I don't know how we can ever repay you, Mr. Lindsay, for your kindness to us," she murmured, her face shining with something more than sweet gratefulness. Miss Lucy did not know that her eyes held the dangerous gift of personal speech.

Because of what he read in the translucent blue eyes, Mr. Lindsay suddenly became very bold.

"I could tell you, Miss Lucy,"—mindful of the pair of sharp ears behind the door, he lowered his voice—"I could tell you how you could repay me for the little I've done for you, ef you'd listen to me!"

But Miss Lucy had fled, and had closed the door softly behind her.

CHAPTER VII

RIVALS

"Every man in the time of courtship, puts on a behavior like my correspondent's holiday suit!"

The month of February was bitterly cold, and a deep snow lay unmelted for three weeks,—a condition of weather that seriously hindered interchange of social calls on the Silver Run creek. The last Sunday morning, however, brought a thaw that made it possible for the socially inclined, comfortably to stir out.

After the James' breakfast, Mr. Lindsay, according to his every Sunday's custom between milking times, dressed himself in his best black suit and his shining Sunday shoes, and with the more than a few white threads that were beginning to come in his hair and mustache, decently colored, and a suggestion of perfume about him, came into the sitting-room.

Miss Nancy, whose Sabbath attire was a change from a soiled brown calico to a similar unattractive clean one, professed to disapprove of this Sunday's dressy toilet, and when her sister came into the kitchen, dressed in a pretty maroon woolen house waist (one of the "remnant" waists), her second-best black woolen skirt, and wearing her watch, with its slender chain, and with the white threads in *her* hair concealed in a manner similar to Mr. Lindsay's, she raised her voice in sarcastic reproof.

"I see you've got on your red sack you think you look so purty in. The idy of an old theng like you a wearin' *red*! And I see you've wore a right smart of the gold off your Sunday specs too, a wearin' 'em ever' day. You and him a dressin' up ever' Sunday, like you was a goin' to church, when you know you ain't goin' to do nothin' but set around all day, makes me plumb sick! And I'm jest a gittin' tired of all the piller slips a bein' blacked up with hair dye, on account of two old fools a bein' afraid of bein' thought as old as they are!"

Miss Lucy turned a pained, guilty red. The little bottles she kept hidden in her trunk were of

recent acquisition, and she had thought their work was as yet her own secret. Knowing it was useless to attempt to defend herself, she put forth a plea for her friend.

"Maybe Mr. Lindsay don't color his hair, Nancy,—hit's a mighty pretty brown, and shines jest like Sister Isabinda's used to."

"Maybe he don't," derided Miss Nancy: "but you jest tell him for me, when he puts hit on in the dark or before daylight, to take a little more pains, and don't come downstairs with hit smeared on slantways of his mustache, not techin' the roots, and leavin' 'em white on one side, and see what he says!"

Miss Lucy did not wait to hear any more, but went quietly back to the sitting-room where Mr. Lindsay sat alone.

"I jest know hit's the nicest day for meetin'," she smiled: "ef the road wasn't so rough a body could go! It'll be lonesome for you today, I'm afraid, Mr. Lindsay, with jest us," she went on: "I wish somebody'd come in to keep you company."

Mr. Lindsay looked behind him, then moved his chair nearer Miss Lucy's rocker. "I have all the company I want, Miss Lucy," he said in daring tone, "all the company I want in this world is here by me!"

Miss Lucy's eyes fell beneath the compelling power of the bright brown ones opposite her, and a warm flush dyed her face. Mr. Lindsay waited smiling for her to speak, but at this moment there came a knock, and Mr. Galvin Brock, newly shaved, so highly collared that the linen cut cruelly into the fat beneath his ears, and wearing a top coat, a gray suit, gaiters, and glossy shoes that all bore the hall-mark of recent purchase, came in.

"Why, Mr. Brock!" stammered Miss Lucy, in her surprise and embarrassment, giving the visitor a rather warmer welcome than she intended,—"I am so glad you come, and Pa'll be awful glad to see you. I was jest a tellin' Mr. Lindsay as you come in I wished somebody'd come to keep *him* company, too. Sunday is sech a long day when a body can't git out to church. Lemme take your coat and hat, Mr. Brock, and you set down in this rocker and warm your feet."

Mr. Brock sat, the unexpectedly cordial reception filling his heart with so much of satisfaction that the glow above the punishing neck linen rivaled the crimson in his nose, which particular spot Mr. Lindsay mentally stigmatized a "grog-blossom." On this occasion, the color of the "grog-blossom" was deeper than usual, owing to the fact that the owner of the nose was suffering from a cold which necessitated the frequent display and desecration of a beautiful hemstitched China silk handkerchief.

After a few perfunctory words to the new-comer, Mr. Lindsay relapsed into a moody silence, replying in monosyllables only, when any portion of the morning's conversation, largely carried on by Mr. James in the absence of Miss Lucy in the kitchen, chanced to be directed at him. In the afternoon, when the family were all at liberty to entertain, Mr. Brock, usually grumly taciturn, under the influence of Miss Lucy's kindly interest which he mistook for admiration, became surprisingly loquacious: it was Mr. Lindsay who sat afflicted of mien, maintaining his morning's attitude of silent gloom.

"Mr. Brock looks like a preacher, he's fixed up so fine today!" Miss Lucy remarked, as she scrutinized the heavy chinchilla coat hanging on the rack. "You must expect to come out mighty well on your tobacco, Mr. Brock, ef you can take to wearin' such a fine overcoat as this, jest to a neighbor's house. Ain't hit nice, Mr. Lindsay?" Mr. Lindsay's reply was not audible.

"I always come out tolerable well, Miss Lucy, and manage to have a check-book ahead I can draw on," Mr. Brock avouched.

"Castle offered to loan me some money along last spreng (as he does all his tobacco men) ef I needed it, but I was proud to be able to say: 'Mr. Castle, I can loan you some, ef you want it,' and I've had more offers fer my tobacco this time, than I care to consider."

"Castle says thar hain't but one terbaccer man in the County, Mr. Brock, and he fetched *him* over from Clarke," hinted Mr. James.

Four years before, Mr. Brock had come at the Castle behest from Clarke County. Mr. Brock smiled broadly.

"I don't claim to be the only terbaccer man in the County," he protested.

"You wuz one the *big* terbaccer men over thar, Castle says," went on the old man: "he says him and his brother, Reed, come mighty nigh havin' a fight over you when he fetched you over here. I told Castle when he said that to me that you must have been a sort of a Hawkins Speed among the terbaccer fellers over in Clarke.

"You knowed that triflin' Hawkins, he moved out in Oklahomy, and got to be a big feller. His Ma come back here and told hit that hit wuz a common theng to see from fifteen to twenty men ride up in Hawkins' barn lot ever' mornin' and h'ist theirselves up on the fence and set thar, ever' man waitin' his turn to be advised by Hawkins in business matters!"

"Now Pa," protested Miss Lucy, "don't poke fun at company!"

"I hain't, Lucy Ann, I'm entertainin',—that's more'n some o' the crowd's a doin'," retorted Mr.

James with a covert wink at Mr. Brock.

Late in the afternoon, Mr. Brock suggested that his host show him his new pigs. When the two men came back to the house, the old man wore a look of ill humor that the subject under discussion (the pigs) did not warrant, and an angry suspicion entered Mr. Lindsay's mind.

"I do wish I could do somethin' for your cold, Mr. Brock," Miss Lucy said solicitously, as that gentleman, preparing to leave them, indulged in a rattling cough. "Ef you'll jest wait a minute, I'll hunt you up some boneset, and Aunt Jane can make you some strong tea, jest before you go to bed. Drink hit right hot and maybe hit'll break up your cold."

With the pockets of the chinchilla bulging with the boneset, and his mind at peace with the world, Mr. Brock stepped jauntily out to the road at the foot of the lawn, but when he reached it, instead of going in the direction of his home, unnoticed by any of the James household, he turned and walked briskly down the path that led to the Doggetts.

"Eph," Mrs. Doggett informed her husband when he came in about nine that evening, having tarried until after supper at the home of his sister, Mrs. Gumm: "Eph, Mr. Lindsay hain't got no chance with Miss Lucy James!"

"How did you git that in your head, Ann?"

"They wuz a person here this evenin' that saw another man there today, and he says that the treatment Miss Lucy give that man wuz the kind o' treatment a woman don't give nobody but a man she thenks is the greatest feller on earth. Mr. Lindsay, he jest tucked his head after the man come, like a whooped dog, the person said, and Miss Lucy never give Lindsay nary look ner word o' notice the whole day! And when the other man started, she told *him* she wisht he'd come ever' Sunday,—said her and Miss Nancy and their Pa jest set thar all day like three old owls a wishin' somebody'd come to keep 'em comp'ny!"

"Who told you all that, Ann,—did you git hit from Mr. Brock?" Mr. Doggett inquired, as he wrestled with a tight sock.

"From nobody else!" exulted Mrs. Doggett. "He's the man o' Miss Lucy's choice!"

"Now, old lady," cautioned Mr. Doggett, as he covered the fire, "don't you let Mr. Brock pull the wool over your eyes! You never can tell what a woman will do, ner a man neither fer that matter, but hit hain't best to believe more'n a quarter o' what a courtin' feller'll tell about how fur he's a beatin' another feller's time!"

"I'm a goin' up to Jim Doggett's, Miss Lucy," Mr. Lindsay announced coolly after the supper that evening,—to set ontel bedtime, and I want to ask you, ef you haven't got no objections, to jest leave the hall door onlocked ontel I come back: I can git in then without disturbin' anybody."

"Why, Mr. Lindsay, of course I will," fluttered Miss Lucy, "but ef you ain't a goin' to stay late, I'll set up and have a fire for you to warm your feet by."

"I thank you, Miss Lucy," Mr. Lindsay answered in the same frigidly polite tones: "I won't be gone long, but I don't want to put nobody to any trouble fer me, what time I'll be here. I wish you good evenin'."

Miss Lucy stood in dumb wonderment on the porch until the splash of Mr. Lindsay's feet in the melting snow no longer reached her ear. What was the matter with him that he spoke to her as one stranger to another?

Unheeding the mud puddles in which he set his feet, Mr. Lindsay neared the tiny cottage Vaughn Castle furnished Jim Doggett. An owl quavered in the top of one of the ragged elms, when he paused on the step to remove his overshoes, and the bird's weird cry was not more despondent than the silent wail of the man's heart.

"She's a settin' there, now," he chafed, "a smilin' in the coals, a thenkin' about old Brock!" But he was mistaken; Miss Lucy was crying in her pillow.

Jim and Henrietty made Mr. Lindsay kindly welcome, but the plump child with the exquisitely molded features drew back the dainty chin that reminded one of nothing so much as a rosy peach, and looked shyly at him through the long curling black lashes of her dreamy brown eyes.

"Have you gone back on me too, Katie?" Mr. Lindsay's look of reproach brought the baby flying to his chair to crawl up in his lap.

"Me love Missa Linney," she lisped: "is 'oo dot a pittty f'ower for Tatie?"

"You'll never lose out with Katie, Mr. Lindsay," laughed her father, as the child began ecstatically to kiss the rose pictured on the bit of pasteboard her friend fished from an inside pocket, "ef you keep on a brengin' her flowers and picturs of flowers."

"I didn't believe she'd go back on me too," Mr. Lindsay murmured, with his cheek on the little one's red-brown hair.

"Been anybody at your house today?" asked astute Henrietty.

"Jest old man Brock."

"Did he stay all day?"

"Yes, staid until milkin' time."

"Wuz he primped up?" persisted Henrietty, with a glance at Jim.

"Yes, in an inch of his life," scoffed Mr. Lindsay, with the high collar in mind: "ever'theng he had on, as fur as I could see, wuz new. Miss Lucy," he concluded with burning sarcasm, "she told him he looked like a preacher!"

"Must 'a' been a courtin' rig," reflected Jim.

"Well Jim," expostulated Henrietty, "and poor Callie not been in her grave more'n six months! Ef I wuz Mr. Brock, I'd let my wife's tracks rain out before I took to courtin'!"

Mr. Lindsay laughed—a mirthless jeering laugh.

"Miss Lucy didn't seem to make much o' his payin' sech disrespect to Callie, a sparkin' around, the way she treated him today! Old Brock'll never be tuck up fer bein' too sociable, but I wisht you could 'a' saw him today, a makin' up to the old man and Miss Lucy,—a settin' about with his lips primped up as innocent and delicate, like they'd never shet over nothin' stronger'n buttermilk in his life. He's tuck a cold—been over to Lexington this last week a layin' out drunk as is his common habit when he goes off on them trips, in fact, hit's what he goes fer,—and Miss Lucy wuz a honeyin' him up, a wishin' she could do somethin' fer his cold, and a huntin' up hoarhound and dried stuffs fer him to docter with. Made me sick!"

"O Mr. Lindsay," placated Henrietty, "Miss Lucy thinks ever'body's all right and good. I heerd Mrs. Preacher Avery a sayin' to her one day—and she wuz jest a goin' by what Miss Lucy'd told her about 'em—'How fortunate,' she says, 'Miss Lucy, that your brothers and sisters all married good people, and in such good famblies!'

"And that Grace that married the middle Jeemes boy, she's about as mean a person as anybody is allowed to be, to keep a livin'! She treated me and Jim's Ma, when we went to see Miss Lucy one day when she wuz a visitin' there, like we wuzn't no better'n the dirt under her feet. 'Lucy,' she says, and Ma and me heerd her when we wuz leavin' the yard, 'do you allow those tobacco people—those tenant people, to call on you?'

"And another day she come down on the creek fishin'—her and them three holy-terror chillern o' hers, and they happened to throw in their lines not fur from where me and Joey and little Katie wuz a fishin'. As soon as she saw us she drawed in her line, and says: 'Come, children, less go to a better place. I smell poor folks here!' Like poor people, ef they have any pride about keepin' clean, smell any different from rich folks!"

"I reckon now," remarked Jim, dryly, "sence she's broke up her husband, so he had to quit his store and go to clerkin' in a meat-shop, she don't have to go outside her own door to 'smell poor folks!'" Henrietty laughed.

"You see how hit is, Mr. Lindsay; you can't put no dependence on Miss Lucy's estimate o' people."

"And we oughtn't to blame her fer that," said Mr. Lindsay: "the charity that 'thinks no evil' hain't so common in folks as to be a bad theng! Miss Lucy, she's a Christian, ef there ever wuz one in Kentucky, I reckon, and ef she wuz ever out o' humor I never knowed hit. But"—his face darkened, and though his voice did not rise above its ordinary soft murmur, there was a tremulous vibration in it that told that he was fiercely moved—"she's mighty fooled in old Brock, ef she thinks he's good!"

"Hit's her cousin, Sim Willis, that's a makin' 'em think that," broke in Jim. "He considers Brock all right, because they both vote the same ticket, I reckon, and he hain't caught on yit to Brock's night habits."

"Hit's a pity," continued Mr. Lindsay, "but what Miss Lucy knowed about him a gittin' blind drunk in town a Christmas Eve, and a havin' to be carried down to the cellar and laid there like a sack o' bran ontel mornin'."

"I wuz in town a gittin' ready to start out, and Reub Brock, he come to me, a beggin' me to please come and help him carry his pappy sommers. I didn't want to, but I felt sorry fer Reub—him a puffin' and a wheezin'—tryin' to git the old dead drunk fool off the sidewalk to where he wouldn't be run over er freeze, so I tuck holt, and we got him down in the cellar! Made me plumb sick a handlin' him!"

"I'd jest tell Miss Lucy," suggested Jim. "What's the use in keepin' back thengs a body ought to know?"

"I hain't never told hit to nobody, on account o' Reub and Evy," declared Mr. Lindsay. "Reub said, Christmas, 'Fer poor Mammy's sake, Mr. Lindsay, don't tell on Pappy!' and I hain't up to this time."

"I been a keepin' back more'n that too. The Jameses always set sech store by old Brock, and he wuzn't a pesterin' me, but—" he rose and threw on his coat, a hot and angry red flushing his face—"but now I despise the old snivellin' hypocrite! My mother always taught me the sin o' fightin', and I have tried to live at peace with ever'body like she taught me to, but ef I'd 'a' been brung up to wipe out them that needs a wipin' out, there wouldn't be no trace of old Brock in this vicinity

long! And I'm a goin' to let Miss Lucy James know how her new beau's been in the habit o' conductin' himse'f, ef hit's the last act o' my life!"

CHAPTER VIII

AT THE TOBACCO BARN

"Farewell grief and welcome joy,
Ten thousand times therefore!"

"Got on your red waist ag'in this mornin', have you? Tuck to primpin' on a week day fer old Lindsay, have you, and what does he keer fer you? And ef he did, what is *he* anyhow? I jest wisht you knowed somethin' I've heard about him lately!"

Miss Lucy's eyes, circled and swollen, told on Monday morning of a troubled and sleepless night. She turned wearily away from Miss Nancy, making no attempt at excuse for the new waist which she had thrust on hastily in the darkness when she arose, too dispirited to care what she put on. Mr. Lindsay, coming in at this moment, met Miss Lucy's look of consternation with one of settled determination.

Miss Nancy's last words (she never mumbled her speeches, but invariably made them sharp and distinct) had reached him, and given his resolution to speak to Miss Lucy at the earliest opportunity, a sudden impetus, like that given a door that bursts open behind a fierce blast of wind.

The little dairy under the harness-room was out of range of the kitchen windows, and quite out of earshot.

"Let me carry the milk down the milk-house steps fer you, Miss Lucy," he suggested, as Miss Lucy attempted to lift one of the pails from the table: "the wind's a blowin' turrible hard, and might blow you down with them full buckets." But Miss Nancy forestalled him.

"Me and Lucy together can git them two buckets safe in the milk-house, I reckon, Mr. Lindsay. Ain't no use you a doin' ever'thing," she said, with the handle of each tin pail in a tenacious grasp.

"Open the milk-house door, Lucy."

Mr. Lindsay, rebuffed, withdrew to the woodpile, defeated for the time, but with purpose undaunted. Under cover of the stone walls of the dairy, Miss Nancy further browbeat her sister.

"Lucy, hain't you ashamed o' yourse'f a lettin' Lindsay foller you around all the mornin'?"

"He ain't been a follerin' me around, Nancy," faltered Miss Lucy.

"He ain't?" Scorn gave Miss Nancy's voice a hoarse note. "I reckon you're green enough to thenk, too, old Zeke's hind feet don't foller his front ones when he's a walkin': but I ain't! See here, Lucy Ann, this foolishness is got to be stopped. You don't want to have folks a talkin' about you, do you?"

Nothing to the sisters was more dreaded than to be "talked about."

"Then you jest keep yourse'f out o' his way, 'tel he leaves here for good, Wednesday. Termorrer is marketin' day, and the mud'll be dried enough ef the wind keeps up fer you to go, and today you can jest git ready and go up to Becky Willises, and stay all day."

"Hit's sorter muddy for walkin', Nancy," objected Miss Lucy.

"'Twon't hurt you: you can wear your gum shoes!" spouted Miss Nancy, stamping up the rough stone steps.

"I won't go to Becky's a cryin'," thought Miss Lucy, as she neared the yard of Jim Doggett, beyond which, a few hundred yards, lay the house of her cousin: "Becky'd ask so many questions! I believe I'll jest stop here, and see Henrietty and little Katie."

Henrietty greeted her with her hands in a bowl of bread-dough. Katie ran to her with a little happy cry: "O Miss Lucy, I's dot somepin' show 'oo! Tome wis me—I's dot somepin' show 'oo in the batter barn!"

"Why, Katie, let Miss Lucy have time to take off her thengs!" expostulated her mother. "Hit's puppies she's a talkin' about," she explained: "I'm sortie feerd fer her to go out to the barn by herse'f, a thenkin' a tier pole might fall on her. I've been skeered o' barns ever sence that time Gil Dutton broke his knee all to pieces on account of a tier pole made out of a wind-shook piece of timber a breakin' and lettin' him fall, and she's jest crazy when anybody steps in to git 'em to go with her."

Miss Lucy, glad of an excuse to take her red eyes out of range of Henrietty's keen ones, followed the eager child to the great barn on the rise above the house. The heavy sliding doors at the north end refused to move more than eight inches apart under Miss Lucy's nervous hand, but little Katie pressed her fat body through the crevice, darted like a sparrow half the length of the building, and squatted with a squeal of rapture behind a high pile of sticks, heaped in careless fashion, after the tobacco was lifted off them. Here, on the dirt floor, three brown and white puppies crawled aimlessly over each other.

"You want to git inside?" Miss Lucy felt her fingers gently removed, and the door pushed back. She looked up to meet Mr. Lindsay's eyes fixed in stern earnestness upon her.

"You thought you'd run off from me, did you?" he queried abruptly: "I 'lowed when I saw you a startin' off in this wind that you'd had your orders give you, and what I follered you wuz to find out ef you really wanted to obey them orders and to git away from me."

Miss Lucy backed inside the door and looked furtively about her. The tobacco had all been taken down, stripped, and bulked down in a half dozen long, high ricks, from "long red," to "green,"—ready for the buyers' inspection, and the dusk of the empty spaces, from the cypress-shingled roof, to the floor, covered with its confusion of broken leaves, was only relieved by the sunlight that filtered in between the outer planks of the barn. The wind rumbled around the barn, and above its roar sounded the far off call of a crow, and the chugging of a freight on the nearest railway, told of a not far distant rain.

"You needn't be oneasy, Miss Lucy": Mr. Lindsay drew the doors together softly. "There hain't nobody a watchin' us here, ner a listenin' as fur as I know, and you are perfectly safe to talk. Ef you don't keer to have me around no more, jest say so, and I'll go right back to the house, and gether up my thengs, and leave now, instid of waitin' until the middle o' the week." He paused, his tone of reckless indifference belied by his grave face and appealing eyes. For once in her life, Miss Lucy was forced out of her habitual indecision.

"I—I—" she stammered, clasping and unclasping her hands, her eyes following a dry tobacco leaf that a sudden gust whirled rattling by her feet, "Mr. Lindsay, I hope I haven't never done anything to make you think I don't want you around!"

The tense cords at his temples relaxed slightly: he took a step nearer her. "Then you don't believe nothin' ag'in me, and don't keer nothin' fer old Brock?"

"Mr. Brock—why, Mr. Brock—he hasn't never said nothin' about me bein' anything to him!" cried Miss Lucy in wonderment.

"I know he hain't yit," he broke out tumultuously, "fer very shame, but he wants to, and the way you treated him yisterday made me think maybe you'd listen to what he's got to say—maybe you'd ruther have him around than me!"

"I jest treated him like I would Mr. Castle or any other of the neighbors when they come in," defended Miss Lucy.

Mr. Lindsay looked at her to assure himself there was no dissimulation in her speech. "Yes, Miss Lucy," he went on, reassured, "but he hain't one them kind o' men that'll take good treatment. Ef you jest treat him with common politeness, he'll think you're a courtin' him! I could tell you some thengs about old Brock that'd make you feel like leavin' the room when he comes around, but considerin' you don't keer nothin' fer him, hit's jest as well not to bother you with 'em. What I want to know in particular is, do you keer anytheng fer *me*?"

Miss Lucy, blushing furiously, looked wildly about her for a means of escape. The moment she had longed for, for weeks, had come, but the habit of fleeing from his presence, lest Miss Nancy should charge her with forwardness, was strong.

