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Darker Races, by Oscar Micheaux

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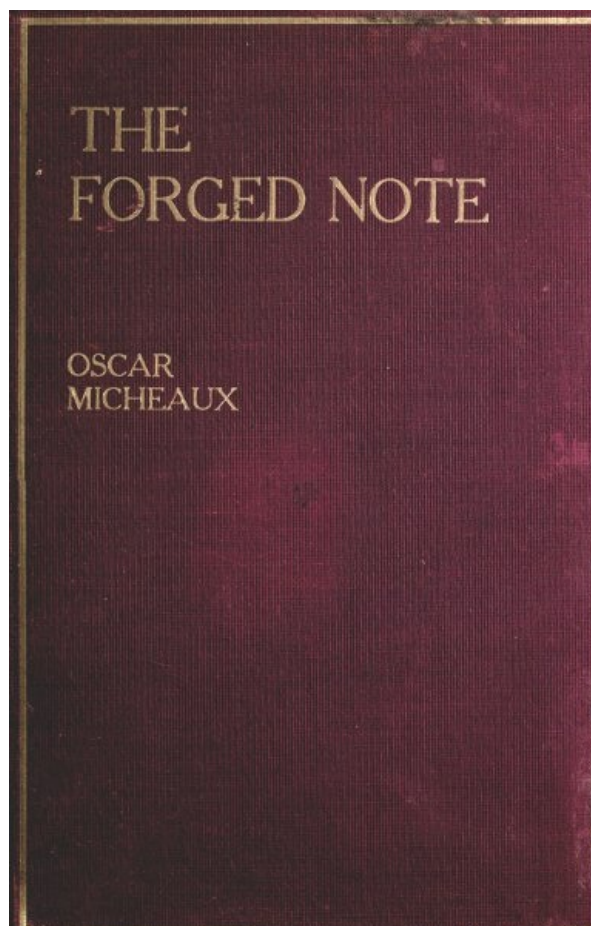
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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FORGED NOTE: A
ROMANCE OF THE DARKER RACES ***





NOTES FROM THE JACKET DUSTCOVER OF THE FORGED NOTE:

It is sometimes asked what inspires people to begin to write. Many reasons may be given, but in this particular instance, a brief statement of the author's experiences might be of interest.

At the age of twenty-one he was a homesteader on the Rosebud Indian Reservation, South Dakota, where he was about the only Negro settler. At twenty-six he was prosperous; and when another strip of the famous reservation was thrown open to settlement, he helped some of his relatives to secure land by furnishing money with which to purchase relinquishments on homesteads and other expenses. He also secured for a young lady another homestead, upon which she made filings. Six months later they were married and then went to live on her homestead.

She was the daughter of a minister in one of the leading Negro churches and was well educated, loved her husband devotedly—to all appearances—and they were happy.

Her father and husband represented beings with different points of view, and on this account an enmity grew up between them. The husband had often publicly criticised some of the leaders in his race as not being sincere, particularly many of the preachers. A year after the marriage, the preacher paid his second visit and when the husband was away, to indicate his dislike for the pioneer, he had his daughter, who was sick in bed, forge her husband's name to a check for a large sum, secured the money and took his daughter to his home in Chicago.

The homestead had been contested previous to this, and the minister had denounced the white man (a banker), who filed the contest, scathingly for trying to beat his daughter out of her homestead. Left alone after her departure, with only his ninety-year-old grandmother, who had raised a family in the days of slavery, for company, Mr. Micheaux wrote his first book. In the meantime, the case dragged through all the land courts at Washington, being finally settled by Secretary of the Interior Lane in her favor. About this time, the book appeared, and was called "THE CONQUEST".

In this was told anonymously the story of a base intrigue on the part of the preacher to vent his spite. The white banker, whose bank in the meantime had failed, read the book, and understood.... He went to Chicago and sent the preacher money to Cairo to come to Chicago, which the preacher did. Although unsuccessful in his effort before the government to beat Mr. Micheaux's wife out of her homestead, which had cost Mr. Micheaux thirty-five hundred dollars and which at that time was worth six thousand dollars, the banker succeeded in having the preacher persuade his daughter to sell him the homestead, giving her in consideration, only three hundred dollars.^[A]

^[A] NOTE—Until a homestead is commuted—proved up on—it may be relinquished by the holder without any person's or persons' consent. The woman, therefore, in this case could sell the homestead without her husband's consent.



"Nice,—Hell! How long do you figure those church people would kite you about, if I told them *what you were* back in—you know where?"

THE FORGED NOTE



They stood together now upon the walkway, and suddenly he gripped her hand.



They regarded the clock strangely, and uttered audibly, "Eighteen minutes left," and in the meantime it tick-tocked the fatal minutes away.



THE FORGED NOTE

A Romance of the Darker Races

BY

OSCAR MICHEAUX

Author of "The Conquest"

ILLUSTRATED BY C.W. HELLER

Lincoln, Nebraska
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"Has it occurred to you that you have told me nothing, absolutely nothing, about yourself?" The look she gave him was severe; but he only regarded her strangely.

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Murphy conducted a blind tiger in his loft; he also ran a crap game in connection; and it was his place that "Legs" visited frequently.



"I own the L. & N. Railroad."

TO ONE WHOSE NAME DOES NOT APPEAR

I am leaving you and Dixie land tomorrow. It is customary perhaps to say, "Dear Old Dixie" but, since I happen to be from that little place off in the northwest, of which I have fondly told you, the *Rosebud Country*, where I am returning at once, and which is the only place that is dear to me, I could not conscientiously use the other term. Still, I am grateful, and well I should be; for, had I not spent these eighteen months down here, I could never have written *this* story. No imagination, positively not mine, could have created "Slim", "T. Toddy", "Legs", "John Moore", et al. I really knew them. I haven't even changed their names, since what's the use? They, unless by chance, will never know, for, as I knew them, they never read. Only one of them I am sure ever owned a book. That one did, however, and that I know, for he stole my dictionary

before I left the town. Whatever he expected to do with it, is a puzzle to me, but since it was leather-bound, I think he imagined it was a Bible. He was very fond of Bibles, and I recall that was the only thing he read. He is in jail now, so I understand; which is no surprise, since he visited there quite often in the six months I knew him. As to "Legs", I have no word; but since summer time has come, I am sure "Slim" has either gone into "business" or is "preaching." "T. Toddy" was pretty shaky when I saw him last, and I wouldn't be surprised if he were not now in Heaven. And still, with what he threatened to do to me when he was informed that I had written of him in a book, he may be in the other place, who knows! I recall it with a tremor. We were in a restaurant some time after the first threat, but at that time, he appeared to understand that I had written nothing bad concerning him, and we were quite friendly. He told of himself and his travels, relating a trip abroad, to Liverpool and London. In the course of his remarks, he told that he used to run down from Liverpool to London every morning, since it was just over the hill a mile, and could be seen from Liverpool whenever the fog lifted. He advised me a bit remonstratingly, that, since I had written of him in the book, if I had come to him in advance, he would have told me something of himself to put into it that would have interested the world. I suggested that it was not then too late, and that he should make a copy of it. He intimated that it would be worth something and I agreed with him, and told him I would give him fifty cents. He said that would be satisfactory, but he wanted it then in advance. I wouldn't agree to that, but told him that he would have to give me a brief of his life, where and when he was born, if he had been, also where and when he expected to die, etc. first. He got "mad" then and threatened to do something "awful". Took himself outside and opened a knife, the blade of which had been broken, and was then about a half inch long, and told me to come out, whereupon he would show me my heart. As he waited vainly for me, he took on an expression that made him appear the worst man in all the world. I did not, of course go out, and told him so—through the window.

That was the end of it—and of him, so far as I know. But you can understand by this how near I have been to death in your Dixie Land. When I come back it will not be for "color"; but—well, I guess you know.

New Orleans, La., August 1, 1915.

O.M.



He awakened from a strange dream. The Bible had fallen to the floor, and lay open at a chapter under which was written,
"THOU SHALT NOT STEAL!"

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"A crooked mother can't raise a straight daughter. It's up to the daughter—and I've failed!"

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She had never felt that he would rebuke her, but now she turned her head away to shut out the scorn in the look he had given her.



"Wha's yo' man?" "I—I have no *man*," Mildred replied, turning her face away. "I am alone—alone in everything."



"That last woman I married" said Slim, "was such a devil she almost made me lose my religion."

THE FORGED NOTE

CHARACTERS

SYDNEY WYETH, An Observer, Who had the Courage of His Convictions.
MILDRED LATHAM, A Girl of Mystery, Whose Fortunes are What We Follow.
FURGESON AND THURMAN, Originals, Who Possessed some Wit and Humor.
B.J. DICKSON, An Editor, and a Fighter of the Right Sort.
V.R. COLEMAN, (SLIM) A Summertime Professor and "Business Man". (?)
"LEGS", a "Crap Shooter", Who Reformed and Became a Hero.
JOHN MOORE, A Character, Who Read the Bible—and did Other Things.
MISS PALMER, Grasswidow and School Teacher, Who Desired to Remarry.
DR. RANDALL, A Druggist, Who Knew Everybody's Business.
WILSON JACOBS, A Minister, Who Works for Uplift among Black People.
CONSTANCE JACOBS, His Sister, a Friend of the Girl of Mystery.
STEPHEN MYER, With a Heart, but a Sinner, Who Died and Went to—.

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THE FORGED NOTE

BOOK I.

CHAPTER ONE

The Barrier

He sat at a desk in the small office he had taken. Before him were papers and bills—unpaid—and letters too, he had not opened, while to one side were others he had read, and had typed replies thereto. He had paused in his work, and was gazing stupidly at the litter before him.

His name was Sidney Wyeth, and his home was away off in the great northwest, in a strip of territory known as the *Rosebud Country*. As we meet him now, however, he is located on the fifth floor of an office building, slightly toward the outskirts of the business district of one of our great American cities. He is by profession an author, which might explain his presence at a desk. It happens, however, that he is not there this time as a weaver of dreams, but attending to matter in connection with the circulation of his work, for he is his own publisher.

At that moment, however, he was nothing, for he was sick. For days he had felt a strange illness. Obviously it had almost reached an acute stage; for, apparently unable to maintain an upright position at the desk, he presently stretched himself face downward.

He might have been in this position an hour, or it might have been only a few minutes; but of a sudden he was brought to a position again erect, with ears alert, since he was sure he had heard a sound without. He strained his ears in silence.

Outside, a soft rain was falling. As he continued to listen, his gaze wandered out over the city below, with its medley of buildings that rose to various heights, and sparkled with electric lights. His gaze, in drifting, presently surveyed the main street of the city, an unusually wide thoroughfare, filled with the accustomed traffic. Beyond lay the harbor, for the city is a great port, and the same was then filled with innumerable vessels from far and near. A huge man-o-war arrested his attention for a while, and then his gaze wandered further. A wind had risen, from the way the water was dashed to spray against the windows. The sound of a clock striking five resounded through the damp air, and echoed in stentorian tones. It was late-winter, but, due perhaps to the overcast skies, twilight was rapidly fading into darkness.

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Failing to hear any further sound, he presently resumed his tired position, and a few minutes later was lost in a sickly slumber.

There could be no mistake now! A step sounded in the hallway. It was a light step, but firm and brisk and forward. It was unmistakably that of a young woman. Onward it came in the direction of his small office. There was a brief pause when the footsteps reached the door, and then a knock, but without response from within. Presently the door was pushed open, and the intruder entered the room lightly. Still, Sidney Wyeth, unconscious of the presence of his visitor, did not move or speak.

The stranger paused hesitatingly, when once inside, and observed him closely, where he sat with his face buried in his arms.

She was an attractive colored girl, trimly dressed in a striking, dark-blue tailored suit, cut in the latest fashion. A small hat reposed jauntily upon her head, while a wealth of dark hair was gathered in a heavy mass over her ears. Her delicately molded face, set off by a figure seemingly designed by an artist, were sufficient to captivate the most discriminating critic.

A thin dark strap extended over one shoulder, at the ends of which a small case was attached. Presently she drew a book from this same case, and crossed the room to where the man sat.

"Good evening," she ventured, pausing at his side, and fumbling the book she had taken from the case, in evident embarrassment. He mumbled something inaudible, but remained silent. His outwardly indifferent reception had not a discouraging effect upon his visitor, however, for no sooner had she caught the sound of his voice, than she fell into a concentrated explanation of the book.

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Soft and low, in spite of the rapid flow of words, her voice fell upon his ears, and served to arouse him at last from his apparent lethargy; but it was not that alone which made him rise to a half sitting posture, and strain his ears. It was a peculiar familiarity in the tone. As he continued to listen, he became convinced that somewhere, in the months gone by, he had heard that voice before. "Where was it?" he whispered, but, in his sluggish thoughts, he could not then recall. There was one thing of which there was no doubt, however, and which added strangely to the mystery. She was explaining his own book, *The Tempest*.

At last, in his morbid thoughts, he gave up trying to connect the voice with a person he had once known, and, with a tired, long drawn sigh, raised his hand wearily to his head, and grasped it as if in pain. The flow of words ceased at once, and the voice now cried, with a note of pain, and plainly embarrassed:

"You are ill and I have disturbed you! Oh, I'm *so* sorry! Can you overlook—pardon such an awkward blunder?" She clasped her hands helplessly, and was plainly distressed. And then, as if seized with a sudden inspiration, she cried, in a low, subdued voice: "I'll make a light and bathe your forehead! You seem to have fever!"

Turning nimbly, and before he could object, had he wished to, she crossed quickly to where a small basin hung from the wall; above this was an electric button, which could be seen in the semi-darkness. Touching this, whereupon the room became

aglow with light, she caught up a towel; and, dampening one end, she recrossed to where he sat, strangely stupid, and, without hesitation, placed the wet end over his burning forehead, and held it there for possibly a minute.

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"Now," she inquired softly, in a tone of solicitous relief, "do you feel better?"

As she concluded, she stepped where she could see his face more easily, and sought his eyes anxiously. The next moment, both recoiled in sudden recognition, as he cried:

"You!"

She was likewise astonished, and, after only a fraction of a moment, but in which she regarded him with an expression that was akin to an appeal, she likewise exclaimed:

"And *you!*" Quickly she became composed; and, catching up the book, as though discovered in some misdemeanor, with a hurried, parting glance, without another word, she abruptly left the room.

She was gone, but his brain was in a tumult.

And then the illness, that had been hovering over him for some time, like a sinister ghost, suddenly came into its own, and a moment later, with a convulsive gasp, he fell forward across the desk, deathly sick.

It had begun in Cincinnati more than a year before. Wyeth, accompanied by an assistant, had come down from Dayton for the purpose of advertising his book, *The Tempest* in that city. It was just preceding an election, that resulted in a change in the city government. And it was then he became acquainted with Jackson.

Now, being of an observant turn of mind, Wyeth took an interest in the state of affairs. He found the city very much worked up on his arrival. He had not yet secured accommodation, but, while standing on a corner after checking his luggage in a nearby drug-store, he was gazing up and down the street taking in the sights.

"Gentlemen," said someone, and turning, Wyeth and his companion looked upon a man. He was a large mulatto with curly hair, small eyes, a sharp nose, a firm chin, and an unusually small mouth for a Negro. He was dressed in a dark suit, the worse for wear, while his shoes appeared never to have been shined—in fact, his appearance was not altogether inviting. And yet, there was something about the man that drew Wyeth's attention, and he listened carefully to what he said. "You seem to be strangers in the city, and of co'se will requiah lodgin'. He'ah is my ca'd," he said, extending the bit of paste board upon which Sidney read at a glance

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THE JACKSON HOUSE

FIRST CLASS ROOMS, TRANSIENT OR REGULAR

OPEN DAY AND NIGHT

"I'm the proprietor and the place is at yo' disposal. Supposin' you stop with me while youah in the city. I'll sho treat y' right."

Sidney believed him, but his appearance made him hesitant. He looked questioningly at his companion. The other's expression was unfavorable to Jackson. So, after a pause and a perfunctory nod, they dismissed him and proceeded to look further in quest of accommodation.

An hour or more was thus lost, and, being unable to find a room that satisfied them, they at last, with some reluctance, found their way to *The Jackson House*.

Inspection still left them dissatisfied, but it was getting late, so they decided to spend the night. Jackson showed them to what he termed his "best room." Wyeth looked with evident disfavor about the walls that were heavy with cob webs, while the windowsill was as heavy with dust. Jackson, following his gaze, hastily offered apology and excuse.

"Eve'thing needs a little dusting up, and the reason you happen to find things as you do, is because I've been so busy with politics of late, that I have jes' nach'elly neglected my business".

Ah! That was it, thought Sidney. He had felt this man was in some way out of the ordinary. "So you're a politician?" he queried, observing him carefully now.

"You hit it, son," he chuckled. "Yeh; that's my line, sho." Turning now, with his face wreathed in smiles, he continued: "Big 'lection on in a few days, too."

"So I understand," said Sidney. "I shall be glad to talk with you regarding the same at your convenience later," and, paying him for the room, they betook themselves to the street.

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Election day was on, and Jackson was the busiest man in town. He was what may be called a "good mixer," to say the least, and Sidney and he had become good friends. So said Jackson that morning.

"Got a big job on t'day, kid; yeh, a big job."

"So...."

"Yeh; gotta vote thirty-five ah fo'ty nigga's, 'n', 'f youah 'quainted wi' ouh fo'kes, you c'n 'preciate what I'm up ag'inst."

"Indeed...."

"Yeh; nigga's o'nry y' know; and lie lak dogs; but I'm 'n' ole han' at the bus'ness, cause that's my line. Yeh. Been votin' nigga's in this precinct now fo' mor'n thi'ty yehs, so you'n see I autta know what I'm 'bout."

"I'd bet on that."

Jackson chuckled again. "The fust and wo'st difficulty is the dinge's ig'nance". Drawing a sample ballot from somewhere, he displayed and explained it at some length. "Now we gotta pu'ty faih line up on this ticket this trip—'co'se the's a lotta suckers on it that I'd lak t' see scratched; but we cain' affo'd to take the risk, 'cause it's lak this. Nigga's so ig'nant 'n' pig headed they'd sho spile it all 'f we tried to have them do any scratching. So the only sho thing is to instruct them t' vote straight. Get me, Steve?"

Wyeth, listening carefully, nodded, and for a moment, a picture of the titanic struggle of a half century before, rose before him; its cause, its moral and more; it's sacrifice. Jackson was speaking again.

"Now we sho gotta win out this time; this 'lection has *got* to put in ouh candidates; 'cause 'f we don't—and this is between me 'n' you 'n' that can a beah—things sho go'n break bad wi' me! But 'f things slide through O.K.—'n my candidates walk in, it means a cole hund'd fo' muh; think of it," he repeated, "a cole hund'd, Ah!" And, smacking his lips after a long draught of beer, he emitted an exclamation to emphasize what it *would* mean to him, that wouldn't look very nice in print.

"What do these *others* get if your candidates are elected?" asked Wyeth, when Jackson paused.

"Aw, *them* suckers gets theahs wether my men's 'lected a' not. That's always my goal. 'f I could get them t' vote so much ah' nothin' I could make a who' lot mo'; but we gotta fo'k out two dollahs a piece, win or lose—and, a co'se, plenty of liquah; but we don' give a damn 'bout that, as the saloon men furnish that, gratis."

"And you can depend upon them to vote as you wish—rather, instruct?" ventured Wyeth. At this Jackson gave a low, short laugh as he replied:

"That's whe' I plays the high ca'd 'n' gets a hund'd," and, laughing again in that peculiar fashion, he would say no more.

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The polls had closed. Darkness had settled over the city. The saloons had opened their doors. From the streets came forth hilarious sounds, where the many hundreds, now steeped in liquor, reeled about. This confusion, mingled with the crash of heavy wagons, and horse hoofs hurrying over the cobblestones, filled the damp air with an almost deafening noise.

Sidney Wyeth lay stretched across the bed in his room, listening idly to the sounds that echoed and re-echoed through the frame building. Presently, his attention was attracted by another noise, familiar, but more noticeable on this day.

"T-click-i-lick-ilick—ah—ha dice! T-click-ilick-i-lick—ah—ha dice!"

"Aw, shake'm ole nigga, shake'm!"

"Yeh. Roll 'm out. Don' let 'm spin 'roun' on d' en' lak dat! Shake'm up. Make music!"

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick—ah—ha dice!"

"Trowed eight!"

"Dime he'n make it!"

"Make it a nickel!"

"Ah fate yu'".

"Hu'ry up, ole shine! Git yu' bet down."

"Shoot um!"

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick—ah, ha dice!"

"Two bits 'ell seben!"

"Ah got yu!"

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"T-click-i-lick-i-lick-ah, eighty day-es!"

"Cain' make eight wid a one up!"

"Do'n' try no kiddin'."

"T-click-i-lick-ilick—ah—eighter from Decatur!"

"Make music nigga, make music!"

"Two bits I'n pass!"

"Ah got yu!"

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick—ah—eighty day-es!"

"Trowed seben!"

"Gimme d' craps!"

"Now, dice; ah-seben ah 'leben!"

"Throwed craps!"

"Hole on! Hole on! You caught dem dice, ole nigga!"

"Caught Hell! You trowed craps, d'y 'e heah! Two big sixes!" A scrambling, mingled with much swearing, ensued.

"Say, cut out dis awgun' 'n' squabblin'," interposed one.

"'E cain' take mah money lak dat," protested the loser.

"'F you don' git y' rough mit offa dat coin, yuh big lump a dough, I g'in' finish spreadin' dat nose ovah y' face!"

"I'on lak dis-a-way a messin' wi' mah jingle!"

"Youse a cheap nigga, Bad Eye, 'n' y' know it. You all time buttin' int' a game wid about a dime, den sta'tin' a big argerment."

"Hush! Ain' dat Jackson a-comin'?"

Silence for possibly a minute. A muttering began to go around as they schuffled about.

"Ah done ca'ied out mah 'structions 'n' now ah wants muh dough-rine," some one spat out ominously.

"Me, too," said another.

"Aw, be patient. Jack's all right," argued one.

"Sho", echoed another.

"Yeh, dat' all right, 's fur it goes; but I'n handle mah money bet'n anybody else."

A heavy step sounded in the hallway, and presently a door opened into the room, admitting Jackson.

"All heah, boys, eh!" He said in a voice that revealed high spirits. "Good—what's this? Havin' a little game already? Say! Looks like y' might a-waited fo' old Jack, ha ha!"

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"Well," he resumed after a general laughing, "Did eve' body vote straight?"

"Sho", they cried in chorus.

"N' how 'bout you, little breeches."

"Ke-heh! You say. 'Stamp ri' undah da' ole elephant's tail'; so when I got 'nside da' place wi one a dem ballets, 'n' all dem names ah did'n' know nothin' 'bout; but I 'memb'd what you say, so I jes' caught hole that li'l ole thing 'n' went, bim! ri' unda' da' ole elephant's tail, ya-ha!" The room, for a time, resounded with laughter.

Just then, Wyeth heard someone rap at the street door, enter, and presently the counting and the clink of coins came to his ears. Then the door closed, and a moment later, retreating foot steps were heard in the hall-way. It was the lieutenant. And now the gurgle of throats could be heard plainly, and the game was resumed, with Jackson in charge.

In the other room, Wyeth stripped himself and retired, and, ere sleep came to him that night, he again had a vision of that titanic struggle and its human slaughter—

and it had all been to give those black men the right. (?) Far into the night he thought it over, and when sleep did come at last, he went into slumberland, at a loss to know whether to condemn or to pity those poor creatures, who, that day—and before—had sold their birthright for a mess of pottage.

Weeks had passed. Over all the north country, snowladen fields frowned. Zero weather was felt in many places. Sidney Wyeth was about to quit it for a place far to the south, and at that moment, sat in the union station at Columbus. A man marked with a chalk upon the bulletin board the following:

TRAIN FOR CINCINNATI AND THE SOUTH, TWO HOURS LATE

And it was only then it occurred to him that a letter might be at the postoffice for him. Forthwith he betook himself, returning shortly with a small envelope, with his name written daintily across it in a feminine hand. It was from Mildred Latham, the girl he loved, and the heroine of our story.

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"Mildred, my Mildred!" he whispered softly, as he gazed fondly at the epistle, and then broke the seal and read it. "Tonight, my dear," he dreamily whispered, "I shall ask you to become my wife, for I love you, love you, love you!"

As he sat waiting, his thoughts went back to the time he had met her, and the place.

It was in Cincinnati, and before the election. He had, while canvassing, come upon her in the door-way of a house with two stories, and a door that opened upon the street. She stood in that door-way, and he had approached her with much courtesy, and after his usual explanation, had sold her *The Tempest*. He had been struck at once by her appearance, and something about her expression—her obvious intelligence. She seemed possibly twenty-one or two. "And such features," he breathed unheard. She also had, he quickly observed, a wonderful skin—a smooth, velvety olive, with round cheeks; where, notwithstanding the slight darkness, a faint flush came and went. As to size, she was not tall; and still not short; nor was she stout or slender; but of that indefinite type called medium. Serenely perched, her head leaned slightly back. She had a frank face and rounded forehead, from under which large, lustrous, soft dark eyes—somewhat sad—gazed out at him. And as he continued in his subtle observation, he was pleased to note that her nose was not large or flat, but stood up beautifully. Her lips were red as cherries. The chin was handsomely molded and firm, but slightly thin, and protruding. Her hair was the most captivating of all. Done in the fashion, it was coal black and wavy. It was of a fine, silken texture, and apparently long, from the size of the knot at the back of her head. All this he observed with favor. He had never seen a figure so clear cut. The girl was, furthermore, dressed in a plain, dark silk dress, with small feet, the toes of which, at that moment, peeped like mice from beneath the trimly hanging skirt. Now, before he had gotten far in his dynamic spiel, the sun, all red and glorious, as its rays slanted in the west, came suddenly from beneath a cloud, and played hide and seek upon her face. And, in that moment, he saw that she was exquisitely beautiful.

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After this, he had seen her when, and however it was convenient, and they had talked—they always talked—on so very many subjects. As time went by, he always felt good cheer, for at last, it seemed—and this meant much, for Sidney Wyeth had had much experience—he had met the One Woman.

One day she said to him, and it was in a tone that was very careful: "You wrote *The Tempest*, didn't you?" She had guessed his secret, although the book had been published anonymously—and he had always been guarded as to its author, so he replied somewhat awkwardly that he had.

"I felt it—was sure when I began reading," she said. "Because there is something in it about you that you never tell—in conversation, but you did in the book."

He was silent, for he knew not what to say at that moment. She resumed:

"Yes; and it is that which makes the book *so* interesting—and so sad." She fell silent then for a time, apparently engrossed in deep thought, but with worried and sad expression.

There were other times she had appeared sad; times when he felt she could have been happy and cheerful and gay. And that to him was ever a mystery. He wished he could help her out of that way—at any time.... Some day he would, too. He was firm in this....

Then came the time when he was to leave, and he passed her way that day. From across the street she saw him, and came at once with hands outstretched; but when he made known the fact of his proposed departure, she was downcast, and sorrowful and sad.

"I'm *so* sorry," she said—and meant it. He was too, and said nothing.

"I shall miss you—oh, ever so much."

"I will you, too," he whispered. She looked up quickly, but what she saw in his eyes made her as quickly turn away. They entered the house and the parlor where it was dark for day-time, and sat together for a long while in silence. Presently, from the next house came the notes of a piano, and some one sang *Sweet Genevieve*. O, subtle art! It made them both feel sad. Impulsively he arose and caught her in his arms, when the music had changed to *The Blue Danube*. Around then, and around they waltzed, light-footed to the sweet old tune. And as they danced, both seemed to become strangely infected with a wild exhilaration. Entranced, he unconsciously sought her eyes with an awakening passion, and saw that she had been transformed by the music, and perhaps the dance, into a wild, elfin-like creature, and he looked away.