But Mr. Lindsay leaned against the fastening of the closed doors. "Jest say 'No, I keer nothin' fer you,'" he prompted, "and Miss Lucy, I won't keep you here a second longer!"

"I—I—that ain't what I want to say!" Miss Lucy managed to gasp.

What she did want to say must have been satisfactory, for thirty seconds later her delicate cheek was reposing with no apparent discomfort on a pocketful of nails on the front of a dingy yellow canvas working-coat, her slender shoulders were encircled by a pair of canvas-covered arms, and a brown, a very brown, head was bent down to hers.

"Mistu Linney, is 'oo lovin' Miss Luty?"



"Mistu Linney is oo lovin' Miss Luty?"

Miss Lucy's agility, considering her years, was something remarkable, when her ears were electrified by this remark from little Katie, who with a pup in the bend of each fat arm, stood gazing in innocent wonder at her friends. Miss Lucy gave a little cry of consternation, but Mr. Lindsay laughed, and placing an overturned box against one of the great center beams of the barn, drew Miss Lucy to this improvised chair, sat down beside her, and took the child and her dogs in his lap.

"When we're married, Lucy," he said gaily, "we'll git Henrietty to let Katie help us keep house."

"Oh, what will Pa and Nancy say?" moaned Miss Lucy, remembering her tormentors. The happy glow in her face fled, leaving her very pale. At this moment, the loud rumble of an empty farm-wagon, driven rapidly on the road that passed the south end of the barn, ceased abruptly.

"Tain't what her and him says that matters to me," Mr. Lindsay soothed her: "I reckon you and me are the next theng to old enough to know our own business, ain't we?"

"I know hit," Miss Lucy mourned, "but they worry me so. Ef you don't keer, Mr.—Mr.—"

"I'm *Nathan* to you, Lucy," Mr. Lindsay corrected her tenderly.

"I jest wanted to say I'd love to keep hit a secret a while any way. 'Twon't be no harm, will hit?"

"Ef you want to, of course hit won't," Mr. Lindsay assured her cheerfully. "I've been thenkin' about hit," he said after a moment, "and I believe ef prices are anyways good this spreng, I'll go into tobacco raisin' ag'in. Jest us two to live, a body might make a little somethin' at hit. Next year I might fill a barn as big as this ef I had no bad luck."

Neither of them had observed the fact that the rumble of the passing wagon had ceased when it reached the barn, nor did they notice the shadow that at this moment fell across the light that came in between two beech planks at the corner of the barn nearest them, made by the pressing of a coarse ear to the fissure. The owner of the ear had caught the sound of voices, and thinking he heard Miss Lucy speak, wished to assure himself of the fact before entering the barn.

"O Miss Luty," little Katie shrilled, "somebody's dot in de shunshine!"

There was a hasty removal of the coarse ear from the timbers, and a lusty cough, and just as the astonished pair of sitters within the barn sprang to their feet, Mr. Brock's stolid face appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. Castle asked me to keep a sharp lookout for night riders about the barns, Miss Lucy," he said, breaking the embarrassed silence. "Mr. Castle's mighty scarey, you know."

Miss Lucy turned white and red, by turns, in an agony of embarrassment, and remained dumb. Mr. Lindsay found his voice.

"I ain't heard of no night riders a bein' out in the daytime, so far," he offered, then added, turning to the door, unmindful of the entreaty in Miss Lucy's eyes, "I guess I'll be goin', Miss Lucy: my

work's a waitin' fer me."

"Little Katie—I come out here with her, Mr. Brock, to see the puppies, and Mr. Lindsay he jest happened along, and opened the door fer us."

Ladies do not usually sit on boxes in tobacco barns with their admirers, and Miss Lucy trembled so she could hardly stand, in her attempt to explain her presence in the barn with Mr. Lindsay.

"You're a gittin' cold, Miss Lucy," Mr. Brock took pity on her confusion and evident misery: "s'pose you take Katie on to the house. I'll be gittin' along."

Following her sister's directions, Miss Lucy came home in the dusk. Mr. Lindsay accosted her as she passed through the barn lot where he was milking.

"I hope you didn't think hard of me fer leavin' you so sudden this mornin', Miss Lucy": his voice was tenderly apologetic, "but I 'lowed you could explain better what you was a doin' in the barn, ef—ef—I wasn't there."

Miss Lucy smiled into his anxious eyes, a smile of trust and happiness. "I knowed you was a tryin' to do the best you could fer me, and to keep us from bein' talked about," she assured him sweetly, forgetting for once her usual precautionary glance.

Mr. Lindsay set the milk bucket down and came close to her.

"There's somethin' of my mother's, I want you to have," he murmured, looking down at her slender fingers: "I put hit in the little pink vase on the mantel-piece, and when you go to the house, I wish you'd git hit."

Before Miss Lucy could answer, he added abruptly: "I hate to tell you, Lucy, but there's somebody a holdin' the settin'-room door open. Jest tell 'em ef they ask you anytheng that I wuz a askin' you ef old Blackie'd fell off any in her milk. Hit don't look like she has, does hit?" He held the half-filled milk bucket toward her. Miss Lucy shook her head, and walked quickly to the house.

"What on earth was you a talkin' to Mr. Lindsay about?" her sister asked her as she came in.

"About old Blackie," murmured Miss Lucy, obeying her mentor: "Mr. Lindsay asked me ef I thought she was a fallin' off in her milk, and I told him I didn't see that she was."

"I think your tongue needs oilin', ef hit took you all that time to git off them few words," Miss Nancy replied suspiciously.

Miss Lucy did not reply to this taunt, but slipping out into the kitchen, she hastily emptied the grounds from the coffee-pot into the ashbarrel, and pouring several tablespoonfuls of coffee berries in the hopper of the little coffee-mill, she carried it stealthily down into the dairy, where the sound would not reach her sister's ears, and ground the coffee quickly.

"He loves his coffee strong," she whispered to herself, as she poured the freshly ground coffee into the pot, with a look of determination that sat oddly upon her: "and Nancy sha'n't give him weak stuff made out of old grounds, tonight, nohow!"

Miss Nancy took care that Miss Lucy had no more words alone with Mr. Lindsay that evening, but when he took his lamp to retire, he found a little twisted slip of paper on the middle step of the stairway, that he read with satisfaction, and laid carefully in his pocket-book, while Miss Lucy went to sleep with her hand closed on a worn chased ring suspended about her neck with a little silken cord.

CHAPTER IX

"SURE SOME DISASTER HAS BEFELL"

"The sun grew weary of guilding the palaces of Morad; the clouds of sorrow gathered around his head, and the tempest of hatred roared about his dwelling."

With March, spring descended abruptly in Kentucky. Before the end of the second week, the rows of interwoven canes with the suggestion of green at their feet, in the gardens of the Silver Run neighborhood, that told that peas were up, were not the only signs of spring.

The great rolling bluegrass fields had exchanged their nunlike drab carpeting for one of a delicate green: the willows that fringed the creek were lightly touched with emerald: in the maples alternating with the willows, bees worked joyously: every red-bud tree on the wooded cliffs wore a drapery of delicate pink, like a tinted bridal veil, and on one side the little James farm, the rye in the last year's tobacco field of Vaughn Castle, spread out like a lake with waters newly dyed green. Even the all-winter bare back yard of the Ephriam Doggetts had made an attempt at redeeming its appearance: the mallow and the dock had begun to lift their heads, and next the fence, some sprigs of purple henbit showed themselves.

Mr. Lindsay had resumed his work of tobacco stripping in late February—helping the belated tobacco-men, and afterward setting up hemp for the weather belated hemp growers, staying from Saturday evening until Sunday morning at the house of the always-open-door, and turn-nobody-away Doggetts.

One Sunday morning, he came into the house, a half dozen yellow jonquils that bloomed under the ragged Althea bush, in a corner of the front yard, in his hand.

"Well, Marshall," he suggested, "suppose'n you git out the razors, and let's me and you shave each other, and git ready to go to see our girls this evenin'."

Wisdom had whispered in the ears of Mr. Lindsay, and, following her advice (though with reluctance) he had made no week day calls on the James family since his departure. On both the Sundays that had passed, however, he had called. The old man and Miss Nancy (her suspicions as to his intentions allayed by his absence, and Miss Lucy's demeanor) had treated him with cordiality: he had managed unobserved by them to exchange delightfully satisfactory whispers with his betrothed, and today he looked forward to a similar happy afternoon.

The sunshine was no brighter than Mr. Lindsay's low cut shoes, when, after Mrs. Doggett's early dinner, he and Marshall lifted the gate that had no hinges: the dead autumn leaves in the ditch no browner than his tidy mustache, and a faint odor of "white rose" trailed on the air behind him.

"How do we look, Ma?" invited Marshall pausing correctly to adjust the bit of white in his breast pocket.

"Mighty well—mighty well!" encouraged Mrs. Doggett: "are you both a goin' the McLean road?"

"Aw hush, Ann," interposed Mr. Doggett, "don't you know him and Marshall's tracks wouldn't nary one fit t'other's? Ef McLean is a gray lookin' house jest over the hill, Mr. Lindsay's a goin' to McLean!"

Exactly three-quarters of an hour from the time of their vainglorious departure, Mr. Lindsay walked into the Doggett kitchen and sat quietly behind the stove, afflicted of mien and crestfallen to a degree.

"What *is* the matter with Mr. Lindsay?" thought Mrs. Doggett: but she made no comment on his hasty return. "He won't do no talkin' 'tel he gits good and ready," she argued. At four o'clock Joe came home from his brother Lem's.

"I want to git a horse, Joe, to fetch my trunk, and my valises, and my enlarged picture away from old man Jameses," Mr. Lindsay said to him, "and ef you know anybody's got one to spare, I wisht you'd tell me. I tried to git one at Jim's and Willises, but Jim and Henrietty wuz gone, and old man Willis wuz in town with his buggy mare."

"What you wanter breng your trunk away on Sunday fer, Mr. Lindsay?" wondered Joe.

"I'll tell you, Joey, ef you'll git me a horse!"

"Thar hain't nary bit o' use a huntin' up a hoss when you can jest kerry them thengs down here, Mr. Lindsay," protested Mrs. Doggett: "They hain't heavy and 'tain't fur. Eph, he'll be in d'rectly—he jest stepped acrost the creek in Dock's boat, to look at Mr. Archie Evans' new terbaccar barn—and he can help you kerry one end o' the trunk, and one valise, and Joey can kerry your ma's enlarged picture, and t'other valise."

When, an hour after, a baggage-laden procession came in at Mrs. Doggett's front door, her curiosity had reached its utmost tension.

"Set the thengs right down, Eph—you all," she cried: "you can take 'em upstairs after supper. Mr. Lindsay looks plumb worried!"

Mr. Lindsay looked at her dejectedly. "I am worried, Mrs. Doggett—I've been treated bad—never wuz treated worse in my life, and onexpectedly too, and by people I never done nothin' to in my life! Ever sence I left the James, the old man has been a sendin' me word to come to see 'em—"

"Yes, sir, he has," broke in Mr. Doggett: "hit's been 'tell Lindsay to come up and set a while some night, 'tell Lindsay to come, ' ever' time he sees me er the boys."

"I went too, two Sundays, as you all know," went on Mr. Lindsay, "and they treated me nice, and I thought I'd git the same treatment today, but—"

"You don't mean to say, Mr. Lindsay, they didn't treat you well, after all that sendin' word fer you to come?" shrilled Mrs. Doggett.

"I'll tell you how the old man done me," said Mr. Lindsay, bitterly. "I seed him a standin' at the gate, and I thinks 'the pore old creeter's a sunnin' his rheumatiz.' When I got up clost I says, 'Good evenin', Mr. James,' but he never let on he heerd my 'good evenin'—jest begun on me. 'Sir,' he says, 'your trunk's here in my house, and I want you to take hit away! I sent word to you as fur back as Friday to come and git hit, and hit's here yit!' I says: 'Why, Mr. James, I hain't heerd nothin' of hit!' 'Well you hear hit now,' he says: 'I want hit tuck away, and don't you never come on my place ag'in, ner never speak another word to any o' my family!'"

Mrs. Doggett's heart beat with a throb of ecstasy. Surely old July's words were coming true! Mr.

Brock's rival was set aside: Mr. James had "turned on him!" Mrs. Doggett was diplomatic; her face assumed a look of indignant horror.

"O mercy goodness, Mr. Lindsay!" she cried, "you know Mr. Jeemes never said that!"

"Yes, he did," went on Mr. Lindsay, "and when I told him I'd try to git the thengs away Monday, he said like somethin' crazy: 'That trunk's got to be tuck out before the sun sets, er I'll know the reason why!' I says then: 'What have I done, Mr. James, that you're a talkin' to me this away?' And he says: 'I din't need to smut my tongue with pertic'lers, but you hain't no nice person—no fit person to be in no nice house with nice people!'

"I left him then, seein' he wuz jest bent on insultin' me. I tell you, Uncle Eph, it made me feel bad to think I'd never done the old man a bit o' harm in my life—never nothin' but kindness—and yit he'd talk to me that away!"

Mr. Lindsay, honest and as upright as one of the boulders that stand on the granite-clad hills of his Scotch ancestors, and conscious of his rectitude, flushed deeply as he spoke of the indignity that had been put upon him.

"I wouldn't 'a' thought hit o' him, no sir, I wouldn't!" murmured Mr. Doggett, in amazement.

"Hain't hit outdacious," execrated Mrs. Doggett, "him been here ever' sence the flood might' night', and a talkin' that away?"

"When I wuz up thar a Friday a helpin' him fix the yard fence whar Mr. Castle's jinnies busted hit," Joey volunteered, "he said to me: 'Joey, you take them old overhalls o' Lindsay's a hangin' thar in the shed, and throw 'em in the creek! And tell him to send after the balance of his old duds—I don't want him to come after 'em hisse'f, but send somebody after 'em!'"

"Why didn't you tell me, Joey, afore now?" Mr. Lindsay's voice was mildly reproving.

"I wuz a thenkin' about hit," answered Joey, "but I jest thought hit wuz too mean to tell anybody, and ef he wanted to tell you, he might as well do hit hisse'f."

"What did the old man say when you went to fetch the trunk and thengs?" asked Mrs. Doggett.

"I couldn't git Uncle Eph ner Joey to go to the door," Mr. Lindsay said aggrievedly, "and when Miss Lucy met me and I told her I'd come after my trunk she looked surprised and said hit wuzn't in the way, and whyn't I let hit stay? And ef I must take hit away, whyn't I wait 'tel a week day? I told her her pa'd ordered hit to be tuck away before dark. 'Pa,' she said, and hit wuz the first time I ever heerd her speak sharp to him, 'what made you do that?' He never made her no answer—never invited me to set down ner nothin'."

"Wher' wuz Miss Nancy at?" queried Mrs. Doggett.

"I never seen her, but when me and Joey wuz a packin' out the trunk and thengs, poor Miss Lucy jest stood a lookin' at us, the tears a streamin' down her face." The husky note in Mr. Lindsay's voice warned him to silence. He reached out and taking the picture frame off the trunk, laid it on his knees, and gazed soberly at the gentle face that looked out of the frame.

"I never fell out with nobody in my life," he went on presently, "and I wuz plumb thunderstruck at the old man's conduct."

"Maybe Miss Nancy er some person that wanted to git you in disfaver with him, had somethin' to do with hit," suggested Mr. Doggett.

"Aw hush, Eph," interrupted Mrs. Doggett, "you know they didn't!"

Mr. Lindsay cogitated a moment. "I never knowed what kind o' people they wuz ontel I went there and staid a while," he said, presently: "and I'll jest tell you the truth, Uncle Eph, I found out two of 'em wuzn't the kind o' people you can live with. I've been a holdin' back all the meanness of old man James, but now hit's out and his daughter's too! I've been around among a heap o' different people, but I've never seen a woman as mean as Miss Nancy, and as fer him, he jest sets and studies up meanness! I knowed he wuz fractious, old and childish, and I didn't want to go there, but they kept at me ontel I went and done the work fer ten weeks, and never charged 'em a cent—jest got my board and washin' fer pay.

"I allus thought Miss Nancy and Miss Lucy wuz one as good as t'other, and when I first went there to stay, Miss Nancy couldn't 'a' been no nicer to me, but jest in a little while—and I couldn't tell you the reason to save my soul—she turned on me and treated me worse than a dog all the time I stayed."

"Miss Lucy is more pleasin' somehow'n Miss Nancy," observed Mr. Doggett.

"Yes, they say she takes after her ma, a good woman. Miss Nancy is strange ever' way," continued Mr. Lindsay, "she don't keer what she says to a person to hurt his feelin's. She fusses at Miss Lucy all the time, and Miss Lucy jest knuckles down to her, and sets under their abuse as dumb as an oyster. She tried to keep hit hid from me how they done her, but 'twuzn't no use.

"And I couldn't do nothin' to *suit* Miss Nancy neither. Ef I made a fire in the stove, the sticks wouldn't be laid to suit her, and she'd take 'em out and lay 'em in the fireplace, and make the fire over! Most of the time she wuz so savin' o' wood, she wouldn't let Miss Lucy kindle a fire in the

fireplace in the kitchen at all, and the poor theng would churn in that cold kitchen without a fire, all that cold weather!

"When I first went there I kep' a wonderin' what made the old man quarrel so much about hit a takin' so much feed fer 'that black cow and calf,' and I come to find out they wuz Miss Lucy's! When he's able, he walks around the pasture and never lets them two old mares o' his git out o' his sight, and he feeds 'em twelve years o' corn at a time, and never allows 'em to be drove out o' a walk, but he begrudges ever' bite o' hay and corn that goes into the black cow and calf, and stints 'em scandalous. I fed 'em a plentiful, when I wuz there. Miss Lucy wuz mighty pleased how well they done.

"And grudgin' feed hain't all: That old man hain't got an honest bone in his body. Miss Lucy told me one day, in the last ten years, (sence her ma died) that old man had tuck three of her hiefers and sold 'em and put the money in his pocket! Miss Lucy she takes what money she makes different ways, and buys ever'theng they need and use. Nancy puts the money she makes in the bank fer herse'f.

"Miss Lucy'd been a sewin' all fall fer niggers, and ef you'll believe me, she tuck ever' cent o' that money to make the last payment on her ma's tombstone! And at Christmas, she had three dollars left she wanted to git Christmas presents with, and she laid hit on the mantel while she wuz a gittin' ready to go to town, and that old man slyly put hit in his pocket!"

"Mr. Lindsay, you know he never done the pore creetur that away!" burst out Mrs. Doggett. "Well, hain't the world a comin' on? I don't see how hit can stand much longer! Hit's might' night' as wicked as 'twuz before the flood! I don't see how you kep' quiet, a seein' sech doin's!" she went on in a warm excess of pretended sympathy. Mr. Lindsay's eyes flashed.

"I couldn't hardly," he avowed, "after I seen that! And many a time after that when I've heerd the old man a bemeanin' her—innocent theng—my hands have jest itched, and I've jest set still sometimes a clinchin' my finger nails into the palms o' my hands 'tel they bled, a makin' myse'f remember he wuz a feeble old man, ef he wuz onjest and cruel to *her*.

"I done my best to sorter make up to Miss Lucy, while I wuz there fer the way they wuz a doin' her, and Miss Nancy ketched on to hit. Then ever' time me and Miss Lucy'd be a talkin' pleasant, she'd make signs to the old man, like 'jest look at Lucy tryin' to court, won't you, Pa!'

"One evenin' jest about dusk I went out in the hall, a startin' up stairs to git my milkin' coat, and I accidentally met Miss Lucy in the hall. Miss Nancy wuz on the porch, and she snarled out to the old man, so loud I heerd her: 'How does that look, her in the hall with him, and hit *dark*?'"

"When I come down stairs ag'in I says, 'Miss Nancy, you needn't 'a' been skeered about Miss Lucy,—you don't think I'd eat her ef I happened to ketch her by herse'f, do you?'"

"Now, Mr. Lindsay," put in Mr. Doggett, "maybe 'tain't so much meanness in the old man as you think. He hain't the worst man in the world when all's said: I think he's got some mighty clever streaks."

"I fail to see 'em," said Mrs. Doggett.

"Well, yes, old lady, but' he's suffered a heap, and maybe his mind hain't exactly all thar!"

"Naw you needn't tell me that old creeter's anytheng but mean!" Mrs. Doggett's voice was a snort of apparent jeering disbelief. "Old age and disease hain't got nothin' to do with hit. That old man's inbred mean!"

"I wonder what's the matter with Miss Nancy?" Dock ventured, raising his tousled head off the bed.

"I jest tell you, Mr. Lindsay," Mr. Doggett observed in a whisper to Mr. Lindsay, "hit's jest as plain as the nose on a man's face, when all's considered: Miss Nancy wuz a hankerin' to be Mrs. Lindsay—she wanted you herse'f!"

CHAPTER X

"NIGHT RIDERS"

"A jest and by-word are they grown."

"O Ma! Come here, Ma, quick!"

It was Monday morning, and this peremptory summons for Mrs. Doggett came from the direction of the tobacco barn, in Joey's voice, hoarse and unnatural. Mrs. Doggett's hands were in the bread-tray, but she tore the dough from her fingers, and heedless of the milk picher that crashed to the floor under the impetus of her rush, ran at top speed in the direction of the call.

"Lord, I jest know some of 'em's killed plumb dead!" she ejaculated as she ran. "I didn't have bad dreams last night fer nothin'! I been a lookin' fer them tier-poles to fall on some of 'em at feedin' time! I told 'em a terbaccer barn wasn't no fitten place to stable hosses! They ort to 'a' kept 'em a while longer in that old piece o' barn out here, ef hit did leak!"

Mrs. Doggett was suffering from a corn, which necessitated the use of a carpet slipper. When she reached the middle of the plowed field, her slipper came off, throwing her violently. She rose groaning, and with her mouth full of dirt, but continued her run with unaccelerated speed.

"What is the matter, Joey? Who's killed?"

Mrs. Doggett's throat was dry with apprehension and fear when she reached the barn, but she managed to gasp out the question.

"Hain't nobody hurt, Ann." Mr. Doggett, pale and dazed, sitting flat on the dirt floor inside the barn, his back to one of its pillars, answered her in a voice that was weak and faint. "I bagged Joey not to holler and skeer you, but he would do hit!"

"Thar's what's the matter, Ma!" Joey, ashy white under his tan, pointed to the wagon. On the side board was tacked a great sheet of white wrapping paper covered with writing in big red letters. Against one of the rear wheels leaned an enormous bundle of ten-foot switches, newly cut from osage orange trees,—the wicked thorns left on, and the whole bound with a piece of white cotton rope, ravelled at its end, and saturated with blood.

From the switches dangled a big bunch of matches, and a necklace made of a twine string and two dozen loaded cartridges of thirty-eight caliber. Mrs. Doggett looked at these menacing articles in amazement.

"Whar'd that blood come from?" she gaped, "and who put them thengs thar?"

"Don't ast me ner Joey who put 'em thar," Mr. Doggett answered her, "all we know is they're *thar!* When I fust come in, I ketched sight o' them hedge switches, and them matches and ca'tridges layin' ag'in the waggin. I says, 'Joey, come here!' Joey, he tuck up the paper and I seed a change come over him. He turned pale and says, 'Pap, they're a gona git you!'"

"Hit's got 'Night Riders' signed to hit," Joey informed his mother, pointing to the big printed words that adorned the lower part of the paper. "And hit means they're a gona whoop Pap in a inch o' his life fer a startin' to raise a terbaccer crop this year,—and ef a whoopin' don't stop him, they're a gona tear up his waggin' and plows, and then burn up the house! And ef he hain't burnt up, they're a gona shoot him!"

"Man alive! You know that hain't so, Joey!" Mrs. Doggett's face would have served for a model of unbelieving horror.

"Jes' read the paper and see what hit says!" Joey spoke in the tone of the convinced.

Mrs. Doggett took a reluctant hold of the paper of warning. "You read hit, Joey. I hain't got my specs."

Joey obeyed.

"Ephriam Doggett," the paper read, "you are hearbye notifide not to plant, grow or cut a crop of tobacco this year, 1908. If you do not obey this notification, you will be ferst, whipt,—then if this does not convinse you, your tools and farming impliments will be destroide: then your dwelling will be burnt even with the ground, and last, you will be rideded with bullits. In proof of your willingness to abide by these orders, you will have your plant beds destroid by yourse'f or somebody under your directions before our next vissit, which will be soone.

"NIGHT RIDERS."

"Holy Powers!" quavered Mrs. Doggett. "Eph, I told you, you wuz a takin' too much resk a puttin' out them plant beds! I felt like you wouldn't be 'lowed to raise no terbaccer!"

"Why, Ann," Mr. Doggett remonstrated, "I didn't 'low thar'd be no night ridin' across the River, away over here in the aidge o' the Burley, you might call hit! Anyway, wouldn't hit be better fer a feller to have his beds sowed and ready, ef he did git to raise a crop, than not to have no plants ready?"

"I guess you won't throw off no more now on the Texas kin fer writin' all skeered up fer fear somepin'd be done to you!" Mrs. Doggett, when fiercely moved, always maligned Mr. Doggett.

"Eph, you wuz the very gentleman that said Uncle Josh had been a readin' the papers, and a swallerin' all that wuz in 'em, like a duck a swallerin' down dough!"

"Well, a body wouldn't 'a' never thought hit!" Mr. Doggett rose weakly, as unsteady on his feet, as a day old calf, and rubbed his forehead. "We'd jest as well as go on and feed the hosses, Joey. Big Money's been a nickerin' fer his breakfast fer an hour, and I'll need him to go to town and see what Mr. Castle says. Mr. Castle told me a while back I needn't to plant no terbaccer: he wuz afeerd I wouldn't git to raise hit, and I ort to 'a' listened."

At this moment there were four bursts of laughter from the roof of the barn. The three on the

floor looked up to see Jappy and Marshall, who had not come home the evening before,—Dock, who was supposed to be yet in bed, and Bunch Trisler, sitting in acrobatic fashion across the tier poles, in a high state of glee.

"Pap, who's a gona git you?" called out Dock, giving vent to a howl that endangered the safety of his position.

"Some people swaller down ever' theng they see on a paper, like a duck does dough," quoted Marshall, facetiously, as the four clambered down from their perch. "We 'lowed they would when we fixed up that notus."

Mr. Doggett and Joey grinned feebly as the perpetrators of the joke, still laughing, swung themselves to the ground. But Mrs. Doggett was full of reproach.

"Whar'd that blood come from, I'd like to know?" she asked angrily.

"That's my old Dominecker hin's blood, Ma," Dock informed her. "Me and Bunch jeet killed her about a hour ago."

Mrs. Doggett turned on Bunch. "You're a nice un, Bunch Trisler," she inveighed. "You, a married man, with chillern, a puttin' up them boys to play off sech a caper on their parents! Here I am, wore to a plumb frazzle, a pullin' through that plowed ground, a runnin', thenkin' Eph, er one the boys, wuz shore killed! You outdacious scamp, somepin will be sent on you fer that!"

"Don't be too hard on the boys, Ann," interposed Mr. Doggett, who had partially regained his spirits: "they didn't mean no great harm,—jest wanted to have a leetle fun, you might say."

"Fun!" mimicked Mrs. Doggett. "I don't see no fun in no sich jokes, Eph Doggett, ner nobody else would, with a quarter of a pint o' brains! A little taste o' jail boardin'd improve the quality o' the little spoonful you've got in your head, Bunch Trisler! Your recollection shorely hain't good, er you'd remember about Jake Wilson a bein' give nine months in jail fer playin' a night rider joke, er two, in *this* County!"

"But, Ma," argued Dock, "this hain't like sendin' letters through the Nuniter State's mail! And Jake wouldn't a never been done nothin' to, ef he hadn't 'a' writ that letter fer that feller that 'tended like he couldn't write,—that thar Gover'ment 'Tecter that wuz out a runnin' down the feller that sent them night rider letters to the big men. This hain't no sendin' through the mail!"

"Hit's the same principle anyhow!" Mrs. Doggett contended, as she started off, her progress somewhat impeded by the lack of one shoe, "and hit ort to be paid with some them bread and water rations I've heerd they have at the jail-houses! Joey and Eph can come to the house d'reckly, when I ring the bell fer breakfas', but as fer the rest of you, you c'n fill up on matches and ca'tridges and hedge tree bark fer all I keer! Thar'll be nothin' on *my* table for you!"

"The old lady is some mad," apologized Mr. Doggett, "though a body couldn't scurcely blame her, considerin'. I wuz myse'f ondoubtedly skeered: hit sorter wilted me down. But, sence hit wuzn't nothin', I don't see no use in takin' hit to heart. Hit makes a feller feel powerful good to thenk thar hain't no night riders over here, though. A body has a heap to be thankful fer, now, don't they?"

"I declar!" said Mr. Doggett, that afternoon, "I thenk I'll go a feeshin' this evenin': I believe I'll jest step down to the creek thar, and try to pull me out a sucker! I've been feelin' so unnarved sence this mornin' I hain't done no good at plowin'. Bein' pestered p'intedly will cut a feller down!"

"Yes, hit will," agreed Mrs. Doggett, "but I've got to hunt my old gray turkey hin, I can't help how bad I feel. She's plumb gone off, the pesky theng! She's got hit in her mind not to lemme know whar she lays. You jest keep one eye on the house while I'm gone, will you?"

Miss Nancy James' largest yellow turkey hen, suffering from the same mental aberration as the gray hen of Mrs. Doggett, held to her determination to withhold a knowledge of the vicinity of her nest from her mistress, with a tenacity worthy of a better cause: thus it happened that Mrs. Doggett and Miss Nancy, in their search for their feathered properties, met in the Castle pasture field, back of the Doggett house.

"Actually and candidly, thar's more torment than profit in turkey raisin', hain't thar?" Mrs. Doggett mopped her warm face with her checked apron, and sank down beside Miss Nancy on the log which lay in convenient nearness to the spot of their meeting. "I believe I'll jest quit the turkeys and raise mostly chickens. Miss Nancy, do you reckon you could swap me some settin's o' hin aigs,—some your black 'Nockers? My aigs is good as any to sell, but Eph says I've kept my chickens so long without no change of blood, they've got to be jest pincushions trimmed in feathers, with darnin' needles stuck in 'em fer legs,—no chickens at all!"

Miss Nancy, who was wearing an unusual expression of satisfaction, fanned herself with her faded sun-bonnet, and remarked that she would have plenty of eggs by the end of the week. Mrs. Doggett made a surreptitious four seconds study of Miss Nancy's contented countenance.

"Mr. Lindsay," she remarked at the expiration of her scrutiny, "he's tuck his thengs away from your house."

"Yes, he has," said Miss Nancy in a noncommittal tone as she turned her head away from Mrs.

Doggett and jabbed with the dead iron-weed stalk she had in her hand at an unoffending chickweed by her ragged shoe.

"He talked like he'd been treated outdacious mean by you all!"

Miss Nancy's face was still averted, but her ears turned crimson.

"I dunno what we've done to him!" she exclaimed.

"Well, he's a talkin' awful about you and your Pa anyway. He tuck you and him both up last night, and throwed off on you scandalous. I said to myse'f when he wuz a rantin', 'pore Miss Nancy, he hates her, the Lord goodness!' He jest called you ever'theng his tongue could lay to. Says you are a reg'lar rip-tearer, and fer all your pa jest sets and studies up meanness, he can't turn a wheel to you, when you git on one them highs o' your'n. He said ef your Ma'd 'a' saw fit to send you to the ejut-house when you wuz a child, and 'a' never 'a' brung you away 'tel you wuz a corpse, the world would 'a' had a little somethin' to be thankful fer in his opinion.

"I spoke up and says: 'Mr. Lindsay, you know you don't mean them thengs! And he went on and said: 'Miss Lucy is as harmless as a rabbit, and she's got the disposition of a forgivin' angel, but that old Nancy is as bitter as quineirn and as ill as a copperhead! She's the devil's half-sister, ef not more nigh kin.'

"And he said you jest staid thar all the time, a reg'lar cock o' the walk, and quarreled at Miss Lucy, and she had to mind you er you'd take the place! And he said Miss Lucy'd fattened ever' little nigger in town, tryin' to git a boy to stay to do your all's turns, and the reason none wouldn't stay, you made the time so hot fer 'em, they couldn't stand hit!

"And when I wuz a wonderin' how many more mean thengs he wuz goin' to say, he lit in on your *looks*."

Here there was a complete annihilation of the unoffending chickweed.

"He 'lowed," manufactured Mrs. Doggett, "that you wuz as ugly as the devil before day, and as old-lookin' as I dunno what: said fer all you wore big leather gloves night and day, your hands wuz as yaller as old bacon rind, and your mouth looked like a hollyhock, and your eyes like they wuz bound 'round with red thread!

"I says, 'Mr. Lindsay, I'd hush!' But he went on: 'She's the tightest human too, I ever knowed,—one o' them that'd skin a flea fer hit's hide and taller, and then dry the meat fer the dogs!' Said he happened in at your Pa's once when he wuz a workin' at Mr. Willises, and you had that little fool nigger Lish down on the kitchen floor, a lickin' up a little gob o' molasses he'd spilt, to save it!"

"I never thought of sech a theng!" Miss Nancy burst out.

"Well, that's *his* tale," pacified Mrs. Doggett: "I know'd hit hadn't no acquaintance with the truth, but I'm jest a tellin' you. He said Miss Lucy'd put out nice bought Gran'pa tair soap fer him to wash his hands with, and you'd hide hit away, and put out a spoonful er two o' lye soap on a saucer."

Miss Nancy's face was furiously flushed, and her eyes gleamed steely.

"Did he tell any more lies on me?" she demanded, when Mrs. Doggett paused for breath.

"He said you bought a gobbler last year," went on her informer, in glib prevarication, "from Miss Maude Floss, on condition ef anytheng happened to her t'other one, you'd sell hit back to her, and hern died, and when you let her have hit back, you charged her three cents a week fer all the time you'd had hit, fer *turkey pasture*.

"And he said after all he'd done fer you all, last winter, when he come back on a friendly visit, he wuz ordered off the place. Then he lit out on your Pa, and I never heerd the like in my life.

"'Old Milton Jeemes,' he says, 'sets up to the world to be mighty religious, but he hain't got no Christianity, jest hypocrites before company. He's about as contrary and overbearin' as people gits to be in this world, a hard old party, a kind of a dog-man.'

"'He's a bloomin' fer hell,' he says, 'and hell's a gittin' ready fer him right *now*!'

"I says, 'Mr. Lindsay, somethin'll be sent on you fer that, and don't you fergit hit!' And I thought to myse'f ef I hated anybody like that, I'd have more respect'n to be a tryin' to talk to their daughter!"

"Now wouldn't you?" fleered Miss Nancy: "wouldn't you?"

"And talkin' about the brazen impudence o' men, he said: 'Ef I wuz to take a notion to Miss Lucy, they wouldn't be nothin' in my way thar—the old man couldn't keep her from havin' me—but I hain't tuck the notion yit. As fer old Nance—'" Mrs. Doggett had reached the climax of her narration, "'she'd jump at the chance o' me! Jest see how she does that old bachelor cousin of Archy Evans that lives there. He comes to see old man Jeemes sometimes, and you ort to see her fly about in her Sunday dress, a sayin', 'Now Mr. Whitley,' jest as fine as a bird twitterin'. She thinks he's got money.'"

Miss Nancy could endure no more.

"I've got to go!" she announced in a freezing voice, as she stalked off, leaving all farewells unsaid.

Mrs. Doggett looked after her with a pleased expression.

"Ef ever Miss Lucy Jeemes gits sight o' Mr. Lindsay ag'in," she said happily to herself, "hit'll be when Miss Nancy is a corpse, not before!"

CHAPTER XI

"MORE NIGHT RIDERS"

"Painful the task is I do, which to you I know must be grievous."

One afternoon in the last week of March, Mr. Doggett came into his yard with six mysterious envelopes in his hand. Mrs. Doggett pounced curiously upon them.

"Diamont dyes! What you gona color with all them, Eph? You must be a thenkin' o' startin' up one them dyin' fact'rys!"

Mr. Doggett grinned. "Them's Mr. Castle's pertection ag'in night riders, Ann! He had the laugh on me when the boys skeered me, week afore last, and now I got the laugh on him a leetle. He says, 'Doggett, hit looks so bad, them beeg white beds a layin' right thar alongside the road. Ef they wuz colored now, they wouldn't show nigh so plain!'

"He 'lowed too, he didn't no ways expect no night riders in this County, on account o' this not bein' a regular terbaccer County, and the Equity not havin' tuck much holt here, but he'd feel safeter, ef them canvases wuz dyed! Yes, sir, old lady, he's skeered some. Hit tickled me to hear him talk, and I brung the dye along to please him, although I hain't no notion thar's any need o' usin' hit.

"Thar hain't no doubt about hit, though, a good many them Independent raisers that's refused to sign the agreement not to raise no terbaccer this year, *is* a havin' their plant beds tore up and some their barns burnt. Thar's a heap in the papers about hit, hain't thar, Mr. Lindsay?" Mr. Doggett appealed to Mr. Lindsay who had just come in.

Mr. Lindsay nodded. "I jest got a letter from my cousin over in Woodford, tellin' about the night ridin' there. She says the people there thinks the terbaccer trust is hirin' a good many tough fellers to burn barns,—and a layin' hit on the Equity, a tryin' to destroy the Equity's credit. He says the people think the trust men actually destroyed some of their own ware-houses, jest to discredit the Equity."

"Yes, sir," Mr. Doggett agreed, "and a heap o' the mischeef is a bein' done by mean fellers that sees a chance to git in some spite work on other fellers they are enemies to, without bein' cotched up with, like hit wuz in time o' the war, when a heap o' devilment they never thought o' doin', wuz laid on the soldiers! Hain't that so, Mr. Lindsay? You remember them times, don't you?"

Mr. Lindsay signified that he did.

"Mr. Brock says that he don't believe they're a goin' to tech this County," broke in Mrs. Doggett: "he says ef they do though, they'll have to whoop him about three times a day before he'll quit! And, speakin' o' angels,"—a look of intense pleasure enveloped Mrs. Doggett: "thar comes Mr. Brock, now. And what's he fetchin'? Hit's a newspaper, hain't hit, Eph?"

Mr. Brock proved the bearer of bad news. A paragraph in a New York paper he had gotten at the Castle house, stated that in Bracken County, Kentucky, a tobacco planter had killed two negroes, and shot off both arms of a white man who he had caught scraping his plant beds. The name of the white man was given as Hancock Slempe, and the paper further stated that he was in a precarious condition. Hancock Slempe was no other than Mr. Doggett's brother-in-law, his sister's husband.

Mrs. Doggett was much affected by the news, but Mr. Doggett suggested that it might not be true.

"Sence the boys fooled me, I jest don't know what to believe *is* so!" he exclaimed. "Do you reckon hit's so, Mr. Brock?"

Mr. Brock did not know, but gave it as his opinion that it was true.

"I wished I knowed," cried Mr. Doggett, sorely puzzled as to the proper course of action. "Maybe I'd jest better go on over thar, anyway! Poor Louizy, ef hit's *so*, she's pestered might' night' to death! Jest knock me up a plateful o' victuals, Ann, and I'll throw on a clean shirt, and jerk on my Sunday clothes, and Joey, he can take me to the train. I'll jest stay a day er two, and the boys kin keep an eye on the plowin' and thengs ontel I git back."

Mrs. Doggett had made a fire in her stove, and cut a strip of bacon, before she thought to ask, "How do people travel 'thout money, Eph?"

Mr. Doggett's jaw fell. "I plumb fergot I never had nothin' left from the terbaccer! And now, what am I to do? I sorter hate to ask Mr. Castle to advance me any now, this early, on another crop that I might not git to raise."

Mr. Brock looked out of the window in a sudden strong interest in a bird in a willow on the creek's bank, so that Mr. Doggett's look of appeal was lost to him. Mr. Lindsay unfolded a worn leather pocket-book.

"How much will your 'round trip ticket come to, Uncle Eph? I guess I can fix you up."

Within twenty minutes from the time of the reception of Mr. Brock's ill tidings, Big Money was making quick application of his hoofs to the turnpike leading to the railroad station from which Mr. Doggett was to take the train.

Rain set in on the morning after Mr. Doggett's departure on his visit of consolation, and for a week, fell heavily at intervals, precluding all possibility of plowing. In the afternoon sunshine of the eighth day, Mr. Doggett returned, and walked home from the station, his face rivalling the sun in its good cheer.

Crossing a rye field, he came suddenly upon Mr. Lindsay, tacking slats upon a strip of wire fencing,—an accommodation job, he had taken for the man for whom he had been stripping tobacco.

"I thought you had gone off for good, Uncle Eph," he greeted Mr. Doggett, as warm, and blowing with exercise, his shoes and the bottoms of his Sunday pantaloons muddy from road splashes, Mr. Doggett seated himself on a weather-beaten "drag," lying alongside the fence.

"How's your sister's man got?"

"He wuz as well as common when I left. He brung me to the train," answered Mr. Doggett.

"You don't say!" Mr. Lindsay dropped his hammer. "I 'lowed he'd be dead of blood poison by now, maybe, with his arms shot off that a way."

Mr. Doggett grinned blithely. "He's all thar, Mr. Lindsay! Hain't nary bit o' him missin', so fur as I could see, from his scelp lock, clean down to his frost-bit toe-nail. Yes, sir, he's all thar. You see, he wuzn't never shot at, let alone bein' hit. Hit wuz all a made-up tale!

"Hancock says that the Equity men thar says that Terbaccer Company that buys all our terbaccer, jest hires some sassy, no-count fellers that hain't easy onless they're a lyin', to write made-up news. Yes, sir, them's the fellers that's a puttin' in more'n three thirds o' the killin's and barn-burnin's.

"Hancock, he says thar is a right smart mischief a goin' on though,—says folks' barns *has* been burnt, yes, sir, and a good many whooped too: but some o' this is bein' done, jest like I wuz a tellin' you t'other day, by enemies—mean fellers that jest takes advantage o' the times to git in their private spite and meanness and lay hit on the night riders, yes, sir.

"The beeg men in the Equity don't believe in night ridin', but jest in *reasonin'*: but Hancock says him and them fellers that's done the sweatin' in the terbaccer raisin' and is a holdin' out ag'in the trust, they know a righteous purpose, and they hain't a goin' to 'low theirselves to be beat by some few fool terbaccer raisers that don't know enough to keep from aidin' and abettin' what's a holdin' 'em down.

"Hancock says him and them fellers thar thenks like him, jest aims to sp'ile the seed beds, and do a little skeerin', so the other fellers that is so shortsighted, er stubborn, er selfish, they can't see the benefit o' cuttin' out a crop, won't git to raise none."

"I reckon Hancock and the rest of 'em ain't a livin' very high these days," observed Mr. Lindsay.

"No, sir, they hain't," Mr. Doggett agreed. "Hancock and most the raisers in that County is jest got a little piece o' their own ground (farms hain't beeg thar like they are in this County) but they hain't got much else. Hancock never had no glass in his winders,—jest had a slidin' board, and he never had no great thengs to eat while I wuz thar. He says him and the rest of the County has been beat down to cornbread and greens, but they are willin' to live on that, ef hit'll help any, ontel the trust's holt on 'em is broke. Yes, sir.

"They're a goin' to have a parade some time this spreng, at Augusty, to show they're a holdin' out, and Hancock, he says they're a goin' to carry flags with 'Very little money, but plenty of cornbread and greens!' writ on 'em.

"Cornely, Hancock's girl, says she's a goin' to be in that parade ef she has to go barefooted. She's been a wearin' a pair o' Hancock's old shoes all winter, but they're about et into the uppers now! Hit's my belief, they're plumb right, Mr. Lindsay, a tryin' to keep the crop down this year.

"And they've convinced a heap o' others, too, one way and another, yes, sir. One man thar,—he's a goin' to be the biggest feller in the parade,—they reasoned with him both before and after they whooped him. He's convinced, yes, sir, and don't hold no gredge, neither. He says: 'Boys, you whooped me into this theng, but I like hit so well, you'll have to whoop me out o' hit!'"

"The night rider fellers didn't give you nary skeer, did they?" Mr. Lindsay took a wire staple from between his teeth to ask.

Mr. Doggett looked sheepishly down at the ground for a few minutes before he answered.

"The old lady—ef I wuz to tell you somethin', Mr. Lindsay," he hazarded, "would you promise ferever to keep hit from the old lady?"

After Mr. Lindsay's remark that he thought he could safely promise that, Mr. Doggett took the precautionary measure of drawing his improvised chair a little nearer.

"Hit wuz away after ten when I got to the depot thar that evenin' I went," he began, "and Hancock he lives five miles out, yes, sir. Hit wuz so dark I wouldn't 'a' knew my own grandmother ef I'd 'a' met her, but I got perticular diractions and 'lowed I could make out to find the way a walkin'.

"I'd got about two miles and a half out, nigh about, before I seed anybody on the road: then I heerd a trompin' and made out a gang o' about forty fellers a ridin'. They wuzn't carryin' no beeg lights,—jest one er two lanterns wuz all—and ever' feller had a piece o' black cloth acrost the top o' his face.

"'Hello thar, Bud!' the foremost one hollered out to me when I sorter aided to one side the road,—'are you a goin' to raise a terbaccer crop this year?"

"I noticed some of 'em wuz a carryin' hoes and shovels, and one o' two sacks o' somethin, besides some guns, but I wuz tuck so suddent I never once thought what they wuz up to.

"'Yes, sir' I says, 'I'm a aimin' to put in a right smart o' a crop.'

"And, ef you'll believe hit, Mr. Lindsay, them words hadn't hardly left my mouth before two o' them biggest fellers jumped off their hosses, and grabbed me and tied my hands behind my back!

"'I hain't got no money, boys!' I says, thenkin' maybe they wuz a Jesse Jeemes gang.

"'We don't keer nothin' about your money,' the leader in front, says, 'you'll jest come along with us, Bud, and we'll tend to you, after we git through our work.'

"They h'isted me on behind a little feller ridin' a big hoss, and I went along with 'em. I didn't see nothin' else I could do, Mr. Lindsay.

"They kep' the beeg road, I'd jedge fer about two miles acrost the country, then all of 'em stopped by a awful beeg terbaccer bed, a layin' sorter on a hill like.