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Minutes went by like seconds and, after a time, he dared seek her eyes again, only to see that she had grown more elfin still. And, as abruptly as it had begun, the music stopped, and their dance ceased. They stood, however, as though forgetting the embrace, and thus heard each others hearts thump violently. One moment they stood thus, and then a breath of wind through the open window, lifted a stray lock of her hair and laid it against his cheek. He was intoxicated by its effect, and then suddenly he had lost all composure. He crushed her to him, close, closer, and, in bold defiance of all conventionality, he kissed her lips—once, twice, three times! She was not angry, but struggled, nevertheless, to be free. She heard his voice then, low, strained, palpitating, and with soul on fire: "Mildred!" Again he cried, "Mildred! O, my Mildred!" She swayed helplessly. "I—", but she got no further. He had caught sight of her eyes, helpless; but with a weak appeal, as her lips faltered:

"Please don't!" And in spite of his mad desire, and the words he could have then sung like the poets, he hesitated, and for some reason, for which he could not quite fully account, allowed her to disengage herself.

Freed now, she took several steps, and when at some distance she paused, and regarded him with forced defiance; but behind it, he caught again that sad distraction. "What is it," he uttered, almost aloud. And then, intuitively, he knew she was unhappy—aye, miserable. "I must help her," said he beneath his breath; but before he had decided how, he seemed to hear a voice saying: "No, not yet because,—well, *you* can't!"

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The strains of music again came floating through the open window. He was not aware of his gaze; but something in his expression seemed to inspire her confidence; for, involuntarily she turned and started in his direction. She took only a step or two, when she abruptly halted; paused hesitatingly, uncertainly, with her thin lips compressed, hands clinched, and her head thrown back in an obvious effort. But her throat swelled almost to choking, as she withheld something she seemed mad to say. An expression of superhuman effort seemed suddenly to be exerted, and suddenly whirling, without a word, she silently quit the room.

He was aroused now from his reverie by "All a-bo-ar-d: Cincinnati and the South," and an hour later, he was whirling southward over snowladen fields to his Arcadia.

Cincinnati rose about him at eight o'clock that evening, as he emerged from the union station and started on his fateful quest. The snow, ground to slush by thousands of wheels, made the hard streets filthy. He scurried across, and caught a car that took him within two blocks of where she lived. Progress was slow, but only seemingly, for he was so impatient. It seemed fully an hour before he left it, although it was not fifteen minutes. Along the poorly lighted street he rushed in breathless haste. His heart kept up a tattoo that disturbed him, and he heard himself muttering: "Sidney Wyeth, what's the matter? Why do you feel this way? Pshaw! You ought surely to be happy, calm and imperious. Mildred Latham loves you—and she needs you; but much she does with such nerves!" He braced himself as he neared the house, and pictured himself in the next hour. She would be in his arms—and all would be over—but the happiness. This picture became so vivid, that for a time it served to make him forget his nerves.

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And now he had come unto the house, the house of his treasure, and within all was silent. Strangely, a feeling came over him of an approaching doom. Before him, shivering in the cold night, sat an old woman, a hag. She looked at him out of one evil old eye, and he shuddered noticeably. She was uncouth and unwelcome. "What's she doing here?" he muttered.

"Does—ah—Miss Mildred Latham live here?" He ventured at last.

"Yes," snapped the hag, and appeared more evil still.

"Thank you," he murmured with forced courtesy, but very uneasy. Drawing his card, he held it out to her, with: "Kindly take this and inform her that a gentleman—a friend—would be glad to speak with her." The old hag crushed it in her bony palm, and spat out five short words.... But, oh, what mean, cruel, hurting little words!

He reeled in spite of his strength, then stood like a statue, frozen to the spot.

The night was cold, and dark and dreary; but to Sidney Wyeth it was hot—suffocating in those next moments. His jaw dropped as he started to speak, but the words failed to come. After a time, the elements began to clear, but left him weak. He turned with a savage gripping at his heart, and stumbled back in the direction from whence he had come.

"Oh, Mildred!" he wailed. "Mildred, Mildred! I can't believe it... I can never, oh, never—and I loved you so!" On and on he went; at times walking, other times stumbling; but always uttering incoherent sentences. "It can't be true—it *isn't* true! That old hag—spiteful creature," he now growled distractedly,—"*lied!* I'll go back, curse her! I'll go back and prove her the liar she is." He halted, staggered drunkenly against a building, and then abruptly turned his face in the direction from whence he had come. But, 'ere he had gone far, he desisted. Believe those words or not, something forbade this step. Weaker than ever, torn, distracted, and mentally prostrated, he paused and leaned against a building, and for a long time gave up to utter misery.

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Our pen fails here to describe fully those conflicting moments. All that he had lived for in those days, and all that he had recently hoped for, seemed to have been swept forever from him in that one moment. After an interminable spell of mental blankness, a sentence he had once been fond of quoting, and which he had taken from Haggard's *Pearl Maiden*, came back to him out of a remote past. It was this: "With time, most men become used to disaster and rebuff. A colt that seems to break its neck at the crack of a whip, will hobble at last to the knacker, unmoved from a thousand blows rained upon him." So, presently, with a tired, wearied sigh, he gathered himself together, and, with a last despairing look in the direction of the fateful number, he passed down the dark street, and disappeared in the direction of The Jackson House.

"Wonder what's the matter wi' d' kid t'night?" said Jackson to his consort, as she looked up inquiringly when he re-entered the room, after showing Wyeth to his bed.

"I wonder", she commented thoughtfully. "He's always so cheerful and pleasant when around. He walked in here like a ghost tonight. Now I wonder what is the matter?"

It was late the following morning when Jackson chanced to be passing, and peeped into the room occupied by his friend, who had acted so strangely the night before. The coverlets had not been turned back, altho the bed was sunk in the middle, as if someone had tossed restlessly about over it the night before. Jackson wondered again. But at that hour, Sidney Wyeth was on a train that was speeding southward into Dixie.

So it happened that the hero of this story went forth into a land which is a part of our country.... A part wherein people and environment are so far different from the rest, that a great problem is ever an issue. This is the problem of human beings versus human beings. A land wherein one race vies with the other; that other being a multitude of black people, and, as one who reads this might know, a people who, once upon a time had been slaves, chattels, and who for fifty and a few years have been free. That time, however, has not been, as we might appreciate, sufficient to eliminate many things hereditary.

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And what came to pass upon this journey; the things he discovered, the one he again met, of what had resulted, due to the machinations of a pious, evil genius, is the story I have to tell.

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CHAPTER TWO

Attalia

"Heah! Heah! Don't get on that cah!" cried the conductor the following morning, as

Sidney Wyeth was climbing aboard the Jim Crow car of the *Palm Leaf Limited*, bound for Attalia. He backed up and looked about him in some surprise, and then demanded the reason why he shouldn't get aboard that "cah".

"I thought I tole you once we had an extra heavy train, and no colored passengers allowed; but since I see yu', now I see you ain't the same fellah that was here awhile ago." And then, in a few words, he explained that, owing to the rush of people to the south during those first days of January, the Jim Crow section of the train had been dispensed with for that day. He explained further that a second section of the same train would follow shortly. As it would, in all probability, pass them at Lexington, Sidney, with a mumble of thanks, gathered up his grips and returned to the waiting room, catching the same an hour later.

Kentucky soon lay before him. As far as eye could see, a snowy mantle covered the ground, for it was winter. Presently, countless rows of frame buildings appeared. A new brick station, which extended for some length along the track, gave the traveler welcome.

When the train came to a stop, Sidney's attention was arrested by the sight of a creature that may have been called a man, but gave every evidence of being an ape.

"I wonder," said he, to a fellow passenger, "do those things grow 'round here?"

They both enjoyed a laugh.

He was now in a land in which a portion of the people, apparently, possessed little sense of humor, judging from the way his jokes were accepted.

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On the car were two women, among the half dozen or so colored passengers. Sidney overheard one of them say to the other:

"I'm from No'th C'lina; but I be'n in Oklahoma two ye's. I'm go'n back home t' stay. Whe' you from?"

"Tennessee, Knoxville. I'm livin' in Bloomington, Illinois, now."

They looked inquiringly in the direction of Wyeth, and presently he was drawn into the conversation. The latter possessed fine sense of humor, and when he found these people so serious, he took delight in joking.

"Whe' you from?" they inquired, with all that is southern and hospitable in their tone.

"From the *Rosebud Country*, South Dakota," he replied. Their faces were a study. Somewhere in the years gone by they might have heard of that state in school, but the *Rosebud Country* was Greek to them.

"O-oh," they echoed, and then looked at each other and back at him. Presently one of them inquired: "Where is that?"

"In Africa," he answered, but they did not catch the joke, and to this day, they speak of the man they met from the Dark Continent.

At that moment, the train was crossing a stream over the highest bridge Sidney had ever seen, with possibly one or two exceptions. It seemed a thousand feet to the crystal water below, and every eye was fixed upon it. The porter, a long, lank, laughing creature, scion of the south and *some* porter, seeing an opportunity to draw attention, rushed up in a Shakesperian pose, and related dramatically, the incident of an intoxicated man, who, while crossing that very stream, fell, of a sudden, smack dab over-board, right into it. In concluding, he looked about him more dramatically than ever, as the many "O-ohs," and "Mys!" greeted his terrible story. And Sidney Wyeth, with eyes wide open, inquired if he got wet.

"Jes' listen at that," they cried in chorus, and the joke was lost.

Down, down the train whirled into the bowels of Dixie. Far away to the east, rising gray and ghostlike above the mists, the pine covered Cumberland Range appeared and reappeared in the distance. Outlined like grim sentinels, the scene, to the hero of this story, recalled the many tragedies of which those mountains were the background. The moon-shiners, the feudists, the hill-billies and the rough-necks, always had a haven there.

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The puffing of many, many locomotives, the sight of buildings, and the glare of electric lights gave evidence that they had reached a large city. Chattanooga, city of southern trunk lines, and railroad center, now greeted his eye.

He spent one night there, and the next day, resumed his journey toward that most conspicuous of all southern towns, Attalia. It was a hundred and fifty miles and more by rail. The train became more crowded as it neared his destination, while the people grew more cosmopolitan. One of these, a black man, entered at one of the many stations, and greeted Wyeth pleasantly, inquiring where he was headed for. Wyeth answered Attalia, and his companion became very sociable.

"Understand," said Wyeth, after a moment—the other had possessed himself of a portion of the seat upon which he sat—"that Attalia is one of the best towns in the south, and has one of the finest stations in the country."

"La'gest 'n' finest in the wo'ld," said the other, with a show of pride. He was a resident of the state of which Attalia was the capital, and was, furthermore, a preacher. Wyeth didn't care to argue, so let it *be* the largest and said:

"That's wonderful! I hear also, that it is a great commercial center as well, and that the city is growing like a mushroom."

"Oh, yeh," said he. "Out-side Noo Yo'k, it's the busiest and best town in the United States. Yes, yeh," he went on thoughtfully, "Attalia is sho a mighty city. Eve' been theah?"

"Not for more than ten years," replied Sidney.

"Indeed! Well, well, I mus' say you'll ha'dly recognize it as the same."

They were now approaching the embryo city. Clouds of smoke, and the whistling of innumerable locomotives filled the air. Wyeth began making preparation to leave the train, when the other touched him, saying: "No hurry, my deah suh, no hurry. Be's a long time yet befo' we 'rives in de station, be's a long time yet."

"Well, well!" the other exclaimed, in some surprise.

"Oh, Attalia's a mighty city, a great city. Wait until you see Plum street 'n' the sky-scrapers."

Meanwhile the train had arrived, and stood outside the station, through which it had just passed. It was indeed a large and imposing structure. As it rose behind them, under the bright sunlight, with its many cornices glittering as so many diamonds, it was truly a city pride. From where the train stood, the city lay like a great scroll, and vanished in the distance. Smoke and dust filled the air, and hovered over the medley of buildings like a dull, red cloud. Rising in uncertain lines, as if to escape the gloom, a line of sky-scrapers appeared in the background. "Those must be on Plum street," mused Sidney, as he looked about for a conveyance.

Besides being the capital of the state, and the greatest commercial city southeast of the Mississippi, Attalia is the city of conventions, the southern center for insurance, a progressive journalistic city, and a uniform town. It is also a center for the education of Negroes, since it has a number of colleges supported by northern philanthropy. Yet the city is unable to maintain a proficient and complete course of education for its many colored children. Unfortunately for the Negroes, when the white schools are amply provided for, not enough is left for the proper training of its black population, which constitutes one-third of the whole.

Sidney did not fail to take note of the fact, as he passed through the station, that, contrary to previous reports, the colored waiting room was cleanly kept, almost as well as that of the white race. White-coated flunkies flitted about nimbly in prompt attention to the weary traveler, in spite of an air of sleepiness.

Presently, Wyeth made inquiry regarding conveyance. No sooner had he done so, than he was deluged with solicitations from a score or more cabmen, who seemed literally to raise out of the floor. They would take him in jig-time anywhere he wanted to go.

"But that's it," he said in a confused tone. "I don't know exactly where I want to go."

"Deed, suh, I c'n take yu' any wha', jes' any wha' 'f you'll jes' name de place."

Not being able, apparently, to make him understand that he was a stranger, unacquainted with the city, he presently settled on the charge, bundled in, and ordered to be taken to the best colored neighborhood, and in a few minutes he was being trundled on his way.

They turned into a street, after a block or two, that happened to be one end of the leading business thoroughfare. On a corner post, Sidney read Walthill. The cab took him up this street, surrounded on either side with the many busy shops and people, and it continued until a viaduct was reached. Attalia's Broadway was just ahead. It was a wide street, and yet not wide enough. It had been made wider recently, and in making it so, the sidewalks had perforce been made narrower. They had not been sufficiently wide before, and now this threw many pedestrians into the street, where they walked along much slower than in Cincinnati even. As the cab rolled along, Sidney observed that the street was considerably wider after some distance, and this was the business section. To the right and to the left, in fact in every direction, buildings, brick and stone, concrete, stucco and an occasional frame, stood, here low, there high, and still higher, even to twenty stories. As he looked, the setting sun played subtly about the topmost peaks. Presently, the cab turned into Audubon Avenue.

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This street sloped down hill for many blocks, and when the cab had made its abrupt turn further on, Sidney observed a large, red, brick building with stone cornices rising skyward. Adjoining this, he caught a glimpse of the outline of still another building, apparently unfinished. Strangely enough, he felt this to be the property of black people. On down the street the cab rolled.

It was a street quite wide enough, and paved in part with cobble stones, and further on with asphalt. Glancing from right to left, as he proceeded, he saw that it was given over largely to business conducted by Negroes, Jews, Italians and Greeks.

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Presently, his wandering gaze took in the proportions of a small book shop, before which stood a tall, lean Negro, whom he surmised rightly to be the proprietor. In the window, displayed conspicuously and artistically, were numerous books by Negro authors which he had read, and, of course, some he had not.

And still he was trundled on. His gaze met the sight of a mammoth stone church, where he saw many colored men standing about the front. Some were brown, while others were yellow, and still others were almost white. They were preachers, he knew, for all were fat. Only preachers were always so, he recalled, and that's why he knew. Across another street and on the same side, they came abreast of the structure that had arrested his attention before. The first portion rose to only two stories, but was so artistically constructed, that it caught his attention, and commanded his admiration. Next to this, the other portion reached to six stories, and, as he came to the front, he viewed it very carefully. On one side of a wide entry, over which was written many words which he could not decipher, was a first class barber shop where black men were being shaved. On the other side, a bank occupied much space, and this, he observed, for the first time in his life, was conducted by black people—no, they were between and betwixt, but that does not matter, they belonged to that race. At the rear he saw elevators moving to and fro, while the entry was filled with these same folk. His bosom swelled at the sight, for he was proud of his people.

"Heah's a place you might look ovah, deah brudder," said the cabman at last, as he halted before an old frame structure, across the front of which was written in large letters

THE BIXLEY HOUSE

Sidney was not favorably impressed.

"How you lak it?" asked the cabman.

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"Nix," he replied. "Try another."

The horse was turned about, and they journeyed back over the same street from whence they had come. Two blocks were thus covered, and then they turned into a street that intersected, and stopped before another place less impressive looking. At this point, the cabman suggested a lady friend of his, who kept nice rooms, and to this he was straightway driven. He was satisfied at last, paid his fee, and in due time was fairly well installed.

Sometime later, Sidney went forth on a tour of inspection. The first place he decided to visit was the book store, where he had seen the serious looking man at the front. He turned out to be so, very much so, as Sidney learned in after months. His name was Tompkins, and he was very affable, even pleasant.

"A-hem. Glad to know you, Mr. Wyeth," he said, accepting the introduction. When Sidney stated the nature of his business, he answered his many questions very pompously, and further said, that the colored people of the city had an inclination for literature.

Sidney, however, began to feel, after more questioning, that Tompkins was stretching things, and that his statement, that the colored people were great readers, was largely exaggerated. It was, as we shall see later; but for the present, he thanked Tompkins, and promised to drop in again.

When he had dined at one of the many little restaurants, he wandered back into the business section of the city. He failed to recognize any of the places he had once known, which proved conclusively that Attalia had progressed. He found himself on Plum street again, through which he walked and reentered Walthill, and, after seeing many of the sights, entered a large book store, where he inquired for a volume he had long desired to read—rather, he inquired of a large, fat man, whether he had it. The other looked around a spell, then replied:

"We sho God has," and stood waiting undecidedly. Presently he held it toward Wyeth, who, somewhat hesitatingly, looked irrelevantly through the pages. He was not sure, whether it was customary to take it in his hands.

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"All right," he said, and reached in his pocket for the money.

"Do you-ah—wish it?" the other inquired, still hesitating.

"Sure," Sidney replied. "That's why I called for it." He was obviously surprised, and expressed the fact in his eyes. The other observed this, and made haste to apologize:

"Ce'tainly, ce'tainly. Beg yo' pa'don. Not many cullud people buy works of fiction, or anything besides an occasional Bible, school books and stationery. That is why I was undecided whether you wanted to buy it or not."

"Indeed!" echoed Sidney, taken suddenly aback. Then said: "I read a great deal myself."

The clerk observed him closely for a moment, and then said: "You don't live in these parts?"

"No."

"And you read a great deal? Where are you from?"

He was told.

"That accounts for it," said the other, proceeding to wrap up the book.

"Accounts for what?" curiously.

"Your being a reader."

"I don't understand.... Don't the colored people down here read a great deal also?"

"No," said the other simply.

"Well, I declare!" said Sidney in surprise. "I have only two hours or less ago, been told by a book-seller that they do."

"Lordy me! Who told you that?"

"Tompkins. The—"

"Tompkins is a booster. He's all right, though," said the other, with a low, amused laugh. But Sidney's curiosity was aroused, and he continued:

"There's a multitude of teachers and preachers, and I should think they would buy lots of current literature to keep themselves informed for their work; but perhaps they are not so well paid, and get it from the library." The other appeared perplexed for a moment, but said presently, without looking up:

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"They have no library of their own, and the city library is not open to colored people, but they do not seem to be very anxious for books. The teachers, and the preachers —" He threw up his hands in a gesture of despair. "You'll find out for yourself. You are, I see, a keen observer, and you'll find out."

Sidney left the store in a reflective frame of mind. "I didn't believe Tompkins," he muttered, as he walked back in the direction of Audubon Avenue. Just then he glanced to his left, into the largest barber shop he had ever seen. It was for white people, but conducted by a colored man. It was not only the largest he had ever seen, but the finest, the most artistic. He forgot, for the time, what he had just been told, and which was causing him some concern, and again he felt his breast swell.

There was much to be learned about his people that he now realized he did not know; and yet, surrounding it all was a peculiar mystery that he decided to solve for himself. He did so, but that remains to be told.

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CHAPTER THREE

Next Day—Discoveries

At eight-thirty the following morning, Sidney set forth, carrying a small case containing a half dozen books. His purpose was to feel out the city from a practical point of view. He had been told that the better class of Negroes could be found by walking down Audubon Avenue, as far as the residence section. So he followed it until the business had been left blocks to the rear. At the end of the paved street he turned into a house. It was a very sumptuous affair, with an attractive lawn before it. He was told by a passerby that it was the home of a club waiter. He ventured up to the front door, and, upon its being opened by a mulatto woman, apparently the waiter's wife, he turned on his spiel. She listened to it patiently, even speaking some words in praise, as he explained the narrative in brief, but he failed to make a sale. He tried more subtle arts, but in vain. And then she told him frankly that their finances would not permit her to purchase the volume. This excuse always made Wyeth desist from further effort.

He turned into the next house, and the next, and the next, until a half dozen had been made, but with the same result. Since he had invariably sold to three-fourths of

the people whom he approached, he was not nearly so confident by this time. These people lived in and owned homes that were a pride, and it was not that they did not wish to buy; people so easily approached can be expected, in a large part, to fall victim; but 'ere long it became more clear to him. They were *not* able. It was well that he perceived this; for hope of success was small, if it depended upon purchasers here. Most of the people he found in these homes were dependent upon a very small salary. The cost of living was as high here as in the north, in fact, the ordinary commodities were higher. The sums they were receiving would not be considered sufficient to care for the same people in the north, therefore, why should it here? This was contrary again to what Sidney had always been told.

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Presently, he happened upon a letter carrier. No time was lost here. This man was paid for his work, so he forthwith became a victim of the most artful spiel, and bought the book, cash. This served to spur Sidney to renew his efforts, and he attacked those he approached more vigorously. For a time he met with no more success.

He had a lunch at a nearby restaurant, of pigs feet and sweet potato custard. After an hour, he resumed his efforts. And this began his discoveries.

Entering a yard, he came up the steps of a house from the back way. He passed a refrigerator, and crossed the porch to knock at the door. But—a bottle of Kentucky's John Barleycorn calmly rested upon this same refrigerator.

The door at which he knocked was opened presently, and he was invited to enter, which he did; but, when leaving by the same way, after selling another book for cash, "John" was gone.

At the next house, his customer was a tall woman of middle age and dark skinned. She drew him adroitly into a prolonged conversation, and then bought the book.

Now, Attalia is a *prohibition* town in a southern *prohibition* state. Yes, it *is*—and it *isn't*. When Sidney Wyeth left that house that afternoon, he had spent part of what he received for the book, for beer and whiskey. Moreover, he was told that more than seventy-five places on Audubon Avenue were engaged likewise, and in the city all—but that is a matter for conjecture!

Obviously, *prohibition* did not *prohibit*—but more of this later in the story.

That evening, while dining, he became acquainted with Ferguson and Thurman, who will, for a time, occupy a part in the development of this plot.

Ferguson was a preacher, but at this time—and for some time—had not preached. He admitted painting to be more profitable from a financial point of view. He complained, however, that if the "New Freedom" continued in power much longer at Washington, and with the way things "was a-goin'," he would have to give that up and go back to pickin' cotton.

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"They ain' nothin' in preachin' no mo', that's a sho thing."

"I do not agree with you on that score," said Sidney; "for, from what I have learned already in regard to these parts, there must apparently be more money in preaching than anything else, judging from the number of preachers. And how fat they all appear!" Ferguson looked up quickly at this remark, and as quickly down at himself.

"I didn' get this flesh preachin', I assuah you," he retorted, with flushed face. And after a pause, he went on with some heat:

"But that's what don' sp'iled preachin'; too many lazy nigga's a-graftin' offa de people!" But Ferguson, as Wyeth learned later, was something of a pessimist, and predicted all kinds of deplorable things. And it was at this moment that a dejected creature made his appearance. He was bald headed, bowlegged, but, notwithstanding these possible deficiencies in his make-up, aggressive. His name was Thurman, and, said he, between bites of sweet potato pie:

"Aw, nigga;—youah allus a-p'dictin'—som'thin' awful!—To—heah you tell it,—since the democrats—has got int' powah—cawse a buncha crazy nigga's—didn' know how t' vote—at dat aih convention in Chicawgo—the world is—liable to end tomorra!"

"It mought!—It mought;—'n' 'f it did—you be one—a d' fust—t' bu'n in hell—too; but don't you 'dress me lak dat no mo'—in sech distressful terms! You autta be 'shamed a-yo' se'f."

And he munched pie for a time, uninterrupted by speech.

Thurman only grunted unconcernedly.

"What are the prospects of the colored people down here at the present time?"

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inquired Sidney, hoping to relieve the tension; but he could have rested easily on this score, for, as he learned later, they carried on that way every night. That was their diversion; but Thurman was now heard from.

"HELL!" he answered calmly.

"Good Lawd man!" cried Ferguson shocked. "What's comin' ovah you!"

"Lyin' 'n' stealin'; drinkin' cawn liquah 'n' gittin' drunk; bein' run in, locked up and sent to d' stock-ade 'n' chain-gang;" he resumed, ignoring Ferguson's shock entirely. Whereupon, Ferguson looked more distressed than ever; but only wrinkled his face in a helpless frown, and said nothing.

"Gee!" cried Sidney; "but that's an awful prospect." All this time Thurman had not smiled, but accepted everything as a matter of course, from the way he partook of sweet potato pie.

"You must not pay any attention to Mr. Thurman, Mister," said the proprietress, from across the room. She was a patient-faced, sleepy, short woman. And now, for the first time Thurman moved in his seat, and took exception to the words. Said he, somewhat loudly, and emphasizing his words with a raised hand:

"Pay no 'tention! Pay no 'tention; wull I reckon yu'd bettah. Hump," he deliberated, pausing long enough to fill his mouth with more potato: "Pay no 'tention when yu' know yu'se'f that Judge Ly'les 's a sentincin' mo' nigga's to the stock-ade 'n' chain-gang than he's eve' done befo'. 'N' a good reason he has fo' doin' so too! Lyin', doity, stinkin', stealin' nigga's," he ended disgustedly.

Presently, before anyone had time to deny his sweeping assertion, he resumed:

"Mis' M'coy, yu' know dem taters I got frum you tuther night?"

"I rember them quite well, Mr. Thurman," she replied, resignedly.

"I took them taters home 'n' put 'm in muh trunk, locked it 'n' put th' key in muh pocket 's I allus do. Now what yu' think happened?" he halted, and surveyed the atmosphere with serene contempt. "That low down li'l' nigga in th' room wi' me, sneaks int' that trunk wid a duplicate key, 'n' steal eve' last one'm! *Jes' think of it!*" he emphasized, with a terrible gesture. *"Stole eve' las' one uv'm! Then talk about nigga's!"*

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"We did'n' say nothin' 'bout nigga's would'n' steal, man!" complained Ferguson. "You jes' nache'lly went offa yo' noodle widout 'casion."

During all this conversation, a girl sat opposite Sidney. She was a dark, sweet-faced maiden, with an expression that was inviting. Sidney, happening to glance for the first time into her face, smiled and nodded. She smiled back pleasantly. Ferguson and Thurman continued their harrangue.

"They are a pair," ventured Sidney, to no one in particular, but the girl smiled and inquired:

"Who are they?"

"I never saw them before," he replied.

She observed him closely, and said presently, in a very demure voice:

"Indeed. Ah—then—you don't live here?"

"No," he answered, and told her.

"O-oh, my," she echoed tremulously. "It must be fine away up in the great northwest. And—do you expect to be here—er, some time?"

"For a few months at least." Whereupon she inquired as to his business, and he likewise inquired of hers.

"I am employed in service," she said.

Now it happened that Sidney had, a few months before, met an agent in Dayton, who persisted in canvassing nowhere else but among this class. He thought of this, and made inquiry. He was told in reply, that practically all the domestics were colored.

"I would like to see the book you sell," she said, presently. "If you could bring it to the number where I am employed, and if, after seeing it I am pleased with it, I would buy one." He could not have wished for anything better, and told her so. Elevating his eye brows in pleased delight, he said:

"I most assuredly will. Only tell me how I may get there—I'll make a note of it," and he immediately did so.

"Catch a Plum Street car," she directed, "and get off at West Eleventh Street, walk a block and a half west until you see a large house numbered 40. They are Jews, so,

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should you lose the number, inquire for Hershes'. You may call any time after two P.M."

"I will be there tomorrow at that hour if the sun rises, and if it doesn't, I'll be there anyway," he laughed. She was amused.

"All right," she said, and took her leave.

The next day was beautiful; the sun shone brightly, and the air was soft and fragrant. Plum Street, besides being the leading business thoroughfare, is likewise the most imposing residential district, at its extreme end. Large cars, modern and built of steel, thread their way, not only to the city limits, but they penetrate far into the country beyond.

And it was aboard one of these modern conveyances that Sidney Wyeth reclined, observing the size and grandeur of the many magnificent residences, that stood back from either side of the street in sumptuous splendor. Magnolias and an occasional palm adorned the yards, while green grass and winter flowers filled the balmy air with a delightful odor.