"'Less jest seed this one,' says one of the fellers carryin' a sack.—'Jack Rout'd plant a dozen more beds, ef he knowed this one wuz sp'ilt, and we'd as well save him that trouble.'

"And, ef you'll believe hit, Mr. Lindsay, they skinned that canvas offen that thar bed, sowed hit thick with grass seed, and put the canvas back like hit wuz, before a body could ketch on to what they wuz a doin'!

"Then they rid on purty fast 'tel they'd got clean out'n the neighborhood. When they come to another beeg fine bed, the sassy little feller I wuz a ridin' behind, he says: 'Less let Bud do some diggin' here at this bed. He's a gittin' restless, havin' nothin' to do!'

"The others all laughed, but they ondone my hands and give me a hoe and a shevel, and told me what to do. The plants wuz all a comin' up so nice,—I felt 'em when I run my hand over 'em—I jest plumb hated to tech 'em, but thar wuzn't nothin' else fer me to do, Mr. Lindsay, but jest do like they told me.

"I dug a long hole, jest the length of a man, three feet deep, nigh about, right in the middle o' the bed, and scraped off all the plants that was left outside hit!

"I wuz in a plumb muck o' sweat when I got through, hit bein' a warm night, and me awful tired to begin with. They put up a head and foot-stone, and writ somepin' on 'em about this hole a bein' the only fitten place fer a man that wuz a goin' ag'in his neighbors fer the trust.

"The naixt bed we come to, them fellers *salted*. Yes, sir! The man carryin' the salt sack says: 'Clover seed and hemp seed is too high fer me to waste,—I jest brought the salt whar I had salted my hog meat down!'

"After we had rid over about feeftteen miles o' ground, the ring-leader, he says: 'We've been fur enough tonight, hain't we, boys? Less 'tend to the pris'ner and go home.'

"I'd been turrible warm up to this time, but when he said that, Mr. Lindsay, I got as cold as a frog.

"'Did we onderstand you to say you were a goin' to raise a crop o' terbaccer this year?' he says.

"'Yes, sir,' I says, and I own I wuz a shakin' so, Mr. Lindsay, my voice wuzn't natural, 'I wuz a expectin' to!'

"'He wuz expectin' to!' a man back in the crowd that hadn't done no talkin', put in. 'Tie him up to that thar ellow thar, boys, and give him about forty-nine!'

"They drug me, a pullin' back like a hoss, and diggin' my feet in the dirt worse'n a cat, to the tree, and while they wuz a tyin' me up, one of 'em cut some long ellow switches. I seed I wuz in fer hit, and I says: 'Boys, in my County, thar hain't nobody never had no orders not to raise terbaccer.'

"'Whar is your County?' the feller that advised whoopin' me, says.

"'Hain't that you, Bud Baker, and don't you live in this County?'

"I told 'em who I wuz, and whar I'd come from. Told 'em I wuz on my way to see my brother-in-law, Hancock Slem, that had accidentally got bad hurt a night ridin'. Then they all laughed, and Hancock,—he wuz the very one that wanted me whooped—he said he could 'a' keeked hisse'f fer not a knowin' me. Said hit bein' so dark and him near sighted wuz the main reason he didn't. Then they all 'lowed thar wuzn't another feller so nigh like Bud Baker, in ginerall build, in the State.

"I tell you, they ontied me quick, and after we had rid back to Hancock's house, I went to bed, and never waked up until ten naixt mornin'!

"Louizy, she wuz plumb proud I thought enough o' her to come to see her in her trouble, she said, but considerin' thar wuzn't no trouble on hand, she wuz glad to see me anyhow."

"I reckon," mused Mr. Lindsay with a laugh, "hit couldn't be held ag'in you, the part you took in night ridin' while you was there, considerin' it wasn't of your own free will. Did Hancock do any more night ridin' while you was there?"

"He wuz out some few nights," Mr. Doggett acknowledged. "The naixt night after I got thar, his crowd went out, a layin' bundles o' switches ag'in the doors o' some o' them hit had tore up the beds of, ez a sort o' reminder o' what'd be did to 'em ef they put out any more beds. Yes, sir.

"They called out one beeg fat man,—might' night' ez beeg around ez one them Archie Evans sycamores. An awful mean feller they said he wuz, and well off too. They wanted to tell him to his face what they'd do ef he didn't promise not to raise terbaccer.

"A sort o' coward they said he wuz, Mr. Lindsay. He had the Gov'ner to send him a lot o' them soldier boys to gyard his premises. The night Hancock and them went after him, his beeg gyardin' army wuz a layin' asleep in the terbaccer barn a mile from his house. One o' Hancock's men scouted around and seed the soldiers wuz asleep, and come and told the crowd.

"The night ridin' fellers, they wuz all a carryin' guns er rifles, but ever' feller wuz proud the gyarders wuz asleep. You see, nobody wanted to hurt the boys. Little town fellers, most of 'em wuz—proud to git to ride hoss back, and out fer a good time a coon huntin', smokin' ceegerettes and gittin' drunk. Some o' 'em hadn't never been on a hoss before they tuck to bein' gyarders!

"The fat feller come to the door, his beeg jaws a swellin' up red, like a turkey gobbler lookin' over a white sack o' meal. (He wuz in sich haste he hadn't drawed on no day clothes.)

"'Of course,' he says, 'I'm goin' to raise a tobacco crop this year. Didn't I git sixteen cents fer all mine last year?'

"'Yes, old elephant,' says Hancock, 'you did, and ever'body else around you, with terbaccer jest as good and some of hit better'n yourn, got *six*. What did the Trust's buyer promise you this year, ef you'd stand ag'in the Equity, and keek hit all you could as you've been a doin',—*eighteen* cents, er *twenty*?'

"'Exercise more jedgement in disposin' of your crop, ef you want to git *my* prices,' the fat man let out, mighty impudent, 'I'm a man of jedgement!'

"'We're men o' jedgement too,' Hancock says, 'but hit don't let us honestly git livin' prices fer our terbaccer.'

"'Ef you've got grievances ag'in the buyers, why don't you take 'em to the Courts?'

"'The Courts!' Hancock says,—'how long would hit be afore we'd git a Court decision? Of course the Courts might decide in time to do our great grandchildren justice, but thar hain't no Methusalah strain in none our blood jest at present. We'd have to *eat* while we wuz a waitin' fer the cases to be settled in Court!

"'I reckon you want us to *keep on* eatin' corn bread and greens ever' day, and let you keep that hide of yours plumped out with pound cake, turkey and ice cream, do you?'

"'You can eat timothy fer all I keer!' he says, 'twon't cut no figger in my terbaccer raisin'!'

"'Naw, but *these* will!' Hancock says, throwin' his bundle o' apple tree switches on the ground,—he'd had 'em hid—'these will! Ketch him, boys!'

"Hit tuck six o' the boys to pull him offen the verandy and git him roped, he clawed and fit so. They never give him but feefteen licks! No, sir. He give in uncommon quick,—his meat bein' some softer than his temper. I'd jedge though, hit wuz the sight o' that thar bundle o' hedge tree switches one the boys fetched and laid down in front o' him that brung him to reason so soon.

"He 'lowed when he ketched sight o' them, he wouldn't raise nary stalk o' terbaccer, and he wouldn't keek the Equity nary 'nother keek, no sir! And he meant hit too. Yes, sir, he wuz ez humble ez a toad when they ontied him and give him a match and a ca'tridge and told him these

wuz souvernears o' the occasion.

"I wuz so tickled when we rid off, I come nigh a fallin' off the hoss I wuz a ridin'!"

"Uncle Eph," said Mr. Lindsay, here, "you don't mean to tell me you was out a night ridin' too, of your *own choice*?"

Mr. Doggett colored as he realized his tongue slip had betrayed his departure from the beaten path of virtue.

"Don't never let the old lady and the boys, ner anybody else about here, hear o' hit, Mr. Lindsay," he besought. "Hancock put at me so to go and see a little o' the fun," he admitted reluctantly, "I went with him and the boys a time er two!"

"I guess you'll give up puttin' in a crop, now," Mr. Lindsay remarked, picking up his tools to go. Mr. Doggett rose.

"Well, no, sir. Ef I didn't raise, Mr. Castle'd git somebody else, so what'd be the difference? Ef I wuz not to put in a crop the boys'd have to light out and work in the mines maybe, or on the railroad, which is mighty nigh shore death, yes, sir! Any word you want to send the Jeemses, Mr. Lindsay?"

Mr. Lindsay stiffened slightly, and there was a world of meaning in his one word of answer, "No!"

CHAPTER XII

THE MAD COW

"No true love there can be,
Without its dread penalty, jealousy!"

A grateful odor from the white blooming wild cherry by the fence of the James potato-lot, was wafted to Miss Lucy, as, with her milk-buckets she came out into the dew-wet yard at five o'clock one morning well on toward the end of May. But she was not cognizant of its sweetness. Her face was pale, restless—harassed, as she paused a moment with her eyes on the sloping plowed fields across the road. The tobacco barn of Castle with its metal roof shimmered like silver in the bright sun: the fields showed flecks of green on their raw brown,—the newly set tobacco.

"I reckon he's a settin' tobacco, too, 'way down that away," she mused sorrowfully, turning her face toward the north: "and maybe he'll overwork and make hisse'f sick. I wisht I could hear from him some way. I ain't heard sence Pa—sence Pa ordered him never to come about us any more! Seems like he might write, but he's afraid of gittin' me in trouble, I guess, ef he sent me a letter through the mail. Pa and Nancy'd—"

The spider curled on the web that hung from the top rail of the gate to the post, felt a heavy drop on his back, and pirouetted away in fright. But a long mournful bellow from beyond the barn prevented the fall of any more drops on his web.

"Poor old Belle! She must be a gittin' worse," thought Miss Lucy, hurrying to the barn-lot, in which, the night before, she had left the roan cow that for more than a week had drooped and languished. To her surprise, the cow was pacing back and forth, restless as something caged, while the other cattle in the adjoining grass field, clustered not far from the boundary fence, regarding their sick mate in a peculiar, half-fearful fashion. Miss Lucy set down her buckets, and flew to the house.

"O Pa!" she cried: "I wisht you'd come down to the barn a minute. Old Belle's worse, I believe, and she's actin' so strange I am afraid to milk the other cows in the lot with her!"

"Aw, she won't hurt ye, Lucy," grumbled the old man, rising reluctantly. "Have the mar's come up to be fed yit?"

When Mr. James had seen the sick beast, he was much vexed.

"The best cow on the place, exceptin' the one you claim, Lucy Ann, and me not able to work with her! Now as soon as you git the milkin' done, and eat, you go git old man Doggett. Maybe *he* can do somethin' fer her."

Not for many weeks had Miss Lucy been allowed at the Doggetts. Mr. Lindsay kept his trunk there, and came back occasionally. This Miss Nancy knew, and though she was quite happy in the thought that Mr. Lindsay, in his anger toward her father, had given up Miss Lucy, she reasoned that if Miss Lucy were allowed to go to the Doggetts, it were possible she might sometime see him there, and the spell of his anger might be broken. So Mr. James, instructed by his youngest daughter, had ordered Miss Lucy to keep away from the Doggetts.

"People'll be a talkin' about you, Lucy Ann, ef you go there," they had said, and Miss Lucy meekly

accepted their dictum, and staid away.

"I don't know ef there ever was a woman situated like me," she thought to herself, as she ran down the familiar little path, "fifty years old—afraid of her folks—afraid to do like she wants to!"

A sob escaped her, a rebellious sob for the hard fate that rendered her path of love, one so stony.

"Jest look at these here plants, Ann. Ef I do say hit, I've got the purtiest plant beds in the country, and I've seed all the beds around whar they are a raisin' hit this year, and went to some purty night' over the Kentucky River country! Jest let a feller have the weather to sow his seed in February, and he'll shore have early plants!"

Mr. Doggett, who might have posed for a member of the Gallatores family, with his bare feet, and ungainly exposure of muddy red leg, coming into the yard with a great basket of newly pulled tobacco plants, was astonished to see Miss Lucy hurrying to meet him.

"Why, yes, sir, Miss Lucy," he acquiesced, hastily brushing off a little of the mud plastering from his lengthy stretch of blue overalls: "I'm shorely one the busy ones: got up at three this mornin', and won't git to tech bed 'tel nigh on to ten. Them two days' rain we had has give us a plantin' season right. Thar's enough wet in the ground fer four days, and ef we jest do the work, we'll have a fine set.

"A body has a heap to be thankful fer, now don't they? Me and my hands, we helped Jim a yistiddy and the day afore, and Jim and his hands is holpin' *me* today, aimin' to git done by termorrer, so's not to have to do no Sunday plantin'."

When Mr. Doggett paused for breath, Miss Lucy, who was listening in a nervous tremor, jerked out her errand. Mr. Doggett's face fell.

"I don't see how I kin jest possible spare the time. I'm a payin' the hands eighteen cents a hour, and *I'm* all the one thar is to keep 'em in plants and time 'em. But I'll jest go anyhow fer a few minutes. A body orntn't to be selfish, no, sir. I'll jest step over to the field and take these plants to the boys. You jest tell your Pa I'll come right on. Maybe I'll git thar time you do, hit's so nigh from the patch. Jest speak to the old lady thar in the house,—maybe she'll try to hobble up thar with you."

The cow stood stolid and quiet, when the three reached the barn-yard, unheeding the attentions of Miss Nancy and her father, who were trying to persuade her to eat a steaming mash.

"Hain't you no idy what ails her, Mr. Jeemes?" asked Mr. Doggett, contemplating her heaving sides.

"I dunno," replied Mr. James, "onless she's a runnin' mad. About three weeks ago a strange dog come through the lot when Lucy Ann was a milkin', and instid o' rockin' hit,—Lucy Ann, she run and climbed up in the loft!"

"Pa, I was afraid of hit!" Miss Lucy defended. "Hit was a frothin' at hit's mouth," she explained to Mr. Doggett.

"When Lucy Ann clumb down," went on the old man, "the dog wuzn't nowher's in sight, and she couldn't tell whuther the cow wuz bit er not."

"Well, Mr. Jeemes": Mr. Doggett rubbed his mud-coated hands uncertainly together, "I dunno what to tell you. She hain't got no holler-horn, ner hain't down in her back, but I ondoubtedly believe she's in a dangerous fix."

"S'pose'n you send fer Mr. Brock, Mr. Jeemes," suggested Mrs. Doggett: "*he'll* know ef anybody does what to do fer her!"

"That's right, Mr. Jeemes, yes, sir," affirmed Mr. Doggett: "Mr. Brock, he's got so many hands, he jest oversees. He don't work none hisse'f,—he don't have to work."

If there was a suspicion of irony in Mr. Doggett's voice, it was veiled from his hearers by the good-nature that habitually clothed his utterances.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Brock'll shorely be able to come, ef you send fer him, and I'll jest git 'long back to the boys!"

"I've got dinner to git," said Mrs. Doggett, as her husband disappeared in the direction of his barefooted assistants, "and ef thar's one time when men folks can lay in victuals faster'n another time, hit's at plantin' season! Stoopin' over sorter stretches their insides I reckon. And ef I didn't have dinner to git, thar'd be somethin' else to do. Whar you keep house, thar's always somethin' to do, and that a whole heap of hit! But I'll jest stay a while any way, and see how she gits."

Miss Nancy was dispatched on old Maude, the fattest of the two fat mares for Mr. Brock, with strict injunctions to ride slowly.

Though she had only a quarter of a mile to go, it was a full half hour before she returned with Mr. Brock, walking carefully and with mincing steps (because of the mud, and the extreme tightness of a new pair of summer tans), wearing his Sunday gray suit, a white shirt, collar, and tie, and carrying a gallon bucket full of ripe strawberries.

"I'd have been back sooner," explained Miss Nancy, "but Mr. Brock wouldn't come until he

changed his clothes, and I had to help old Jane hunt their bottle of cow bitters."

"Hain't them nice!" Mrs. Doggett sniffed Mr. Brock's offering of fruit, in appreciation. "Miss Lucy, didn't I tell you, Mr. Brock was the nicest man out?"

"Hit's awful good of you, Mr. Brock, to breng 'em, and awful good of you to come," Miss Lucy tendered. "Maybe you can do somethin' for Pa's poor old cow!"

During Miss Nancy's absence, the watchers had gotten the sick beast in one of the double stalls, the inner of which was separated from the outer stall by a long pole having one end caught over a hook.

"Lucy Ann, take that bucket, and fill it with water and fetch that brass kittle in the barn," ordered her father: "that cow ort to be watered."

Miss Lucy drew a bucket of water from the cistern which covered with loose planks, stood on the upper side of the barn, and carried the water to the open door of the stall in which the cow stood quiet, with eyes downcast, and feet spread apart.

"I'll take the water in to her, Miss Lucy," volunteered Mr. Brock, lifting the kettle. Mr. James objected.

"The cow is used to Lucy, Mr. Brock, and she might show fight to you."

Obedient to her father's wishes, Miss Lucy shrinkingly pushed the kettle under the dividing pole, and poured the water into it, while Mr. Brock, with prudent forethought, picked up a thick stick and took a position in the doorway.

Suddenly the animal, hearing the splash of water, turned and unexpectedly lunged at the kettle. The dividing pole cracked under her onslaught. Miss Lucy started back with a scream, and fell violently. Mr. Brock thrust strongly at the cow as she rushed forward again, and the creature reeled back on her haunches. Before she could recover herself for another plunge, he had lifted Miss Lucy over the sill, and together, Miss Nancy and Mrs. Doggett had slammed the door, and thrust its iron bar in place.

"Lord!" shuddered Mrs. Doggett, "that wuz a narrer call!"

"Open the gate for me," wheezed the breathless Mr. Brock, staggering along with his limp burden on whose forehead appeared a little blood, trickling from a slight cut. "We'd better git her to the house quick!"

Miss Lucy, laid on the sitting-room lounge, presently revived and feebly murmured her distress at causing so much of trouble.

"Don't you thenk we'd better go back and doctor on the cow, Mr. Brock—give her them bitters, er somethin'?"

The old man's mind, his anxiety for his daughter relieved, presently turned again to his barn-yard patient.

"I'm afraid she's about past medicine," Mr. Brock regretted, placidly seating himself. "If you wish it, though, I'll stay and take a look at her ever' once and a while, and if there's no change by three o'clock, and you wish it, I'll send home for my rifle to shoot the poor creature."

Mrs. Doggett bent reluctant eyes on the clock.

"I'm bound to go," she declared,— "them hungry men—"

"Mrs. Doggett, don't you want some cabbage plants? Pa said we was done settin' yesterday," proffered Miss Lucy. Miss Nancy scowled.

"You've surely forgot about Miss Maude Floss engagin' some last week, Lucy," she reminded her. "But maybe she won't take 'em all," she conciliated.

"Cabbage!" Mrs. Doggett's voice rang out shrilly. "Miss Lucy, don't say *cabbage* to me! I hain't raised a stalk o' cabbage sence the summer Jim and Henrietty married. That year the cabbage snake come a one o' killin' us all! But hit shore wuz the cause o' Jim and Henrietty a marryin'."

"Was hit?" asked Miss Lucy, innocently, while Mr. Brock smiled at her over his former parent-in-law's head. Mrs. Doggett resumed her seat.

"Hit wuz one them awful hot days in June, and Henrietty wuz a visitin' my Hattie that day. Our cabbage wuz jest a comin' in, and late Meriller cherries wuz turnin'—jest ripe enough to taste good, and we all et a right smart o' cherries before dinner and we wuz all a talkin' about the cabbage snake skeer, and about hit a sickenin' people nigh to death when one got accidentally cooked with the cabbage. Eph, he didn't believe thar wuz no pizen snake on cabbage, but I wuz sorter oneasy when I put hit on the table,—the first mess we'd had.

"Jim, he wuz a workin' in Cincinnati that summer. He wanted to see some new people he said, and he seed enough of 'em.

"'Ma,' he says when he come home, 'them people up thar is so distant a turn, and so selfish, they never ask you to eat a meal o' victuals; and they don't have no bread fitten to eat. I hain't ketched

sight of a hoe-cake o' corn bread, ner smelt a biscuit sence I've been gone!

"I set dinner on the table at twelve, and before the long hand drapped to two, ever' soul of us but Eph wuz a doublin' up like figur' eights! Eph, he don't never eat cabbage ner cherries. He het water fer us, and doctored us up with mustard and red pepper, ontel we all got some better, then he set off to the still-house to git a little whiskey fer us.

"While we wuz at our worst, Henrietty she crawled to the table and writ a letter, and when Eph, he started she give hit to mail on the road. Hit wuz her dyin' farewell to Jim, beggin' him to meet her in heaven, ef she died!

"Henrietty had been a lovin' Jim a long time, and though she wuz mighty purty behaved—never runnin' after him ner nothin'—she told Hattie onct, ef she didn't git to marry Jim, whoever married her would marry her lovin' another man, and that man Jim Doggett! Jim, he never paid much 'tention to Henrietty though—never tuck no holt on her. Seemed like he fancied most any the other girls more, 'tel he got that letter. Then he come home on the next Sunday excursion, and 'twuzn't no time 'tel they married! My belief is they wouldn't never 'a' married, ef hit hadn't 'a' been fer the cabbage snake.

"Mr. Castle, he read them Gover'ment disports, and said they wuzn't no cabbage snake, but I pulled up ever' head and throwed 'em in the creek, so's not to resk anytheng else gittin' pizened! I'm as bad about cabbage, as Jim is about a black cat, and he wouldn't have a black cat to save your life! I hain't raised nary head sence, ner I hain't a goin' to!"

"Ef that's the way you feel about hit, I wouldn't, Mrs. Doggett," said Miss Lucy, kindly.

"Did Mr. Doggett git back with the whiskey?" asked Mr. Brock, as Mrs. Doggett once more arose to go.

"He never got back 'tel midnight," she answered, "and I hain't never tasted nary drap o' *that* whiskey yit!"

A hundred times since Mr. Lindsay had been commanded to hold no further communication with the James household, he had taken a pencil in his fingers to write to Miss Lucy: a dozen times had walked as far toward her home, as the great beech that stood by the dividing fence of James and Castle: more than once he had set his foot on the mossy fence, but every time, the wounded pride of his sensitive nature, whispering that she ought to write or contrive to see him if she still loved him, held his hand and stayed his foot.

But his heart was not obedient to the pride that ruled his hand, and his foot, and its daily cry refused to be stifled. Mrs. Doggett never failed to wound him by her hints about Mr. Brock and Miss Lucy, but he could not deprive himself of the uncertain consolation of hearing from her, through the Doggetts.

On the evening of this third day of the tobacco setting, Mr. Lindsay, muddy, tired, and footsore, walked in at the Doggett back door. Mrs. Doggett, for reasons, could have hugged herself when he appeared. Joey, while his mother did her after-supper kitchen work, gave a skeleton-like account of the excitement of the day to the new-comer, but Mrs. Doggett, when she was free, repeated the tale with embellishments for his benefit.

"I jest wisht you could 'a' seed that pore old cow, Mr. Lindsay, after she got to cuttin' up," she narrated gleefully. "After Mr. Brock come, Miss Lucy, by the old man's directions, ondertuck to water her. I seed Mr. Brock wuz uneasy, fer he picked up a old hickory hoe handle, and follered Miss Lucy in the stall. The pore creeter no sooner ketcht sight o' the water'n she tuck violent. She run at the brass kittle, and mashed hit flat as a batty-cake, and ef Mr. Brock hadn't kep' her off Miss Lucy with that stick, she'd 'a' horned her to death!"

"Why didn't Brock water her hisse'f?" demanded Mr. Lindsay, indignantly.

"He did want to: tuck the kittle in his hand to," defended Mrs. Doggett: "but the old man—he's childish you know—he 'lowed that the cow, bein' used to Miss Lucy, wouldn't hurt her. Mr. Brock, he gethered up Miss Lucy when she fell, and got out o' the stable mighty quick, and 'twuz all me and Miss Nancy could do to git the door shet and barred."

"Wuz Miss Lucy hurt?" Mr. Lindsay was very white.

"Naw, she wuz jest stunned and had a little scratch on the side o' her forehead whar her head hit the wall. Mr. Brock, he 'peared desp'rit oneasy about her, though. Kerried her ever' step o' the way to the house in his arms hisse'f—wouldn't let nobody tech her to help him kerry her! Watch out, Mr. Lindsay! Ef you don't quit a whittlin' so reckless, you'll cut your hand!"

"Mr. Brock, he saved Miss Lucy's life shore, fer after they got out, the cow's eyes turned right green, and glared like a tagger's, and she tried to tear up ever'theng in sight! She tore down the rack, and bit the trough, and hooked in the ground, and flung the stable dirt plumb to the j'ist! Then she bawled and bawled the mournfulest you ever heerd!"

"I asked Mr. Brock what he thought ailded her, and he said she wuz shore mad, and all he knowed to do fer her wuz to shoot her and put her out'n her misery! She wuz a gittin' more

furiouser all the time when I left."

"Did Brock leave when you did?" asked Mr. Lindsay.

"No, indeed—he staid to dinner. Miss Nancy and her Pa, they looked like they wuz mighty pleased to have him! Miss Nancy, she went and killed a spreng chicken (one them fine black 'Nockers she's so choice of) and before I left she wuz a puttin' on some macaronian, and she knows how to cook hit too! I et some up thar onct—the first I ever et—all cooked up with aigs and cheese, and I thought hit wuz the best stuff I ever et. I took out twice, and I thinks to myse'f, 'ef I wuz out behind the house, I'd take all out!'

"When I left, Miss Lucy wuz a layin' on the divan sorter shuck up and weak, but talkin' to Mr. Brock cheerful. She wuz all over dirt when she fell, but she put on a purty palish blue kimonian when she come to, and Mr. Brock, he had on his good clothes, (actually wouldn't come down thar 'tel he put on his good clothes!) He wuz a takin' on about a pan o' wonderin' Jews she had a hangin' in the winder, and a pale yaller tea rose she'd got at the warm-house, a bein' so purty, 'as purty as their owner,' he says."

At this point Mrs. Doggett was so elated with the charm of the picture that her imagination had painted, that she could not resist giving it an additional touch.

"And Miss Lucy," she added, "she told him to git the clothes bresh out'n the press drawer, and bresh off the dust whar he had got hit on him at the barn, and then he might have one her roses to put in his button-hole."

Mr. Lindsay's cheeks became a gray-white. "I wouldn't thenk a man'd have much chance to be a primpin' up and visitin' on a rush time—a terbaccer settin' season," he remarked icily.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Lindsay, yes, sir,—croppin' and courtin' don't go together right handy, do they?" Mr. Doggett agreed with Mr. Lindsay.

At this moment, Dock, who had been so consumed with curiosity to know the fate of the cow, that he had forced his weary feet to walk to the James house, returned, bringing new information.

"Mr. Brock, he went home long in the evenin' to git Reub's rifle," he informed his questioners; "and when he come back 'bout an hour ago, he shot the cow. He's thar now and says fer as many of us as hain't too tired, to come up and help cut wood to burn the carkis. Says hit'll spread the mad all over the country ef dogs git any of hit!"

"I plumb hate to not go," remarked Mr. Doggett, rubbing one of his stiffened lower limbs: "Joey, can't you and Roscoe, and some you young fellers go and help Mr. Brock out!"

"Hit looks more like imperdence than anytheng else, fer him to ask fellers as wore out as you all, to do any more work tonight! The theng fer you all to do is to go to bed, and let him peel off them Sundays, and be his own 'hewer o' wood,'" said Gran'dad, unfeelingly. Mr. Lindsay smiled in the dim light of the small lamp, and gave Gran'dad's lean arm a pinch of commendation.

"That's right, Gran'dad," he said: "ef Miss Lucy's beau wants to raise hisse'f in the estimation o' her family, by conductin' a cow-burnin' fer 'em, less don't bother him none; less jest let him have his cow-burnin', and all the pleasure and honor there is in hit to hisse'f!" And every tobacco-setter agreed.

On his way to the tobacco field next morning, Dock made it convenient to go by the way of the Jameses and the funeral pyre, and from him, Miss Lucy learned that Mr. Lindsay had passed the night at the Doggetts. Because of this information, she drove even more slowly than usual on her way to town.

"Perhaps," she thought hopefully, "he'll remember hit's my marketin' day, and maybe he'll walk to town and overtake me, and ride 'long to town with me. Hit surely wouldn't be no harm."

She looked from the glass in the back curtain of her buggy. Nobody was coming along the road toward her, but if her eyes and ears could have pierced three miles, they would have seen a slender, brown-eyed man, with a heart sore and full of rancor toward the world, going rapidly in the opposite direction, and would have heard him saying,—his voice wistful with the tears his pride would not allow his eyes to shed:

"They've set her ag'in me, I reckon, and hit looks like she's got to preferrin' Brock to me. Ef she has, she can have him; I won't stand in her way! But I wouldn't have thought hit of her, no I wouldn't, and hit's—O Lucy, hit's—hit's good bye to the home I laid out to have!"

CHAPTER XIII

MR. DOGGETT'S ACQUISITION

"I am now in fortune's power,
He that is down can fall no lower."

"Fifty cents! I'm offered a half a dollar! Who'll make it three quarters?" The eyes of the sheriff twinkled, despite his efforts toward solemnity. It was the third Monday morning in August: he stood in front of the Court-house door, facing a "court-day" crowd and conducted the sale of Napper Dunaway, a gentleman afflicted with what the Court had diagnosed to be a case of chronic leisure.

Under the vagrancy law of the State, the remedy for this disease is the enforced sale of the patient's services for a given time,—the purchaser binding himself to furnish food, lodging, and medical attention to his bondman during the term of his compelled servitude.

The crowd pressed up for a nearer view of the young man, who, with a soft white thumb caught in the button-hole of a pale blue negligee shirt, worn in shirt-waist style, with a crimson silk tie, a tan belt, and a pair of blue serge pantaloons, stood in nonchalant contemplation of the church steeple across the street.

"Who'll give me three quarters of a dollar?" repeated the sheriff.

"I will: yes, sir, I'll make the bid seventy-five cents!" drawled a new-comer, slightly out of breath from his hurry to reach the scene of the sale.

Every eye turned toward the advancer of the bid,—a long man, with a wild red beard. For a few minutes, the bidding between Mr. Ephriam Doggett and a derisive competitor advanced by cents, and half-cents, but one dollar marked the end of the bids, and Mr. Doggett became, for the space of ten months, Dunaway's legal owner.

In the summers past, worms had been bad in the Kentucky tobacco fields, but this year, they came in numbers like the Assyrian army: by the middle of August, at the time of the leaving off of the spraying with Paris green, Mr. Doggett was, according to the words of his mouth, "in a tight place."

"Hands" were at a premium: his sons, Marshall and Jappy, had a crop of their own several miles off; Mr. Brock had slyly induced two of Mr. Doggett's "promised" men to stop with him: Mr. Doggett's aids—Dock, Joey, Gran'dad, the brothers, Bunch and Knox Trisler, and his cousins, Roscoe and Ob Doggett, numbered but seven, when there should have been ten, for the worming and the suckering.

Something had to be done, and on court day, with his seven left behind to do battle against the green army, Mr. Doggett went to town in search of a "hand." He heard on the street of the vagrancy sale, and seized the opportunity offered him to secure a free hireling. Time was precious to Mr. Doggett, and fifteen minutes after his one dollar bill went into the pocket of the County's representative, the new acquisition was seated beside him behind the abbreviated tail of Big Money.

"We'll go right on out," he said cheerfully to his purchase: "although," he added thoughtfully, "I wuz on the p'int o' fergittin' hit—you'll want to git your clothes. I'll jest drive by, and you can git 'em."

At the door of the yellow cottage on a rear street, Dunaway pointed out as the residence of his father-in-law, Mr. Doggett drew rein. This building, for five months from the day of his marriage, had been Dunaway's home, until his father-in-law, a one-armed pensioner, grew tired of waiting for him to add a day to the six days of manual labor he did during the term of his married life, and instituted vagrancy proceedings. The hospitality of the Kentuckian is great and lasting, but even gold will wear thin in time.

"I reckon," delicately hinted Mr. Doggett, "considerin' you hain't exactly in faver with your folks, I'd better go in the house fer the clothes."

"You needn't say *clothes* here," the peppery little man who answered Mr. Doggett's knock informed him, when he had stated his business. "I'll allow you to have them garments he's got coverin' his worthless hide, but the others, they'll have to go to pay a little on what he's eat off of me since Nan got took in last March! I feel sorry for you, man," he concluded, dryly, "ef you are goin' to undertake to keep him fed. I might have been able to put up with what he et at the table, but the between-meal business of runnin' into victuals and eatin' was more than my pension would stand up against!"

A suspicion that his hand was not going to be the gratuitous addition to his laboring force he had supposed crossed Mr. Doggett's mind, and somewhat ruefully he turned Big Money's head again in the direction of the dry goods houses, and climbed out before the store of Jacob Himmelstein.

"I been a layin' off to drap in to see you, Mr. Himmelstein, yes, sir, I have," Mr. Doggett mollified his Israelitish friend, whose first words of greeting were gentle reproaches: "but I jest hain't possible had time 'tel today, and I come in to see ef you couldn't sorter help me out. Can't you gimme some barg'ins?"

"Can I gif *you* bargains, mine frient?" Mr. Himmelstein's upraised hands spoke worlds of reproach: "I t'ought your memory vas goot!"

"Thar's a kind o' fellers that won't buy nothin' onless might' night' ever'body says they's gittin' a barg'in," pursued Mr. Doggett, "but I hain't one o' them kind. I wish I wuz."

"Ah, mine frient, you have been to buying elsewhere dan under de sign of J. Himmelstein!" mourned that gentleman.

Mr. Doggett told of his purchase of the morning, and of his garment shortage, and received voluble assurance of Mr. Himmelstein's ability and willingness to fit him out "sheap."

After a half-hour's haggling, the question of everyday clothing was settled in two pairs of azure cottonade "overalls," three sky-colored hickory shirts, two outfits of underwear, a buckeye hat, and socks (three pairs for a nickel).

"Forty cents seems a reasonable price fer these here jeans breeches," Mr. Doggett mused, when he came to buy Dunaway's "Sunday" raiment: "but hain't they a leetle short in the leg? Hit seems to me they won't more'n hit him at the knees."

"Dey'll be all right for fine wedder," Himmelstein assured him, hastily wrapping up the doubtful pantaloons.

"A hat and shoes," Mr. Doggett reflected: "I hain't able to lay out but a doller er two more on him. I don't keer fer style fer him,—got anytheng a leetle onfashionable in the way o' head and foot coverin's?"

Mr. Himmelstein darted to a box in the extreme back part of his establishment, and after some moment's digging in its depths, brought out a flat derby of the style of twenty years past, and a pair of "needle pointers," number twelves.

"If your man can veer dese," he inveigled Mr. Doggett, "you can haf de great bargain for t'ree quarter of von dollar unt I t'row in de hat for von nickel unt two dimes more."

Mr. Doggett concluded to take the risk of their fitting, and had them wrapped up.

"Before we leave town," observed Dunaway, as Mr. Doggett took the reins, "I'd like to tell you I'm about out of chewing tobacco. 'Lady Isabel' is the brand I use."

"What's the matter with long green?" Mr. Doggett's tone was persuasive. "I've got a world o' that hanging up at home."

Dunaway coughed apologetically. "My stomach is delicate," he declared airily, "and anything but the Lady Isabel seems to irritate it."

Mr. Doggett climbed to the pavement once more and three minutes later a package of the "Lady Isabel" was added to the company of bundles under the buggy's seat.

Mr. Dunaway, on the drive, proved to be a most agreeable talker, oily of tongue,—eloquently mendacious. He explained to Mr. Doggett the circumstances that had brought him to his present state. His family was one of wealth and high social position, he said, and he had never known a care until the failure and death of his father. Since that time, travelling with a party of surveyors in the Arkansas swamps, he had contracted malaria, had drifted to Kentucky, and had married. Because of his delicacy, his wife had persuaded her father to allow them to remain with him for a while and the vagrancy proceedings were taken without hint to him that the old gentleman was weary of his presence. He was astounded at this cruel treatment, and could hardly believe that his two trunks of clothing would be withheld from him.

Mr. Doggett listened respectfully, with expressions of interest and sympathy,—and drew his own conclusions.

Mr. Dunaway's garments were neat in appearance, his face was newly shaved, and the visible portions of his person were clean, but, mindful of the suspicions that would be sure to arise in Mrs. Doggett's mind as to the personal cleanliness of a gentleman convicted of vagrancy, unless she had actual convincing evidence of the recent application of water to his epidermis, Mr. Doggett stopped when they reached a covered bridge, spanning a stream that crossed the road.

"How'd you like to go in washin', Dunaway, bein's hit's so hot?" he asked, as he hitched his horse to the roadside fence. "I b'leeve *I'll* go in!"

Dunaway did not particularly relish the idea—it involved the expenditure of some energy—but he politely refrained from objection, and a few minutes later, he and his owner were disrobing behind a clump of elders that hid one of the banks of the Silver Run about fifty yards below the bridge.

Mr. Dunaway was in the deep water, first, enjoying the cool splashing, and swimming toward the bridge, before Mr. Doggett had divested himself of half his garments. This was Mr. Doggett's opportunity. Dunaway had laid his top shirt, his belt, tie, and shoes, apart from his other garments, which fact saved them to him, for when he started in the water, Mr. Doggett remembered other suspicions—unjust or otherwise—that might enter Mrs. Doggett's mind,—suspicions as to possible inhabitants of a vagrant's garments—and in his plunge, accidentally caught his foot in the heap of clothes, sending them into the deep water.

When Dunaway came back to the clump of elders for his clothes, Mr. Doggett was using the cake of laundry soap he held in his hand, in vigorous applications.

"I thought I'd wash my years and neck good while I wuz at hit, Dunaway," he said: "the old lady's mighty perticular. S'pose'n you lay on a little too, hit takes the pike dust off so slick!"

When the two climbed out of the water, Dunaway gazed uncertainly at the spot where had lain his trousers and underwear.

"Where the—" he began. Mr. Doggett interrupted him. "Ef your breeches and thengs hain't gone, Dunaway! That must 'a' been them I stumbled over when I went in! My foot caught on somethin'—I wuz a lookin' at you swimmin' off so peart—and I thought hit wuz a bunch o' grass er somethin'!"

"I guess they're in the bottom of some deep hole by this time," Dunaway remarked in a tone of light regret. "And what am I to wear?"

"Wear?" cried Mr. Doggett: "don't them thengs I got fer you come in handy now? Jest put on a suit them new underin's and a pair them overhalls, and one them hick'ry shirts, and you'll be ready to work in the patch this evenin'!"

It was twelve when Mr. Doggett reached home. "Jest step down in the spreng thar on the creek bank," he said to Dunaway who complained of thirst, "but don't knock over the old lady's milk jairs."

After dinner, Mr. Doggett conducted his new man to the field.

"I won't be hard on you this evenin', Dunaway, your fust day o' wormin'," he avowed, as each man started his row: "I'll take a row and sorter help you in your'n too, onct in a while."

Dunaway was quick and agile, and although the sweat poured into his eyes, and his back ached with the unaccustomed stooping to lift the leaves, he managed to do a fair amount of worm-killing.

Dock or Gran'dad was usually sent to the spring for fresh water for the toilers, but when about three o'clock, Dunaway offered to go, Mr. Doggett made no objection.

"The pore feller hain't seasoned yit," he conciliated Dock and Gran'dad, for thus favoring the stranger, "and hit hain't no more'n jest to give him a leetle breathin' spell."

That evening, seven men (Bunch Trisler and his brother boarded at their own home) very weary of eye, of back and of arm, soiled with dust, perspiration, and tobacco gum—filed in, and immediately after supper, five of them, including the worn and dejected Dunaway, climbed the steps to their bedroom. Gran'dad rested a while in the sitting-room, discussing Dunaway with his son and Mrs. Doggett, while Dock stretched himself flat on the floor.

To Mr. Doggett's enthusiastic congratulation of himself on the wisdom of his purchase, Gran'dad remarked:

"I dunno as I'd keer to own him: seems to me he'd be a slippery possession."

"Yes," broke in Mrs. Doggett, "about the time you git him clothed up fer winter, he'll light out and that'll be the last you'll hear o' *him*!"

"Why, Ann," Mr. Doggett obtruded, "I could excribe him over the tillephorm, and could git him anywhar. He wouldn't have no chanst a runnin'!"

"He seems to be a mighty light eater," Gran'dad mused. "Wouldn't drink no buttermilk tonight: said hit wuz too fillin'."

"I bet he's a holdin' in," said Dock.

"He tuck holt o' work well," said Mr. Doggett. "Got a good sleight at suckerin', although I had to help him some in his row a wormin'—him not bein' broke into the work—so we'd come out ever' row together. He's sorter green about hit. Told me he wisht I'd git him a pair o' gloves to keep the gum offen his hands. I told him I jest couldn't possible do hit,—he'd tear the leaves up in gloves."

"He's green about a heap o' work," put in Dock: "he told me he'd been all over the Nuniter States, and he'd never yit stuck job that wuz heftier, ner killiner, ner back-breakin'er, ner disagreeabler than wormin' and suckerin' terbaccer! I ast him wouldn't he holp me milk,—*hit* wuzn't no mean job, and he said he didn't know how to milk! I told him I thought ever'body knowed how to milk, and he said he reckon they ort ter ef they don't, and he'd git me to learn him when he wuzn't so wore out."

"Somethin's been in the milk jairs at the spreng," remarked Mrs. Doggett, regretfully. "When I went to strain the milk a while ago, I found two jairs o' fraish milk with ever' bit the cream skimmed off: wuzn't *no* cream on 'em—fraish mornin's milk—and the milk on one jair wuz half down, like hit had been poured out into somethin'."

A suspicion as to the receptacle into which the milk and cream had been emptied, entered Mr. Doggett's mind, but he was discreet.

"Maybe some Mr. Archie Evans' fox hounds done hit, Ann," he suggested, maligning the innocent, "I heerd 'em out this evenin' about four o'clock."

"But the leds wuz all on," objected Mrs. Doggett.

"Well, maybe some the hands seed 'em off, and laid 'em back," persuaded Mr. Doggett,—"Bunch

er Knox when they went home."

"Somethin's goin' with my aigs too," Mrs. Doggett further complained; "not nary aig did I git at the barn this evenin', and been a gittin' nineteen ever' day!"

The next day, to Mr. Doggett's secret chagrin, the energy and initiative of his new work-hand suffered a relapse: he complained that the sun affected his malaria infested system, and insisted on short rests every hour: he left suckers standing: he skipped worms: he came out many minutes behind the other men with his row.

The other hands enjoyed Mr. Doggett's discomfiture. Dunaway, working without wages, they regarded as a grand joke,—something that distinctly enlivened their hard toil, and they listened to his airy tales, and his light flippant fun making with keen relish.

"Darn that man Castle!" he inveighed in the middle of the afternoon, clinching one grimy, gum-covered fist. "Darn all tobacco that grows anyhow! I'd be happier in hell than I am here: I'll bet it's eighty per cent. cooler down there any time than it is in a tobacco patch in August!"

"Hain't none of us disputin' your statements, Dunaway," chuckled Gran'dad: "and ef you are a cravin' to git whar you claim thar's more bliss in store fer you, than you're enjoyin' here, jest wet a few them biggest leaves and lay 'em crost your chist and take a leetle nap, and you'll wake up down thar!"

Dunaway, however, declined to take this short cut to happiness.

With Dunaway's slackness in field work, came a degree of facility at table that surprised Mr. Doggett. While batting, and blinking his black eyes, directing airily polite and delicately conciliatory speeches toward Mrs. Doggett, and telling gay tales to interest the men,—not seeming to gorge—he threw food into his mouth with the rapidity and dexterity of the ant-eater at his repast.

"I declare, Eph," remarked Mrs. Doggett, one evening after a few days of the new hired man, "that crittur has shorely got the right name! He's done away with more victuals in them four days sence he's been here than'd lasted Lily Pearl a year! Ever' meal thar hain't been nary bite o' bread left, and I've had to go and make up more bread before me and Lily Pearl could eat!"

"Think he eats as much as Keerby?" asked Mr. Doggett.

"Keerby?" Mrs. Doggett's voice rose to a scornful screech. "When Keerby put his feet onder our table, we wuz *hurt*, but when Dunaway puts them long legs o' his'n onder our oil-cloth, we're might' night' ruined, I tell you, Eph Doggett!"

In the days that followed, to Mrs. Doggett's distress (for it made serious inroads on her butter making), her cream was skimmed almost daily, and on Wednesday morning of the second week of Dunaway's bondage, when she went into her smoke-house to take down a large ham for cooking, she found that the lean portion was completely hollowed out, not by rats, but by a skilful pocket-knife. In addition, a dozen or more of the large "hill onions," on which she had taken a premium at the County fair, and which she took pride in showing visitors, were gone from their shelf in the meat-house, and a full jar of honey, she had obtained from the Evans beeyard, to use when her most honored guest (Mr. Brock) should sit at her table, was eaten half-down!

Full of wrathful suspicion, she locked her smoke-house in the daytime, kept an eye on the milk at the spring, and sent Lily Pearl running to the nests at every hen's cackle.

Dunaway, during his ten days' stay in the Doggett household, had become an intimate of Dock: the "hands," including Gran'dad and Joey, liked him, like Desdemona the Moor, because of the tales he told, and his glib pleasantries: even Mr. Doggett, despite the trouble to which he was put to get his bondman to work any, fell under his charm.

Not so Mrs. Doggett. After the between-meal pilfering of her provisions, although she did not openly accuse Dunaway, her dislike and distrust of him were glaringly apparent, and although he was unfailingly polite and respectful to her, and adroitly concealed his enmity, he heartily returned her dislike.

Little Dock Doggett would have pressed through fire or an iron wall, had there been an apple or a plum on the other side the flames or the metal: he knew the whereabouts of every wild haw, (red or black), pawpaw, or persimmon tree, or wild grape vine, in the neighborhood, and nobody's fruit orchard or melon patch was immune from his visits.

When the Castles moved to town, leaving Mr. Brock to occupy a portion of their country residence, and in full and absolute control of their strawberry beds, grape-arbors, and fruit-orchards, invasion of these fruiteries was no longer easy.

Dock had never liked Mr. Brock, and when his inner part began to cry for fruit whose acquisition Mr. Brock's presence prevented, his hatred of that gentleman became violent.