He alighted and found himself very soon in the rear of No. 40. Success was his, for he sold to the girl, and three more at the same number, and the next, and the next—and still the next, until darkness came. Thus he came in touch with people who were more able, and positively, more likely to buy.

A few days after this he dropped in on Tompkins.

"Hello, my friend!" that worthy one said. "Why haven't you been in to see me? I've been thinking of you."

"Indeed," said Sidney, in glad surprise. "I've been too busy," he concluded shortly.

"Too busy!" echoed the other in evident surprise. And then he waited expectantly.

"Oh, sure," Sidney smiled, looking over Tompkins' supply of books, mostly Bibles, for such was the most Tompkins sold, as he learned.

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"Been selling lots of books?..."

"Hundred and sixty-five orders in eight days."

"Great goodness," Tompkins exclaimed. He dropped all work for a moment, and stood with mouth wide open. Then he inquired artfully: "Have you *delivered* any?"

"Fifty copies last Saturday and Monday."

"*Man!* Are you telling me the truth!" he exclaimed dubiously.

"I *sell* books," Sidney replied calmly.

Tompkins resumed his work in a very thoughtful mood. Presently, as Sidney was leaving he called: "Say, drop in and see me some day when you have time to talk—a long talk. I'm *interested* in you."

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CHAPTER FOUR

And He Never Knew

Weeks had passed. Mildred Latham could be seen sitting dejectedly by the window of her small bed-room, gazing down a street that led to the river. Every day since that next day when she had been told that a man had called to see her, and instinct told her it was Sidney Wyeth, she had sat thus. On this day, however, things were different. There had been a change—a great change in her life; for she was today, and henceforth, free, in a sense, but this is further along in the story.

Presently she picked up *The Tempest*. This was nothing unusual. Although she had read it in two days after she had received it, she had, in the weeks that had just passed, picked it up and reread certain parts of it. But, as a change had come since the last time she held it, she read it today with unusual interest. After reading for a few minutes, she laid it aside, took from the table near a map of South Dakota, and for a time studied the part of it across which was written *The Rosebud Country*. She allowed her mind to wander meditatively back to the past. She saw this land as it was when the country was young; when the bison and the native Indian held sway; when

mighty herds roamed across those plains, molested little by the red man. She picked up the book and read a little more. For scores of years they had lived and died, and at the end of this regime, came the inevitable white man, the greatest race of conquerors the world has ever known, without doubt. And behold the change of a few short years! Nature in wild profusion, then materialism in the extreme. They, these conquerors, had almost changed the world. And among those thousands that crossed the densely settled prairies, and made conquest of *The Rosebud Country*, were only a few black men. Judging from this book, they could be counted upon the fingers of one hand. One of these was Sidney Wyeth.

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Yes, he had gone forth, hopeful and happy and gay, and had become a Negro pioneer. So he began, and did a man's part in the development of that now wonderful country. Thus she imagined it, and felt it must have been. It *could* not have been otherwise, because only *men* went west, to the wild and undeveloped—and stayed. *He* had stayed for ten years. How he spent those years, Mildred Latham could imagine. Through the pages of that narrative, she had followed his fortunes to the climax—the culmination of a base intrigue. What a glorious feeling it must be, she felt, to be a pioneer; to blaze the way for others, that human beings ever after, to the end of time, may live and thrive by the right of others' conquest! He had plowed the soil, turned hundreds of acres of that wild land into a state of plant productivity, which should bear fruit for posterity. And if Sidney Wyeth had in the end failed, in a way it was only after he had done a man's part in behalf of others.

But then came the evil.

In the lives of all men, the greatest thing is to love. Sidney Wyeth had hoped, at some time, to gain this happiness, the love of a woman. Had he earned it? Apparently not, from another's point of view. That was all so singular, she thought, time and again. For the evil creature, evil genius, was a preacher, a minister of the Gospel. "I can't quite reconcile myself to that part of it, yet I should," she mused, now aloud, "for *my* father is a preacher."

Mildred Latham's thoughts drifted from Sidney Wyeth for a time, and reverted to her own life, and that of her father, who was a preacher. Soon, they wandered back to Sidney, to his life of Hell—the work of an evil power—the torn soul upon its rack of torture—and finally the anguish—always the anguish, followed by the dead calm of endless existence.

Yet during their acquaintance, he never spoke of the past. No word of censure, or of unmanly criticism, passed his lips.

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So Mildred Latham could feel in a measure relieved, for she had secrets,—and she kept them all to herself, too.

Directly, she shook off the depression, and rose to her feet.

"It is all settled," she said half aloud, and, going to her trunk, laid the book in the tray, lifted the latter out, and, reaching to the bottom, took up a small steel box and set it on the dresser. She then inserted a small key, opened it, and took therefrom a heavy, legal document. Examining it for a time, she put it into her hand bag, locked the box, returned it to its place, replaced the tray and locked the trunk again. This done, she slipped into a street suit, and, gathering up the handbag firmly, left her room, locked the door, stepped into the street, and caught a car that took her up town, where she alighted before a mammoth office building. She entered this, took an elevator and got off on the twentieth floor, entering the office of a prominent law firm. This visit had been pre-arranged.

An hour later, she left a large bank on the ground floor, returned to her room, took the box from her trunk, and replaced, not the legal document, but a long, green slip of paper.

"All is now settled on that score," she whispered drearily, and then busied herself mechanically about the room. Again she fell into that fit of meditation. She could not—try as she might—shake off the despondency. And always, in the background somewhere, lurked Sidney Wyeth. Was this because she felt she would never see him again? She couldn't, she knew, as she recalled her secret.

Suddenly she threw herself weakly across the bed, and sobbed for hours. "Sidney, my Sidney," a careful listener might have heard her lips murmur. But she was alone. Perhaps that made it so hard, for she was alone now, always alone.

At last she got up and bathed her face, as she had done many times before.

Always, too, she had a presentiment down in her heart, that somewhere or somehow, some day fate would be kind and send him again into her life. And then would she be ready?

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O that persistent question!

Now Mildred Latham was not a weak woman. Far from it. In spite of the secret,

which was ever *her burden*, she was not the kind to give up without struggle. This was perhaps the cause, in a degree, of the suffering she endured. It was this sorrow which Sidney Wyeth had observed, and wished to dispell. "If I could only have permitted him to do so," she said, so many, many times. But always *The Barrier*.

"I will sell his book henceforth for my living," she said to herself at the end of that day, as she had often said before. "And in doing that, I shall ever live with his memory—God bless him!" For Mildred Latham loved Sidney Wyeth.

And he never knew.

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CHAPTER FIVE

B.J. Dickson

When Sidney Wyeth's work among the domestics was an assured success, he decided to rent desk space in the large office building referred to, get a typewriter, do a little circularizing, and concentrate his efforts upon securing agents elsewhere, for the purpose of distributing his work.

Accordingly, one Sunday morning, after being told that the custodian of the building could be found in his office on the fourth floor, he betook himself thither.

But let us pause for a moment, and retrace a long span of years, that we may interest ourselves in the history of this same structure. For it has a fascinating tale to tell.

Before freedom came to the black people of the south, pious worship had begun. Despite the fact that it was an offense to teach Negroes during that dark period, or in any way to be responsible for allowing them to teach themselves, many, nevertheless, did learn to read; and perhaps because the slave-owners were inclined to be God-fearing people, they did not, in a general sense, openly object when they found many of their slaves worshipping. So it happened that, since men were in the majority of those who learned to read, the first channel to which they diverted this knowledge was preaching. And since, as above mentioned, they were not always forbidden, worshipping the Christ among Negroes had been practiced long before freedom came. Therefore, after freedom, preaching became the leading profession among the men.

The reader is perhaps well acquainted with the pious emotion of the Negro; our story will not dwell at length upon this; but the fact that, to become a preacher as a professional pursuit, was the easiest and most popular vocation; and from the fact, further, that Negroes had become emotionally inclined from fear in one sense and another, so that it is inherent, preaching and building churches swept that part of the country like wildfire.

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Of the different sects, the Baptist seemed to require the least training in order to afford the most emotion. All that was required, in a measure, to become a Baptist preacher, was to be a good "*feeler*" and the practiced ability to make others *feel*.

History proves that people of all races (when still not far removed from savagery) are inclined toward display. This is an inherent nature of Negroes. Indeed, Negroes of today, in many instances those who have graduated from the best colleges, seem yet largely endowed with this trait, as this story will show later.

So, shortly after preaching and shouting became the custom, another feature entered which permitted these people more "*feeling*," and this was lodges, secret societies and social fraternities. These, like everything else—omitting possibly the extreme "*feeling*" exercised during religious worship—was patterned after white custom; but, insofar as the Negro is concerned, a great deal more stress and effort and feeling was put into the things mentioned. In a sense, they were the Negroes all.

Naturally, these many lodges, etc., must have some object. And that object for years, was irrevocably, to care for the sick and bury the dead.

Our story will be concerned with the United Order of the AAASSSSBBBBGG, which, for the purpose of this story, will answer as well as the real name, and will be much easier to refer to.

The AAASSSSBBBBGG, is one of the oldest lodges in Dixie, having been in operation among the black people for generations. And its great object was, until a few years ago, to "ce'h fo' the sick 'n' bu'y the dead."

In the course of events, there had been elected to a very conspicuous position in this same lodge, a man with a square jaw. He was of medium height and build, but

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aggressive, very much so, in fact, a born fighter. Happily, the latter trait was peculiarly necessary to the one who held the office of grand secretaryship in this lodge—and to this office Dickson fell heir.

Now Dickson was no ordinary Negro. He was ambitious, not the kind that is likely to be satisfied with the past duties of the order. Because, and it might be well to mention so strange a coincidence: This lodge had not been able to spend all the money that had come into the treasury for burial purposes. So the reserve totalled \$40,000 cash. It was confidentially whispered that the officers, a united click, preceding Dickson, had calmly planned, when this amount reached \$50,000, to grab it all, and start a colony—for themselves, of course, in Africa. But, alas! enters Dickson, the determined, the ambitious. And if anything can serve to disturb an order like this, it is ambition. In all the years of its existence, the slogan had been to crucify ambition religiously, but Dickson crucified them. At this time, at least, they were relegated to the scrub timber, where they lay dreaming of a time never to return, for "the old order changeth."

In addition to the office of grand secretary, Dickson was an editor, and before the moss-backs had realized it, some years before, he was editing the official mouthpiece, *The Independent*. They thought little of this, in fact, they didn't care, because, in the first place, no one else cared for that job; it required too much thought to edit a paper that the members would be likely to read. *The Independent* had come out at spasmodic intervals, reporting, in detail, the death of Miss Sallie Doe, "a member in good standing, who had met her Jesus on the altar of evermore;" or, that Jim Johnson, another member, "had been incarcerated in the county jail, along with many others, for disturbing the peace;" or, that at the revival at the Antioch Baptist church, of which Brother Jasper was the pastor, "a soul stirring revival is going on with scores 'gittin' right with Jesus'," etc., etc., etc. But its greatest ambition, apparently, had been to come before the people, guaranteed not to be read.

So fancy, when, after getting control, Dickson "did it all over." *The Independent* became "some" paper. It fairly ripped and snorted. It took up the instances of officers that were sluggish and backward and slow, and made great headlines. "Whew!" the members cried, who had never read the paper before. While others declared: "Ah allus knowed dat nigga's crazy!" But everybody began reading the paper. They objected and scrambled and stewed about what was said, called him the biggest liar, bull-dozer, and everything else, but read the paper. So the circulation doubled and trebled and quadrupled, and then doubled all over again, until it was reaching every "live" member of the order. Dickson didn't care whether it reached the others or not, and he told them so; moreover, he said—in not so many words, but it was read between the lines,—that they could go to Hell. They took the paper then.

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There came a time at last when the treasury was reeking with Sam's good gold, and Dickson had more enemies than could be counted readily. But Dickson was wise. He had looked deeply into the condition and inborn weakness of these black creatures, and had surmised that they only patronized each other when they mutually hated. If they loved one another, they were allowed to starve to death undisturbed.

He saw that Negroes would only build and occupy an office when the white man refused to rent him anything but the attic—and not even that sometimes. So, with a flare, a blaze and a roar, out came *The Independent*, and said that the AAASSSSBBBBGG lodge had decided to erect an office building of its own. It was to be six stories in height, of brick, with stone cornices, and what not. Moreover, a picture of it completed appeared on the front page of *The Independent*. That finished it! They prepared to send him to the mad-house, and forthwith gathered for that purpose, which was what Dickson wanted. They arrived in twos, threes and fours, and then in droves. To the tune and number of thousands they came and were met (?) by a brass band! And away went the music: "Ta-ra—ta—ta-ti-rip-i-ta-ta-ta-tu!" It got into the Negro blood. Music, of all things, always has effect. Before they were aware of it, they were cake-walkin' and doin' the grizzly bear, and it has also been whispered confidentially, that two preachers, high and mighty in the order, "balled the jack." The music stopped for a spell. Through the crowd—the black crowd—came a cry, "Arrah! Arrah! for the Negro, the greatest race since the coming of Christ!" And it was answered: "Arrah! Arrah! So we is. Who said we wasn't!" "The white man!" came back the reply. "He's a liah!" went back the words heatedly. "If so, then," came back, "why do we continue to do our business in his attic? Why?" This was a shock. But before recovery, sayeth the cry: "\$50,000 odd we have in the treasury to care for the sick and bury the dead! With \$60,000 more we can have a building all our own, with elevators and mirrors and a thousand things, with our own girls to tickle the type and scratch on the books." A wild dream flitted across the minds of these black men, the underdogs, the slaves for a thousand years; their wives, the cooks and the scrub women; their daughters, the lust of the beast. And then from somewhere came another cry. It was soft and low, but firm and regular. It came from a body of women, black women. "With our hands, from the white people's pot, we will give unto thee thousands, and back again to the pots we will go and slave, until our

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old bones can slave no more, and pay, and pay until a mighty building, the picture of which we have seen, shall stand as a monument to the effort of BLACK PEOPLE!"

And now there was a scramble to the front! It was a scramble as had never been seen in Attalia before! \$60,000 was fairly thrown over the heads of one another to B.J. DICKSON, the grand secretary.

Six months and a year had elapsed. And the monument stood serenely in the sunlight, as Sidney Wyeth came down the street that Sunday morn. To the side of this monument stood another, imposing and grand, not yet finished, but soon to be, and it had all come through the indirect efforts of B.J. Dickson. They were not satisfied with the one, when they learned they *could* do things, but needed another—so they subscribed the necessary funds without effort, and built the other.

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Before entering, Sidney walked across the street and viewed the structure from the other side.

Thus he saw his people, as others see them.

For his life had been spent, for the most part, in white civilization.

As he surveyed it carefully, he was relieved to find that, to a stranger, there was nothing to indicate that colored people occupied the building.

An intelligent looking man came out of it, and, crossing the street, bowed casually to Wyeth. The latter, returning it, inquired regarding the building and Dickson, and he was told the following:

"Yes, while there are many who do not give Dickson the credit, he is, nevertheless, the man who has made all that possible."

"Everything is well kept apparently," said Wyeth. "That is unusual for our people."

"That's Dickson," said the other. And then aside he inquired:

"Have you ever been through it?"

"I am just going," said Sidney.

"You should have done so during the week. Any time before one o'clock Saturday."

"Why one o'clock Saturday?"

"Because everything ceases at that time."

"Indeed," Wyeth commented in wide surprise. "System?"

"That's it. That's Dickson."

"Indeed! Does he have charge of everything?"

"Indirectly, yes. That is, he does not own everything, of course not; but it's like this: Do you observe how everything is in order?" Wyeth did, and waited.

"Well," resumed the stranger: "You can bet your boots that it would not be that way, if it were left to those in the buildings altogether. No; they would—some of them—get into a fight, knock out a window or two, and bring a pillow from home, to stick in the hole. The first time it rained and blew in at the window, the plaster would fall. Then, others, posing more than anything else, would have a crap game going on and sell whiskey on the side. As for the letters in gold which you observe on the windows, they are Dickson's ideas. Negroes would use chalk naturally. But Dickson won't stand for anything like that. When anything is amiss, he goes at them, as for instance, those stores in the front. Many of the proprietors, when they empty a box, instead of putting it to the rear, would stick it in the front, right up where every passerby could see it. To augment it further, they would allow dust and dead flies to collect. Cobwebs too and perhaps, pile a few old rags up on the top of it. But B.J. goes to them, as I said, invites them across the street, and shows it to them. He takes them up to one end of the building, and walks them to the other, and allows them to see it as the casual observer would. If he doesn't think or consider this sufficient, he takes them up town, and allows their gaze to compare it with the way things are conducted by the first class white people. And then he says: 'Now just look at it! That's nigga's. Nigga's proper. You conduct your place so that every stranger, seeing the city and the sights, when he gets before this building, realizes at one glance that Negroes occupy it.'"

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Sidney laughed a low, amused laugh. The other continued:

"That's why you see things as they are. Our people are not bad to handle. They are, in fact, the most patriotic of all races, and are surely anxious for the success of each other, only they don't know it. They are like a herd without a leader. Dickson's a

leader over there."

"Ah!" thought Sidney, "that's where it comes in. The race needs leaders!" Again the other was speaking.

"Of course, we have a great many that would be leaders, oh, yes, indeed! Over there in that building are many who are pining their lives away. They are confident they are leaders, and are exasperated because they have no following. They hate the people because they are not awake to the fact. They declare, that they have *even been to school and graduated from college and know everything*, which *alone* should put them at the head. For some peculiar reason, they cannot realize that leaders are born, not made.

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"Now you leave the building and wander about over the city, and you will find a score or more of these would-be leaders, all with the same delusion in regard to themselves. They include, for the most part, teachers, preachers and doctors. They are so wrapped up in this idea, that they are utterly incapable of appreciating what the race is actually doing, and trying to do. Of these, perhaps the worst are the teachers. This is probably because they are paid by the county, and do not have to cater to the masses for their support." He paused, and extended his hand. "Glad to know you, stranger, and good-by."

Sidney Wyeth watched him disappear, and then crossed the street to the building, and entered.

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CHAPTER SIX

"Oh, You Sell Books"

One beautiful day, the *Palm Leaf Limited* carried another passenger southward, aboard the Jim Crow car. It was Mildred Latham, and her destination required a change at Chattanooga. Turning her course, however, she went west and alighted at a town, happily located upon the banks of the Mississippi. It was a large metropolis, a fac-simile of a sister city, Attalia.

Miss Latham left the depot at once, and proceeded to Beal Street, which was entirely occupied by Negroes. She entered a restaurant, but soon came out, and started in search of a room. However, the land-ladies all told her they preferred men, so she decided to look elsewhere.

A car put her off at a corner far removed from Beal Street. She passed down a clean, quiet street, lined on either side by comfortable homes occupied by colored people. She paused before a small but handsome stone church. It was the First Presbyterian, so the cornerstone read. To the side, and back from the sidewalk, completely surrounded by vines, was the parsonage, at least she took it for such. And so it proved to be. She hesitated a moment, then, with an air of finality, she opened the gate, entered the yard, and mounted the steps.

The door was opened by a kindly lady, whom she judged to be the pastor's wife.

"Pardon me, please," began Miss Latham demurely, "but I am a stranger, recently arrived in the city, and have been unable to secure lodging. I noted the church next door, and surmised that, if this is the parsonage, and if the pastor is in, he might assist me." She hesitated, and for a time seemed at a loss how to proceed. In the meantime, the other surveyed her critically. Strange women were always regarded with suspicion. Finally she replied kindly, swinging the door wide:

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"Come in, my dear child. You look tired and surely need rest. You must have come a long way. The pastor of the church you refer to is not in for the present, and, I regret to say, is out of the city, and is not expected back for several days. I am his sister, however, and will help you all I can." She paused as she placed a rocker at the disposal of the stranger, and relieved her of coat and hat.

"You are very kind," said Mildred gratefully. "I hardly know how to thank you."

"Please do not speak of it, my dear. As I am alone, you may stay with me until you have found the kind of place you desire." She was silent and thoughtful for a moment, and then asked softly, "where are you from?"

"Cincinnati."

"I do declare!" exclaimed the other in mild surprise. "I have relatives there; but I have never seen the city myself."

The stranger appeared relieved.

"And do you expect to be in the city long?"

"I cannot say. I am here to sell a book, *The Tempest*, a western story, by a Negro author. And, of course, it depends upon that, as to how long I shall stay."

"Oh, you sell books." Mildred did not correct her. "I used to sell books, and, indeed I liked it. I am fond of reading. I am anxious to see the book you speak of when it is convenient, since I have observed advertisements of it."

"It is a nice book," Mildred commented. "And as soon as I can have access to my trunk at the depot, I shall be delighted to let you see and read it."

"I shall indeed be pleased, I assure you," the other smiled back sweetly. "I am always so interested when it comes to books, that I wish, when you have had something to eat, you would tell me the story of *The Tempest*."

"It will be a pleasure; but you need not fix me lunch, for I just ate a short time ago, as I came from the station. So, if you now wish, I will tell, in as few words as possible, and as best I can, the story of this book.

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"The story opens up on the banks of the river, near this city.... It concerns a young man, restless and discontented, who regarded the world as a great opportunity. So he set forth to seek his fortune.... Thus it began, but shortly, it led through a maze of adventures, to a land in the west. It is, perhaps, the land of the future; a land in which opportunity awaits for courageous youths, strong men, and good women.... This land is called *The Rosebud Indian Reservation*. It lays in southern South Dakota, and slopes back from the banks of the 'Big Muddy', stretching for many miles into the interior beyond. It is a prairie country. No trees, stumps, rocks or stones mar the progress of civilization. So the white men and only a few blacks unloaded at a town on or near the frontier. I think it is called Bonesteel. And then the mighty herd of human beings flocked and settled over all that broad expanse, claiming it by the right of conquest.

"Among these many, conspicuous at the front, was the hero of this narrative. He came into a share, a creditable share, and, although far removed from the haunts of his own, and surrounded on all sides by a white race, he was duly inoculated with that spirit which makes men successful.

"Time went on, and in a few years there was no more reservation, but it became *The Rosebud Country*, the land of the optimist.

"Then, of course, came to him that longing, that dream, the greatest of all desires, the love of a woman. But of his own race there were none, and he did not feel it right to wed a white wife. But at last, he found one of his own blood. She was kind, good and refined, but in conviction she was weak, without strength of her own. She loved him—as such women love, but to her father, a preacher, she was obedient,—subservient. They lived for some months in happiness, until that other—her father—came to visit them. These two, her father and her husband, differed, both in thought and action, and, naturally out of sympathy. In short, they disagreed upon all points, including the daughter, the wife, and at last the mother, for in time such she became. And that, strange to say, instead of being the birth of a new freedom, was the end of all things.

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"So o'er this land of the free there came a change, a sad change, that led to the end, the end of *The Tempest*." She paused, and allowed her eyes to remain upon the rug before her, while the other listened for more. Presently she said:

"And was it her father—who stooped to *this*?"

The other nodded and remained silent, with downcast eyes.

Mildred Latham could not have said more had she wished—just then. A peculiar feeling came over her, and her mind went back to a night not long before.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

The Office of the Grand Secretary

When Sidney Wyeth walked into the office of B.J. Dickson that Sunday morning, he found him alone, engaged in reading. When a step sounded at the door, he laid the paper aside and glanced searchingly at the intruder. Wyeth saw before him, the man of determination: the square jaw, the determined set of the neck; otherwise he would not attract any particular attention in a crowd. But this was B.J. Dickson, of whom he had heard much since coming to Attalia, and even before.

"Mr. Dickson?" he inquired, respectfully. The other nodded, and pointed to a chair.

"You have charge of the renting here, so I understand?"

"Yes."

"I'd like to get desk space for the present, and later on perhaps I might require an office."

"I see," mused the other, surveying him meditatively. "Well, we have nothing left in this building; but I think there are two or three rooms not yet rented in the building you have observed in course of construction. What kind of business are you engaged in?"

"Books," replied Sidney, simply.

"M-m. Well, I can't give you any information as to desk space. You can, however, see Morton tomorrow. His office is on the second floor, the board of trade. He can enlighten you on that score."

"What do you receive for the rooms?"

"\$12.50 a month."

"That is quite reasonable," said Wyeth. The other looked up with a pleased expression.

"You're one of the few who have made such a remark," he commented.

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"Indeed! That would be considered cheap in my section of the country," said Wyeth.

"Where is that?"

Wyeth told him.

"Oh well, you come from a place where the people are accustomed to something. These down here have been used to nothing but an attic or an old frame shack, a fireplace with wind blowing in at the cracks, and, of course, cannot appreciate steam heat, electric lights, first class janitor service, and other modern conveniences that go with such a building."

At this point, several men entered the room, most of whom were distinguished looking, compared with the average Negro. Wyeth was introduced to them, and learned that two were physicians, one a dentist, another a lawyer, and still another was a letter carrier. The stranger was soon the object of their many questions. They were answered deliberately, for Sidney Wyeth was well informed.

"What do you think of the colored people in the south, now that you see them yourself?" he was asked. He noted the pride and air of dignity along with the question.

"I am considerably impressed with what I have seen, I am sure," Wyeth began cautiously. "It is unnecessary to say that this is probably the most commodious structure owned and occupied by our people, in any city. And, I have noted with a great deal of pride that you have in the building, also, some half a dozen large insurance companies, owned and conducted successfully by members of this race. All of this and other creditable things, too numerous to mention, count for much in the solution of the race problem. Much more could be said in praise, but I do not consider it necessary. And still, with so much to their credit, there is much also to their discredit—very much. I refer to this, since it is a thing that can be remedied, and positively should be. To begin with, the people as a whole, do not read nearly as much as in the north, and are poorly informed in matters of grave concern and of general interest." He paused, and saw that they were puzzled. They were, all of them, taken aback. They looked at each other, and then began to gather color and heat as well.

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Sidney Wyeth had stirred, by his last words, his criticism, the hornet's nest.

"And what, may I ask," inquired one of the physicians icily, "has given you that impression?"

"Well, many things," Sidney resumed calmly. "For instance: I am in the habit of buying *The Climax*, which is, as you know, published in New York, and edited by a man who used to be professor of sociology in one of your colleges. Now, in all the places I have been" (he didn't refer to the north, realizing that it would cause more argument not bearing on the discussion), "I have found this magazine much in circulation among our people; but here, at only one place have I found it. You appreciate that the Negro population of this town is to exceed, without doubt, sixty thousand. It receives but fifty copies a month, and does not sell all of *them*—of course there are annual subscribers; but, so there are everywhere else as well."

"Now—" all began with upraised hand, but Sidney stopped them with:

"I've made this remark, so hear me out, that I may show that I am justified in making it."

They were quiet, but impatient.

"You have several large drug stores, doing a creditable business in the city. Omitting a few operated by white men in Negro neighborhoods, you will hardly find one that does not carry a goodly stock of magazines for his trade. Not a colored drug store carries one. Tompkins, other than *The Climax*, does not sell any. Now, gentlemen, with such a population as you have," (he was very serious now), "is it consistent to believe that these black people read in proportion to what they should, when there is so little current demand for literature?"

The outburst that followed this was too intense to describe. The composure that was in keeping with their appearance and training was, for the time, lost. Everybody had something to say to the contrary, and, at the same time.

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"I have five hundred dollars worth of books in my house," cried Dickson.

"I take *The Climax*, and have since it began publication," cried still another.

"Derwin, its editor, is a traitor to his race, and I can prove it," persisted another.

"Theah ain' nothin' in it, nohow," yelled another whose English was not the best.

"It's the only magazine edited by, and in the interest of this race," retorted Wyeth; "and has a circulation more than double that of any other publication by Negroes since freedom."

"You northern Negroes think a whole lot of Derwin, and are imbued with his point of view," cried Dickson; "but we had him down here before he went north, and we know him for what he is," and he looked about him meaningly.

The others gave sanction.

"He's the author of the only book in sociology, that stands out as a mark of Negro literature. The book is a classic, and is one of possibly two or three from the pen of a Negro since Dumas."

It is difficult to foretell where the argument may have ended, but Sidney slipped out. As the door closed behind him, a mighty roar of indignation came over the transom. "He's a liar." "He's crazy!" "Like all from that section!"

When these men met Wyeth afterward, and for some time, they did not recognize him. He was not surprised. They are, and the best of them, in a measure, still incapable of accepting criticism as it is meant. Our story will go to prove this more conclusively later on; but for the present, Sidney Wyeth had made friends....

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CHAPTER EIGHT

Henry Hugh Hodder

Weeks had passed, and a touch of spring time was in the Dixie air. Sidney Wyeth's canvass was now assisted by another, while from over the country he had secured, here and there, an agent to sell the book. He found desk space in an office on the second floor, hired a stenographer, and filled the country with circular letters. Perhaps fifty or more replies were received, a few with a money order and requests for further information.

Although most of the letters were sent to preachers and teachers throughout the south, two-thirds of the replies came from the north. From Boston, New York, Chicago, and centers where literature is obtainable from the libraries which are open to Negroes, more letters by far came, than from the south where such is not always available. And out of these, a few agents were secured. But it seemed almost an impossibility to interest those at the south in a subject of literature.

One day, there came a letter from a small town in Florida that amused Wyeth. It was from the secretary of the board of trade. In reply to the circular inquiry, requesting the names of the Negro preachers in that city, it ran thus:

MY DEAR SIR: Replying to your favor of recent date relative to the names of Negro preachers of this city. In regard to this, I am compelled to say, that I cannot fully enlighten you, for this reason: Everything with trousers appears to be a preacher, or, any one who can spell "ligon."

My gardener is a preacher, although he finds my work more remunerative, apparently; but you could, however, write to him, and he would, I feel sure, give you the desired information.

When Sidney appraised Tompkins of his failure to get the cooperation of southern preachers, in his exploit, he was advised that the preachers were working that "side of the street."

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We cannot appreciatively continue this story, without including a character that is very conspicuous in Negro enterprise. That is the undertaker. He is always in evidence. Mortality among Negroes exceeds, by far, that among whites. This is due to conditions that we will not dwell upon, since they will develop during the course of the story; but in Attalia, there was one undertaker who was particularly successful. He had the reputation of burying more Negroes than any man in the world. He had a son, a ne'er-do-well, to say the least, and they called him "Spoon."

Sidney, who at this time shared a room with Thurman, became acquainted with "Spoon" one Sunday night. It was at a "tiger," of which, as we now know, there were plenty.

Spoon had a reputation in local colored circles, as well as his father; but Spoon's reputation was not enviable. He was boozilogically inclined, and reputed by those who knew him, to be able to consume more liquor than any other ordinary society man. Moreover, Spoon was "some" sport, too; could play the piano, in ragtime tune, and could also "ball the jack." He would lean back upon the stool, play the latest rag, as no other could, and at the end, cry: "Give me some more of that 'Sparrow Gin!'"

Wyeth and Spoon became close friends following their first meeting, and Sunday nights, they would roam until one or two in the morning. Spoon knew where every "tiger" in town was; and, moreover, he proved it.

Thurman, although two and fifty, was no "poke;" but was a sport too. His began early Sunday morning. One Sunday morn, as they lay abed, after the light of the world had come back and claimed its own, Thurman called to Sidney where the other lay reposing in the pages of a "best seller." "Say, kid! how 'bout a little toddy this mawnin'?"

"I'm there," came the reply.

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"Good!" exclaimed Thurman. "Guess, tho' I'll haf to go after it, 's see you lost in a book all time. Gee! Looks lak you'd lose your mind a-readin' so much." No comment. "Guess that's why you got all these nigga's a-argun' 'roun' heah though; cause you read and they don't. M-m; yeh, yeh; that makes a diff'nce. M-m."

"Wull, reckon' ah'll haf t' git in muh breeches and crawl ou' and git dat stuff t' make it wid. M-m. Old Mis' 'roun' the conah 'll be glad t' git dis twenty cents dis mawnin'. M-m. Wull, kid, be back t'rectly."

He was, sooner than expected. He didn't get outside. He peeped out. What met his gaze would send any southern rheumatic Negro back.

It was snow.

"Jesus Chr-i-s-t!" he exclaimed, returning hastily from the hallway. "Hell has sho turned on dis mawnin out dare. K-whew! 'f the's anything in this world I hates, it's snow."

Sidney stopped reading long enough for a good laugh, as Thurman skinned off his trousers and clambered back into bed.

"Aw, shucks, Thur, this is a morning for toddies."

"A mawnin' fo' Hell, yes, hu! hu! Wow!"

After a spell, he peeped from beneath the coverlets. "Say! since ah come t' think uv't, we c'n have them toddies wid-out get'n froze out in doin' it."

"How's that?" asked the other.

"I'll get dat liquah from John."

"And who is John?"

"John? Wull, did'n' you git 'quainted wi'im when I brung you heah? John's the man we room with. He sells liquah."

"Say Spoon," said Sidney one day, "I'm going to cut the tiger kitin' out."

"Aw, gwan, kid, what you talkin' 'bout?"

"I'm going to church in the mornings, and in the evenings, I hope to find a place that will be more in keeping with respectable people," announced Sidney.

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"Come on, let's go up here to old lady Macks, and get some of that 'Sparrow Gin,'" Spoon suggested, temptingly.

"To prove that I am not likely to keep my resolution."

"You've none to keep as I can particular see. I have never seen you drink anything

stronger than beer when you've been with me. You seem to go along with me, to see me and the others act a fool. Sometimes you impress me as being a strange person.... I wonder. Now I wonder...."

"Where is a church that would be likely to appeal to you and myself?"

"Up on Herald Street is one that I think will appeal to *you*. You're serious. Me—I'm quite unfit for any; but I'll take you up there, and sit through one of Hodder's sermons if you care to go. My people are members of that church, and it is a progressive one."

"We will attend services there—Sunday morning."

Wyeth became a regular visitor.

The following Sunday, the pastor appraised the congregation of the fact, that on the following Sunday, they would have with them the Reverend W. Jacobs, the energetic young man who was doing such great work for the training of wayward children. And this takes our story into a matter of grave human interest.

Coincident with better educational facilities, and the more careful training of the children, time had brought a change that was slowly but surely being felt by these black people in the south. It has already been stated, that the Baptist church required little literary training in order to preach; but, in this church, it is quite different, and no man would be tolerated as a minister, who had not a great amount of theological, as well as literary training.

Henry Hugh Hodder was a man, not only prepared in the lines of theology and literature, but was fully supplied with practical knowledge as well. He had, at the time Sidney Wyeth became acquainted with him, gathered to his church, a majority of Attalia's best black people. His popularity was, moreover, on the increase, and his church was filled regularly with a class of people who listened, studied and applied to their welfare, what he said each Sunday in the pulpit.

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His church stood on a corner to the edge of the black belt, and near a fashionable white neighborhood. And it had, at the time it was constructed, caused considerable agitation. When Sidney and Spoon came to the door, prayer was being offered, and when it was over, they entered, taking seats near the door.

It was a nicely ventilated church, with large colored windows, arranged to allow air to pass in without coming directly upon the congregation. At the front, a small rostrum rose to the level of the rear, and contained, in addition to the altar, only four chairs. Sidney was told afterwards, that, due to a practice always followed in other churches, particularly the Baptist, of allowing journeymen preachers to put themselves before the congregation uninvited, Hodder had removed the chairs in order to discourage such practice.

Apparently he had succeeded, for, on the Sundays that followed, Sidney saw only those who were invited, facing the congregation.

Directly over the rostrum hung a small balcony, which contained the choir and a pipe organ. Following a song, the pastor came forward. He was a tall man, with width in proportion, perhaps two hundred and twenty pounds. Not unlike the average Negro of today, he was brown-skinned. His hair, a curly mass of blackness, was brushed back from a high forehead. His voice, as he opened the sermon, was deep and resonant. And for his text that day, he took "Does It Pay!"

Not since Sidney Wyeth had attended church and heard sermons, had he been so stirred by a discourse! Back into the ancient times; to the history of Judea and Caesar, he took the listener, and then subtly applied it to the life of today. Never had he heard one whose eloquence could so blend with everyday issues, and cause them to react as moral uplift. For he knew the black Oman's need. Pen cannot describe its effect upon Sidney Wyeth. It seemed, as the words of the pastor came to him, revealing a thousand moral truths, which he had felt, but could not express, that he had come from afar for a great thing, that sermon. It lifted him out of the chaos of the present, and brought him to appreciate what life, and the duty of existence really meant.

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Having, in a sense, drifted away from the pious training he had received as a youth, Sidney Wyeth was suddenly jerked back to the past, and enjoyed the experience. On account of his progressive ideas, he had been accused, by some of his people, since his return to live among them, of being an unbeliever. He was often told that he was not a Christian; they meant, of course, that he was not a member of a church, which, to most colored people, is equivalent to disbelief. Sidney Wyeth saw the life, the instance of Christ as a moral lesson.

When the sermon closed, Wyeth had one desire, and fulfilled it, and that was to shake Henry Hugh Hodder's hand; moreover, to tell him, in the only way he knew how, what the sermon had been to him.

He did so, and was received very simply.

As he approached the rostrum, at the foot of which stood the pastor, shaking hands with many others who had come forward in the meantime, he was like one walking on air. He recalled the many sermons preached to satisfy the emotion of an ignorant mass, and which, in hundreds of instances, went wide of the mark, causing a large portion of the congregation to rise in their seats, and give utterance to emotional discordance, the same being often forgotten by the morrow.

Hodder was not only as he was just described, but he proved to Sidney Wyeth to be a practical, informed, and observing man as well. When he had received the card, he inquired of the country from whence Sidney came, and related briefly the notices he had followed, regarding its opening a few years previous.

At that moment, a large man, almost white—that is, he was white, although a colored man—was introduced to him as Mr. Herman. He proved to be the proprietor of the large barber shop on Plum Street, which had caught Sidney's attention the day he came. After Mr. Herman's introduction, he met many others prominent in Negro circles, including the president and cashier of the local Negro bank. And thus it came that Sidney Wyeth met these, the new Negro, and the leaders of a new dispensation.

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Two hours after the services had closed, he passed a big church on Audubon Avenue; a church of the "old style religion" and, which most Negroes still like. It was then after two o'clock. Morning service was still in order—no, the sermon had closed, but collection hadn't. Out of curiosity, he entered. The pastor had, during this period, concentrated his arts on the collection table. He was just relating the instance of people who put their dollar over one eye, so closely, that it was liable to freeze to the eye and bring about utter blindness. "So now," he roared, brandishing his arms in a rally call, "*We jes' need a few dollahs mo' to make the collection fo'ty-fo'. I'll put in a quata', who'll do the rest,*" whereupon the choir gave forth a mighty tune, that filled the church with a strain which made some feel like dancing.

The following Tuesday, an editorial appeared in one of the leading dailies, concerning the sermon and the instance of Henry Hugh Hodder. It dwelt at some length on his work for the evolution of his people, and concluded by praying that (among the black population) great would be the day when such men and such sermons were an established order.

Sidney, now in an office to himself, read it to a man next door. Whereupon the other said:

"Oh, that is nothing unusual. They often speak of him and his work in the editorial columns. Which might account for his having such a fine church." ...

Wyeth was silent, apparently at a loss what to say. The silence had reached a point which was becoming strained, when another, who happened to be in the office, relieved it by spitting out sneeringly:

"White fo'kes'll give any nigga plenty money, when he says what they want him too." He was a deacon in the big church referred to. This was not investigated.

Wyeth called him a liar then and there.

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CHAPTER NINE

"Sweet Genevieve"

"Wilson, dear," said Constance Jacobs to her brother, the pastor, on his return from Attalia, Effingham, and other places where he was required to go in the interest of his work. Coming up to him in her usual manner, she kissed him fondly, for she was not only fond of this, her only brother, but she was proud of him. Well she could be, for Wilson Jacobs was a hard, conscientious worker in the moral uplift of his people. "I have a surprise in store for you," she said, "and if you are comfortable I will tell you."

"Little sister," he said, as he kissed her fondly in return, and gave her his undivided attention.

"I hardly know how to tell you, but I have with me, someone who came during your absence; the most unusual to be a usual girl I have ever known." She then related the instance of Mildred Latham's coming, and the circumstance, including the book. "I have read the book that she is selling, and with which she seems to be very successful, in fact, she is so successful that I am almost persuaded to take up the work myself. The story is interesting; but it is not that which has caused me much thought, it is the girl herself.

"She is a beautiful girl, intelligent, kind and winning, although she does not, as I can

see, practice or exercise any arts to be winning. She is single, and does not appear to have any interest in the opposite sex, nor does she appear to care for any society. In fact, besides being nice and kind to all whom she chances to meet, she does not have any interest beyond the book. She is simply foolish about it, just as much so as though the author were her lover, and depended upon her for its success.

"There is something peculiar, that is, oh, Wilson, there is something, just something that I cannot understand about her, that's all." She gave up trying to express herself for a time, and then he spoke:

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"In love, no doubt, and has had trouble."

"Yes," she said, then shook her head. "It might be that; but if it is, it is an extraordinary love affair; but I am confident it is deeper than that. I catch her at times looking into space as though her mind were far away. And at these times, I have taken notice that she is sad, very sad. My heart goes out to her when I see her like this, because, for some peculiar reason, I have fallen in love with her. She found a place to stay, and was going to move, but I could not think of it. She is the sweetest companion I ever had.

"I wish you would become interested in her, dear. I want you to. Perhaps you can get at the bottom of the mystery that surrounds her. I cannot, and it worries me, because I want to help her, and it hurts me when I feel that I cannot. She has become very much interested in your work, and has been helping me in the correspondence relative to the same."

"When can I meet this strange person you speak of, Constance? I am curious, from what you have said. I gather already that she may be able to help us in some way in our work."

"She went down the street for a walk, but will return shortly, since she never goes far." At that moment, steps sounded on the porch, and a moment later, Mildred entered quietly, and was on the way to her room, when Constance met her with: "Oh, Miss Latham. Please meet my brother who came since you went out. Miss Latham, my brother, Wilson Jacobs."

"My sister has just been speaking of you, Miss Latham," said he, after the exchange had been made.

"Indeed!" cried Mildred, smiling pleasantly upon Constance. "Your sister does me too much honor."

"Not a bit. I am glad to know you, and shall be pleased to become better acquainted as time goes on. I am told that you are selling a good book. I have observed advertisements of the same some time ago, and will be delighted to read it."

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Mildred smiled pleasantly, hesitated, and then said: "Every one I sell to report that they love the book. I do myself. I think it is such a frank and unbiased story, and told so simply, that anyone can understand it; yet with a touching human interest that is, in a measure, vital to us all. Even persons more highly gifted can learn something from it, and be entertained as well."

"She has sold over a hundred copies in three weeks, which I think is extraordinary, don't you?" said Constance at this point, whereupon Mildred looked slightly embarrassed. She always did when anyone spoke in praise of her.

"Extraordinary, excellent, I should say," her brother smiled. "Where does she find such good customers?"

"I work among the women in domestic service," Mildred explained. Wilson looked surprised.

"Indeed! And do you find many readers among them? You have not been to many of the teachers?"

"I have, yes; but they do not seem to take much interest in work by Negroes, so far as I have been able to gather. I could not say for sure, of course not; but I *do* find the women in service, in great numbers, to be fond of reading and full of race pride. Of course, there are multitudes of ignorant ones who are not capable of appreciating literature and its value as moral uplift, but, as a whole, I am highly successful."

Wilson Jacobs was greatly moved by his first conversation with Mildred, and found himself thinking about her more than once in the days that followed. His sister became so deeply interested in her, that after a week had passed, she had taken up the work also.

"Do you ever play, Miss Latham?" inquired Constance a few days afterward, and late one afternoon, when they had returned from their work.

"A little," Mildred admitted. "But it has been so long since I have touched a key, that I am sure I should be very awkward if I attempted it. I think you play nicely."

The other laughed. "I only play when I am quite sure no one is likely to hear me. There is one piece I can play, and of which I am very fond. I heard you humming it the other day. As soon as the parlor is 'comfy,' I shall ask you to condescend to listen to me play it."

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"What piece is that? Please tell me," Mildred inquired.

"Sweet Genevieve."

"Oh, yes...."

"Why, what is the matter, dearest?" cried Constance, hurrying toward her.

"Nothing, nothing!" said the other, hastily mopping her nose and eyes.

"Well, I'm relieved, but I thought I heard you sob, but of course you didn't. Of course not. Really, I begin to feel that if I don't get married soon, I'll become a nervous, cranky old maid."

"Please don't say such things about yourself," entreated Mildred. "You were not mistaken. I did—ah—I sobbed—I mean I coughed. I had something in my throat," she concluded nervously.

"I'm relieved," smiled the other, and, going to the piano, she struck the keys, and sang in a high contralto voice:

"O, Genevieve, I'd give the world
To live again the lovely past!
The rose of youth was dew-impearled;
But now it withers in the blast.
I see thy face in every dream,
My waking thoughts are full of thee;
Thy glance is in the starry beam
That falls along the summer sea."

It was in the small hours of the morning when Mildred Latham's eyes closed in sleep. All the night through, the strains of *Sweet Genevieve* and what it recalled, tortured her memory, until it was from sheer fatigue that she did at last fall asleep.

She hoped Constance would play *Sweet Genevieve* no more.

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CHAPTER TEN

"Do Something and You'll Find Out"

In Attalia, there is a street which includes all that goes with Ethiopian. It is called Dalton street, and along its narrow way—for it is narrow, and one of the oldest streets in the city—occurs much that is deplorable.

On this selfsame street, an incident took place, in which Sidney Wyeth happened to figure as more than the casual observer.

It was in late afternoon of a cold wet day. He had been delivering books, and had a considerable amount of the proceeds of the delivery in his pockets, when, while on the way to the office, he chanced to be passing down this street. He looked up, and found himself before a large, odd appearing structure. A uniformed man stood at the front, and, in passing, Wyeth paused a moment, took in the proportions of the building with a critical gaze, and inquired of the man what it was.

The other looked at him with an expression which seemed to say: "You ought to know!" But grinning, he replied:

"Do something and you'll damn quick find out! It's the police station."

"M-m-m-m! You wouldn't be likely to find out if you didn't, I suppose," he laughed, as he continued on his way.

During Sidney Wyeth's bachelor life on the *Rosebud*, he had been a victim of the habit of going to town, and loafing the night through, occasionally. There had, in the beginning, been a great deal of gambling there, and to watch this was an absorbing pastime. It served, also, as he then felt, as a diversion to break the monotony of his lonesome life.

Now there were places—if not gambling dens—in Attalia also, where one could loaf at night. When his correspondence was completed that evening, he felt a "Call of the Wild" in his blood, and went forth on a pilgrimage of this kind. In company with a chauffeur, he left for his room about one thirty A.M. the following morning. They had not, however, gone far before the clouds had gathered. They didn't see the clouds—at first—but the clouds saw them. They happened to be a pair of meddlesome bull-cops. It has been stated that the hour was about one thirty, but the cops said two.

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Moreover, they wished to know what business occasioned two young men to be out at such an hour.

Sidney felt slightly insulted, and stepped aside to let them by, thereby wishing to avoid any argument. The cops stepped aside also, but to see that they did not get too far out of the way. Said one—and he was the burliest—"Well, boys, where have you been?" "Where have we been?" said Wyeth, to himself. "Now wouldn't that frost you!" What business of these men was it? They had positively not been acting suspicious, nor were they seen fighting, and neither were they drunk. So, then, what right had two burley cops to get in the way, and ask such impertinent questions. Sidney felt like making an indignant reply, he felt like fighting; then he did some quick thinking, and decided to be patient, answering the questions in an offhand way, and so be on his way, for he felt sleepy. And then, again, he observed that they wore great big sticks, with which they toyed idly, as they waited for reply.

"Aw, knocking around." It was Wyeth who made this reply.

"Aw, knockin' 'roun'," said the big cop, who had now grown ugly in the sight of Wyeth, and he repeated this mockingly. And now spoke the chauffeur, who had grown up in those parts. He was diplomatic. Said he:

"I'm jes' gettin' off frum we'k, cap'n," and despite his look of truth and sincerity, he trembled perceptibly.

Sidney observed him with a touch of disgust.

"Is that so-o?" said the cop, more sneeringly now than ever. Sidney had enough, and started to go by, but the blue-coat blocked his way roughly, and cried out, with club grasped: "Where yu' been, nigger?"

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Wyeth was shocked beyond speech. Evidently, he had not as yet come to appreciate that he was otherwise than on the *Rosebud*. "Where you been, nigger?" came the terrible voice once more.

Wyeth woke up. Moreover, he became obviously frightened. He replied—and lo! He was trembling also, as he cried:

"What do you mean, Mr. Policeman!" He was now wild-eyed. "I'm not breaking the law; I have done nothing; I am on the way to my room and to bed. Why do you hold me up this way. I don't think I am obliged to answer such questions as you ask; but I have been calling, I cannot see that it matters where, since—"

"Aw don't talk to the man lak dat," whimpered the chauffeur.

"I'll knock your damned head off, nigger! What'n Hell's got int' you to talk to a white man like that!" He turned his face to the other who had not, up to then, said anything, and said: "Let's arrest them!" The other acquiesced. "Come on!" he roared, grabbing the chauffeur by the belt of his trousers, and whirling him about. The other caught Sidney likewise, but was more civil in the act.

"Good Lord, Mister," said he to his cop, "why are you arresting us? We have done nothing!"

"Got orders to pick up everybody after one o'clock who looks *suspicious*, and cannot give good accounts of themselves," he replied soberly.

"I wish I had known it," Wyeth sighed wearily; "but I'm at least glad that I didn't have him lead me," he said, pointing to the cop who had the chauffeur.

"You made him mad," grinned the patrolman. "You must not live here?"

"No, Lord, and I wish at this moment I had never come."

"When a white man speaks to you down here, always answer him 'sir!'" he advised.

"I most assuredly will, if I meet any more like him," said Sidney meekly. After a moment of silence as they stumbled along, he said thoughtfully: "I hate this. I've never been arrested before in my life. Will they lock us up?"

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"Oh, sure!" the other laughed.

"M-m-m-m—m!"

"Jes' lemme go this time, Mister," whined the chauffeur ahead, "'n' I won' neve' be out late no mo'."

"I'm sorry, son," said the bull-cop a little kindly, "but it's impossible. I o'n' think you are bad 'tall, but that other nigger's crooked, 'n' I know he is," he said, pointing back at Wyeth. He was overheard, and despite the precarious condition Wyeth realized he was in, he smiled.

"He's sho got a bad 'pinion a-you, son," laughed Wyeth's cop.

"I'll go t' bed eve' night at nine 'clock—eight 'f you say so," begged the chauffeur, as they neared the patrol box.

While they were waiting for the "wagon," the copper with the chauffeur in charge turned that worthy over to the other cop, and ran across the street to intercept another Negro. That one happened to be a waiter who worked at night, and was, accordingly, allowed to go his way; but he had been off work since ten o'clock. Wyeth and the chauffeur had left him at the palm garden when they departed, but that was no argument now. The other went his way, whistling cheerfully, while they stood prisoners of the law.

It was a dreadful experience for Sidney Wyeth.

A mighty but familiar jingling of bells proclaimed that the "wagon" was on the way, and in an incredibly short time they were pushed inside. As the door closed, with a bigger cop than the others between the culprits (?) and the door, these words came to Wyeth's ears: "Idling and Loitering!"

"Youse the cause a-this," accused the chauffeur angrily.

Wyeth laughed outright.

"How c'n you laf 'n' us on the way t' the lock-up!"

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Wyeth laughed in earnest now, while the bull smiled naively.

"I wish I'd a-neve' seen you," said the other wearily.

"It's vain to make such wishes now;" and then something occurred to him. He had been to the bank, but had, fortunately, not deposited all he had. "Say, Governor," he cried, "if a man should put up money when he is taken before the clerk, or whoever it is that receives us, would they allow him to return without locking him up?" His inquiry was eager. The other replied:

"Most assuredly."

"Good! How much will I have to put up to keep from being locked up?"

"About ten dollars and seventy-five cents."

Wyeth did some counting. "I have ten fifty. Will they let me out on that?"

"I think so."

"What you goin' do 'bout me?" put in the chauffeur.

"Do about you!" said Wyeth. "What you going to do about yourself? I'm not your guardian."

"But I ain' got bu' fifty cents," he wailed despairingly.

"Then methinks you will sleep on Dalton street tonight."

They had arrived at the station by this time. Wyeth recalled a few hours before with a feeling of awe, as he recognized the place and the words the man had used.

"What's your name?" demanded the clerk of the chauffeur.

"Boise Demon."

"Yours!"

Wyeth gave it, and as the clerk made a record of it, he made inquiry regarding a bond.

"All right. Ten seventy-five."

"I have but ten fifty."

"See the sargent."

"What's the charge?" inquired that orderly, coming forward.

"Id'ling and loitering."

"Let him off for ten."

"Pay me out, pay me out!" trembled the chauffeur.

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"Shut up!" commanded Sidney. "Haven't you heard me say I had but ten fifty?"

"Then do'n go, do'n go; stay with me!"

"Like Hell, I will!" exclaimed Wyeth with a laugh. The officers standing about, laughed also, and said:

"Don't be 'fraid, honey. You'll have lots a-company."

Wyeth handed over ten dollars, and a moment later passed into the street where a soft rain was falling. "Jesus," he muttered; "I'm sure glad I kept that money." And then, ere he had got far, he heard a cell door clang, and thought about Demon. At the same moment, there came to his ears the music of many throats singing: "Don't you leave me here!"

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Judge L'yles' Co't"

Wyeth sneaked into the room without waking Thurman that morning. Nor did he inform him of his good fortune, when the other arose two hours later to go to work. He did not sleep any that night, and, since he had to be to the court at eight-thirty or forfeit his bond, he arose early, dressed, and in due time, he sat in the large theatre.

Perhaps if Sidney Wyeth had suspected what would come to pass that morning, he would have forfeited the bond by not putting in his appearance; but when he put up the collateral the night before, he had observed a mark of respect in the officers. He was sufficiently acquainted with the courts from a distance, to realize that the average Negro brought before that tribunal—with the possible exception of a boot-legger—seldom brought any money or had any at home, and invariably went in great numbers to the stockade. Moreover, the sargent and the clerk, too, had advised him that he might not possibly be fined at all. Therefore, when he left for the court, he had no thought other than that he would go free, and have his money returned.

"It will, of course," they had said, "depend upon how Judge Loyal feels when you appear."

He had heard something regarding this "feeling" before. He meditated as he made his way in that direction. And still he recalled more of what he had heard, which was to the effect that if "his stomach was upset, look out!"

He hoped Judge Loyal didn't suffer with dyspepsia or indigestion....

As he neared that place he now remembered so well, he was overwhelmed with memories. He recalled this same court, more than ten years before. It was in a leading magazine. It was, moreover, he recalled, an interesting story, too. "Wonder if it will prove so today," he mused silently....

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And now he was inside the court room. He was early, and so were many others. He recalled, with another twitch of the memory, that Judge Loyal had presided ten years before. He would see him today. "There he is now," he said to himself, as an old man with white hair came upon the platform, and took a seat behind the bench.

But it was the clerk. Judge Loyal came later, so did others, many others.

And now all that he had read in that article many years before, suddenly came back to him clearly. It overwhelmed him. The article concerned that court—and Negroes—Negroes—Negroes—a court of Negroes. And now he was a part of them. Although on the outside, he felt guilty. He was supposed to answer when his name was called.

The court room was filling rapidly. They were herded behind huge doors, to the left of the room. Black men and a few whites. A mass of criminal humanity. He shuddered. He wished now to be over and out of it as soon as possible. And then he experienced a cold fear. It became stronger. It developed until it became a chilly premonition that Judge Loyal (Judge L'yles, as these Negroes called him) would be feeling badly that day. This feeling persisted until it became a reality.

It was now eight-forty. In ten minutes court would begin. But still others came, and came, and came. Women and men, boys and girls—even children. And eighty per cent of them were Negroes, his people. Would they never quit coming? What manner of business did these people conduct that brought so many into court? And at last came the judge. He was, in all appearance, a young man. Evidently he was not, because Sidney had been told that he had been on that bench for twenty-five years.