Mr. Brock prided himself on an annual patch of fine melons, and at the time of the coming of Dunaway, his melons were approaching maturity. There was no other melon patch in the neighborhood, and for days, Dock's dreams at night had been of nothing else.

"I know whar thar's ripe mush and water millerns," he confided to Dunaway, the next morning after Mrs. Doggett's securing of her provisions against thieves. "A body has to go at night to git

'em though, 'cause they're right next to a terbaccer patch whar the man is workin' ever'day." Dock was an arrant coward at night.

"If it's a partner you want," Dunaway grinned, "I'm your man!"

Dock agreed that this was the desire of his heart, and a compact was made for the evening.

It rained the entire day through, but there was no cessation of work in the tobacco-field of Ephriam Doggett: it was near the end of the week, and Sunday—Sunday when suckers grow and worms eat as on a week day!

As weary and besoaked as the Continental Army, on the Christmas night of '76, the men trailed in at nightfall. They had been wet to the skin since early morning, and as soon as hunger was satisfied, each, with two exceptions, stumbled off to bed, to fall into the immediate sleep of exhaustion. These exceptions were Dock and Dunaway, who, when the others were safely asleep, stole out and took their well-lighted way (the moon was full) to the hillside where, separated from the tobacco field by a wire fence, lay Mr. Brock's water-melon patch. The dread wet day tobacco patch weariness is a powerful thing, but the desire of the stomach for the fruit of the vine is more mighty.

Near a great stump in the middle of the patch grew a vine with which Mr. Brock had taken the greatest pains in work and fertilization. The one mighty melon he allowed to grow on this vine, he intended for a present, and when it was about half developed, he had traced on its rind, with the point of a pin, the inscription: "To Miss Lucy James, from her friend, Galvin Brock."

These letters had widened and healed with the growth of the melon, until, in its maturity, they were like something done in crewel embroidery. It looked an unique thing. Mr. Brock was proud of it to a degree, and had planned on Sunday to take it to Miss Lucy.

"Here's our melon!" cried Dunaway, thumping the prize gift.

"Don't plunk right," objected Dock: "hit needs about one more day's sun: less hunt another un."

At that moment a sneeze betrayed to the raiders the approach of their enemy. Mr. Brock, coming out to test the ripeness of his intended gift, thought he saw two shapes by the big stump: he wheezed forward, but when he reached the stump, no one was there, and the gate at the lower end of the patch hung wide open.

Dock and his assistant did not dare to make another venture that night, but laid their plans for an invasion at a later hour on the following evening. Fatigue was the portion next evening of Dunaway, who, under Mr. Doggett's constant urging, did a fair day's work, and of Dock, who never shirked in the tobacco patch, but ten o'clock found Dunaway gleefully bearing the big melon ornamented with the words of presentation in the direction of the gate of exit, and Dock, filling an empty flour sack with cantaloupes.

"Lay down that melon!" suddenly sounded gruffly on their ears, and a thick-set man, brandishing a stout leather whip, emerged from the shadow of a big walnut near the fence.

"Lay down that melon, I tell you, or I'll smash you flat!"

Something was smashed, but it was not the bondsman. Dunaway, cornered, lifted the melon high, and dropped it heavily on a flat rock that lay near the gate. It burst in a dozen pieces, and the sweet juice flew in the face of the horrified Mr. Brock.

That gentleman, enraged at this wanton destruction of Miss Lucy's present, said something that would have fallen harshly on the lady's ear, and rushed forward with his cowhide. But Dunaway had fled and Dock, his booty cast aside, was making a wild dash toward the open gate. Fate, in the shape of fatigue, retarded his movements; a tough vine tripped him, and he fell.

Before he could rise, the sole of a heavy foot was forcibly applied to the rear side of his trousers, the lash of his pursuer had twice smote his bare legs, and before he could reach the gate and safety, a half dozen more mighty cuts were bestowed on those insignificant members that Gran'dad called Dock's foot-handles.

Early next morning, Mr. Brock appeared at Mr. Doggett's with anger burning in his eyes. Mrs. Doggett was not at home, but Mr. Doggett had remained at the house a few minutes behind his workmen, and into his ears Mr. Brock poured his melon tale. Mr. Doggett was solicitously sympathetic.

"Who on earth you reckon 'twuz tuck your big millern, Mr. Brock?" he asked wonderingly.

"The man was nobody but that vagabond, Dunaway, you've got a workin' for you, and the little feller with him, judgin' by his size, was *Dock!*"

Mr. Doggett smiled. "Shorely, Mr. Brock, you are mistakened. We all worked in the rain, day before yistiddy, and hit wuz all the boys could do to git upstairs last night to bed, after they et, and I noticed Dock wuz so stiffened up, he wuz walkin' lame this mornin'."

"I saw a man's track in the mud by the gate this mornin'," said Mr. Brock: "a pointed shoe track."

Dunaway had reviled the long needle-pointed shoes, but his worn patent leathers had come in pieces on the second day of his labors, and he had been, perforce, to the great delight of the

other men, obliged to put the "new" shoes on to protect his feet from blistering and the dry clods.

"And," added Mr. Brock in fine scorn, "there's nobody in the County a wearin' needle-pointed shoes at present, but your hireling. As for his companion, I didn't see his face, for the cloud that came up over the moon when I was close to him, and he got away before I could git my hands on his collar, but an old cowhide in my hand came in close contact with his legs. You never noticed any stripes on Dock's standards this mornin' did you?"

Mr. Doggett was much troubled.

"I jest hate hit awful, Mr. Brock," he deplored, "ef 'twuz them. I hain't never warned the boys ag'in goin' in millern patches, no, sir, I hain't, although I ort to 'a' done hit, yes, sir. But I'll see they don't go in yourn no more."

"If I catch Dunaway in again," said Mr. Brock, thickly and with heat, as he started homeward, "it certainly won't be good for *him*. I'll just manage to get word to the sheriff down where he wintered, where he broke jail without servin' out his time for indulgin' in some law breakin'!"

Dock's legs, Mr. Doggett's public reproof, and the ungratified longing in his stomach for melons, were still giving the boy trouble late Saturday afternoon, after the flight of Friday evening.

"Old devil!" Dock remarked to Dunaway as they went from the field together, conversing of their enemy: "he's a layin' hisse'f out to please the Jeemeses—sendin' 'em water-millerns and canterlopes, and mush-millerns! He thenks he's a gittin' on with Miss Lucy, and I don't b'lieve Miss Lucy'd give Mr. Lindsay's little fenger fer all old Galvin Brock, ef Mr. Jeemes and Miss Nancy'd let her have Mr. Lindsay. I b'lieve old Brock told old Mr. Jeemes some lies, anyway, on Mr. Lindsay! And he couldn't let us jes' *taste* one his old millerns! Old devil! I'll stamp him yit!"

"Consarn his old moley, red nose! I'll help you stamp him, Dock!" offered Dunaway, mindful of possible weary days in a Mississippi jail.

"Miss Lucy Jeemes used to give me pears sometimes; her'n is gittin' ripe now," Dock remarked irrelevantly: "I believe I'll go up thar in the mornin', ef Miss Nancy is gone to church (she's stingy), and git some. Wanter go with me?"

"I'd go in a minute," said Dunaway, "if it were not for the figure I cut in the confounded short jeanses, and these blasted needle-pointers, and that Noah's Ark derby!"

"Ef I'll slip you out a pair o' Jappy's pants, and his last year's Sunday slippers, and one of his white shirts and collars, and Joey's cap, will you go?" asked Dock.

"Sure!" agreed Dunaway.

Dunaway had liked the gentle Mr. Lindsay, from their first meeting. From Dock, he had learned of Mr. Lindsay's connection with the James family, of the affair of the trunk, and of the interrupted winter's courtship. He had discovered that Mrs. Doggett was espousing the cause of Brock, had observed that Mr. Lindsay on his Saturday evening's visit, had winced when she had prophesied that Mr. Brock would be married to Miss Lucy before his tobacco was cured, and had resolved to help him when opportunity offered itself.

After Mrs. Doggett's application of locks to her food supplies, and after Mr. Brock's threats became known to him, Dunaway had the incentive of revengeful desires to stimulate him to aid Mr. Lindsay in the cause of love.

"My hair is a gittin' turrible long, Mr. Lindsay," Mr. Doggett remarked on Sunday morning to his guest who, more pallid and worn than the week before, had come on Saturday evening: "and your'n's might' night' long enough to do up in a French twist: less git a pair clippers, and have a hair cuttin'."

"All right," agreed Mr. Lindsay, "I'll jest step over to Archie Evans'—he's got ever'thing—and borry his. Anybody want to go with me?"

Dunaway proffered his company immediately.

"You're paler and thinner than you were this time last week," he observed, on their way, "and hard work oughtn't to bleach you that way. What's the matter? Sweetheart gone back on you?"

Mr. Lindsay looked at him intently: but sympathetic interest alone was expressed in the shining black eyes.

"I dunno about *her*, Dunaway," he said, after a moment: "sometimes I believe her folks have set her ag'in me, and turned her toward another man, then ag'in I dunno whether I am right er not!"

"I hear she's like an angel," reflected Dunaway. "You still think so too, don't you?"

"I don't deny I still thenk hit," confided Mr. Lindsay, "and I believe she'd 'a' married me too," he added impulsively, "ef hit hadn't been fer Galvin Brock lyin' about me to old Milton! Brock—maybe you don't know hit—wants her hisse'f!"

Dunaway declined entering the brick house of the Evans', but remained a respectable distance out, in the field, giving "the confounded jeanses" as his reason. His mind rapidly formulated a plan, on the way back to the Doggett home. Dock impatiently awaited him at the woodpile.

"I snooped up thar in Mr. Jeemeses pastur," he whispered, "and seed Miss Nancy a startin' off to church—she's plumb out o' sight by now; now's our time to go ast Miss Lucy fer them pears. I got them clothes ready on the back side Mr. Jeemeses strawstack."

The pear tree of Dock's admiration stood in the northeast corner of the orchard, out of range of the porch, and next the garden, from which the orchard was separated by a post-and-rail fence, easily climbed; along the eastern side of the garden and orchard lay a picket fence, over which leaned blackberry bushes on the orchard side, and golden rod on the pasture field side.

There was no opening into the pasture field from the orchard, but a small gate led into the grass field from the garden. Miss Lucy James, gathering green beans, looked up to see Dock, accompanied by a tall and good-looking young man, in a neat shirt-waist costume, coming toward her.

"This is Ma's cousin, Alfred Bronston, Miss Lucy," said Dock (acting by instructions) by way of introduction. "He's been a workin' fer us a month. He's the one Mr. Lindsay thinks so much of."

Miss Lucy's slim hand was very cold when she held it out to Dunaway.

"How is Mr. Lindsay, Mr. Bronston?" she asked. "Have you saw him lately?"

"He's at our house today," answered Dunaway, "but I'm sorry to say, he is not looking well."

"He's awful puny lookin'," exaggerated Dock, still following previous instructions: "Pap says he thinks he's goin' into a recline; his eyes is all sunk in, and he's paler'n a taller candle, and jest wouldn't weigh *nothin'*!"

Miss Lucy's heart gave a great plunge, and seemed to stand still: her hand lost its grasp of the basket—the beans were scattered.

"Allow me to pick them up, Miss James," said courteous Dunaway, and the knees of dudish Jappy's second best pantaloons went down in the dirt.

"Me and Dun—my cousin—" ventured Dock,— "we wanted to git a few pears to eat—jest a little taste, Miss Lucy."

"Ef you'll empty the beans on the kitchen table for me, Dock," said Miss Lucy, "you can gather some pears in the basket to take home with you."

The words had scarcely left her lips, before Dock was opening the kitchen door in joyful obedience.

"Is what Dock says about Mr. Lindsay true, Mr. Bronston?" Miss Lucy's voice trembled over the question.

"Well," answered Dunaway, "when a man is in deep trouble, his bodily health is bound to be disturbed, and Mr. Lindsay—" he paused as though reluctant to go on.

"What—what is he worryin' about?" fluttered Miss Lucy.

Dunaway looked straight at her—an earnest, honest look.

"You want me to tell you the truth, Miss James? He thinks he has lost your love."

When Dock came back, Miss Lucy pointed to the pear tree.

"Jest go and help yourselves, Dock, you and your cousin: I—I've got to git a little note ready, I want to send by you."

It was many minutes before Miss Lucy, with her eyes suspiciously pink, appeared under the pear tree with a sealed envelope of a delicate lavender shade, in her hands, and the three, Dock, his "cousin" and the basket were alike full.

"Ef you could give this to him, without anybody seein' hit, I'd be glad," faltered Miss Lucy, as Dunaway placed the envelope carefully in the pocket of Jappy's white blouse.

"Mr. Lindsay shall have this in his hands in a few minutes, and nobody shall be the wiser," he assured her with a smile so full of good-will and encouragement, that her heart lightened as she looked at him.

When the two pear-bearers once more appeared at the Doggett home, Dunaway wore his own clothes, and a bundle in a clump of briars awaited a favorable opportunity to be conveyed to the house.

All that afternoon, Mr. Lindsay sat leaning against the pine in the front yard, with a glow in his face that told of a joyful heart within, and when Lily Pearl's pet pig, his especial aversion, poked an inquiring nose against the letter in his left hand, he gently patted the muddy back with his right.

CHAPTER XIV

MR. DOGGETT LENDS A HAND

"He that is thy friend indeed,
He will help thee in thy need!"

Humming a joyous little song, Miss Lucy James came out of the garden about ten o'clock on Monday morning, a day lily in one hand, a basket of sage leaves in the other and the brightness of the morning in her face.

"You, Lucy Ann, you come here!" Miss Nancy, standing on the back porch, transfixed her sister with a glance so full of disgust and censoriousness that Miss Lucy quivered. The old man stood by Miss Nancy, with an unfolded sheet of lavender note paper in his hand.

"Here's a letter, Lucy Ann," he sneered, waving the sheet before Miss Lucy: "a letter a fool woman writ to Lindsay a yistiddy, tellin' him a passel o' foolishness about her a thinkin' he'd give her up: and how happy she is to know he's a lovin' her yit: and how proud she'd be to see him again: and how 'feerd she's been he'd work too hard and maybe git sick, and a rigamarole o' other sech stuff! And your name's to hit. I wanter know, did you write hit?"



"Here's a letter, Lucy Ann," he sneered.

The scorn in his voice burnt Miss Lucy's heart like a live coal: a darkness came before her, and she clutched at a pillar of the porch to steady herself, with fingers as cold and devoid of feeling as those of the dead. Her silence aggravated the old man further.

"So you're still a runnin' after that weakly critter, air ye?" he sputtered, the paper shaking in his hands, "a man with one foot in the grave, and hain't laid up a cent as fur as anybody knows! What can you promise yourse'f a marryin' *him*?"

Miss Lucy's stiff lips moved. "I—Pa—we could work!"

"Work!" scoffed Mr. James, "a sickly ailin' theng like you, a talkin' about workin' fer a livin'! Lindsay's a mighty fool ef he's willin' to saddle hisse'f with sech a bundle o' doctor's bills as you! And hit 'pears like to me, hit's you a doin' the anglin' instid o' him, any way. Hit's about the case with you of my grandfather's def'nition o' a fisherman—a line and a pole, with a hook at one end and a fool at the other.

"And what'll you be a doin' ef he'll let you ketch him? You'll jest be a draggin' around from cabin to cabin like them old Taylors,—you a bar'foot, and him with a hog-jaw, and a skillet onder his arm! When you wuz made, Lucy Ann, the sile you wuz made out of shorely wuzn't in no condition to breng more'n a quarter crop o' brains!"

Miss Lucy had covered her eyes with one delicate hand, but the tears were creeping through her fingers.

"Now Lucy Ann, you jest dry them eyes up and listen to Pa, and what he's got to say!" Miss Nancy took hold of her sister's shoulder, and shook her lightly.

"Yes, you jest listen to me," commanded her father; "ef you hain't got no head piece to speak of,—you've got a pair o' years I reckon. I've done made my will, and give you your part along with the rest, but ef you marry old Lindsay, I shall disinherit you! I shan't give you a theng, and a poor off critter you'll be!"

"Pa," quavered Miss Lucy, "a body can live on just a little."

"Jest listen to that!" derided Miss Nancy. "Lucy's visited among them terbaccer trash 'tel she's got jest like 'em. I'd hate to class myse'f with sech! Mrs. Castle says some them terbaccer people ain't no better'n niggers, and I believe her. I despise all old poor people, sech as old Lindsay."

"Nancy," remonstrated Miss Lucy, between sobs, "poverty is no sin."

"Naw, but hit's a mighty inconvenient possession, as you'll find to your sorrer, Lucy Ann," prophesied her parent.

"And mighty little respect your selected husband's a showin' you," he added, "a tearin' your love letter acrost and throwin' hit down in the mud on the road fer anybody to pick up!"

"Hit's mighty thankful you ought to be to Mr. Brock," broke in Miss Nancy: "people are a scandalizin' you now, and tellin' you are meetin' Lindsay out places, I hain't a doubt, and ef hit hadn't 'a' been fer Brock a findin' that letter, and handin' hit to Pa to give to you, no tellin' who would 'a' read hit! Ef you had any sense at all, Lucy Ann, you'd quit runnin' like a skeered kitten ever' time Mr. Brock comes in! You'd see which man hit is that keers anything for you, and let him do a little proper courtin'!"

Pinned to the lining of Miss Lucy's waist was a bit of paper that to her was sufficient contradiction of her father's insinuations as to her friend's lack of respect, and satisfactory proof of his regard,—a little note that had been slipped into her hand late Sunday afternoon when the youngest Doggett had come up on his monthly shoe-last borrowing quest.

In willing obedience to her father's commands, Miss Nancy wrote at his dictation a number of letters to absent relatives, wielding a pen biased to the limit of truth. Near the end of the week, the answers came, rendering Miss Lucy who had not dared to write to defend her position, wretchedly miserable.

The youngest married sister's selfishly pathetic appeal was: "Lucy, for my sake, stay at home, and help Nancy take care of Pa!" The reduced, fine sister-in-law, with no desire to care for an aged parent-in-law, counseled: "Lucy, whatever you do, don't marry and break up the home!" The law student nephew wrote in half jest, half earnest, "Aunt Lucy, if you were to marry, who'd be there to bake pies for me when I come to see Grandpa? Aunt Nancy's pies are the limit!" The rich old aunt sent simply a gilt-edged card bearing the inscription, "Honor thy father and thy mother."

On the evening of Friday, the day that the letters of advice came to the James family, Dock Doggett went to return the borrowed shoe-last. He had raised his hand to knock on the kitchen door, when a sound within of some one violently sobbing, arrested him. He heard the rattle of a dishpan on its nail, announcing the completion of the kitchen work of the evening; then Miss Nancy's high voice raised itself.

"Lucy, are you tryin' to melt yourse'f a cryin'? Hit's been nothin' but cry, cry, ever' sence Mr. Brock found the letter you wrote to old Lindsay, and now sence Aunt Mollie and the others have give you good advice, you're worse'n ever. Pa's asleep, and I'm goin' upstairs to bed, and ef you're bound to cry, you jest stay here in the kitchen where Pa won't hear you and do your weepin'!"

Dock waited until he heard the stair door shut Miss Nancy in her bedroom, then knocked gently.

Before he went home, Miss Lucy, desperate for sympathy, had told him of the fate of her Sunday's letter, of her father's anger, and of her unhappiness since.

"If you see *him*, Dock," she besought when Dock took his leave, "tell him not to be mad at me for not answerin' his letter: I'd love to answer hit the best in the world, but—Tell him I say maybe I've done somethin' wrong and the Lord's a holdin' happiness back from me because of that sin. And tell him ef they won't let—ef I have to give him up, I'll never fergit him while I live!"

"I 'lowed they'd give out a marryin'," remarked Mr. Doggett, Sunday morning at the breakfast table, when Dock, who found it impossible longer to keep so interesting a a story to himself, had told Miss Lucy's tale of the lost letter. "I hain't heerd Mr. Lindsay say but mighty little about Miss Lucy, sence back in plowin' time, when the old man ordered him to not set foot in the house no more. He's mighty proud and he wuz so insulted, I 'lowed he'd never git over hit. Brock, he's been a lottin' on standin' fust with Miss Lucy, hain't he, old lady? Hit's cur'is how he got a holt o' old man Lindsay's letter, now, hain't hit? Look's like a man'd teck better keer o' a love-letter than to be drappin' hit in the road."

Dunaway, between quick mouthfuls, looked keenly at Mrs. Doggett. The morning was warm, but

its heat was not responsible for the red spots that burnt on her usually pale cheeks.

"Hit's strange Mr. Lindsay didn't come in last night," went on Mr. Doggett: "although he wuz like us I reckon—worked so late in the terbaccer yisterday, he was jest too tired to possibly walk hit."

"He'll be along this morning probably; let's go down to the creek to meet him," suggested Dunaway.

When Mr. Lindsay crossed the felled sycamore, that stretched across the creek, which served when the riffle rocks were under water, for a foot-bridge, he found his friends awaiting him.

The smile with which he greeted them vanished, and his eyes hardened as he listened to Dunaway's story of the letter.

"That's the reason," he muttered, "I hain't got no letter from her this week: I've been a lookin' ever' day, and a wonderin' why none never come, and all the time the poor theng's been afeerd to write!"

"Hain't she the feerdest and the tender-heartedest woman you ever seed?" said Mr. Doggett. "Dock said he left her a cryin' t'other night like a child lost from hits mother. And ever sence we've been a livin' here, she's been a cryin', oft and on, over somethin'. Yes, sir! The wonder is how any person can leak all the tears that she does, and be any juice left in her. Accordin' to my calculatin', by this time, she ort to be a lookin', after fifty years o' quiet weepin', and them last few days o' tornader weepin' like one them dried Gypsum mummets Jim says he seed in the Cincinnati amusin'-pen."

"It looks like to me," remarked Dunaway, after a sudden, and to Mr. Doggett, unaccountable burst of laughter, "a person of that age ought to be able to take up for self some."

"Hit does—but women folks is quair, Dunaway. Some of 'em will take any sort and amount of abuse and say nothin', and some even won't take a joke, no, sir. Hit's jest the way they're made. When I lived in Bourbon, I knowed a man, Colonel Keys,—the butterest kind o' man in company you ever seed; nobody wouldn't 'a' thought he wuz anytheng but purty behaved in his fambly: but he wuz jest as rough thar as a hackle. His wife, though, ef she ever said a word to lead folks to think he wuz anytheng but plumb sugar to her, hit's yit to be heerd, and she's been dead feefteen year. He got mad at her one day, and when she had her back turned, he keecked her down the cellar steps, and the fall, hit broke her false teeth, and she swallered 'em and never lived the year out, no, sir!

"You've heerd me talk about Lawyer Willie Wall over in Bourbon, hain't you, Mr. Lindsay? Willie, he always said her bein' a woman that wouldn't take a joke wuz what parted him and his wife. Willie, he killed some rats, he'd caught in a cage rat-trap,—about a dozen, and skinned and cleaned 'em right nice, and tuck 'em, and told his wife, they wuz young squirrels, yes, sir! She fried 'em and they looked the nicest you ever seed on the table. Willie, he wouldn't eat nary un, said he wuzn't feelin' well, but she et one and a half, and then he told her what they wuz! They wuz some that didn't blame her fer leavin' him, no, sir, but he said he thought all women ought to be willin' to be joked now and then! Women is cur'is, I tell you, Dunaway."