Court was then opened. Inside a fencing, many white people sat in chairs. Who they were, or what part of the proceeding they represented, he could not tell. Prisoners were then being arraigned. From somewhere, he did not see, but it was not from the detention room where the "*great*" herd was, a young Negro of striking appearance was led forward. He was tall and slender, and what caught the attention of Sidney Wyeth was, that there was nothing criminal in his appearance. He was about twenty-five years of age, and wore shackles about his ankles, as well as upon his wrists. He made a pathetic picture. Sidney listened carefully, as he stood before the judge, while talking in an undertone. He could not hear what was said, but, presently, the prisoner was led outside and away. He never learned what charge was made against this young man, although he would have liked to know.

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On a table that stood to one side of the bench, behind which the judge and clerk sat, were several cases of liquor.

Evidence against some poor devil was strong, thought Wyeth.

The gavel fell.

The first prisoner brought forward and placed before the judge, was a Negro of medium size and height, and about middle age. He did not possess the look of a criminal either. In fact, not all of these people, or any great part of them, appeared to be criminal, if Sidney Wyeth had observed criminology correctly. Yet there was a charge, himself for instance. This one was charged with having been drunk and making a big noise.

He admitted the charge.

"Where did you get it," demanded Judge Loyal.

"On Dalton street."

"Who from?"

"A nigga."

"Who was he?"

"A nigga."

"I don't mean that. What was his name?"

"Dunno."

"You don't know, yet you purchased enough liquor of him to get drunk, whoop it up and disturb the peace of the populace."

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"Yassar."

"Did you ever see him before?"

"Nawsar."

"Was it corn whiskey or rye?"

"Niedda."

"Well—what was it?"

"Gin."

"Oh! Gin...."

"Sparrow Gin."

"Ten dollars and cost. Next!"

There was some delay before the next ones were brought forward. When they came, there was some anxiety. They were white men from one of the suburbs. As to how they happened to be in this court was a matter for conjecture; but the charge was fighting.

A witness mounted the stand by request.

"Your name is?—"

"Bill Sykes."

"William Sykes. Very well, William Sykes, what do you know about this affair? Tell it to the court."

"Yer' 'onah, Judge," began Sykes, drawing his jeans coat sleeve across his mouth. "Yistidy I left home 'bout four a'clock 'n' come dawn to Abe Thomas' store, as I usually do for some t'baccar."

"State what you know about this disturbance," cut in the recorder's voice. "The court has nothing to do about your tobacco."

"Well, 's I started to say. I come down after some t'baccar.—"

"Witness ordered removed from the stand. Put up the next," commanded the judge.

Bill Sykes was summarily removed, as he muttered: "This is shore an all fired place to tell somethin'."

"Your name is?"

"Silas Harris."

"Silas Harris, state briefly to the court what you know about this case."

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"Well, sir, Judge, yer 'onah. It was sho'tly afta' fo' er-clock when I came down to Abe Thomas' store, 's I always do to get a chaw t'baccar."

The judge looked disgusted. Silas resumed.

"'N' I wa'nt no morn' inside before Chris Tuttle says, says he t' me, 'ah Si', says he t' me, ah gimme a chaw t'baccar. Then I says to him, says I t' him, 'ah Chris,' says I t' him, 'I ain' got no t'baccar, 'n' I jes' come down t' see 'f I couldn't get a chaw of'n you!' says I t' him; 'but,' says I, says I t' him. 'I ain' got no t'baccar, Chris,' says I t' him; 'but I God, I got some a 's good-a ole rosin as yer ever broke a tooth on.'"

"Case Nolle-prossed."

Several Negroes were brought before the bar for various misdemeanors, were fined and few dismissed, while a great many were bound over. The next case to arouse any special attention, pertained to two white girls who were brought forward with drooped heads, and made a picture that attracted the attention of the crowd. The recorder frowned, as he observed then questioningly.

"What's the charge?" he inquired of the officer, who presented himself as prosecutor.

"Soliciting."

"All right, prefer it."

"Your honor, Judge. I found these young women hanging around Dewitt and Carlton streets this morning about one o'clock, and advised them to 'beat' it. They disappeared for a spell, but at a quarter past two they were out again, and I heard them and saw them accost several men who happened to be coming from work. Presently a couple halted, and a few minutes later the four disappeared within a rooming house. I had been watching this house, and was positive it was crooked. I followed them a little later, and when I was inside, I looked about for a clerk and register that I did not find. Then I overheard talking in low tones in a couple of the rooms. When I knocked on the door, all was quiet and the doors were not opened. I then demanded the doors be opened in the name of the law. A scrambling followed, I heard windows go up, and a little later men hit the ground below. When I entered the rooms I found these young women alone, and put them under arrest."

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The court room was very silent. All eyes were upon the prisoners. The fact that the girls were both beautiful seemed to provoke the judge, and he was very cold of demeanor.

"What excuse have you to offer for such acts of indiscretion?" he inquired presently, and eyed them severely.

They both burst out crying and clung to each other, which made a very pathetic picture. "We wasn't doing anything, Mr. Judge. Not anything. We lived there and the men were our husbands," said one, while the other cried woefully. The recorder eyed them critically, before speaking in a tone of extreme severity:

"Why, then, did they jump out the windows and run away.... Don't you think that was very cowardly for *wives*?"

"O-oh," they cried now like two poor souls about to enter purgatory. They almost made others cry, too. But the judge was unbending. He looked forbidding, and as cold as steel as he said:

"Young women like you two should exercise more discretion. If you *must* conduct yourselves to the disgrace of the community in such manner, you should keep off the streets with your *men* at such ungodly hours. I am, therefore, going to impose a fine of \$10 and costs upon each of you for delinquency. Next!"

"Boise Demon and Sidney Wyeth!" called the clerk with his eyes on the docket.

The pair now stood facing the court.

"Your Honor," began the officer, who had Wyeth in charge the night before, preferring the charge, "we found these fellows at two o'clock this morning, going in the direction of Warren street. And since, as you know, we have orders to intercept all people whose appearance is suspicious, and since they failed to give an account of themselves that was satisfactory, we considered it expedient to place them under arrest."

The recorder nodded his acquiescence.

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"Your name?" he inquired of the chauffeur.

"Boise Demon."

"And yours?" of Wyeth.

"What's your occupation, Demon?"

"I'm a chauffeur 'n' wo'ks fo' Mr. Baron Ciders. You know him. 'Es mah boss. 'Es got a office in the—"

"Why weren't you at home in bed ten hours before you were charged with being on the street?" he demanded.

Demon's jaw fell. Sidney looked discouraged.

It was a self-evident fact now that Judge Loyal's stomach was out of order....

Demon's excuse was a variation that failed to impress the judge as being the truth. Wyeth languidly resigned himself to the inevitable.

"What is your occupation, Wyeth?" he now turned his gaze upon Sidney.

He was told.

"What's your excuse for being upon the streets at two A.M.?"

"Nothing!" calmly.

The judge regarded him in silence, while the pair waited for the sentence. Still the judge paused. As he did so, Wyeth heard him belch slightly, as if decided. A moment later came the words:

"Fine you fellows \$5 and costs. You must keep off the street loafing about all night. Next!"

They were turned about automatically, and then Wyeth found himself looking down on a low, deformed creature. He had been told about him also, and why he was deformed.

It had come about during a terrific race riot of a few years before, and the incident will ever live in the history of Attalia. It was then this creature became crippled. He was, at the time, one of the strongest and most capable officers on the force. But, upon being sent to make an arrest, he happened onto a "bad" Negro, run amuck. He was, to say the least, however, far more fortunate than a dozen others, for they had been sent to their happy hunting ground before the riot was quelled. Since then, he had acted as a sort of bailiff.

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Peeping up at Wyeth he said: "You have up collateral, do you not?"

"Pay me out, pay me out!" cried Demon, at this point.

Wyeth nodded.

"Then you step aside, and follow the officer downstairs to the clerk's office," he instructed.

"Pay me out, pay me out!" from Demon again.

Wyeth frowned and pinched him good. "I wish to confer in regard to this fellow," said he to hunchy, as they were being waited for.

In the detention room, Demon secured a loan of fifty cents from another miscreant, and a moment later, they stood before the clerk.

When the fines had been paid, the officer said: "Now Demon, you can go, but I am ordered to hold Wyeth as a suspicious character."

"Well I'll be damned!" was all Wyeth said.

"Take me at once before him," he cried, when they were again in the court room, at the same time flashing his check book which he had placed in his pocket for precautionary measures. Demon had followed them gratefully back up the stairs, and now stood about muttering in a low tone: "Ain' that Hell, *ain' that Hell!*" Wyeth motioned him aside, resolutely.

Once more he stood before his Honor. Upon recognizing him, the recorder looked at the officer with a question. His face had cleared of the frown it wore some time before, and Wyeth concluded his stomach was better.

The officer preferred the charge, whereupon he looked at Wyeth keenly. Wyeth made a motion. It was granted.

"I dislike, very much, your Honor, to be kept in this court room so unceremoniously. I am no criminal, and my time is worth something. Now if I may be permitted to put up more money, I have just paid a fine for being out late for myself, as well as for another, and go my way until this thing is done with, I'll appreciate it."

"Very well. Twenty-five dollars."

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Wyeth paid it, and never returned to take it down.

When he got back to his room after it was all over, thirty-six dollars to the bad, he opened the book of resolutions and recorded therein:

"Resolved! That to give heed to the 'Call of the Wild' in Attalia, is a very expensive diversion, albeit a lesson; therefore, henceforth, twelve o'clock will find me in the land of nod."

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CHAPTER TWELVE

A Jew; a Gentile; a Murder—and Some More

"Look here, kid, they tell me they had you," jollied Spoon, when he saw Wyeth that evening at Hatfield's ice cream parlor.

"You're breaking into print," laughed "Bubber" Hatfield, unfolding a green sheet, *The Searchlight*, a sensational four-page afternoon affair, which made a specialty of court news, and which most colored people read. They are fond of such news.

Frowning, while all those standing about laughed, he took the sheet and read:

NEGRO FROM THE NORTH WAS SURPRISED

In a few colored paragraphs, it described his appearance before the recorder. And in conclusion, it had these trite words, purported to have been said by him: "Dey don' have dem kind of laws up norf."

The following Saturday, he dropped into Tompkins' and was introduced to a man who impressed him considerably. At the first glance, he could see he was not a southerner. Before he made his acquaintance, he overheard him discussing books with Tompkins, and when he heard him speaking of the latest works of fiction, he opened his ears. To hear a Negro in Attalia discussing novels, the late ones, was something new to him; in fact, he had heard the most of those he met discuss but one, a salacious one from the pen of a noted English author and playwright, and which cannot be had at the libraries, but is, nevertheless, a masterpiece.

He grasped his hand cordially, and they at once entered into conversation. His name was Edwards. "This gentleman," explained Tompkins, "is the author of the book you and your friend were looking at this afternoon." Edwards' eyebrows went up with considerable pleasure, as he cried in a voice that was, to say the least, cordial:

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"Indeed! I am honored to meet a real author." Sidney, however, was much embarrassed. He disliked to be pointed out as an author among his people. The most of those he met had impressed him with the feeling that an author must be something extraordinary, and were usually disappointed to find them only human beings like themselves. Edwards, however, was not only an individual of good breeding, but one with perspective, and quite capable of appreciating an effort, regardless of what the attainment might be.

Sidney had met few of his race, but who seemed to feel that to write was to be graduated from a school, with a name that was a fetish, and to be likewise a professor in some college. In order to get material and color for a work, they had not yet come to realize that it was best, and much more original as well, to come in contact with the people and observe their manner of living.

This may account, in a large degree, for the fact that so many whom he met were impractical, even badly informed.

Edwards and he became agreeable acquaintances at once. "Come take dinner with me this evening," Edwards invited, grasping Wyeth's arm, and leading him into the restaurant next door, where he had already ordered dinner. And such a meal! Wyeth had not realized that it was in the range of possibilities for the little place to prepare such a one. Moreover, to say that Edwards knew how to order would be putting it mildly. He spared no cost obviously, since the meal came to \$3.75. Wyeth felt guilty, when he recalled that he ate three times a day at the same place, the kind termed "half meals," and which came to fifteen cents per.

Before they had sat long, Edwards' friend came to the table. And of all the Negroes Sidney had met, this one was the most extraordinary. The son of a Japanese mother and a Negro father, he had been educated abroad. He spent his youth in Asia, lived a portion of his life in Japan, the remainder in America and was a Buddhist. One Negro at least who didn't spell "ligon."

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History and science, from the beginning of time—before Adam whom he scorned,

astronomy, astrology, meteorology, the zodiac and the constellations, in fact, he seemed to know everything. Sidney, anxious always to learn what he did not know, could only sit with mouth wide open, while the other declared Jesus of Nazareth, Noah, the flood, Adam and Eve, and all the rest, the biggest liars the world ever knew.

When Sidney had occasion to speak of him to religious Negroes in after-months, they would say: "Shucks! He couldn't a-convinc'd me 'gainst mah Jaysus." And he would then be sorry. Sidney "believed" as much as any one else of moderate intelligence, and his acquaintance with the unusual Negro had no effect whatever upon him as a believer; but he knew that many of those who professed so much faith in "Jaysus" and cried: "We is God fearin' fo'kes," were mere "feelers" who had no thought of God whatever, in the sense he should be regarded and respected. Indeed, they did not fear him. They feared but one thing, these black people, and that was the white man, which belongs to another chapter.

"I grant all you say to be quite possible, my dear sir," said he, when the other paused in his serious discourse; "but, having been raised to the Christian faith, I am, therefore, a hopeless believer. I do, nevertheless, respect your point of view and your faith, and am glad indeed to have met you," which ended it.

Edwards proved to be a graduate of Yale, and was well informed in every way, as Sidney suspected.

He had always found it this way. The great fault he was finding daily with those of his race, was that they did not read, did not observe, and were not informed in the many things they could just as well have known.

As the days went by, Sidney's friendship with Edwards developed to the point, where Edwards insisted upon paying half the rent for the privilege of loafing in the office whenever he was at leisure. Sidney did not inquire his business, or what he was engaged in; but his curiosity was aroused nevertheless. His friend always had plenty of money and spent it not foolishly, but freely. He never permitted Wyeth to pay for anything, and he never ate a meal that came to less than two dollars.

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After a few days, another fellow joined him, who, while surrounded with an air of mystery, did not happen to possess so much apparent education. His name was Smyles, and he purported to be from Boston. At the same time acknowledged Alabama to be his birth place. He still carried the accent. He was dark of visage, had long legs, and wore trousers around them, which appeared never to have been pressed. (Wyeth wondered why some of the many pressing clubs did not kidnap him alive.) His head was small and obviously hard, and he wore his top hair so closely cropped, that no one could quite describe what kind it was.

Now Smyles was a sport, likewise a spender, and, moreover, with money a-plenty to spend. And, as the days passed and Wyeth became better acquainted with him, he learned that he was "mashed" on the girls to a considerable degree. For instance: There was Lucy, who waited on them at Miss Payne's cafe, who got "crazy" about him. He did about her, too, for awhile, at least he pretended to. Then he became interested likewise in another who had "better hair" than Lucy. Thereupon Lucy became "mad" with jealousy, and threatened to do something "awful." She didn't, so we leave her to her fate, and go on with Smyles who becomes, for the present, the hero of this story.

"Smyles is a great fellow," remarked Sidney humorously to Edwards, one day.

"Isn't he the limit?" said Edwards, with a touch of disgust.

"All the girls are liking him," resumed Sidney, enjoying the conversation and discussion.

"Takes with all the kitchen mechanics, and anything else that wears a skirt." Edwards had dignity, a great deal of it, Wyeth had come now to know. He was plainly disgusted. Sidney went on.

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"Has lots of money to spend, which makes it exceedingly convenient."

"He's the luckiest coon in town," said Edwards thoughtfully.

"Indeed!"

"Shoots craps I think."

"And wins, evidently."

That Wyeth might not gather an adverse opinion of him—or rather, a questionable one, Edwards had informed him that he was connected with a northern philanthropic organization. Wyeth assumed that he was connected with something of the kind, and that he was actually the recipient of plenty of the dispensation. Every Monday he would go uptown, and return with a roll. Most of this would be spent by the next Monday, which was unusual.

He didn't gamble, but better light will be thrown on this later.

About a year before, there had been committed in Attalia, a most dastardly murder. A man, a Jew he was, had killed a little girl, a gentile. This murder had occasioned more comment in those sections, than had anything in the way of crime for a decade. We stated that the Jew had killed the girl; it should have been said that he was *accused* of having killed her.

This was the state of affairs in regard to the murder at the time of our story. Notwithstanding the fact that the Jew was accused of the murder, the charge against him, and the public sentiment in particular, had reached a very serious stage. It would have been very serious for any one to be accused of such a crime in those parts, be she gentile, Jewess, or anyone with a white face.

The body of this girl had been found in the basement of a factory, at which she was employed at a very small wage, foully murdered. It was a mystery at first, as to who was the murderer. A Negro had been arrested and charged with the crime. It appeared that he was surely guilty; but he wasn't—at least so it was decided shortly afterwards. It was confidentially whispered about town to this day, and may be for all time, that he was a lucky Negro, too. Because, with the way they treat Negroes accused of doing much less serious things in a part of this country, he was fortunate to have been accused in Attalia, where protection is quite ample now, and not in some of the smaller places—but we are digressing.

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Evidently he was not felt to be guilty, and, moreover, since suspicion was quickly diverted to the Jew. And yet he, the Negro, had been discovered in the back yard of the factory, washing a bloody shirt. Such incriminating evidence! For some reason, the people could not seem to bring themselves to feel that the Negro had sense enough to kill the girl, had he wished to. He was put through a severe examination of some length, and finally confessed to having helped the real murderer dispose, or try to dispose of the body after it was all over. It was, of course, duly found and as duly buried. It was, thereafter, exhumed two or three times, as evidence for the state. The Jew was discovered acting very peculiarly a few days after the murder. So they had taken him into custody to ascertain the cause of these actions. Accusations followed, and he was in time brought before the high tribunal on a charge of murder, convicted and sentenced to be hanged until dead, however long that might be. The date of execution was set for a day, which happened to be the same day a year later, than that upon which he was supposed to have committed the deed.

Thus our story found it.

Sentencing a man to be hanged, and hanging him, however, are two very different things. Yet the court persisted. It was determined to carry out the decision of the jury of "twelve good men and true,"^[A] this Jew, scion of Jacob, of Israel, of Solomon, and Job, and others, had money at his back, plenty of it, as we shall see presently; and they were spending it lavishly, to save his neck, which was long. Perhaps that explains what came to pass later.

The counsel for the defense hired a detective, *A Great Detective*. The greatest detective in all the world. No one can deny this, since he said so himself, at least this is how he was quoted by a paper, which, for the purpose of this story, we shall call the "Big Noise." It was a "noise," too. But, to get back to the detective, *The Great Detective*.

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The leading papers corroborated the fact that he was the greatest in the world, and so he shall be, in this story, as well. We are compelled to quote the "Big Noise" again. It claimed, very urgently, that these papers were paid to corroborate the detective. So be it.

The leading dailies and the greatest detective in the world got together, with a view to obtaining a new trial for the Jew, after which they hoped, of course, in some subtle manner, to extricate him from his very embarrassing predicament.

The detective did the posing, and he was *some* poser, and the papers did the rest. The most obstinate proposition which they were up against, was that the people believed the Jew to be guilty, but naturally read the papers.

Now The Great Detective's picture had been seen by almost everybody who read, or ever had read anything, so we must appreciate that he was a familiar figure. But, in addition to what had occurred in regard to the detective, more came to pass. Pages of the Sunday edition were devoted to his cut, and other pages to his ability as a mystery solver. From the way the papers wrote of him and reproduced his pose, he made Sherlock Holmes, Raffles, Arsene Lupin, and even Nick Carter, look like thirty cents with the three invisible.

He began, in opening the case, a series of angles. At first, of course, he viewed it

from an Attalia angle. Forthwith, after this, he went to Chicago and viewed it from a windy angle. From St. Louis, he viewed it from a "show me" angle; and while he was out that way, he chased across to Kansas City, and saw it from that angle. And 'ere anyone was aware of it, he had crossed the prairies to Denver, and viewed it from a mountain angle. Behold then, upon picking up the morning paper, where the great detective has reached New York, and was viewing the case from that angle; but space will not permit of recording further these many angles indulged in by *the greatest detective in the world*, for the defendant in the case of the state versus the Jew.

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All of these angles were followed with much color by the Attalia papers. Moreover, papers elsewhere mysteriously took up the Jew's cause, by following the angles of the detective. All except the "Big Noise." It was busy viewing the detective from its angle. But it was not, of course, endowed with such an abundance of readers, therefore, for the time, it was not noticed much. It was later, however.

Now we come to the most extraordinary phase of the case, leaving the prisoner in his cell for the present.

While all this angling was going on, witnesses who had testified for the state, and whose testimony had resulted disastrously for the defendant, began to come up mysteriously, with affidavits to the effect that what they had sworn to was a falsehood, no, a lie! Many of them declared, in these affidavits, that they were inspired to make these statements, that they might face their God with the truth on their lips! The city became chaotic. No one had even suspected that the city possessed such people. This renouncing of testimony developed into an almost everyday affair. "Everybody was doin' it". So it came to pass, in an incredibly short time, that almost every one who had supplied damaging testimony against the Jew, had renounced it.

The newspapers were the most interesting things to read in Attalia during this spell. But more mysteries followed in due order. Every one who produced, or had produced an affidavit, renouncing his or her previous testimony, became automatically prosperous, no, we'll have to change this statement. They did, and again they didn't. Alas! Some had not received all they had been mysteriously promised, it seems. And still others, unaccustomed to wealth, and feeling that money is rightfully the medium for the good things they had never been able to enjoy, including liquor, proceeded to fulfill this long felt desire. So, many got drunk. And, trust John Barleycorn to do the rest, they imparted secrets to their near friends. And then, of course, the friends imparted such illuminating information to their friends, whereupon it was duly imparted, in time, to the people through the paper.

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Truth combined with a conscience, is always a danger, a menace to falsity. And, of course, not every one possesses the strength to stand on a falsehood, therefore—and in an incredibly short time—affidavits began to be voluntarily offered by these many, to the effect that the renunciation was a falsehood; the original testimony was true, quite true. Accompanying many of these latter affidavits, was money.

We are reminded at this point of Judas and the thirty pieces of silver.

Conspicuous throughout the trial, and conducting the prosecution, was one Doray, the solicitor, and he was there, very much so. Doray became quite busy about this time. He had ambition, and was being mentioned for the governorship. So the state, with its many poor people and slim treasury, labored relentlessly in the prosecution, while the purse of the Jew seemed to have no limit.

We return to *The Great Detective*, the greatest one in all the world.

Naturally, when he began, with the reputation he possessed, with the notorious angling, with hundreds of newspapers all over the country supporting him, and from the fact that he had uncovered many dark plots, many people took notice. A half dozen extra editions was the average per day, but some days they reached a dozen, all replete with subtle mystery. The populace lived in an ecstasy of expectation. They were hurled between so many confusions, until they knew not what they were expecting. But, as the days went by and the mystery deepened, they glared dry-eyed at the headlines of the many extras, expecting at last that the greatest detective in the world would lead forth a diabolical creature otherwise than the Jew, declaring, and subsequently proving him to be the murderer.

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He did, but he was not a man of mystery.

The announcement came in a blazing morning extra. Shops were forgotten, people gathered upon the streets, blocked the corners, and everything became a medley of excitement, as the news became general.

"The real murderer of a little innocent girl has been found!"

The population waited in abated breath. In the order in which he had reported, or as had been reported by the papers, the detective set a day upon which he would point,

with the forefinger of his right hand, straight to the murderer.

The day would never come, everybody seemed to feel. All the anxiety attendant during the trial, before as well as after, for it must be understood that the Jew had not been seen to kill the girl, was lived over again during this spell. But at last the mighty day came. It was a dark, drizzly, gloomy, forlorn day. Just the kind for what was now the order in Attalia. On this day, the people now felt, the real murderer would be placed in the lime light. The detective had declared, a few days after he had been retained and put on the case, that the Jew was innocent. Moreover, he declared that the prosecution, abetted by public sentiment, had been affected in its decision, by the worst of all that is inherent in our advanced society, race prejudice. He lied here—and knew it. There is no prejudice in Attalia against any race but one, of which we will pass. In addition, he flaunted in the face of the people, the idea of perversion on the part of the Jew, of which the latter had been accused. This accusation had been advanced as the only excuse for the murder, of which he stood accused. But the real murderer was that day announced as per reports.

"Jim Dawkins," cried the detective, "killed that girl! So now, free this poor man thou hast persecuted these many months, and hang that murderer, that beast, that pervert, for he is guilty!"

It was some time before the people recovered. Many of them had to pinch themselves to be quite sure they were awake; for it was positively incredible, after all this waiting, after all this angling, after all the mystery, that this detective, the greatest one in all the world, by his own admission and that of the press, should come right back to where the case had begun.

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Jim Dawkins was the Negro accused in the first instance.

And now we hear from the "Big Noise"—and it made some noise now. Moreover, the public, with a relief from their long tension, began to hear it. Its editor had once run for president, on a ticket we cannot recall; moreover, he had the reputation of being opposed to every man elected to anything in the state and the United States. This included the democrats, of whom he, although a southerner, was not one.

The people now bought and read his paper with as much eagerness as they had the others, in the beginning.

The Great Detective was absent for a week following his sensational discovery. (?) Then he returned, but alas! The day of angles had become contagious, as we shall see presently.

Following his return, he happened to go to a nearby town to view the case from that angle. This town happened to have been the home of the murdered girl. So, when the great detective whirled into town, seated in the tonneau of a huge automobile, they proceeded at once to entertain him with true southern chivalry. (?)

A night extra told all about it, before he had returned to Attalia, which was marvelous, when one considers this place was only twenty miles away, and from reports, the car took its highest speed on the return, at least it did in leaving the other town. But, lest we forget, the eggs used at this entertainment could not all have been guaranteed as the freshest. And with a few more words, we leave this story.

Shortly after this, Edwards and Smyles took their leave. Wyeth missed them considerably, for he had grown very fond of them about the office. When they were far, far away, the mystery connected with their occupation was still unsolved. Then, one day while Sidney was folding up an old newspaper, his eye happened to fall upon an article of two paragraphs. It related to an incident that cleared up the whole thing, and was to the effect that, while doing some sleuthing on the ground floor, Smyles had, after refusing to explain the occasion of his mysterious action, been arrested and locked up for an hour, at the end of which the great detective had come forward and got him out.

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"Well, I'll be blown!" exclaimed Sidney, for it revealed that his two friends were detectives, in the employ of the noted chief, and hired, no doubt, to view the case from a "dark" angle. But the most extraordinary part of it all, was that their names were not Smyles nor Edwards either, but—I guess it doesn't matter.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"Cause Nigga's 's Gittin' so Rich"

In the building to the furthest end from where Wyeth's office was now located, he observed a man one day. He was standing in front of the bank. He was a white man, and was tall and slender, while his complexion was sandy, his hair red and awry. His

eyes were keen and piercing. "A collector," thought Sidney, for there were so many about the building, especially on Monday, and this was the day. He lurked in the entry on Tuesday, when Wyeth passed that way. "Must be a contractor, the way he is studying the inside of the bank," mumbled Wyeth, as he took the elevator upward.

Wednesday came, gray and gloomy, and then it rained. It was four o'clock and thirty minutes in the afternoon. Sidney passed through the entry to the elevator on his way to the office of Dickson, and again the man stood there. He had drawn no conclusion as to what was the occasion of this presence, when from behind came a sound. He did something else then. So did others about him.

"Throw up your hands, nigger, and get into that vault!" came a command.

It was from the man he had seen, and he was holding up the bank.

There was a silence, followed by a scuffle, then a lull, and a shot, and still later,—for the shot went wild, landing in the ceiling where it cracked the plastering, and made bits of it fall upon a score of frightened Negroes—a thud. This had not gone amiss. There was a groan and a dull sound, as some one sank to the floor. This part was witnessed by Wyeth and others. It was the teller, and the son of the bank's president. On the floor he lay bleeding, while the other was standing frightened over him. Then he looked up. Open-mouthed like dumb creatures, Negroes of all shades, including the green, stood about. And then the man seemed to awaken to the emergency, and the danger.

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Those Negroes would not be dumb for all time. He sensed this aright. And then he took initiative, action. With a flash, he fired off the huge gun, and with a leap and a bound, he came forth, while Negroes, black and brown, yellow and green, and some white, fell back upon each other, in a hurry. He had plenty of room, for a time, and made use of it. Out into the hallway he must perforce come on his way to the street, and freedom. He started, but one little moment he hesitated. Then, firing again, he made his great rush. Through the hallway he dashed, and entered the street through a side door that was open before him. A moment later he was gone.

But so were the others.

They were led by a barber, who shaved black faces next door. He was a mulatto with a flat nose, which made his appearance grotesque. With a roar like that of a mad guerilla, he ran in hot pursuit. Away they went, all of them now, including Wyeth.

The barber led the others by far, and in his hand, open for action, was a razor. It seemed quite large to Wyeth as it glistened in the sunlight, for the day had cleared. Perhaps he was seeing double, but he followed while the "victim"—which we shall call the other—preceded the other only slightly. The barber was breaking wind now, but gaining nevertheless.

As Wyeth followed in that dark pursuit, a picture of the possible consequences rose before him. This Negro, scion of two races, embittered by an instance in our history that will never die, was wild. Blood, blue blood, it was he thirsted. All the hatred of a thousand or more years was now privileged, by the unwritten law, to give vent. This other has attempted crime—the robbery of the people's where-with-all. To kill him now was to get revenge, revenge upon those who have long since died—and go scott free!

Perhaps the other appreciated this point of view.

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He rushed pellmell, wildly through the street he came into, and turned at the end up another that led, whither, he did not take time to think or to consider. It seemed impossible for the man to escape dire consequences, as Sidney Wyeth saw him now. He wished he could save him, but he did not know how. Only a few steps ahead, the culprit led the other. It was only a question of minutes—a minute. And then—horrors!

Up this new street, which happened to be Herald, they went, and closer and closer the Negro came to the victim. He was breaking wind fearfully. A block had been covered, when, ahead to the left stood a laundry with doors wide open. Then, suddenly, when abreast of it, the victim plunged into it, but so did the barber. Others followed, and workers fell back amazed. To the rear the chase led, and then, lo! A brick wall faced the victim, with a closed door only. This door could not be opened in time! That appeared to settle it! The poor creature, frightened out of his wits, fell to the floor, and then rose to one knee, with hands stretched Heavenward. At last the end had come. The Negro now, the picture of which our pen cannot describe, stood over him with razor upraised, and eyes dancing with murder like huge coals of fire. "Don't cut me with that razor, Mister," the victim whimpered. He pushed the other back until he was against the door. For the first time in his life, Sidney Wyeth was to see a man killed. One moment he looked. The sunlight played through a transom window, falling strangely upon the blade of that poised razor. He closed his eyes to shut out the fearful sight. The next moment, he opened them as he heard a noise—a momentous instant. It was the opening of the door, against which the victim had been pushed.

A moment later, the two went over the steps a-tumble, below; but the razor had flown in a direction which they had not gone, and the tension was relieved.

Soon, the victim emerged from the rear, and another chase began; but the razored Negro was then far to the rear. He eluded his pursuers for a moment during the mix-up. But suddenly in chorus they cried:

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"Dere 'e goes, cetch 'im!"

The crowd had now grown to a mob, a sullen mob. They cried out in loud tones for blood, blue blood; but the culprit was illusive. A street car was passing, and into it he vaulted. "I've shot a coon," he cried; "and the niggers are after me!" The car lunged forward as the mob reached the door, whereupon they looked into the muzzle of a revolver held in the hand of the conductor, as he commanded: "Stand back!" They did, but 'ere he had gone far, there came to his ears from the crowd in the rear:

"S robbed d' bank! 'Es robbed d' bank!"

The conductor immediately rang to stop. The victim rang to go forward. The motorman obeyed the former, and the car slowed down. The victim leaped off before it came to a halt, while at the rear, the mob, howling like a bunch of savages, came on in mad fury.

Then he tore across the street to where an old man, with bent shoulders and flowing white beard, sat half asleep in a buggy. He rushed to the side of this, and permitted the old relic to smell the muzzle, as he cried: "Unload!" The old man did, in a pile. The victim jumped in, and, jerking the whip from the socket, brought the old horse, half asleep also, to appreciate the state of affairs, by dealing him a blow that made his tail stick out, as his legs speeded up the street. The crowd roared diabolically, as they saw themselves being left to the rear; but many on bicycles gave chase, and followed in close pursuit. He suddenly drew his revolver, and let go the trigger, which made a flash, point blank in their midst. That settled it. One fell to the street with a sad, sickening cry, an arm limp at his side. The others gave up, turned back, and quickly went the other way.

And then he disappeared.

Wyeth had returned to the scene of the opening—so had the rest. And the crowd, combined with those who had gathered about the bank in the meantime, filled Audubon Avenue the entire length of the building, a block and a half on the side. All was uproar. Report followed report, and each flashed through the crowd with much comment. He had, so the news ran, been captured here, and everywhere. As it stood, he had not been captured at all. Opinions, expressions, conclusions and rejections were in order on all sides. One was to the effect that the big banks uptown, conducted by "whi' fo'kes," had conspired the deal on account of fear, "'cause nigga's 's a-gittin so rich 'n 'a-posit'n they money in the cullud bank, ontell dem whi' fo'kes done 'trigued' and got dat low down po' whi' man t' come and tri' t' frustrate us 'spectable cullud fo'kes." And again there came to the ears of Sidney another report, and this was one of graver concern.

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"Robbers 'roun' a-stealin' d' money, go'n be fus' one dare in d' mawnin' t' draw mine out!"

"Gwan, you fool nigga! Yu' ain' got nothin' in dere; 'n' yu' aut a-be run outta town fo' talkin' lak dat!"

"Who dat obber dare, da' whi' man dressed so 'maculete wi' du soft hat?"

"Dat's Judson, d' 'porter on d' Jou'nal."

"Who dat udder one wi' a big nose 'n' dark 'plection!"

"Ain' you ebber been 'rested, nigga, 'n' up a-fo' Jedge Ly'l's, 'n' seen 'im a-hangin' 'roun'? Dat's Jempsy, d' putective."

"Lis'n! lis'n! Wha' dat! Dey has captured 'im!" Forthwith, to another point they rushed, through a bunch collected around the barber, who was then telling and retelling "'Ow close ah come t' gittin' 'im."

It was not a report this time, but the ambulance that was taking the wounded teller to his home. The sight of him, with bandaged head as a result of the attempt, served to renew the local race animosity.

"Ah sho 's go'n kill me a whi' man, so 'elp me Jaysus!" muttered a dinge, as the carriage passed him by, while all about dark faces scowled ominously.

Darkness was approaching, when an authentic report came at last, to the ears of the crowd. The would-be robber had really been captured, and it was the papers that gave forth the news.

His name, so he said, was Rhynata, a "vaudevillian," who hailed from Denver. His capture had been thus:

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When he had eluded the mob, by holding up the old man for his horse and buggy, he followed that street for only a block, when he turned into another. After the crowd was lost, he left the buggy, and walked hurriedly up the street, turned a corner, and disappeared in the basement of a house.

A plainclothes man, some while later, happened to pass that way in trying to locate him, and followed him therein. When he got to the second story, he came into a room where a woman was bathing, with a damp towel, the head of a man in bed. He backed up, begging pardon, and turned to leave. As he was passing a dresser, in a half open drawer, his eye espied a revolver which his hand forthwith touched. The barrel was warm, which told the rest of the story.

The settlement began the next day before Judge Loyal. His court room was filled that day, but the greatest crowd was outside. The man was duly identified as the culprit, by many, including the Negro with the razor, was as duly bound over under a bond that no one cared to go, and a few months later was brought to trial, convicted on two charges, and subsequently sent to the chain gang for five years.

He should have much of that yet to serve, but he escaped—rather, he walked away a few months later, and has not been intercepted at the time of this writing—but this is not our story.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

And Then Came Slim

Wintertime had flown, and over all the country, springtime had blossomed. On one of those beautiful days, Slim came to the office of Sidney Wyeth. His real name was V.R. Coleman, but, since he was so tall and slender, to Wyeth, "Slim" seemed more appropriate, particularly when the other did not object. This name, however, was applied sometime later, and not on this particular day.

In Dixie there are many original characters, and this has made it the source of humor. Undoubtedly, the Negro is the background of most of it, and justly plays the part. Conspicuous among these original characters, there is a particular class of men who will work from the time frost falls in November, until the birds sing again in the last days of March. When the smell of the honeysuckle, and the buzz of the bee become a part of the day, they succumb to an inevitable longing to mingle, and become "human" bees themselves. So, by the time May has arrived, and spring chickens are large enough to fry, they go forth to the open, choosing many varied ways—but always an easy one—of living until the leaves begin to fall again.

Most of these men preach; for, since the beginning of the present order, this has been the easiest way. No learning, of course, is required, so long as they can spell "ligon" and preach "dry bones." Of course, if the character is a good "feeler," with the magnetism, sufficient eloquence, and a severe frown with it, he "gets by" much easier. Conditions, it must be observed, are changing, even in Dixie. And, it is a fact that a Negro preacher is beginning to pay for a meal occasionally.

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But there were other ways of "gettin' by" as well, though not nearly so prevalent as preaching. It was in quest of such a way, no doubt, that Slim came to the office that day. Wyeth had become acquainted with him while canvassing during the winter. He was, at that time, employed in a grocery store as man of much work, a part of which consisted in driving a little black mule about the streets, before a wagon in which he delivered groceries.

They had become friends, and Slim was, in the opinion of Wyeth, an original and sociable being also. He had informed Wyeth that music was his line; singing schools he claimed to have conducted with great success. So, during the summer and spring months, and some time into the fall, he carried the title of professor. And it was as such, that Wyeth welcomed him that day.

"Hello, Professor," he greeted him cordially, arising from his chair, and grasping the other's hand, with much ostentation. "Professor" was ushered into a seat, where he crossed his long legs with much dignity, and gazed out the window for a moment, without saying other than the return of the greeting.

As he sat by the window at that time, it was hard to even *fancy* his driving a mule in front of a load of groceries.

"Ah, my friend," he began, after he had swept the street below with a careful gaze. "I am glad indeed to see you, and to find you occupying such a delightful office." He scanned the office now, with an admiring gaze, and went on: "You are sure fixed up in great style, just grand, grand!"

"Oh, fair," Sidney admitted carelessly. "I am, however, glad you dropped in, for I

have been thinking about you for some time."

"I am honored," said the other, with an elevation of the eyebrows.

"Yes," resumed Sidney, with a serious and thoughtful expression, "it has always been my opinion, that a man with the bearing and dignity you obviously possess, could be much more in keeping with society, in a position that would employ such a wealth of ability."

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Slim did not make immediate answer to this, for the simple reason that he was too flushed with vanity by the words, to do other than color to the roots of his hair, and swallow.

"When I see a man like you carrying groceries up the back way of a house, let me tell you, Professor," Wyeth said flatteringly, "I can't help, in a measure, but feel despair for our race; but I was told by a very responsible party, that your health required such an expedient." Slim was then in the seventh Heaven of vanity, and looked away to hide the tears of gratitude, he felt toward the man who had courage sufficiently to admit what he himself felt. He admired Sidney Wyeth on the spot.

Wyeth went on to say, "Now, for instance, I am in the book business, which was never better. I have been anxious to enlist a good man's service." As he said this, he looked in Slim's direction, and went on: "But I did not wish to place this matter before you, until a time I felt you would be in a position to consider it, possibly, favorably." He paused long enough for his words to take effect, then continued, "So Professor, I should like to have you consider this matter with a view to taking it up."

"Well, sir, Mr. Wyeth," his honor began, "I confess that I have been thinking of that myself." He was silent a minute, then proceeded again: "My health is improved to such an extent, that I have, of course, emancipated myself from a position of drudgery," and here he drew himself up, with more ostentation than ever. "I shall be glad to tell you, when it is more convenient, and we have the time, of my career as a business man back where I came from. You can, I see, appreciate a man that is possessed of ability," and he looked down at himself at this point, before continuing. Directly he said: "I shall be glad to have you explain this matter in regard to the book."

"Well," said Wyeth, slowly, "you should have some idea of the work, since, with your years back in South Carolina, you were so successful; but more so, since you have been over a territory I have worked."

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"You certainly did fill Brookville with it, I must say," he admitted.

Wyeth smiled.

"Wish you hadn't worked that neighborhood, though," he said regretfully.

"Others are yet to be worked...."

"But I know everybody in that neighborhood."

"So do I—now."

Slim laughed a low, sorrowful laugh, and then was thoughtful. Then he inquired: "What commission do you pay?"

"Forty per cent. Sixty cents the book."

"Do I have to pay for the books before I can have them to deliver?"

"I can, of course, trust you, Professor," Wyeth replied; "but the last one I trusted, and who took eighteen copies out for the purpose of delivery, has not shown up since."

"Indeed! Did he send the books back, or leave them somewhere?"

"He left them somewhere—several where's."

"Then you—ah—got them back?"

"Not yet."

"But you will?"

"Not likely. The people he left them with paid him \$1.50 a copy therefor, but I have charged that to the dust, and it has rained since. You think over this proposition and come back tomorrow morning, and we will get down to business. Should you decide to take it up, I shall be glad to have you accompany me an afternoon, and hear me spiel it."

The following morning, full of book selling, Slim was on hand. Moreover, he wished to begin that morning, but, as Sidney had made no arrangement to that end, he was compelled to wait until the afternoon.

"I used to sell books in South Carolina," he said later, as he was looking through the

book.

"You have had some experience then," commented Wyeth.

"Wait until I commence. I'll show you a thing or two."

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"Oh, I have a 'hunch' you'll 'clean up,'" said Wyeth with feigned admiration.

"You sold a book to somebody I know on Fourteenth Street....," he smiled.

"I thought you said I sold to many you know. I think I did," said Wyeth innocently.

"I know this one a little *better* than the rest," he admitted, now showing his teeth, despite his effort to keep his upper lip stiff.

"Oh—ho, I see now," laughed Wyeth, good naturedly. After a pause he said:

"Who is she? Come, 'fess up. At what number does she work?" But at this Slim only laughed, and left his friend curious.

That afternoon, at two o'clock sharp, they sallied forth. Going to Dalton street, they entered a cafe conducted by some people in the last stage of hook-worm hustle.

"What'll you genamens have?" asked the waitress, who looked so tired and sleepy.

Sidney scanned the greasy bill-of-fare, while Slim inquired: "What have you?" As she drawled out the list, Sidney's ears came attentive to the orders being given by others.

"Snout."

"Yo's, mistah!"

"Pig tail 'n' swee' taters."

"'N' yo's?"

"Stewed haid."

"Ah wan' some magetti," sang a small boy on a stool, with papers under his arm.

"Gimme a yeah sanrich," from one with a very loud mouth.

Slim was very hard to please, as it now appeared, and was having some difficulty in being satisfied.

"What is your specialty here?"

"Ah don' tole you du' ohdahs already. We has hog year, 'n' hog snoot, 'n' pig tail, 'n' collap greens, 'n'—"

"Give us a pair of feet," interposed Wyeth.

After the meal, they turned into a side street, crossed a back yard and entered a house from the rear. Ahead, a flight of steps led up through the basement, to the kitchen. Up this they went, and rapped on the kitchen door. It was opened by a woman, presumably the cook. Wyeth raised his hat, while Slim did likewise; whereupon she was very much flattered. Said Wyeth: "Yes, ma'am! How-do-you-do. You will pardon our interrupting you, but I suppose you are the lady employed herein," and gazed into the kitchen before him.

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"Yes," she replied embarrassed. "I work here."

"Very well, thank you." Then turning, he revealed his honor, bending almost to the floor. "This is Professor Coleman!" Their prospective customer was very profuse as she accepted the introduction, and then was curious to know to whom she was indebted. Presently, unable to withstand the wait, she inquired:

"Are you preachers?"

Wyeth looked at Slim who had his hat rolled up, and was showing his teeth, then turned back to the lady and replied that they were not. He then, without further ado, began his spiel, putting more dynamite into it than usual, since he wished to make an impression upon Slim as well.

"I presume from your English, madam, that you are literarily inclined, in fact, I feel certain you are." He bestowed upon her a hypnotic smile, which he had cultivated for the purpose of impression, and then went on, with eloquence:

"This is *The Tempest*, a tale of the great northwest, in which we follow the fortunes of this young man," and he showed his picture on the frontispiece. In this same picture, people seldom recognized himself as the hero. Before long, he had her order, and a half dozen more, and Slim was enthusiastic. When they were on the street for a time again, Slim said, with much admiration:

"*Man*, but you are a salesman! The spiel and look you turn on these cooks and maids and house girls, and everybody, is guaranteed to make the dead take notice. I can

never get over laughing when I think of the old lady back there, the one who said: 'I am not decided yet as to whether I shall take it,' Then you said, and as serious as she was: 'Let me decide for you in this,'" and then he gave up to laughter for some minutes.

"Think you can learn it?" said Sidney.

"I want you to let me take this house," said Slim, halting before an imposing structure.

"All right," said Wyeth. "I'll wait for you. Don't get struck on the house girl and stay too long."

Slim disappeared. A moment later, a noise and the barking of a vicious dog came to Wyeth's ears, accompanied immediately by a scuffling. A moment later, Slim emerged from the back way in very much of a hurry, with a bull dog in close pursuit. When he was safe outside once more, he looked about him dubiously. "I don't like this neighborhood!" he said.

"You mean *that* neighborhood," laughed Wyeth. "Did you make a sale?"

"Make Hell!" cried Slim, still breathing heavily from his nervousness. "Talk about making a sale with a bull dog barking at my heels!" They had, by then, reached a street that led across town, and they turned into this. Wyeth took a few orders, but Slim decided to dispense with further canvassing until the morrow. Several times, Wyeth tried to steer him into a yard, but always he observed that his eye wandered around toward the rear, and since nearly every one kept some kind of a dog—the most of which would rather play than anything else—it was hard to reconcile Slim.

At last he managed to get him through a gate that was close to the rear door, and, while he explained his mission to the cook, Slim gave the house girl a good talk, but she smiled on him and said: "I purchased one from the other gentleman already."

This served to relieve him at least, and also encouraged him to a more concentrated effort later.

When they returned to the office, Slim was again full of the book business. The next day he went out for himself. After a few houses had been made, however, he must have met another "sociable" dog, for, shortly afterward, Wyeth saw him depart.

That afternoon, when they met again at the office, he was surprised to learn that Slim had taken several names, and was in the highest of spirits. Wyeth was too, but from other causes. He had taken about eight orders, when he came into a back yard from an alley. Through a screen, he caught a glimpse of a girl working in the kitchen. He approached the house, and presently knocked on the door. She opened it with an inquiry. He looked up into her face from where he stood on the ground. She looked down into his, and blushed as she looked away. She made an impression, and he was, for a moment, lost in a maze of delight. Soon he was serious, however, and said he wished to speak with her on important business. This was his style. He had observed that agents, the minute a door was opened, began a spiel without getting the attention of the prospective customer, so he made it a practice to get their attention first, and leave them in doubt until he did, before disclosing his business. If he failed to do this, he usually went his way, without letting them know what he was selling. But, to get back to the girl.

She declared that she was very busy at the time, but would be glad if he'd come back shortly. "In about an hour," she advised, as she watched him walk toward the gate. He went his way with a subtle swimming of the head.

He passed the next hour mechanically, made several sales, of which he was hardly aware, and at the end of the hour, he returned. She was waiting for him. He smothered his interest, and told her the story in brief.

"Oh, that's fine!" she exclaimed, in an ecstasy of delight, when he had finished. "When do you deliver?"

"Any time," he replied; "but I have several in this neighborhood for the first. Could you take yours then?" As he finished, he looked at her strangely. His thoughts went back to a place and a person he had almost forgotten. (?)

She looked back at him, smiled, became uneasy, apparently she did not know how to take him. Then she asked softly: "Why do you look at me like that?" And then he came out of it, and replied candidly:

"I don't know," he started to say, "because you remind me of one I once knew—and loved." The very thought of it, however, now pained him. However, he dismissed these thoughts from his mind, and was normal again.

She appeared as though she would like to say more on the subject, but instead she added: "Have you been selling the book long?"

"Ever since publication," he admitted frankly.

The past lingered with him for some time, but it was temporarily forgotten, when he had returned to the office, and noted Slim's success.

"You're there, Professor," he beamed, while the other assumed an air of modesty.

A few days later—and he was apparently successful in the meantime—Slim said to Wyeth: "I want you to go with me tomorrow. I've found a 'nest.'"

"A hornet nest?" asked Wyeth humorously. Slim looked uncomfortable. He had a good memory.

"I'm serious. Out there around the colleges, man, are some of the finest people you ever met, and rich! They own homes that will open your eyes."

"M-m. Are *these* orders from them, or have they told you they would '*think*' it over and you could drop in when you were in the neighborhood again?" Slim's face fell for a moment, then he said, while Wyeth thought he detected something.

"These orders are from *good* people in and around that neighborhood." He paused for a spell, and resumed, with a frown: "I have been thinking very seriously, that you could do much better among the people in their homes, and wouldn't need to go snoopin' around to the rear. I must confess, Mr. Wyeth, that I have never been overly anxious to confine the most of my work to domestics, as you seem to choose."

Again Sidney smiled, while Slim paused, disconcertedly.

"Now this list I have here, should convince you that you have simply been overlooking the best people, for the kitchens. So, if you will go along with me tomorrow, I will convince you to your own satisfaction."

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Wyeth kept out of going with Slim in different ways, and 'ere long, the day of Slim's first big delivery came.

Only about forty copies of the book were on hand in the office, but more were at the freight house, with the bill-of-lading at the bank, and a sight draft attached for the cost of the books. Sidney did not have the amount available to pay it on that day. He reckoned, however, that the number on hand should have been sufficient, but Slim didn't think so. He was, moreover, insistent to a point that moved Sidney to make effort to get the others out.

"I think we have books sufficient for today's delivery, Slim," he argued. "And then Monday, we will get those at the freight office."

"It isn't business, it isn't business. I have taken these people's orders for this book to be delivered today. There are fifty. I have promised faithfully to bring the book this day, and when I was in business, I did a thing when I promised. So I wish you would get the books you have at the freight office down here at once, so that I can fill every order and have no disappointments."

Wyeth looked distressed, but smiled all to himself. If he had learned anything about selling books to colored people, and had forty copies to fill fifty orders, he could figure on having a goodly supply left. But Slim must have fifty copies, or a book for each order.

The books he had at the freight office would cost a pretty sum to get, and he did not have the amount convenient. He went to the bank and borrowed it. Slim went with him to the freight office to be sure there would be no failure; he must have fifty books.

When they arrived, Sidney was chagrined to find he had one dollar less than it took to get them. It was only fifteen minutes before the office would close, its being Saturday. Sidney was up against it. Slim was in a stew. He deluged the other with, "Why didn't you get them yesterday?" or, "You should have known this office closes at twelve o'clock today." And in the end he gave up entirely. Wyeth employed his mind vigorously, hoping to raise a dollar in fifteen minutes.

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"There's no use," deplored Slim hopelessly. "I will lose \$7 or \$8 through your business carelessness." Just then, Sidney observed a drayman coming toward the freight house. A thought struck him, and he hailed the drayman. In a few words, he explained the circumstances, while the other nodded acquiescence, pulled out a dollar, and a half hour later, the books were unloaded at the office.

Slim breathed a sigh of intense relief. He was a business man, and told Wyeth so.

Wyeth admitted it. "Glad to be affiliated with a gentleman of your ability, and you know it, Professor."

"You will always find me right up to the point in business, Mr. Wyeth. That's always been my reputation, and if you don't believe me, you can go over in South Carolina, and find out from the people there yourself," he said, very serious of demeanor.

"That's all right, Professor. I'll take your word for it."

At one o'clock P.M. Slim was ready. He had a cab hired for the occasion, and with fifty nice, clean copies, wrapped deftly at the publishing house before shipment, he sallied forth.

Wyeth was nodding in the office, when, about ten o'clock that night, he heard some one coming up the stair. From the way he halted at intervals, and set something down, he judged he must be carrying a load.

He was.

Presently the person reached the landing, and, halting again, dropped something heavy, then breathed long and deeply. A moment later, he heard him pick up whatever it was, and come on toward his door. It was burst open in a moment, and some one stumbled in behind a big package.

It was Slim. He dropped the package as soon as he was inside, with an air of disgust, and fell, apparently exhausted, into a chair. He was silent, while he got his breath. When this had become regular, he got up and moved to the desk, where he figured for some time. Wyeth remained silent, but quietly expectant. It came presently.

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"Liars! Dirty liars! Stinking, low down, dirty lying niggas. Damn all of them, damn them!"

Wyeth was still silent. Slim looked about himself wearily, and then did some more figuring. Presently Wyeth heard him again.

"Lying nigga's, o'nry nigga's, dog-gone the bunch!"

Wyeth was impatient. He wanted to ask very innocently what the matter was. Suddenly he saw Slim looking at him savagely. Wyeth made an effort to look innocent, and not burst out laughing. After awhile he heard Slim again.

"I'm done! I'm through selling books to Negroes *now!*" He then arose, and strode back and forth across the room in a terrible temper.

Wyeth started to say: "You mean you are through getting orders." But he waited.

"The first old nigga I come up to, looked up when he saw me, and then just laffed, 'ke-ha!' Then, when I held the book toward him, he said: 'Yu' betta' gwan 'way frum heh wi' dat book!' And then just laffed again, like it was something so funny. I got mad right then, but kept my temper and said:

"'What's the matter with you! Didn't you order this book from me two weeks ago?'" He paused at this stage, and looked at Wyeth again with a savage glare. "But that old devil just kept on laffing like a vaudeville show was before him, instead of me with the book he had ordered, and which he told me to be sure, *sure* to bring today. My nigga was rising now; but just then I heard a little half-naked kid: 'Uh! Misteh! 'oo might's well ferget it. 'Cause th' ole man there,' pointing to the old sinner, 'orders sumpin' from eve' agent what comes 'long; puvidin' i' do'n cos' nuthin' t' give th' odah.' And all the time that old coon was just laffing, 'ke-ha!'" He gave Wyeth another glare, and went on:

"The next one I come onto looked at the book as though it was something dangerous. And then he squints up at me—I think he must have been near-sighted—and says: 'Sah, I decided since I give you that odah, that I wa'n't go'n' take th' book.' When he saw my eyes, he could see I was mad enough to kill him on the spot. He saw danger in them too, because, near-sighted or not, he began edging away, but again I held back my nigga and says: 'What in Hell you mean by making up your mind like that!'"

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"He must have been drinking Sparrow Gin when he gave you that order," suggested Wyeth, with a twinkle of the eye.

"What?" inquired Slim, listening.

"I'd advise you to take along a little corn liquor the next time you go to deliver; pour a little juice into them; get them drunk. They'll take their books then."

Slim kicked a piece of paper on the floor before him viciously, and said: "I'll take along a club and knock their lying heads off their shoulders, 's what I'll do."

"Did you have enough books?" inquired Wyeth, ignoring the big package Slim had brought in.

"You seem possessed with no sympathy, Mr. Wyeth," he complained, and then grew thoughtful. Presently, seeming anxious to tell more of his experiences, he went on. "One woman I had an order from, when I knocked on the door, she opened it and said: 'I'm so sorry, but my husband won't let me take that book,' and then she handed me a nickel, saying, 'so I'm going to give you this for your trouble.' I could not, of course, be ugly, as much as I felt like it, but I had to say something. So I inquired, as kind as I could under the circumstances, 'What am I to do with this?' She looked

distressed at first, then brightened with a thought, and replied, as though she were doing something wonderful: "Why, you can use it for car fare. You won't have to walk back."

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"Shoo Fly"

Wyeth had not been able, as yet, to awaken much literary interest among his people in the south, but he had a great many agents working all over the north. Of those he had secured in Dixie, he was deluged with complaints to the effect that so many people failed to take the books they ordered; so, he began shipping only fifteen when an agent sent in an order for thirty books. This worked better, and the office was not the recipient of so many complaints thereafter.