"I wish," remarked Mr. Lindsay, who had paid but careless heed to Mr. Doggett's recital, "somebody'd tell me how in the name o' sense Brock got a holt o' her letter when I laid hit between the leaves o' my Bible, and put the Book in the bottom of my trunk Sunday evenin' before I left?"

Dunaway shook his head. Mr. Doggett looked uneasy.

"Are you plumb shore you put hit thar, Mr. Lindsay? Hit might be you drapped hit out'n your pocket a climbin' the fence, yes, sir, hit might."

"I laid that letter in the Book of John, in the New Testament part of my Bible," emphasized Mr. Lindsay, with some impatience. "Who knowed I had the letter, besides you and Dock, anyway, Dunaway?"

Dunaway, seated on the stump of the felled sycamore (he never stood when he could sit) batted his eye in a wink that suggested many things.

"A body ortn't to be too certain o' nothin', Mr. Lindsay, whar his mem'ry is the only proof he's got—a feller is so liable to fergit," Mr. Doggett hastened to say. "Now I knowed a young doctor over in Bourbon that went back to his old boardin'-place the next day after he married, and his bride wuz a settin' in her Ma's house whar they wuz goin' to live, wonderin' why he didn't come home to supper. He forgot he wuz married!"

Mr. Lindsay laughed, but his laugh did not sound quite natural, and he followed his friends to the house in a state of growing anger toward Mr. Brock and one other to whom his suspicions most strongly pointed, his whilom friend, Mrs. Doggett.

Gran'dad sat propped up in a chair, with pillows, slightly pale from the effects of a fall he had suffered the day before,—a fall that in no wise had affected his tongue.

"Well, Lindsay," he grinned, "I hear love-letters air so common with ye, you throw 'em down in the highway!"

Mr. Lindsay frowned heavily. "I never have throwed one in the road yit, and whoever says I did—"

"He belongs in the company o' them that 'shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone,'" quoted Gran'dad, interrupting him.

"Hit don't seem to me that tellin' a leetle made up tale to holp hisse'f along in courtin' would be accounted a crime on a feller," proffered his son.

"Mebbe the feller that's done hit wouldn't be accounted guilty of crime in the Courts, Ephriam," sagely observed Gran'dad, "but he ort to be in the pen on gineral principles anyhow!"

"Ef hit's Mr. Brock you're a hintin' on," said Mrs. Doggett, "I've got this to tell you: anybody that says a word ag'in Galvin Brock, may eat dough that passes through my fingers, but he hain't no ways *welcome* to hit!"

She spoke lightly, but the spark in her eyes belied the lightness of her tones. Mr. Lindsay rose, and with the remark that it was time all respectable people had on their Sunday clothes, went upstairs where his wardrobe was kept. Dunaway and Dock followed him.

When they came down they announced that the three of them were going to Jim and Henrietty's to spend the day.

"What wuz that you throwed out the winder, Dock, jest before you come down?" queried his grandfather who sat facing the front window. "Hit fell in that yaller rosey-bush."

"Jes' my dirty clothes, Gran'dad," answered Dock, cheerfully, going out to rescue the bundle.

"Bein's the boys is all gone, Mr. Lindsay," Mr. Doggett reached for his hat,— "and Dad liable to be a nappin', I'll git sorter lonesome. I believe I'll jest step up to old man Jeemeses as you all go, fer a few minutes, and see how he is."

Dock and Dunaway had disappeared, but just before the older men came in sight of the James house, they joined them, Dunaway clothed in the shirt-waist costume of the Sunday before.

Mr. Doggett gazed at Dunaway in his stylish habiliments, and opened his mouth for remark, but thoughtfully and considerately closed it again.

"I guess I'll have to leave you here," said Mr. Doggett, lifting the latch of the gate in the high picket fence that ran along the back of the James garden and orchard. Mr. Lindsay laid a detaining hand on Mr. Doggett's shoulder.

"Think you could talk to the old man and keep him settin' still there on the back porch fer an hour er so, Uncle Eph?"

Mr. Doggett smiled intelligently. "Ef hit will help you and her out any," he declared, "I'll guarantee to entertain the old feller, until livin' terbaccer worms quits a eatin'!"

Mr. James roused himself from the nap into which he had fallen after Miss Nancy had departed for church, and Miss Lucy had gone to the kitchen, and welcomed his guest cordially.

"All as well as common, yes, sir," assented Mr. Doggett, "but Dad. He fell down the stair-steps a yistiddy and sprung his neck. He's not been able to git about sence, and I'm afeerd he'll be laid up all week."

"Old fellers will fall about," remarked Mr. James.

"Yes, sir, they will. Although Dad's allus been so active, he fergits age is a creepin' on him. Jappy, he takes after Dad,—jest as active as a cat. He went to the skeetin'-rink about three weeks ago—the fust time he ever wuz at the rink—and outdone all the skeeters. He said he wuz a aimin' to try the next Saturday night they have hit, fer the ten doller skeet-book. Ten dollers seems a heap o' money fer one book to cost—although hit might be hit's got some kind o' gold er silver claspin's er ornaments on hit, yes, sir.

"And what good hit'll do Jappy ef he wins hit, I don't see, considerin' he can't read. I've allus been so busy, the boys hain't had no schoolin', no, sir."

"Joey can read, can't he?" asked his listener.

"Yes, sir—Joey he takes to the book like a lawyer: reads might' nigh ever' book er paper he can lay hand to. Joey, he says when he wuz up at the Castle's a Sunday or two ago, Lisle, he took him in a room that the four walls of, wuz jest one thickness o' books, and Lisle showed him a book he wuz a larin' in he called the *Latins*. Dad says hit 'pears like he can't quote no scripture on the Latins. I told him they might 'a' lived in old Pharaoh's time, though that's jest my guess."

"Thar's certain a lot of thengs in the world the most of us don't know nothin' about," conceded Mr. James.

"Yes, sir, that's jest what I wuz a tellin' the boys," went on Mr. Doggett, and inserting his thumb and finger in his inside breast pocket, he pulled out a dark object, the jaw tooth of a horse, and laid it on his host's knee. It had belonged to old Powhatan, a racer buried in the field many years before.

"Here's somethin' I found out in the terbaccer t'other day, I fetched to show you. I thought maybe hit belonged to one o' them creeters that lived before the flood. I showed hit to Lisle Castle, and he said hit wuz a mammon's tooth. I'd a tuck hit to Jedge Robbins,—he has a whole room full o'

sech, ef he hadn't 'a' died."

"Who'd they app'int Jedge fer his successor?" inquired Mr. James.

"Hain't you heerd?" Mr. Doggett seemed surprised: "they app'inted old man Perry. Reckon they thought they'd drap a plum to Al's pap, considerin' Al wuz so nigh a gittin' elected assessor last fall—but not quite!"

"And jest defeated by one vote," commented Mr. James.

"Yes, sir," Mr. Doggett laughed, "and that vote wuz Dad's."

"How come him to go ag'in Al? I 'lowed Dad wuz a Dimocrat."

"He is, yes, sir, he is, but you know how Dad is. He jest can't possible fergit an injury," confided Mr. Doggett.

"The old man, him and Dock, they wuz a fishin' in old man Perry's pond along two year ago, and they had ketched two as fine New Lights as ever you seed, and sir, along comes Al Perry, that big-headed, gold-toothed Al Perry (teeth ever' one plated over 'tel his mouth's a plumb gold mine) and says: 'Gran'dad, throw them fish back: I want to stock the pond with 'em!'

"'Why, Al,' Dad says, 'they've been out so long they'll die anyway ef I'd throw 'em back, but I'll give you half of 'em to eat!'

"'No,' Al says, 'you've got to throw 'em back!' And, don't you know Al made him throw 'em back! Why, they wuz might' night' the length o' my arm!

"That Al, he's a tough one. Dad turned to him when he heerd them fish floppin' back 'mong them waterlilies, and says: 'Jest you wait, Al, 'tel my time comes. I'll stamp you yit fer this!' And he shore did. Ever' one of us voted fer Al fer Assessor but Dad. He voted fer Fant ag'in Al. Yes, sir, Al wuz defeated by one vote, and that one wuz *Dad's*.

"I told Dad I wouldn't 'a' done hit ef I'd 'a' been him, and I dunno as hit done him any good. Al, he's jest schemy and smart and he couldn't holp that streak o' stinginess—tuck after his pap. And a dollar looks as big as a cart-wheel to him. You know old man Perry, don't you, Mr. James?"

"I think I've seed him," answered Mr. James.

"Leetle low old feller—looks like he's walkin' 'round after a set o' sandy whiskers. His whiskers are so big he looks like he's got a bushel basket stuffed with cowhairs tied to his head! They used to tell a tale on him about a couple o' mice makin' a nest in his beard, hit wuz so thick, and nobody wouldn't 'a' never knowed they wuz in thar, ef they hadn't 'a' heerd 'em a squealin'!

"Old man Perry, and the boys got up a barbercue before the election to sorter holp Al along on the votes. Ever'body wuz to bring provisions, and would you b'lieve hit, old man Perry, afraid o' losin' a copper, brought a pig ham, and a broken-legged drake, and him ownin' half the county!

"I used to hear the toll-gate keepers on the pikes a grumblin' about him a allus goin' through the gates free, on account of allus carryin' bills too big fer the keepers to change. He used to go through ever' gate fer miles around in any direction and fla'nt his twenty dollar bills—but they all got up to him finally, and got to keepin' money at the gates jest fer him. I tell you, they busted them twenty doller bills, yes, sir, they busted 'em!

"Did ever you notice Mr. Jeemes," Mr. Doggett went on meditatively, "hit's among the rich folks you find them o' the quairest ways? I've seed a sight o' curi's rich people in my time, yes, sir. When I lived in Bourbon, I seed somethin' done onct a body wouldn't think o' seein' in any fambly, much less a rich one.

"Me and Captain Theodore Murray wuz a drivin' some hogs to town, and on the way we passed by John Sutherland's, his brother-in-law's place. Rich John, they called him over thar whar he lived, hit looked like a little town, fer the nigger cabins, and granaries, and stock barns, and all sech. The County road hit run right along by one his barns. Old John, he wuz out watchin' one the hired men diggin' a hole right on the slope between the barn and the road. Captain Theodore, he says: 'What you fixin' to bury, John, turnips? Sorter early, hain't hit?' Hit wuz in September.

"'John,' he says: 'No, we're a fixin' to bury Emily's baby!' Hit wuz the week-old child o' his daughter that run off and married a soldier in the standin' army. He wuz stationed away off sommers when hit died.

"Captain Theodore, he rared back in his stirrups and he called out like he wuz orderin' a company o' soldiers.

"'Fill up that hole!' he says. 'Ef you haven't got a decent place to bury that child, I'll buy a place, and give hit to you!' And he rid on to town, and bought a lot in the cimetry. And, ef you'll b'lieve hit, Mr. Jeemes, next day when they started to town to take the child to hit's buryin'-place, old rich John tied the little coffin on behind a buggy, and started to town at a brisk trot! And thar wuzn't a mourner a follerin'. When he got along as fur as the store half-way to town, the store-keeper thar hollered at him and told him his box wuz a slippin' off, and ast him what he had in hit. I tell you, Mr. James, he wuz plumb ashamed o' hollerin' so rough and keerless when he found out hit wuz Mis' Emily's baby, and he come out and tied hit on good, and then John cut up the horse and driv' on faster'n ever! Now would you 'a' thought that o' rich people?"

Mr. James' comments and his good-humor encouraged Mr. Doggett toward the subject of most interest to him at that moment.

"I tell you, Mr. Jeemes," he tendered, "a poor man don't have nigh the temptations o' the rich fellers, and he can't afford so handy to be odd and quair. As I wuz a tellin' Mr. Lindsay—"

Mr. James put up an interruptive hand. "Don't mention that thar Lindsay to me!" he growled. "He hain't wuth mentionin'! Though he let on to have the reputation of an angel fer a mighty long time, when he come about me, he made out to lower that reputation."

"He never done nothin' wrong, did he, Mr. James?" placated Mr. Doggett.

"Persuadin' a woman away from her duty to them as is her best friends, to want to marry him, he's done *that*. All the winter he'd set around the fire clost to Lucy Ann, a puttin' his hands over his mouth, a talkin'; I couldn't hear a word, bein' deefer'n common last winter, but I know now he wuz a courtin'—a talkin' love right onder my nose!"

Mr. Doggett smiled conciliatingly. "Miss Lucy's bein' a nice woman, you couldn't blame him, no, sir! And whar wuz the harm, Mr. Jeemes? Mr. Lindsay—he's a nice man. They hain't a honester man in the world'n him, Mr. Jeemes. Ef he hain't got but a dollar in the world, and owes hit to you, you'll git hit. They hain't nigh enough o' them kind o' men in the world. Whar's the harm o' him a talkin' pleasant to Miss Lucy?"

"Whar's the harm!" fumed the old man. "Persuadin' Lucy to want to marry a weakly man sixty-five year old and hain't saved up a cent, as fer as anybody knows!"

"He hain't more'n fifty, Mr. Jeemes," demurred Mr. Doggett gently, "and he shore has got some money laid up. He told me hisse'f he had two thousand dollers in the Owensboro bank. He showed me the bank book, yes, sir. Hit wuz a paid up inshorance policy, er some sich, he'd tuck out, and put thar along in the winter."

"Well, I'll never believe hit 'til I see hit," said the old man, contrarily: "and I don't put no confidence in his ability to make a livin'."

"Yes, sir," broke in Mr. Doggett, "but he's a fine terbaccer man, jest can't be beat, and the workin'est feller I ever seed! He's aimin' to put in a crop o' terbaccer next year."

"I keer nothin' fer his aims," declared Mr. James, impatiently: "Lucy sha'nt fling herse'f away on a poor man, ef I can keep her from hit! What could she promise herse'f a weddin' poverty?"

"Poverty is mighty mean company, yes, sir, but maybe ef Mr. Lindsay had riches he'd have undesirable qualities along with 'em, yes, sir. Kentucky men hain't like Kentucky horses. No, sir; you jest can't possible git holt o' a man with all the good qualities combined, fer men don't have more'n half a dozen good qualities, none o' 'em! No, sir!"

While Mr. Doggett on the back porch entertained Mr. James, Dock and Dunaway, at the pear tree, and under the grape arbor, refreshed themselves: and Mr. Lindsay, in the shadow of the goldenrods outside the farthest corner of the orchard, sat on the turf, with one hand holding tight a small one buried in the grass, and with the eloquence of happiness, explained away the weary weeks of parting, of misunderstanding and misery—the lost heaven of the year.

"Jest go through the back gate o' the garden, Miss Lucy," Dock had besought her in the kitchen, "and keep a goin' along the fence 'tel you come to the far corner o' the orchid, and you'll find somethin' fer you thar. I reckon you don't keer ef me and my cousin gits a pear er two to take to Jim's little Katie, do you Miss Lucy?"

Miss Lucy did not care. "I wonder why he didn't send me a letter by Dock, instead of puttin' hit out there?" she murmured as she passed slowly along the wall, searching the ground. Mr. Lindsay watched her coming.

"Lucy, what have they done to you?" he cried out sharply, and a mighty wave of pitying love surged over him and sent him toward her with outstretched arms.

The bees that, regardless of Sunday, gathered sweets from the pale blue aster blooms beside the goldenrods, went back to their hive many times: Miss Nancy's chances for filling her jars with sweet pickled pears steadily lessened, and the soft murmur of voices that came from the goldenrod shaded corner went on and on.

"You'll not fail me then, Lucy," the man said at last: "I can't have you worried an hour longer than —"

"They—they won't let me, Nathan," said Miss Lucy. "You'd just better go away and forget me! I'm afraid—I'm afraid—"

At this moment Dunaway raced past them, making quick time in the direction of Jim Doggett's, but Dock paused in his flight.

"She's a comin'!" he panted, jerking his thumb in the direction of the road, "Miss Nancy! I seed her buggy out'n the top o' the pear tree, and she's right at the yard!"

Miss Lucy started up in dismay, a chalky whiteness spreading over her face. Mr. Lindsay took one of her trembling hands.

"Remember!" he said meaningly.

The latch of the yard gate rattled: Miss Lucy tried to pull away her fingers, but his hand tightened its grip, and his other arm went around her.

"O Nathan," she gasped, frantic with fear, "go away! go away quick! Ef Nancy was to see me out here with *you*—Don't Nathan!"

A moment after, Miss Lucy, blushing furiously, sped through the garden, trying to compose an explanation as to her rumpled hair, the fireless stove, and the unstrung beans, lying wilting on the kitchen table, while a determined man of fifty, with the stride of a boy, and a decidedly youthful glow in his face, hurried toward the home of Jim and Henrietty Doggett.

CHAPTER XV

"WEEP NO MORE, MY LADY"

"God's in His Heaven,
All's right with the world."

The opportunity for speaking to her father alone, for which Miss Lucy watched all Sunday afternoon after Mr. Doggett's departure, did not present itself until after supper. Then, while Miss Nancy remained in the kitchen for her half-hour's cleaning—an occupation in which she would brook no assistance—Miss Lucy, tremulously resolute, hastened to broach a subject that meant much to her dress-loving soul.

"Pa," she murmured humbly, "you remember you helped Sister Isabindy, and the others to git some nice clothes when they married: now, s'pose I was to take a notion to marry, would you do the same by me?"

The old man frowned impatiently. "I thought I'd made hit plain to you, Lucy Ann," he reminded her, "that ef you wuz to marry, I'd cut you out o' my will!"

"I understood that, Pa," Miss Lucy explained with a look of pleading: "but in case I was to git ready to marry, and would ask you to jest give me a dollar or two to help pay for my dress, you'd say you would, wouldn't you?"

Mr. James looked at her as though he had not heard her aright.

"What'd I say?" he jerked out, after a moment. "I'd say 'I shan't give you nothin'.' Hain't I been a feedin' you longer'n I done any o' the others?"

Miss Lucy thought of the thirty-five years of uncomplaining toil for the household,—her portion since her young womanhood: her heart quivered with the injustice of her father's words, but she bit her trembling lip and went on: "Anyway, Pa, ef I was to marry, I could take old Blackie, couldn't I?"

"Naw, you shouldn't take that cow! I need that cow."

"But she's mine, Pa," persisted Miss Lucy, "and you sold her yearlin' calf last spring and I—I—never got none of the money."

"That don't make no difference," insisted her father, obstinately, "you shouldn't have her!"

On Monday morning Miss Lucy went to town with the marketing, and came back with a silver gray costume—a dress of soft veiling, a gray silk turban, a pair of dainty laced shoes, and a depleted purse.

Miss Nancy sternly disapproved of her purchases.

"What on earth made you git 'em, Lucy Ann?" she asked. "Hit's awful early to be gittin' a new dress and hat, even ef they was suitable fer winter."

"Mr. Claine was a sellin' out his left over thengs at cost," replied Miss Lucy, "and I thought I could wear 'em a good deal this fall, and then have 'em ready for next sprenge."

"What did you git *gray* fer?" demanded Miss Nancy: "the idy of an old theng like you a wearin' gray!"

An hour afterward, Miss Lucy sat in the sitting-room, hemming towels and talking to her cousin, Simeon Willis, who had brought their mail from the post-office: Mr. James was walking in the pasture field. Presently Miss Nancy came hurriedly into the room.

"What you got your new dress and shoes, and hat, and parasol, and ever'theng laid out on the company-room bed fer, Lucy, like you was ready to start somewheres?" she queried, irritably. "Look's like you'd know enough to put 'em away where they wouldn't ketch dust!"

"I'm a goin' to put 'em away after a while, Nancy," Miss Lucy flushed a little as she met her sister's suspicious eyes: "I jest laid 'em out to see how they looked. Any news, Simeon?" she asked to turn the subject.

"Nothin' much," replied Mr. Willis: "I saw Lindsay in town. He's a goin' to raise a crop of tobacco next year for Archie Evans. Told me this mornin' he wuz a goin' to move his thengs there tomorrow in Archie's house the carpenter's have jest got done—a mighty fancy little house it is for a tenant house, too—and keep bachelor's hall, ef he couldn't do no better. He was buyin' a cook-stove and a bed-stid and some cheers and thengs today."

Mr. Willis was not prepared for the result of this innocently imparted information.

Without comment, Miss Lucy quitted the room, and picking up her egg basket, scurried off to the hens' nest at the barn. Miss Nancy sat recklessly back on the bed whose smoothness had hitherto never been disturbed in the daytime, and throwing her apron over her head, burst into passionate weeping. Mr. Willis gaped.

"What on earth is the matter with you, Nancy?"

Miss Nancy dropped the apron from her face and groaned dismally.

"I don't want to live—ef he—ef he—"

"Ef he, what?" demanded her cousin, impatiently.

"Marries!" screamed Miss Nancy. "Ef Lucy and him marries—I'm—I'm—a—a goin' to take poison!"

Mr. Willis looked at her in astonishment. "Aw shucks, Nancy," he remarked, putting on his hat, "jest save your pizen for the rats. Lucy hain't a goin' to marry, and ef she wuz married, what worse off'd you be, I'd like to know? Unless," he added, under his breath, "unless you wanted her man yourse'f."

When Miss Lucy, ignorant of her sister's outburst, came back to count her eggs into the brown-painted sugar-trough gourd in the sitting-room closet, she expected Miss Nancy to say something about Mr. Lindsay, but to her relief, a grumpy silence prevailed the rest of the afternoon.

"I reckon I won't have nothin' else to worry me between now and bedtime," thought Miss Lucy. But her congratulations were premature. After supper, at the sound of a troubled outcry, Miss Nancy looked up to see Miss Lucy standing in the doorway, shaking nervously, her face whiter than the kitchen wall.

"Nancy, have you been usin' some lye or somethin'?" She choked out the question with difficulty.

"I doctored a chicken this mornin' while you was gone, with some carbolic acid," answered Miss Nancy, "and I might 'a' left a few dregs in the cup."

"Did you use the broke-handled teacup I wash my teeth in?" Miss Lucy's voice rose to a wail. Miss Nancy reddened uncomfortably.

"I ain't certain but what I did," she acknowledged.

"O Nancy, whatever made you put hit back in the safe fer me to use?"

Miss Nancy hastened to get a cup of warm water and the glycerine bottle, but she did not express much sorrow for the accident.

"There ain't no use in takin' on so, Lucy," she admonished her sister; "looks like them few drops of carbolic mixed with water wouldn't hardly burn your mouth, let alone poisonin' you."

"My mouth ain't burnt to hurt," quavered the tearful victim, "but I'm afraid my lower teeth's ruined: I run the brush over them before I tasted hit!"

Miss Lucy's first thought when the rain roused her from a troubled sleep in the morning, was of her maltreated teeth. She felt of them with one tentative forefinger. Four of them moved before her reluctant pressure. "Ef hit hadn't 'a' happened jest *now*," she lamented: "but ever'theng goes against me!"

"Nancy," she announced with unwonted determination, after their breakfast, "I'm a goin' to town today, and see ef the dentist can do anytheng for my teeth."

"'Twouldn't be no bad idy," admitted Miss Nancy, whose conscience, for reasons known only to herself, had not been an easy one, for some hours: "but whyn't you wait 'tel the soreness goes out of your mouth? Looks like to me, most any day when 'tain't rainin' would do," she added, not unkindly. Miss Lucy was not gifted at prevarication.

"I'm—I'm afraid some more of 'em might git loose ef I wait," she explained lamely. "Don't you thenk, Nancy, hit's a lightenin' up some in the east?"

Miss Nancy smiled grimly. "Ef you call a black cloud 'lightenin' up,' hit's a lightenin' up!"

To Miss Lucy's great disappointment, dusk only brought a cessation of the steady down-pour. To go to town in the rain was to invite both illness and Miss Nancy's suspicions, and her care was to avoid these calamities. She remained at home. After another sleepless night, Miss Lucy rejoiced

to see Wednesday morning dawn clear, and as soon as her nervous hands could harness the big bay, she started to town.

But early as was Miss Lucy, there was on the road an earlier traveller from the neighborhood of the Silver Run. Before she reached the turnpike she overtook Dunaway, tramping along in the mud. She stopped old Ailsie quickly.

"Mr. Bronston, won't you get in and ride?" she invited him. "There's plenty of room, and I'd be glad of your company."

"Mr. Bronston" accepted her invitation with a smile, but as he climbed gracefully in the buggy, he gave a deprecative wave of his hand: "These everyday clothes of mine, which the mud compelled me to wear,"—he indicated the short jeans pantaloons, and the long needle-pointers—"I am afraid are not suitable to a lady's carriage, Miss James."

Mrs. Doggett, in the rush of cooking for Mr. Doggett's force of tobacco cutters, had not been able to compass laundry work for the space of two weeks: both the bondman's pairs of overalls were in an oppressively dirty condition, and on this, the first day Mr. Doggett had allowed him to go to town, he was compelled to resort to his "Sunday" clothes.

"Has Mr. Doggett got his tobacco all housed?" Miss Lucy inquired of him.

"Every stalk is hanging in the barn, else I could not have gotten off today," he told her in pleasant mendacity. In reality, Mr. Doggett had many days more of cutting, but there was no cutting to be done until the rain had dried off the tobacco, and Dunaway had promised to be back in time for the morrow's work.

Despite Miss Lucy's protestations, when they were about a quarter of a mile from town, Dunaway insisted on alighting from the buggy, that she might not be mortified in the town by having so clumsily garbed a companion. He threw his bulky and evidently hastily-tied bundle over his shoulder, thanked Miss Lucy effusively, and as she drove off tipped his derby with grace. After driving a few hundred yards, Miss Lucy looked back to remark the progress of "Mr. Bronston," but there was no longer any such gentleman on the level stretch of "pike."

It was nine o'clock when she presented herself at the office of Doctor Everett Bell.

"The four lower front teeth will certainly have to come out, Miss James," he told her regretfully. Miss Lucy paled at this confirmation of her fears.

"I thought maybe you could tighten 'em some way for me, so they'd stay in a while," she faltered.

The dentist was young, sympathetic, accommodating and full of resource. "I'll tell you what I'll do, Miss James," he said comfortingly, after a half-moment's thought: "I'll tie them in with thread, so they'll stay in a while, as they are."

"Will they stay in a week?" asked Miss Lucy, hopefully.

"Why, yes, three weeks," the young man assured her: "then come back to me."

A dance would better have suited Miss Lucy's feelings when she left Dr. Bell's office, than the decorous walk to which she held her feet. In her relief and happiness, she lingered an hour in town talking to her acquaintances in the dry goods stores, and when, on getting into her buggy, she was accosted by a black-veiled Sister of Charity, soliciting aid for the Italian families suffering from an epidemic of typhoid fever, in a mountain railroad town, her last twenty-five cents went into the woman's black glove.

She reached home, jaded but joyous, near one o'clock. Miss Nancy met her with a lowering brow.

"Now you're back from town at last, Lucy, you can light to and help me a little," she informed Miss Lucy coming in from taking the horse to the barn.

"I'm so tired, Nancy, I 'lowed to rest some this evenin'."

Miss Nancy's face stiffened. "Sunday jest gone, and you a talkin' about restin' a weekday evenin'!" she derided. "Old body, you jest git to work, and rake and clean up them leaves the wind's scattered over the front yard, and when you git done that you jest heat some water and make suds and wash them fall fly specks off the settin'-room winders, and the glass in the door o' the press."

Miss Lucy looked after her sister in dismay. "I'm afraid she's found out somethin'," she said to herself: "anyway she's mad, and ef I don't help her, she'll thenk I'm a restin' up fer somethin'. Ef she had jest only took a cleanin' up spell some other day!"

But there was no help for it. Miss Lucy put her aching feet in a pair of old carpet slippers, and wearily struggled through her allotted tasks.

With an aching back, she milked the cows in the dusk, and after a pretense at eating supper, at six o'clock crept into bed in her room off the sitting-room.

At eight o'clock, she woke with a start of remembrance. Rising hastily, she threw on a wrapper, and peeped cautiously into the sitting-room, where her father slept. The old man breathed deeply. With a velvet touch, she opened the door at the foot of the stairs that led up to Miss Nancy's bedroom, and with a mighty sigh of thankfulness, listened to the slow even breathing

which proclaimed that Miss Nancy had been asleep at least an hour.

Miss Nancy never permitted but two lamps to be filled with oil: one of these was in her room, the other on the sitting-room table by Mr. James' bed. Miss Lucy, however, had a private illuminator of her own, a purchase of the morning.

She lighted her candle, and packed her trunk and a large valise with the contents of her bureau drawers. The trunk, she locked; the valise, and a little covered basket she carried noiselessly out to the drive and set by one of the great poplars, carefully covering the basket with an old rug. This done, she mounted the hall stairway to the company bedroom, and began hurriedly to dress herself in the new clothes. She threw off the carpet slippers, and reached under the breadths of the silver gray skirt for her new shoes. They were not there, neither in the bureau drawers, nor the closet,—nowhere in the room. In distressed wonder, she went down stairs, and made a thorough search of her bedroom: but, to her consternation, they were not there, and the second-best shoes she had worn to town, and even her rough "everyday" shoes were gone!

"Nancy must have hid 'em!" thought Miss Lucy, sitting weakly on the side of her bed, "and what *will* I do?"

Tears sprang to her eyes, but she wiped them away and resuming the carpet slippers, clothed herself in the new dress and hat, extinguished her candle, and sat silent in the darkness by the window, listening eagerly. The room was chilly, but her cheeks burnt with the flush of excitement, and her hands were feverishly warm.

At half-past ten, the end of a long fishing-pole tapped on the window. In answer to this summons, Miss Lucy groped her way downstairs and out into the yard. It was very dark, for there was no moon. A long hand shot out from the darkness and caught her shaking arm, and a hoarsely whispered drawl assured her cheerfully:

"He's a waitin'—a waitin' in a buggy right down at the road, Miss Lucy, and he sent me to fetch you. He wanted to come to the house to git you hisse'f, but he's got a raisin' on his heel a tack made, and I told him hit wuzn't no use to irrigate hit walkin' in them new shoes any more'n was necessary. He's a wearin' patent leathers, and they're powerful drawin' on a sore foot. I told him he ortn't to 'a' got that kind o' shoes, but he 'lowed he wanted to honor you by wearin' what other bridegrooms wears!"

"I've got to git my valise, and basket, Mr. Doggett," whispered Miss Lucy at the gate.

"You jest hang on to my arm, Miss Lucy!" Mr. Doggett gathered up the articles with a sweep of his right arm. "I'll 'tend to them satchels!"

A few hurried steps brought them to the road. A hasty head was poked from the waiting buggy, and a questioning face shone in the light of a lantern.

"Here she is, Mr. Lindsay! Here's your lady!" cried Mr. Doggett, in soft reassurance, setting down his burdens to adjust the buggy's top.

As Mr. Lindsay stepped out, his foot struck the covered basket. The lid flew open: there was a scared spitting, and with a loud "miaouw," the occupant of the basket extricated itself, ran a dozen yards up the road, and climbed wildly upon the stone fence which bordered one side of the highway.

"Well I do say!" Mr. Doggett's eyes widened to their utmost. "I didn't know you had a cat in thar, Miss Lucy! I 'lowed maybe hit wuz a Cubiun parrit!"

"O Nathan," faltered Miss Lucy, apologetically, "hit's the kitty you give me, and I was afraid Nancy might—might kill her, ef I didn't take her with me!"

"All right," Mr. Lindsay smiled cheerfully: "I hain't never heerd o' no cats goin' to a weddin' before to be saved from execution, but ef Uncle Eph and me together can ketch her, she can go!"

He crept cautiously up to the fence, and put out a propitiating hand. Kitty was not to be propitiated, but bounced down, and fled farther up the road, where she paused, a white spot in the darkness.

"Jest git in, Mr. Lindsay," advised Mr. Doggett, "and drive erlong ontel you git most to her, and Miss Lucy can sorter talk to her a leetle, and maybe git her to come to the buggy."

Mr. Doggett's advice proved good. This time, kitty, lured by the call of her mistress, allowed herself to be caught and replaced in her travelling-cage.

"Bein's hit's so muddy, I'll jest walk to the pike," announced Mr. Doggett, when the basket was safely stowed under the seat, "I'm afeerd ef I wuz to git in now, hit might delay us some. Big Money, he hain't lazy, but I have sometimes knowed him to take a notion to *bear easy on a cold collar*."

"Better let me do the walkin', Uncle Eph," protested Mr. Lindsay: "we don't aim to let you make a plumb dog of yourse'f fer us."

"Now, Mr. Lindsay," expostulated Mr. Doggett, "you hain't a talkin' o' pullin' through the mud on that foot!"

"I fergot my plagued foot."

"Listen to him, Miss Lucy," chuckled Mr. Doggett. "Fergot a ready when he got with you, and all the way up here, he wuz a frettin' over that foot! I told him thar wuzn't nothin' so bad but what hit might be wuss! I knowed a man that had a raisin' come in his *jaw* the day of his weddin': he couldn't open his mouth, and the weddin' had to be put off!"

"Ain't he good to us, Nathan?" murmured Miss Lucy, from behind the thick barege veil she had tied over the bridal hat to protect it from the night dampness, as Mr. Doggett strode ahead with the lantern.

"Whose buggy did you git?" she asked after a moment.

Mr. Lindsay smiled wickedly in the darkness. "*I* never got no buggy—Uncle Eph—he got hit. This is Mrs. Doggett's new buggy she got last week with her hogs (Johnny Leeds ordered hit fer her cheap), and hit hain't been rid in before. She tuck some of her butter'n-aig money and bought tarred paper to make a roof over hit, she's so choice of hit."

Miss Lucy gasped. "Hit's a wonder she'd a loaned hit!"

The darkness again hid a grin, a still more wicked one.

"She *never* loaned hit. Uncle Eph slipped hit out after her office hours—I mean after she was asleep."

Miss Lucy looked uneasy. "Do you think hit's right fer us to be a ridin' in hit?"

"Don't give yourse'f no worry about that, my dear," said Mr. Lindsay calmly: "she owes you that much on her account of stealin' your letter out of my Bible Sunday week."

At the juncture of the dirt road with the turnpike, Mr. Doggett cleaned his boots carefully, climbed into the buggy, and shutting himself up like a jackknife, with his knees touching his breast, seated himself on the floor of the vehicle on a small box he drew from under the seat.

"I'm afraid you ain't comfortable, Mr. Doggett," Miss Lucy protested.

"S'pose'n you let me set on the box, Uncle Eph," proposed Mr. Lindsay: "I take up some less room than you."

"Keep your seat, Mr. Lindsay," insisted Mr. Doggett, gathering up the reins: "this buggy top wuzn't built fer a man o' my height, and I do better on the floor whar I can fold myse'f three times."

"Hain't hit a gittin' *dark*!" murmured Miss Lucy fearfully, as the few stars disappeared in a black cloud: "somebody might run into us on the pike."

"Hit's a comin' up a rain after a leetle," remarked Mr. Doggett: "but don't you git oneasy, Miss Lucy: this here huntin' lantern Mr. Lindsay borried from Archie Evans, helt in front o' a buggy'll make t'other feller on wheels think he's a meetin' a ottermobill', and he'll hug t'other side the road. Now, Big Money, git 'long towards town!"

"Big Money done mighty well over that mud we jest passed," complimented Mr. Lindsay.

Mr. Doggett's face beamed. "Now hain't he turned out well to be a swapped-for plug? I'm a purty good jedge o' hosses, yes, sir! Anybody can fool Lem with any old plug, ef hit's jest fat enough, but I can't be fooled much. Marshall, he said when he seed the false tail they had tied on this un come off jest after I left town the Court day I got him—'Pap,' he said, 'you've got cheated! You'll have to sell that hoss fer a song and seng hit yourse'f!' But old Big Money, he's turned out to be a right peert old nag, yes, sir, a right peert old nag!"

"We wouldn't be puttin' you to all this trouble, Mr. Doggett," regretted Miss Lucy, presently, "ef Brother Avery hadn't moved to Lexington."

"Hit hain't no trouble," protested Mr. Doggett, covertly feeling of one knee to assure himself that it was not paralyzed—"I'm enjoyin' hit!"

"Whar are you goin' from Lexington?" he asked when he had, by a gentle wriggle, slightly eased his position.

"We're a talkin' of goin' to visit Mr. Lindsay's nephew: hit's in Owensboro, ain't hit, where he lives?" Miss Lucy turned to Mr. Lindsay.

"Goin' to Owensboro, I reckon," answered the bridegroom, a perceptible touch of sarcasm in his tone, "to see that wife and family some the good people o' this neighborhood has saddled on to me!"

Had there been sufficient light to distinguish facial tints, it would have been observed that a shamed color sat upon Mr. Doggett's countenance.

"Now, Mr. Lindsay," he petitioned the unforgiving gentleman, "don't hold that ag'in the old lady. She don't mean fer truth much over a quarter o' what comes out'n her mouth. Me and her gits along mighty well, though, considerin'. They say a man and his wife orter be *one*, and fer all people passin' our house sometimes might think instid o' me and her bein' one, we wuz half a

dozen, we are *one*, and she's the one."

"Why, Mr. Doggett," exclaimed Miss Lucy, "Mrs. Doggett thinks the world of you!"

"Yes, sir, Miss Lucy, although she hain't as foolish over me as a old lady I used to know over in Bourbon. This old lady wouldn't let *her* husband out'n her sight, and when their sprenge went dry one summer, and they had to go a mile to git water, he used to carry a bucket o' water on hossback on his head, and she'd be a settin' behind him on the hoss. The fust time my old lady saw 'em a doin' that, she says to me, 'Eph Doggett, a body never lives to be too old to learn—look, I've learned *that!*'"

As the lights of town met the travellers, Miss Lucy, who had for many minutes been trying to muster up courage to tell of her shoeless condition, burst out desperately: "O Nathan, I ain't got on no shoes! Mine got—got *misplaced* tonight, ever' pair, while I was takin' a nap, and I—I—ain't got on nothin' but a pair of carpet slippers!"

She did not add that they were a home-made pair, fashioned by Miss Nancy out of an ancient and moth-eaten carpet satchel.

"The dry goods stores, I'm afeerd, are all closed now," remarked Mr. Lindsay: "maybe you can sorter hide your feet under your skirts, until we git to Lexington," he added encouragingly.

"I'll tell you what," suggested Mr. Doggett, "I seed some women's shoes in Johnny Leeds' grocery store a leetle while back. Johnny he tole me his boss keeps 'em to give fer prizes when a body's bought thirty dollars wuth. Johnny, he sets up night' aver' night, 'tel twelve, and I'll jest git him to onlock the store and fetch Miss Lucy out a pair o' them!"

"You jest hold the hoss, Mr. Lindsay." Mr. Doggett drew Big Money to a standstill beside the depot platform. "I'll jest clip around to Johnny's and be back inside o' ten minutes!"

It was not until the ten minutes had lengthened themselves to twenty-five, however, and the train was whistling at the first crossing, that Mr. Doggett, his whiskers cutting the air like whips, and his blowing rivalling the incoming engine's, reappeared, to find Mr. Lindsay and Miss James, standing beside the buggy in a high state of nervous tension.

"Johnny," panted Mr. Doggett, "Johnny, he wuz in bed, but I h'isted him, and we tore to the store, and," he thrust a slackly-tied newspaper-wrapped bundle in Miss Lucy's trembling hands,—"*here them shoes is, Miss Lucy! You'll have to put 'em on after you git on the cars!*"

Miss Lucy clutched the knobby bundle thankfully. "O Mr. Doggett," she cried with shining eyes, "I can't never pay you for what you've done for me!"

"We'll never fergit you in the world, Uncle Eph, fer this night's work fer us," declared Mr. Lindsay fervently, as he wrung Mr. Doggett's hand, "and week after next, ef you'll say the word, I'm a goin' to cut the stovewood, and she's a goin' to cook a big dinner fer you in our house!"

"I'll be thar," promised Mr. Doggett, as Mr. Lindsay, bearing the valise, quickly drew Miss Lucy, holding fast to the handle of the cat's basket, and to the strings of the bundle to the steps of the rear coach. "Ef ever you git in a tight place in your terbaccer, Mr. Lindsay, you know who to send fer. Teck keer yourselves, and good luck go with you ferever and ever!"

Mr. Doggett turned to a tall lady in a black dress and flowing veil, the only other passenger to take the midnight train.

"Can I help you to git on, Ma'am?" he asked her deferentially. The Sister of Charity for it was she, laid her black-gloved hand in his, as he started down the steps.

"May God be with you, brother," she wished him devoutly, "and prosper you in your life of toil!"

When the train had thundered over ten miles of ties, Miss Lucy, hesitating and blushing, unwrapped the Johnny Leeds shoes.

Mr. Lindsay considerately walked to the water cooler in the opposite end of the coach, and after getting a drink, sat down on the seat behind it, that his intended bride might change her shoes without embarrassment. He found himself facing the Sister of Charity.

"It's beginning to rain. Had you observed it, sir?" the Sister said to him, presently.

"I hain't surprized," he answered her: "the clouds have been comin' up fer a rain fer about two hours. Seems like I've seen you before, ma'am, somewhere: your voice is familiar," he added, looking at her quickly and sharply.

The Sister deliberately winked at him. An amused light of recognition came into his eyes: she saw it and bent toward him, whispering: "When the mouse slips out of the trap, you're never the man to set the cat on his trail, are you, Mr. Lindsay?"

"Not I," Mr. Lindsay whispered back, a precaution which seemed wholly unnecessary, since Miss Lucy, at the far end of the car, was busy over her shoes, and the other two passengers, weary long-distance travellers, their soft hats shading their faces, slept heavily. "I hain't blamin' you fer wantin' to git away from the terbaccer patch jest now!"

"You'd be less than human, if you did! God, man, what do they raise it for? The world, and myself with it, would quit chewin' tomorrow, if I had to raise its tobacco and mine. Mr. Long-beard

assured me this morning, we'd have less than eight more days of it, but *one* more day in that hell's vestibule would have been my finish, and I preferred ignominious flight to pauper burial!"

"So I see," grinned Mr. Lindsay, with his eyes on the kid buttoned woman's shoe that protruded from the Sister's black skirts: "but where'd you git them church clothes, Dunaway?"

Mr. Dunaway indulged in another wink. "In the closet of an upstairs bedroom not a thousand miles from Chicago," he cited oracularly, "there were wont to hung the black garments of a mother, in mourning for a daughter whose last name was not *Block*. They no longer hang there!"

Mr. Lindsay's restrained laugh expressed both understanding and enjoyment.

"But the funds—the travelling funds?" he persisted.

Dunaway grinned cheerfully. "I once knew a Sister of Charity, in one day of soliciting aid for a town of fever-stricken dagoes (Italian workmen, I should say), to collect enough, had it been applied to such a purpose, to buy a ticket to Los Angeles."

"When'll the mournin' rig quit hit's travels?" chuckled Mr. Lindsay.

"I could exscribe him over the tillephorm, and he wouldn't hev no chance a runnin'!" quoted Dunaway, irrelevantly. "Say, Mr. Lindsay, how far is it from here to Kansas City? The telephone service doesn't claim to be good over eight hundred miles, I believe."

"No, hit don't," Mr. Lindsay answered him, "although hit won't be necessary to go as a lady more'n a tenth that fur. But you hain't a goin' to throw them cothes away, are you? *I've* got a right to hold a grudge agi'n her, ef anybody has, but I hain't a holdin' hit fur enough to want to see her lose her wearin' thengs. The poor theng has to work so hard for what few she has, and never sees a cent o' the terbaccer money fer clothes. What's ag'in expressin' 'em back to her, onct you git on male togs, Sister?"

"Nothing!" Dunaway assured him. "How much are you willing to contribute toward the good cause (of express charges), my brother?"

Mr. Lindsay laid fifty cents in the palm of Mrs. Doggett's black glove. "Be shore you send 'em, Dunaway," he whispered: "I've got to go back to her; she'll be a wonderin'."

A flicker of uneasiness passed over Dunaway's face, and the ghost of an expression of shame came into his eyes. "You'll not tell her," he petitioned: "I'm a true Catholic Sister to *her*! She gave me a quarter this morning, besides—"

"Do you think I haven't got any gratitude in me, Dunaway, after all you've done fer us, that I couldn't do a turn fer you?" rebuked Mr. Lindsay. "I give you my word, she'll never know from *me*!"

"Who was that lady in mournin' you was a talkin' to, Nathan?" inquired Miss Lucy, when Mr. Lindsay had resumed his seat beside her: "she makes me think of a Sister of Charity I saw on the street today."

"Hit's the same person," answered Mr. Lindsay: "he—she was a tellin' me about them sick Italians, she'd been a collectin' fer."

"I wisht you'd 'a' give her a little money, Nathan, ef you'd thought of hit, to help those poor folks."

"I give her fifty cents: hit certainly was fer a good cause," responded Mr. Lindsay.

"Ain't hit pleasin' to our Maker to be livin' sech a saintly life?" whispered Miss Lucy, a little wistfully: "a body don't never have to deceive ner nothin'. I believe, ef I hadn't seen you, Nathan, I'd love to have been a nun or somethin'. They're always so good."

"I am glad you ain't one, Lucy," murmured Mr. Lindsay, letting the arm he had extended along the back of the seat, drop gently down in a more comfortable position: "you're good enough for me!"

When Mr. Doggett ceased staring after the outgoing train, the rain was falling on him and dampening the splendors of the sow-and-pig purchased buggy: there lay before him the long homeward drive, and the dreary prospect of working until dawn, that the buggy might be washed clean, and mounted on its pedestal once more, before the awakening of the "old lady." But nothing could mar his serenity of mind, nor take the sunshine of rejoicing for his friends' happiness out of his heart.

"Mr Lindsay's sore heel'll pester him some when he goes to step out fer the saremony," he mused, as he drove through the silent streets. "Miss Lucy's teeth won't stay tied in but a week er so: Johnny Leeds' prize shoes is sorter slazy and ill-fittin': the old man'll ondoubtedly cut her out of his will, and, although I'm mighty hoped up about terbaccer prices a goin' up reasonable, a body can't tell. But a body can't have ever'theng like they want hit in this world, and they've got a heap to be thankful fer, *anyhow*!"

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