As for Slim, he went with the cook on Fourteenth Street, ate two meals there out of every three, and canvassed whenever he felt so disposed. He had some cards made, only one hundred. Four hundred more would have cost but little additional. He handed them about, advertising that he would conduct a singing class at his residence, beginning any time any one wished lessons. He was successful in delivering more books, when he returned to work among the domestics, but not so many that, at any time afterwards, was Wyeth put to such strenuous efforts to secure books, in order that he might have one for every customer.

When the colleges had closed for vacation, Wyeth hired the matron to work in the office, and, upon finding her very interesting, Slim became more in evidence about the office.

Just about this time, the auditorium was completed which was begun two years before, by the lodge of which B.J. Dickson was the secretary. It was decided to ask the head of Tuscola, the great Negro educator, to speak at the dedication services. He was secured, and this fact caused thousands to gather for the occasion. It gave Wyeth an opportunity to hear the noted Negro for the second time in his life, the first being twelve years before, in Chicago.

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The day came at last. It rained in the forenoon, but was calm and clear in the afternoon. The night was fit, and the mammoth place was filled to overflowing, while thousands, unable to gain admittance, loafed outside, where they were entertained by a band, that served to keep them quiet. For Dickson, fully acquainted with his own race, was aware that they would disturb the speaker, if some diversion was not resorted to, for their amusement.

The speaker looked very tired and worn, and Wyeth felt a pang at his heart when he saw him. His years of service were beginning to tell upon him. He had returned recently from the west, where he had gone for the purpose of raising \$150,000 for his school, and had, as he did in everything else, succeeded beyond requirements. He was not only an educator, but a practical business man as well. To one who sat near him, Sidney Wyeth said that evening: "And no one of these odd ten millions is competent, in the public's favor, to take that old man's place, when eventually he will be called." The other sighed as he made reply: "There are many, though, who feel that they and not he should be in the confidence of the world, and have wasted themselves in uselessness and inactivity, as a result of their imagination." The speaker's eyes, at the distance Wyeth saw them, seemed dazed, and his voice was strained; but he did not soon forget the words he spoke to those black people, in dedication of an instant that had been inspired by his work. B.J. Dickson came in for a worthy praise, which Wyeth knew he justly deserved.

It was some two weeks afterwards, that a convention was held, which brought together a class of men, who were largely leaders of this race. They were the doctors, the dentists, the pharmacists, and all men connected with physical and surgical dispensation; and they came from two adjoining states also. Sidney Wyeth had, therefore, opportunity to see his own people from a professional point of view, and was cheered to observe the most refined set of men of his own kin, that he had ever seen. Dickson thought so too, and wrote as much in *The Independent*, the following week; but he wrote of something else connected with the same men, and served to show Sidney Wyeth something he did not know, could not have believed; but Dickson made it plain to the thousands of readers of *The Independent*, of which Wyeth was a constant reader.

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In the building, conspicuously located on the best corner, was a drug store, acknowledged to be the finest drug store operated by black people in the south. The new building included a street front on another side street, the drug store and many other trades on the ground space, with a row of offices to the number of about twenty-five, especially fitted for physicians and dentists. All these encircled the auditorium, and were regarded as the most artistic arrangement in the building.

Moreover, this was advantageous in many ways. At all events, it happened to be convenient for the men gathered on the occasion referred to. In addition to being used as a gathering place, this auditorium could be conveniently cleared for the purpose of dancing, and was employed for that purpose, on the night the convention closed. And this was what B.J. Dickson wrote in the following week's issue of *The Independent*:

"COLOR LINE DRAWN AT THE PHYSICIAN'S BALL

"Last week there was held in Attalia, the annual convention of the Tri-State Medical Association, as was stated in last week's issue of *The Independent*. Never before has this city been graced by a more refined, and obviously intelligent class of colored men. From all over the state, and the two states adjoining, which are members of the league, came physicians, surgeons, dentists and pharmacists, representing the highest body of men in the Negro race. They were entertained in sumptuous splendor, by the same profession of men in Attalia. This was facilitated by the fact, that the new buildings and the auditorium were employed for the occasion, and the members were not compelled, as they had been in the past, to house their social function in some old deserted hall, in a deserted part of the city.

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"It is, therefore, with deep regret, that we are called, by the bond of common sense and race appreciation, to mention a narrowness that pervaded this great occasion.

"It may be recalled, when the leader of our race spoke at the dedication, a few weeks past, that, on the committee were numerous doctors, some of them successful leaders, and some who were not. Yet it is and always has been the custom of our people, to honor these men in the best way we can, for we have long since come to appreciate that they are a part, and an important part of this new dispensation. Surely it is in order and keeping with the uplift of black people, to help men whose training has fitted them for such an important place. That, perhaps, is why their conduct of last week has constrained us to make this mention.

"They drew the color line. Plainly, and irrevocably. At the ball, at the stag party, and during the entire proceedings of the convention. Not a black person save one—the wife of one of the local physicians who married her for money—was invited. Such an example shocks us, so to speak. It seems incredible, in view of the condition of our race, both morally and mentally. And still, though we have forced our pen to ignore it, it has been, and is shown, right along. At the ball, not only was the color line drawn, but a white orchestra gave the music. Imagine such a spectacle! In the bourbon and always democratic south, our people hiring a white orchestra, at a fabulous sum; for, since long before we were free, Negroes have made music for the richest white people to dance by.

"Surely the old order changeth!

"Negro doctors live by the patronage of their race, positively; the white people would not hire one to doctor a dog. In the dark ages, when it was felt that a Negro was incompetent for anything else but to act as a slave, some excuse could be given for Negroes to hire white doctors. But today, all race loving people give their practice to their own, except those who are nearly white, and wish they were. But more than half of those at the ball have white doctors, and wouldn't hire one of those with whom they danced. But Negro doctors expect Negro practice, and deplore it terribly when Negroes hire white physicians! On the heels of this, too, they say "Shoo fly!" to Negro musicians who are competent to play for the whites, but not for Negro doctors. Like everything else that relates to our people—except their money—our professionals wrinkle their faces, and conclude without trial, that no Negro orchestra is properly trained to play for their balls; and Negroes who conduct newspapers do not know enough to write a part of what they read; books of Negro authors are not read by them, because they don't know enough—in the minds of these hypocrites—and so it goes in everything. They could not have held their convention in the white auditorium, even if permitted to, because that would have cost more than they were able to pay.

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"Now, if Negro orchestras are incompetent as musicians and are, therefore, relegated to the rear, and a white orchestra is hired to give music, and if Negroes as authors and editors, do not know enough to write a part of what they should read, and, moreover, if Negroes who happen not to be the scion of some white man, and, therefore, possessed of a yellow face, are not good enough to mingle and associate with them, then the Negro doctors are not fit to 'kill' us. Why not let the white man do this? Admitting that the white orchestra and the white editor and author have

more advantages than do the Negroes in the same vocation, is it not credible that the same applies in regard to the doctors? Is it not to be appreciated that, while the white man, often and mostly the son of a rich parent, is taking a post-graduate course abroad, the poor Negro boy is slinging hash in a cheap hotel—most of the best ones hire white help now—to get the wherewith to go back and finish school?

"Oh, we have thought this brave in our people these many years, and our very hearts and souls and sympathies have been with them in this great effort!

"And we are repaid in these terms!

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"The black-skinned people who pay them their hard-earned money, that we might have a representative set of men as our leaders, have been scorned for their pains!

"They, the doctors, set up what they silently look upon as society, "blue-veined people." How they must deplore that they are colored, in a literal sense! "We are the best people!" they cry. The insurance companies, started and led to their present position of success by black men, use every means, subtle and otherwise, to throw business to these men. Likewise do the lodges. And with all that, not more than a dozen or so are making a decent living in Attalia. We are still very poor people. Yet when society comes before us, the black ones are not good enough to play for. We must close. It makes us sick!"

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

"Why Do You Look At Me So Strangely?"

The first books came, and among the many orders to be delivered, was one for the girl who had reminded Wyeth of a person who now belonged to a closed chapter of his life. He carried her the book.

"My madam has not paid me yet," she said regretfully, "but if you can bring it back next week, I will be delighted to take it."

He did so, and she was as good as her word. "I hope I shall enjoy it," she said, as she paid him.

"I hope so too," said he. "Practically all I have sold to told me that they liked it," he added. He looked at her, and while he was not aware of it, in that moment he had an insane desire. The past and the one connected with it, rose for one brief second before him, as he had known it. She noted the strange look, and was embarrassed. Presently she recovered from the effect it had, and said:

"Why do you look at me so strangely?"

"I don't know," he replied, non-committally.

She did not understand it, but blushed as she said: "You are indeed a strange person.... I have thought about it more than once, since you were here and took my order. Do you look at all your lady customers like that?" She looked full into his eyes as she said this, but what she saw there made her hastily retract.

"I was only joking. You are singular—strange, and—I do not know what to think of you; but you are more than an ordinary agent for the book. I'm sure of that." He remained silent. She looked keenly at the picture, and then at him. A small mustache and a different style in the trimming of his hair; but she inquired suddenly:

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"Did you write this book? The picture resembles you." He looked innocent and said:

"Do you think so?"

"Indeed I do," she insisted. "'Then you wrote it?"

"Oh no, indeed," he lied, earnestly.

She appeared dubious, and then said, thoughtfully: "Maybe you have some private reasons for not wishing to be identified as the author, but I feel positive that you are." She smiled appreciatively for a moment, as she surveyed him carefully. "I think you must be smart and know a great deal, to be able to write such a big book. I shall always recall with pleasure, that I had the honor—though he did not acknowledge the fact—of meeting a real author." She extended her hand, which he took, as she said: "I am glad to have met you; and if you write another book, please try to remember that I would like to have a copy of it. Goodbye."

Slim was lolling in the office when Sidney returned. Mrs. Lautier, the clerk and ex-

matron, found him very much to her humor, as did Sidney, and he was appreciated in the capacity of mirth.

"Well," he said cheerfully, "I'm doing a little better now. Delivered six copies today," and almost took Wyeth's breath away by handing him \$5.40.

"Say," he cried suddenly, when they had settled up. "I happened upon something today in which I am deeply interested, and have been very anxious to tell you." He lowered his voice to a whisper, while Sidney looked surprised, but listened.

"It's a grocery stock that can be bought at a bargain."

"Well?..."

"A chance for you and me to get in right...."

"What do you mean?"

"We'll buy it?"

"But I am not in the grocery business. Books!"

"But you are out to make money?"

"I don't gather what you want or expect me to do."

"Well, I'll explain." He seated himself comfortably, and then went on in that low tone of voice. "A fellow is in partnership with another who is up against it for cash, and offers to sell his share, which is a half interest, at a bargain." He paused again briefly, and then went on. "I, as you know, having recently quit working in a grocery, naturally know all about the conducting of one."

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Wyeth nodded understandingly, and remained silent and patient.

"I see in this thing the chance I have been waiting for, and am ready to consider it favorably. Big money is to be made, can be made out of it for me, and I can, at the same time and in the same enterprise, become a man of affairs."

"M-m," breathed his listener, "How do you propose to conduct it?"

"Well," artfully, "first, it should, of course, be incorporated. And then a competent manager and treasurer are necessary."

"M-m. Do you propose to increase the present stock?"

"Not at once. I think the stock as it stands at the present, is quite sufficient to care for the trade which, I have observed, is good."

"M-m."

"I thought as a favor, I would tell you and give you a chance. You could put in an equal share along with myself, which would give you a fourth interest, and you could become vice president."

"I suppose you will, of course, quit selling books, should you take over the affairs of this—er—corporation?" said Wyeth, with well feigned regret.

"Well," said the other, meditatively; "I have not fully decided as yet. It depends largely upon whether you can be brought to see the great advantage you would gain by coming in."

"But what little I represent—which surely isn't much—is tied up in the book business. How much will this thing cost?" Slim winked wisely, held his head low, and whispered it into his ear.

"Twenty-five dollars."

"I'll think it over," said Wyeth, feigning seriousness.

The next day, Slim had forgotten all about the grocery business, but tore into the office in an ecstasy of delight and secrecy. He had discovered something else. It was a soda fountain, rather, it was some old fixtures. When the drug store below had been moved into the new building, they had stored their old fixtures in an empty store room near. The same had been vacant for ten years, but Slim happened by, and saw a grand opportunity at a glance.

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He told this to Sidney, with much feeling. "It's the greatest proposition of a decade! We can buy those fixtures for a song, rent the place they are in cheap, move the office up there, and conduct a book store and soda fountain in connection." His eyes opened wide, as he revealed the magnitude of the proposition.

"Can't do it, Slim. It's too big. Guess I'll have to stick to books." The other took on a disappointed expression.

"It's the chance of a life time," he said, with plain regret, and continued to look the

part. "I thought you were down here to make money, and when I go out and find something that's an Eldorado, I cannot enlist you. You are making a serious mistake, and will regret it some day."

That was all for that day, but the next day he was mysterious. He didn't, however, "put" Wyeth next to this, but, on the quiet, he met others on the street below, where, at some length, they discussed a restaurant and hotel business, to be duly incorporated, and an office and a management to be appointed. Mrs. Lautier made known to Wyeth the inner secrets of this the next day.

"I'm certainly disappointed in you, Mr. Wyeth," said Slim, one day soon after, very grievously.

"How's that, Professor?" inquired the other, with assumed concern.

"You never seem to consider seriously, the many good propositions I have discovered, and have offered to you for investment."

"Do you yourself?"

"I could make a bunch of money if you would come in," he repeated artfully, but ignored the direct question.

The next day, he was more artful than ever. He was, indeed, full of another proposition. He smiled as he told his friend.

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"I'm going to marry that woman out there," he said, low and confidentially.

"On Fourteenth?" the other echoed cheerfully, returning a sincere smile. "That's where you're a man. That'll sure be dandy. When?"

"Oh, not yet a-while, not until I get a divorce from the last one."

"Oh—then. M-m. So you've been married already, rather, you are."

"I have never told you much of my past life, except from a business point, have I?" He smiled naively, and, taking a chair, he became seated, placed his feet in the window, and proceeded to narrate a part of his past.

"I've been married twice," he began.

"Oh, twice...."

"Yes. My first wife died. We lived on a farm in South Carolina, and were as happy a couple as you ever knew. I owned a two-horse farm, and raised plenty of cotton and corn and some hogs, while my wife raised plenty of chickens and garden truck. We had two boys, whom I kept in school in town during the winter. And then, after my crops were laid by, my wife looked after the place, while I went out and sold song books and pictures, and preached."

"Then you're a preacher, too," said Wyeth, when he paused a moment. "I didn't think you were a preacher," he continued, looking him over.

"Well, not altogether. I preach sometimes, but not much since I married the last woman."

"How's that?"

"To tell you the truth, that woman almost made me lose my religion, she was such a devil."

Wyeth was silent, but attentive. Slim went on.

"Didn't you meet my brother? He was here not long ago. I had him up here in the office. You might have seen him about the building here. You could not have mistaken him for any one else, if you had seen him."

"Does he look like you?"

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"Lord, no!" Slim exclaimed, with a laugh. "Not at all. And you would not have believed it; but ten years ago he was as spare as I am. Then he went to preaching, and since then he has become the fattest thing you ever saw."

Wyeth smiled naively. Coleman proceeded with his interrupted narrative.

"Well, getting back to that *woman*; I married her four months after my first wife died, and took her to live in the same house. We got along less than three weeks in peace. Then things began to warm up. She was a devil, if there ever was one on top of the earth, but I persisted faithfully." His appearance was now very pious. "The first big row we had was on Sunday. It was in the morning, and I, with my Bible under my arm, was starting to church. She didn't want to go that day, and had tried to keep me from going; but I always led the prayer, and preached during the pastor's absence, so, as I was saying, I was starting for church. When I passed a room in which she had enclosed herself to pout, she suddenly opened it, and hit me in the side with a big

rock. If it had not struck the Bible, I think I would have been hurt seriously; but it hit the book and my arm, and rolled upon the floor.

"Well, after that, the devil was to pay. She kept me in Hell and hot water, and we got along like a cat and a dog. Each day, from sunrise until long after it had set, I asked Jesus whether I could hold out to the end. I had declared to his Holy Name, that I had taken that woman to live with for better or for worse; but surely I was getting the worst of it. And then, at last, it came to the point when it was beyond human endurance. She took to shooting at me for the fun of it."

"Good Lord!" exclaimed Wyeth. "You don't mean to say that she shot at you!"

"No," he replied calmly, "she didn't *shoot* at me; she *shot* at me, and not once, but any old time she felt like it, which was more than once, by many, many times," he soliloquized, grimly.

"Good night!"

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"Yes; she shot at me as though it were no more than throwing hot water on a bunch of rats."

"Save me Jesus!"

"Then one day I shot at her."

"Hush!"

"Yes, I shot at her and tried to hit, but I am thankful the good Lord was with us both against ourselves, I missed. I think I was too much excited."

"Deliver me!"

"It was a few days after we had had a big row for sure, and she had declared she would kill me."

Wyeth looked helpless. Slim smiled grimly, and went on:

"It was about my first wife. I had an enlarged picture of her that hung on the wall, and this devil had been eyeing it with apparent disfavor. That day, she stood directly under it, looking up at it with a double ax concealed in her skirt. I knew she had the ax, and watched her. I swore to myself that the day of Pentecost had come. If she touched my dead wife's picture, I would kill her on the spot."

"Be merciful, Coleman!"

"Yes, yes," he said, in a terrible voice. "I would have done so too, you can bet your last dollar on that.

"She kept looking up at it, and muttering in a low tone. I heard her say: 'I've a notion to tear you to pieces!' I decided that I would tell her, and in so doing give her one chance, a last chance to continue life in this world. So I said: 'Woman, woman, if you touch that picture, get ready to die, for, just as sure as I'm a nigga, I'm going to put your lights out!' Those were terrible days, terrible days," he sighed wearily, and for the first time since Wyeth had known him, he felt a pang of sorrow for him. He was serious. Presently he resumed:

"She went out without a word—she was always dangerous when she said nothing—and returned presently, with a brand new, great big pistol, and, without a word she began shooting. She and I then had it. She with the gun and me a-running, while she pulled the trigger, and run me all over that farm.

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"After this, I armed myself and got ready. I took the children to my mother, sold off the stock and everything else but the furniture. I asked the Lord to spare my life, and not let one of those bullets from that gun she always carried, push daylight through me, and I would try to fulfill my promise, God's will be done. I offered her half if she wanted to quit, but she didn't. No, after she had shot at me and scared me out of my wits, she was ready for me to take her in my arms.

"For awhile, things became a little better, but suddenly she went off half-cock, and pulled the trigger of that big gun on me again. Then she got her surprise. I had a gun too. She had a Smith and Wesson, and I had a left-hand Wheeler. 'Ki-doi! Ki-doi!' my old gun barked, and the magazine would whirl around cleverly, automatically. She stood frozen to the spot for a minute, then, taking fright, she dropped hers, and flew with me right after her, shooting that old cannon at every leap. Across the country we went. I loaded and emptied it a half dozen times, and shot away twenty-five shells. I shot at everything in sight!

"After that, I finished selling out and went to Arkansas, where I was getting along all right, until I was fool enough to let her come to me. Again we got along very well for a time, but she got to cocking her pistol where and when I could hear it, so I set out again. Just lately she came to Brookville, and went to raising Cain, trying to force me to take care of her. So, as you see, she made me quit there, and thus you see me."

For a long time, both were silent. The noise outside came to their ears, clearly and distinctly, while the ticking of the clock seemed louder than ever before. Presently, Sidney, to relieve his own emotions, arose from his chair and went outside.

Slim spoke of marrying the woman on Fourteenth street, every day for the next week. One morning he came in, his face beaming all over with smiles, and pleasant anticipation was plainly evident.

"Well," he began, "we talked it over last night, and she thinks it will be all right. So I want you to write a letter to my brother who owes me some money, and tell him I must have it, since I am engaged to be married, and must have it to use in paying for my divorce."

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Wyeth did so.

"That's fine," he cried gratefully, when it was handed to him. "You certainly can say a whole lot in a few words."

"When I get married to this woman, I think I will have a mate like my first one," said Coleman. Wyeth tendered his sympathy.

"Well," he said, as one put to a task he would like to avoid, "I must get around, and see a lawyer about a divorce." He was thoughtful for a moment, and then resumed: "Wonder what they charge for divorces in this town?"

"Depends upon the attorney and the case," said Wyeth. "I think twenty-five dollars is the usual fee, or amount of cost." Slim hesitated thoughtfully, and then said:

"I'll go down here and see this nigga lawyer. He ought to be willing to get one cheaper than a white lawyer. Don't you think so?"

"Possibly."

He went out. About a half hour later he returned, looking downcast and sullen. He was silent for some minutes, and then said, as if addressing himself: "That nigga's crazy."

"Who's crazy?" Sidney inquired, looking up.

"That nigga lawyer."

"How do you figure that out?"

"I went in there, and spoke to him in regard to the divorce, and what do you think he wants for getting me one?"

"I haven't the faintest idea."

"Fifty dollars! What do you think of that for highway robbery?"

"Perhaps your case is a bit more complicated than the average, and, therefore, justifies a larger fee," Wyeth suggested.

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"Aw, that what he said, too, but he's a blood sucker. He can't gouge me."

"Oh, well," said Wyeth in an off-hand manner, "you won't quibble on a matter of twenty-five dollars additional, when you are getting a good wife. Consider that as a treasure."

"Well, I don't care. If she's willing to pay half, I'll give the sucker fifty." Wyeth bestowed a terrible look upon him, whereupon Slim withered:

"Well, she'd be getting as much as I. So what's the difference?" he tried to argue. Wyeth continued to glare at him.

"The idea!" he declared presently, with undisguised contempt. "To wish a woman to pay for your release from another! I'm too shocked to say how ashamed I am of you!"

Slim laughed sheepishly.

"Twenty-five dollars for a pair of legs like you! If I were a woman, I wouldn't give twenty-five cents for you as you sit there now," Wyeth added, with subdued mirth.

The next day, his atmosphere had changed perceptibly. He was in an ugly humor. Presently he gave words to its cause.

"That nigga woman's fooling me, and I know it."

"What's the stew today?"

"She's got another nigga a-hangin' around her. I've been suspicioning it for some time."

"You're the limit."

"I gave her a ballin' out last night about it too."

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"I'll Never be Anything But a Vagabond"

Sidney Wyeth had about filled Attalia with *The Tempest* by this time, and had anticipated going to another city almost as large, about one hundred seventy miles west. He made known the fact to Slim, and suggested that he might leave him in charge of the office, if he did so. As a precaution, or rather, to get some idea of his ability to dictate letters, he had him compose a few. When the typist handed them to him to be read, and he had done so, he decided to allow him to continue his canvass, and to hire some one more proficient.

"Say," he cried the next day. "I've been thinking it over, and maybe I'll be going along with you."

"That so? Well, I do not see any reason in particular why you should not go."

"There's only one reason," he said thoughtfully.

"What is it?"

"Mrs. King."

"Oh! yes; that's so. When's the wedding going to be?"

He glared at Wyeth a second, and then exclaimed doggedly: "I'm not going to marry. I wouldn't marry the best woman in the world."

"From what you have told me, it seems that you *did* marry the worst," laughed the other.

"I'll stay single henceforth, and be safe," he growled, and busied himself through some papers.

"Stay single, eh! And let the nice lady go without a husband. It's incredible that you can be so regardless!"

"I do not care to discuss marrying today," he muttered. "I've something better. It's a business proposition."

"Oh, I see. What is it this time? Going to buy the First National Bank or the Southern Railway?"

"Oh, you needn't try to kid me. Besides I have not asked you to come in, though if you did, you could pick up some big, quick money, if you were of a mind to be serious."

"Oh, well, if it doesn't take more than a million, I might be brought to consider it," Wyeth smiled, with assumed seriousness.

"I can see you laffing in your sleeve, so I don't tell you anything, you see!" He ended it angrily, and left the office.

It was too good though to keep to himself, so he told Mrs. Lautier, who in turn told it to Wyeth.

"Mr. Coleman had me write to Ames today, in regard to some song books, which he says he used to sell lots of," she said, when it was convenient.

Wyeth grunted.

"He is very much provoked at the way you treat him. He says, if you would go in with him, you and he could both make lots of money; but that you only laugh in your sleeve at everything he proposes," she went on, replete with gossip.

"He proposes many things," said Wyeth.

She giggled.

"He's going out to Liberty Street Baptist Church to sing and sell them Sunday, providing he gets them in time." She typed a few letters, and then said:

"He says he would like to go to Effingham with you and sell books, but that you want too much for it. That the book is too high, and you want to make too much. He says the book ought to sell for a dollar, and he should be paid seventy-five cents for selling it."

"He wouldn't make a living selling it then," retorted Wyeth, somewhat impatiently. Then he thought of Mrs. King, who fed him most of the time.

The following Monday, Wyeth thought he had fallen heir to a fortune. He passed him

in the hallway, with head high, and as serious as zero.

Mrs. Lautier imparted the reason for it, when Sidney had taken out the letters.

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"Mr. Coleman had a great day yesterday, so he informed me," she smiled. "He said you should have been out to Liberty Street Baptist Church, and heard him sing and sell song books afterwards. He said you were not a Christian, however, which made it bad."

"How many song books did he sell, and what did he receive a copy for them?"

"I think six, and he received fifteen cents apiece," she replied. He entered at this moment, his face wreathed in triumphant smiles.

"Well, my doubting friend, if you would have taken the trouble to come out to Liberty Street Baptist Church yesterday, I think you would have been convinced that I am something of a salesman after all."

"I've just been told that you 'mopped' up," said Wyeth, heartily. Slim swelled perceptibly. He seated himself, crossed his legs, and resumed:

"When I used to live in South Carolina, I was considered one of the best salesman in the country."

"You must have been a great man in South Carolina," said Wyeth. Slim observed him a moment sharply. Presently he went on:

"I would go to the camp meetings and festivals, sing a few songs, get the people warmed up with a good sermon, and then sell hundreds of song books in the end."

"Wonderful!" from Sidney.

"I am going to the HNRTYU convention at Timberdale Thursday, and I thought you'd like to go along," he said, artfully.

"Couldn't very well do it, unless you got them to hold the convention over until next week."

"You *will* not take me seriously, regardless of my success," he complained. "Now yesterday I sold a pile of song books, and today I am sending the man his share of the money. I could do you some good with the book you are general agent for, if you would increase my commission to seventy-five cents a copy, and lower the price to a dollar."

"If you wrote the publishers, they might give you the books free of charge, providing you agreed to pay the freight on arrival, and not let the railroad company come back on them later for it," soliloquized Sidney.

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He went to Timberdale the next day, and the office saw no more of him for a week.

"When will Mr. Coleman return?" Mrs. Lautier would inquire every day. "I certainly do miss him."

"He's our mascot, our jest. I miss him also," said Sidney, and they both spoke of him at some length.

Mrs. Lautier was also a sociable person about the office, Sidney was coming to appreciate more each day. She was from New Orleans, and a creole. She had personality, and a way that won all who were near her. She was slender and very dark, and, although only thirty-nine, was almost white-haired, which contrasted beautifully with her dark skin. Her eyes were small and bead-like, while she was affectionate by nature. Her make-up was in keeping with the position she held as matron at one of the local Negro colleges. When she spoke, her voice struck the ear musically. She was a widow.

"Why have you never remarried, Mrs. Lautier?" Wyeth ventured, one day. She colored unseen for a moment, before she answered:

"Perhaps there's a reason."

"What reason? You are charming—very charming, I think," said he earnestly, although he smiled.

She hid her face. For a woman of her age, she was most extraordinary. "I have been told that creole people have a most frightful temper," pursued Wyeth, enjoying her manner. "Is that quite true?"

"Yes," She admitted, surveying him now.

"And do you happen to be endowed with such an asset, also?"

"I wouldn't be a creole if I were not," she advised, still smiling.

"That's too bad," said he, a trifle sadly. "You seem too kind and sweet of manner, to

be liable to those angry, wild fits they tell me they have."

"Perhaps you will see New Orleans while you are in the south, and the creoles; and then, you can be better prepared to understand them in the future," she said.

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"Perhaps I will," he said, after some thinking. "Yes, perhaps I will. I had not thought of it before."

"Mr. Coleman will be back tomorrow," cried Mrs. Lautier, entering the office a day or so later. "I received a postal from him announcing the fact, so we will not be so lonesome now."

"I am anxious to see what he did in Timberdale. I guess he succeeded in turning it upside down, and covering the whole town with song books."

The next morning, early, he was back. He entered the office and sat around in silence, seeming to be in an introspective mood. Wyeth waited for what he knew would eventually come. It did not as early as it usually did, in fact, he sighed wearily and looked so peculiar, until Wyeth, to break the impatience he was laboring under, presently turned his gaze upon him, and said: "Well, I see you are back...." The other sat up and looked about him suddenly, as though awakened from a trance.

"I suppose you have more money now than you can conveniently use for a while," Wyeth tested. "Made a bunch in Timberdale?"

"Like Hell!" spat the other grumblingly. "Lucky to be back here alive."

"M-m! What did you run up against? A freight train, or the madam?"

"I left the day she arrived," he said in a heavy tone, then added, after a pause: "They've been lynching and driving nigga's out of that town this week, so the convention was a fizzle."

"I suppose you sold out before they got after you? How many song books did you sell?"

"Didn't I tell you the white people was raising Hell, and a-killing and burning Negroes like barbecue out there!" he exclaimed impatiently. "I never sold any song books, but I sold one copy of *The Tempest*."

"How many song books of the amount you received have you still on hand?"

"All but six."

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"I thought you had sold them all but a dozen when you left for Timberdale."

"Aw, that old nigga that I left them with, and who claimed he could sell them at his church and more, slipped them back into my room while I was away. He didn't sell any."

"You don't seem to be getting back into your old-time selling form very rapidly," suggested Wyeth. Ignoring him, Slim said suddenly:

"When you all going to Effin'ham?"

"Next week."

"I don't know whether I'll get to go with you or not. Mrs. King thinks I'd better stay here this summer. What do you think about it?"

"I agree with her."

Just then Mrs. Lautier came in, and, greeting Coleman very cordially, Wyeth left them and went out on business.

He happened to have a delivery on Fourteenth street, and when he had filled it, he stood talking with the girl a moment. "Are you acquainted with Mr. V.R. Coleman?" she inquired.

"Sure. He is a *sort*" of agent for this book," Sidney replied.

"I thought so," said she; "and I was wondering what kind of an agent he must make, when he spends so much time in this neighborhood. He goes with a certain party next door, and he was there all last week. I think he scarcely went outside."

"Good morning," said Sidney.

"Goodbye," said she. "I hope I'll enjoy the book."

The week arrived in which Wyeth was to depart, and preparations were made to that end. He decided to leave the office in charge of Mrs. Lautier. Slim came in the day before he was to leave, looking frightened and terribly upset. Always given to joking with him, Wyeth hardly knew how to accept him, as he apparently was that day. He was trembling in every limb as he cried:

"That woman! She's after me! Great God! I wish she would leave me alone, I wish she would leave me alone! She's followed me all over the country. She's like a ghost on my trail! And now she is at this moment down in the street looking for me again!" Wyeth's sympathy went out to him, and he cried:

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"Quiet yourself! You'll surely go to pieces trembling like that. After all, why should you become so excited? You say you have advised her that you are not going to live with her again."

"Aw, but you don't know; you don't understand. She's got it on me, on me so strong until I dasn't make a crooked move, or resort to the law. The only chance I have is to keep out of her sight." He paused a spell now, and his appearance was that of a man under sentence of death. Then he said: "She has vowed to kill me, and I know if she gets a chance she will!"

"I will go with you fellows to Effin'ham," he said more calmly. "I've got to get away from where she can see me, if I hope to live. Every moment I stay where I know her to be near, will be moments of fear. I don't want to kill her, even in self-defense. God, no! I don't want murder on my hands!" He paced the floor at some length, pausing at intervals to peep into the street, in evident fright.

"She was out to Mrs. King's, night before last. Mrs. King was not in, so she walked up to the front door of the white people, and rang the bell. When the door was opened by the man of the house, the expression he wore got her goat. She made some excuse to the effect that it was the wrong house, and went her way. Then, yesterday, or last night rather, she came back. We were eating supper, and it happened that my seat was so I could look out the window, and up the alley. I saw her slipping up this alley, near the side of the board fence, with a big gun and it cocked. I rushed out the front way and avoided her; but she is bent upon forcing me either to live with her and submit to her tyranny, or she'll kill me, and prevent me from living or being friendly with any other."

"You seem certainly up against a bad proposition, V.R.," said Wyeth, helplessly.

"If it wasn't for a certain little deal back in South Carolina, I wouldn't be so afraid; but, owing to that, I dare not do anything but keep out of her way," he trembled on, woefully. "I'm going to try and slip out of town unbeknown to her, and go along with you fellows to Effin'ham. I'll be safe there for a while; but as soon as she learns I am there, she'll take up the trail and I'll have to 'beat' it elsewhere."

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"Gee! It must be dreadful to live in the fear that somebody is thirsting for your blood," said Wyeth, shuddering.

"I'll never be anything but a vagabond; a rover, drifting over the face of the earth until death comes," he cried despairingly.

He was calmed presently, with the prospect of going to Effingham. Wyeth went uptown, attending to considerable business in connection with the office, preparatory to leaving. When this was completed, he went to a movie, and returned to the office about six o'clock. He went to another show that evening, and after that had closed, strolled about the town until ten-thirty. There appeared to be a gathering of women for some occasion at the auditorium, which was breaking up when he returned. Mrs. King and Coleman were leaving the building when Wyeth came up. They started up the street with the crowd. As they reached the corner, there was a sudden commotion. Wyeth ran up, and was just in time to see a woman dash after Coleman from around the corner. He saw her before she got near him, and, jerking free of his escort, he tore into the street. She was a dark woman with coarse black hair, and of an Indian appearance. With a cry she flew after him, as she cried in a diabolical voice:

"At last, Vance Coleman, I have found you, and in another's company. I am forced to stand aside, although your wife!" Down the street his steps could be heard, as he tore along in mad haste. She stopped when she saw that she could not catch him, and, drawing from some invisible direction, a gun, she levelled it, with deliberate aim, at the flying figure. The crowd stood frozen creatures.

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And then suddenly, a terrible cry rent the still night air, just as the gun went off; but the cry had disconcerted her aim, and, with a cry she turned toward the crowd, but Wyeth had the arm of the hand that held the revolver, which he twisted and made the weapon fall to the ground. She was led away presently by an officer, while still, far down a street, the sound of hurriedly retreating footsteps came to Wyeth's ears. He listened until they died away in the night. Wyeth turned, and disappeared in the direction of his room.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER ONE

Effingham

"I'll take that change now," whispered the porter, nudging Wyeth, as he lay trying to sleep, as the train roared westward toward Effingham, the iron city, and greatest industrial southern center.

Raising up, he reached in his pocket while yet half asleep, and handed the porter two dollars. "I paid fifty cents for the ticket to Spruceville, as you know, and the charge was to be two fifty?" The other nodded, and pocketing the money, he melted away noiselessly.

A few hours later, Wyeth raised the shade and peered out. The train was flying through a valley, that spread away from either side of the single track, smooth and unobstructed, except for comfortable farm homes, set back from the roads. He looked back in the seat behind him, observed young Hatfield, whom he was bringing with him, dozing peacefully. Then he looked toward the front of the car for the first time, and observed another with whom he had become acquainted in Attalia. He had never learned his name, in fact, he had never inquired it; but, since the other possessed such long legs, and was tall and good-natured into the bargain, he had called him Legs, which had brought no objection on the part of the other. And it is by that name we shall follow him in this story.

"Hello, there!" he greeted cordially, when their eyes met. "And where did you get on and call yourself going?"

"Hello, Books!" the other returned, as cordially. He rose from his seat, shook himself as if to start the blood, jumped about for a moment, rubbed his face, and then came back to where Wyeth was and sat down. "Say," he cried, "a little liquah'd go good right now, wouldn't it? I had some, but like a pig I emptied the bottle last night. Oh, yes," he cried suddenly, "I'm going to Chicago. Where are you going?"

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"To Effingham; but I wish I were on the way for old Chi' along with you," said Wyeth. The other smiled blandly, stretched his long legs in the isle, then got up, went to the end of the car and looked around for a cup out of which to drink; and, of course, not finding any, he lifted the lid of the cooler, turned it over, and finding it had a disk, drew it full and drank from it. Replacing it, he came back and reseated himself. Since we shall become quite familiar with him, and very shortly, a description is quite necessary.

He was tall, over six feet, and a mulatto. His shoulders were broad, while his chest was thin and flat. His head was small, and straight up from his back, while he possessed a pair of small ears that fitted closely and oddly against his head—so oddly that, when one observed him at a glance, he reminded one of an elf. He appeared to be smiling always, although there was no great depth in the same. His eyes were small, and danced about playfully in his head, while his hips were arched and broad, between which was a full stomach which made him resemble a pickaninny.

"You see, it's like this," he began confidentially. He lowered his voice almost to a whisper, and held his mouth close to Wyeth's ear. "The reason you did not see me when we left Attalia last night, was because I had the porter lock me in the lavatory. I didn't come through the gate at the station, but went out to the yards where he concealed me. When the train was out of the town, I came out; but you were reading and didn't look up, when I came out and took that seat."

Wyeth observed him now wonderingly. He could not understand this unconventional manner of boarding a passenger train. He was not, however, left long in doubt. In fact, before he could give words to the question his eyes asked, the other enlightened him:

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"I's havin' a little game Sunday night, and the bulls run in on me." It was now all clear to Wyeth. He recalled the other's occupation. He had become acquainted with him through "Spoon," and recalled that he kept a rooming house for questionable purposes. In addition to this, he sold liquor, and ran a game on Saturday nights and Sundays—or any time a crowd gathered with enough money to start.

"M-m. Did they arrest you?"

"No; that is what I's goin' t' tell. I got away; but they got the rest of the bunch, every damn last one of them, the fools! You see," he explained, warming to the narrative, "it was not altogether my fault. It was like this: I had a nigga watching, that is, I had him hired to watch, but the d—n fool was a whiskey head, and had t' have a drink eve' ten minutes, claiming, of course, that it was necessary that he have plenty of booze t' keep himself awake."

Wyeth laughed quietly.

"Well, I was 'head a the game and winning right along, and didn't give a damn; so I fed him all he could pour down. The result of this was that he got good and full by and by, went off t' sleep, and the bulls walked right in on us without a word of warning.

"We were shooting craps on the bed, and the game was going along nicely. I was sitting at the head holding the lamp, and getting the cuts. At least fifteen dollars was in the betting, when, on hearing a slight noise to my back like some one creeping, I looked around—and, man! The room was full of bulls with dark lanterns, which they at that moment flashed upon us!

"I didn't know what to do for a moment. 'Up with yu' hands, niggers!' they cried. All the shines looked then into the barrels of a bunch a-guns. 'Don't try no monkey business there, you big nigger,' the sargent cried, as he observed me shifting about. All the time, though, I was edging toward a place I knew none ov'm didn't see. Suddenly, I drops the lamp, and there is some tall cussin'. A little pup—I think he was a sup'—put a star on the back of my head"—he turned and Wyeth saw it. "I staggered about now like I was knocked out. They were all over us now, a-hand cuffin' the nigga's like a lot of cattle with halters. By this time I see's my way clear t' make this break. One sucker spots me and cries: 'Look out! That big nigga!' But they were too late. I had my hand on the knob of a door that none ov'm have seen; and, swinging it open quickly, I ducked out. As I did so, one of the bulls takes a shot at me, but missed. He was determined to have me, though, if possible, so he comes after me in a hurry. That's where I am wise and he wasn't. There is a fence a few feet from the door, that he didn't see. Out he came after me in a blind fury, and, 'bing!' He ran full into the fence, and knocked the wind out of himself. I saw my chance. I was mad and scared now, too; so I rushed upon him while he was staggering about and 'bingo!' I landed on him, and knocked him cold. Then I 'beat' it. I had his gun and club and 'peeper,' and I flew. Out the back way I went like a race horse. In the rear, two or three bulls were a-workin' over this bull that I done knocked stiff. I entered the alley, and ran until I reached Bell street. An onry bunch of dogs kept barking away at me as I hurried along, and kept me scared, because I's afraid I'd be located by other bulls. I ran down one, a little pug-nosed bull. He was game and tried to bite. I reached down and got'm by the head, whirled him over my shoulder three or four times, and when I turned him loose, he landed beside a second story window, and fell to the ground a dead dog, I didn't try to see. I then began to jump fences. I bet I jumped a dozen fences, and then got hung on the last one, which held my shirt. I fell off at last, and liked to have bust open. My face was bleeding, and my head, while my shirt was soaked. I looked like the devil. I at last tore off the shirt, and tried to tie up my head, then went to my brother-in-law's."

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"Gee!" exclaimed Sidney, "but you certainly had some experience!"

"Aw, man, I done some runnin', believe me!" he declared, and looked grim.

"They had plenty a-liquah—the bootlegs, too—, so's soon's I's cleaned up with my head bathed and a clean shirt, I took a few drinks, and went to bed, feeling all right.

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"I laid around town hid away, until he could slip me my clothes and a few dollars. So I happened to know this porter, and arranged to come over tonight, and here I am," and he breathed a sigh of relief.

"How did those they arrested come out, and how come the cops to be next to your little game?" Wyeth inquired, casually.

"Oh, yes," cried Legs. "I forget to tell you that part of it. You see, there was a guy in the crowd—or had been, rather, whose wife didn't want him to gamble. Now he came down there and lost what little he had, and went home drunk. His wife, of course, learned that he had lost his money, and got sore. He was a damned tramp, and told her the whole story, with tears, perhaps, and you know a nigga with tears, so she went and put the cops next.

"Now 'bout them other shines—the ones who got arrested—they came before Judge Loyal's the next morning, and got ten seventy-five each."

"I thought it was fifteen seventy-five for gaming."

"They were let off lighter, owing to the fact that I was not brought. If they'd a caught me, it would have been fifteen seventy-five for them, and about a hundred for me."

Wyeth laughed amusedly.

"You don't gamble or drink liquah, either, do you?" he asked, and then answered his own question. "No, I know you don't. You're lucky for using such common sense. It doesn't pay, even if four nigga's out-a five do. Yeh," he went on wearily, "only the straight and narrow path leads to happiness in the long run," and with that he turned on his side, and went to sleep.

"Say," he cried suddenly, raising up, "what did you pay?" Then looked around quickly to see if he had been overheard.

"Two and a half," the other replied. "How much did you?"

Legs held up two fingers. "I told'm 't'was all I had, and I didn't have but a precious little more."

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"Are you acquainted with any one in Chicago?" Wyeth inquired.

"Aw, yeh, a plenty; but I am not going on through now. I'm going to stop in Effingham for a while, it depends."

"Hello, Red," cried young Hatfield, coming up now, rubbing his half closed eyes. "I see you got out all right."

"Say, man!" cried Legs. "Didn't I get out of that thing in luck?"

"Bet your life on that you did," commented Hatfield. "If they'd have gotten you, the devil would have been to pay." He laughed a low, hard laugh, and then added: "Those church people have had their eyes on your place for some time, and the chances are if you had been caught, they'd have appeared against you."

"They certainly put old Jack Bell out of business proper," Legs commented, thoughtfully. "That old nigga conducted such a rotten dump and tiger, though; and all those dirty little girls around on top of it, I don't wonder."

"Wonder whether he had any money left when they got through with him?" Hatfield inquired.

"Hard to tell," said Legs. "They fined him out of hundreds, that I *do* know."

By this time, the train was entering the city. From the car could be seen an incomplete mass of varied buildings, little shacks that faced alleys, and at the front of which played dozens of little unbleached pickaninnies. Wyeth viewed the city as the train crept slowly along, and his impression did not agree with what he had gathered from reading of it. It was not, he felt positive, the city Attalia was, although claiming almost an equal number of people.

"You see those two brick cupola's extending into the air?" he heard Hatfield saying. "That's a Negro Baptist church." He was mistaken, however, for the same proved to be the large, new station, the pride of the city.

Soon the train rolled into this, and a few minutes later, they stood in the waiting room.

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"It's going to cost like the dickens to get all these grips of your hauled," said Hatfield, with a frown.

"Only had to pay thirty-five cents to get them to the depot in Attalia." He walked to the lower end of the platform, and began a series of inquiries relative to the hauling of the same. He soon came upon an express man, who agreed to unload them for fifty cents, at where-ever they found a room.

The three walked down a level street, paved with brick. On either side a lot of houses appeared behind a row of trees, dense with foliage. It was a calm, soft morning, and the sun, red and glorious, was just peeping out of the east. The street they followed led from the depot into the business section. Perhaps eight blocks ahead of them, several buildings of extraordinary height, stood outlined far above those about them. Wyeth counted the windows of two, and found them to total sixteen.

"There are two or three buildings here higher than any in Attalia," said Hatfield, following his gaze. "I think the ones you have been noticing, are twenty-five stories high."

The other whistled. "That's going some!"

Soon they were well into the business section. "Let's go by and look at that hotel they have just completed and opened," suggested Legs; for, just then, a little to the right, the outline of that beautiful structure arose. It was a grand affair, to say the least, and stood as a monument to the enterprise of the populace. It was claimed, by them, to be the swellest in the south.

"I think I can get on there after a bit," said Legs. "I'm a head waiter by trade, but I haven't done any hotel work for some little time now."

"I hear they brought all the waiters from the north," said Hatfield.

"Well," said Legs, "I'll *be* from the north when the time comes, so I can make a fit if there is an opening."

"You'll pass, Red," laughed Hatfield, as they walked onward now in a different direction.

As Wyeth saw Effingham, he observed that it lay very differently from Attalia. It had been built up recently, so to speak, and had, therefore, broad, spacious streets, unusually so, he thought, as he now found himself in the heart of the business district. Perhaps they may have seemed wider, because he had become accustomed to the narrow highways of Attalia. In addition to the wide streets, the sidewalks stretched back from the buildings they fronted, from twelve to twenty feet, giving pedestrians plenty of room to walk unconcernedly along. As they continued on their way, he further observed that the business section covered an unusually large area, and it was hard to tell which might be called the main street. As the street cars clanged by him, he noticed another feature, also. The position occupied by the Negro passengers. They entered and left the car from the front instead of from the rear, as was the custom in Attalia.

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"Negroes do lots of business in this town," said Hatfield, as they came abreast of a large, new building, that reached five stories into the air. "This, now," said he, pausing and surveying the structure, "is the Dime Savings Bank building." Wyeth, having read much about the bank, observed the building carefully. To one side, through the street door, there was no entry, or, rather, the small entry was to one side of the building, and not in the middle, and one elevator was in operation. Straight back from where they stood, the open doors of the bank (which the janitor was now sweeping) revealed the inside of the institution.

A few hours later, their wanderings brought them back again before the bank, which they entered. It proved to be a busy place, and at that hour, was filled with black people, depositing and withdrawing money, and attending to other business in connection therewith. He observed, in the first glance, that the furnishing was elegant. Behind the first desk, enclosed by an oak office fence, sat a black man, the cashier he thought, since the insignia was plated conspicuously before him. And still to the left of him, behind a grating with the insignia of *Collections* before it, was another man, and he was blacker still. And then, in the next cage, over which was labeled boldly, *Receiving Teller*, worked still another black man. He was younger, and he worked rapidly, counting the money that was continually being thrust to him. There was another cage to the right of him, and this was marked *Paying*. Behind this worked another black man, young and intelligent, and seeming perfectly efficient, as had the others. In the rear, working over books, he saw the first mulatto. Another, brown-skinned this time, worked near him, and these made up the active members of the bank. No blue veins held sway here. It was truly a black man's bank. It was, as he had long since learned, the largest in the country conducted by black people, and the footing exceeded a half million by almost a hundred thousand dollars.

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Young Hatfield, who was a student in one of the colleges of Attalia, had been to the city before, was well acquainted, and pointed out the many places of interest, and, in particular, those conducted by black people.

"The president of this bank, Dr. Jerauld," he explained, "is in failing health, and is substituted by the vice, Dr. Dearford."

"I see," acknowledged the other. "So the president, then, is a physician."

"No," corrected the other, "a minister."

Wyeth recalled now, that "Reverend" or "Elder" was almost a thing of the past among Negro preachers. They were all called, and called themselves "doctors." But he did not then realize to what extent this title was usurped. Beyond the instant of medicine and dentistry, he had noted that "doctor" was an honorary term, conferred upon men who had done something notable in the evolution of mankind; but he was soon to learn that the title had become a fetish with his people, sought after and preempted by any and everyone without even the remotest right to claim it.

"Everything that has ever been started down south has been done by the preachers. A Negro preacher down here, in the past in particular, has headed everything. Of course, that would be natural, granting that almost every man with ambition to be before the public has been a preacher," Hatfield explained. "Now, for example, the largest insurance company in Attalia—that is, with offices there and conducted by our people—has for its president, a preacher located in this town."

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"I've heard of him. His name is—"

"Dr. Walden," he explained. "He's the pastor of a big church on the other side of town. Dr. Jerauld, before he retired, was pastor of the Sixth Avenue church."

"And what denomination do these preacher business men represent?"

"Oh, Baptist, of course. As I said, they are at the head of everything, including," and

he smiled humorously, "a great many wives of other men." They both laughed, and Legs, who was almost forgotten, joined in.

By this time, they were wandering aimlessly down a street that finally came to an end, and ran abruptly into a brick wall. Changing their course into another street, they continued their indefinite pilgrimage. Presently, they paused before one or two neat looking houses, and inquired regarding rooms. Both were full. A convention of preachers was still in session, which explained the state of circumstances. So, on again they went, until they paused at a corner. A middle-aged woman sat on the front porch of a house that rose to two stories, and was decorated with two vine-laden porches. The house appeared to contain possibly seven or eight rooms.

"Hello, Mis'!" exclaimed Legs, in greeting so familiar that Wyeth felt he surely must know her.

"How-do," she answered as familiarly and smiling.

"Three tramps we are from Attalia, and without a place to roost. Do you happen to have a spare pole or two?"

"Sho has. Come upon the po'ch and be seated," she invited.

"A-hem. That's when you said something," smiled Legs, "eh, Mis'?" She joined in the humor.

"Well, boys," said Legs, when they were comfortably seated, "this looks good to me. Supposing we just hang up here, and send for our stuff?"

It was agreeable to the other two, and they were, therefore, duly installed, three in a room. Legs, being the longest, was given a bed to himself, while Hatfield and Wyeth agreed to share another together. It was fortunate for both that it was arranged thus, since Legs proved to be a dreadful night man, and, from his apparently restless way of tossing, required a halter.

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"Any saloons around here, Mis'?" he inquired shortly, when she reappeared on the porch a few minutes later.

"Sho is!" she exclaimed. "Yeh, most sho. Go right down this street, turn the corner, and across the street near the other corner, is what you want," she laughed, taking them all for granted. Wyeth and Hatfield followed Legs to the inevitable fountain he now sought energetically.

"Got t' have a little liquah before I c'n feel like myself," he grinned, as they sauntered along.

"Hello!" called some one from the rear. Turning, they observed a medium sized Negro walking rapidly in their direction, and beckoning to them. They halted, and presently he stood before them, introducing himself.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," he began very properly; "but the Mis' back there," pointing in the direction of the house they had just left, "was telling me that you have just taken a room with her, and, since I am the man of the house, I wish to offer my name and make you welcome."

He was very cordial. His name was Moore, John Moore, he said, and to describe him, our pen fails to a degree. He had, however, an odd looking face. His cheek bones were high, slightly Indian-like, while his face was broad. His nose was not flat, nor was it high or medium, it was—just a nose, that's all. He held his head forward aggressively, his eyes were twinkling, and possessed a cordiality that, to a careful observer, was distrustful. And still, his appearance in general, was that of a Negro who might be expected to bluff, but not to fight; to steal when the opportunity was ripe, with enough cunningness to keep from being caught. Otherwise, he was apparently harmless.

They acknowledged his welcome, and, joining them, they all went toward the place of happiness by proxy.

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"I'm buyin' this," said Moore, as they lined the bar, four abreast.

"Let me do the buying this time," insisted Legs, who proved himself a sport, and a good mixer.

"I've paid him already," said Moore, as if in dismissal, shoving at the same time, a half dollar across the bar.

"Whiskey," nodded Legs familiarly, to the bartender.

"Little liquah, too," from Moore.

"Beer."

"Beer."

"Drink whiskey!" insisted Legs and Moore, of the other two. "Something that has the kick."

"These are my sons," said Legs, teasingly.

"Hold on heh', George," argued Moore with the bartender, "you know how I take mine. A half-a-pint 'n' two glasses." The bartender obeyed.

Here Wyeth observed, was diplomacy, albeit economy. Moore paid twenty-five cents for the half pint, wherein he and Legs had six sociable drinks, three a-piece; whereas, the same would have totalled sixty cents otherwise.

"How's this town for gettin' hold a-something?" inquired Legs of Moore, when John Barleycorn was doing his duty.

"Best town in the south to get it, if you're wise," Moore winked.

Legs responded with a big wink. "I'm the man that put 'w' in whiskey," he smiled. "I'n get mine when it's in the gettin'."

"What's your line?" from Moore, pouring more whiskey.

"Anything from heavin' coal to sellin' liquah and operatin' a crap game, and a little 'skin' when the crowd's right."

"I see," said the other thoughtfully, then added: "And your friends?"

"This lad here is going to school to learn how to get 'his without workin'; while the other boy," pointing to Wyeth, "is already doin' it."

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"Well, men," began Moore, as he opened a fresh half pint that Legs paid for, "as I said, 'f you're wise, Effingham is the best town in the country for pickin's. It is, as you should know, the greatest industrial center in the south."

"So I have understood," interposed Wyeth, waiving the bartender's invitation aside; "I am anxious to learn something, everything about the town, and the colored people."

"Are they employed in considerable numbers at the mines, steel mills and furnaces about here, of which the city possesses so many?"

"Thousands upon thousands," he was informed.

"And how are they paid? From a personal standpoint, I'd be glad to know?" went on Wyeth.

"All kinds of wages, and at various times. Some receive as low as a dollar and a quarter, while others make as high as seven and eight; but the average wage runs from a dollar fifty, to three dollars."

"How's the crap games?" from Legs, with the usual smile.

"Nigga's will shoot craps, yu' know," grinned Moore. "I shoot a little myself when the moon's right," he winked.

"I want t' find a good game as soon as possible, and win about a hundred," said Legs, beginning to show the effects of liquor. Hatfield and Wyeth left them to their cheerful diversion, which was now, to all appearance, warming to the superlative.

The former went toward town, looking for certain friends. Wyeth went back to the place where he was going to stay, and retired. They had called up for their luggage before they went to the saloon. Wyeth was sleeping peacefully, when he was aroused by an argument on the porch. He tried to close his ears, but the same was persistent. It was between the landlady and the expressman, who had arrived with the stuff.

"That little trunk is as heavy as lead," he heard that worthy saying.

"That has nothing to do with it," from the landlady. "They left fifty cents here to pay for it, and you must have agreed to that amount, or they would have left more."

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"Seventy-five cents, seventy-five cents. That little trunk is like something filled with bricks."

"My trunk," mumbled Wyeth, coming to himself, and listening to the argument. "And that sucker is trying to work her. The dirty cur!" he now cried, angry for two reasons. One for being disturbed when he was sleeping so peacefully, and another for being worked, or trying to be. With a bound he was on the floor, and in a jiffy he was in his trousers and upon the porch.

"Well, 'f y' ain' go'n pay it, I'll haf t' take th' stuff back," the expressman said, as Wyeth came up. The other did not see him until he mounted the porch. Then he looked into his eyes which were fighting, and recoiled.

"What's this you are going to do!" he demanded, filling the doorway, and bestowing upon the other, a look that corresponded with his feelings.

"Well, stuff I brung down heah's mor'n I thought 't'was, so I'll haf t' have a quarter mo'!"

"What kind of a proposition did we make with you in regard to hauling it at the depot awhile ago?"

"You said yu'd give me a haf a-dollah fo' haulin' it, but I didn't say I'd do it fo' a haf," he sulked, evasively.

Wyeth glared at him, but the other refused to meet his eye. "Then," he began, "when you took hold of it and loaded it into your wagon, you subsequently agreed to my offer, and now I want to see you get more."

"I'll haf t' take the stuff," argued the other, shifting about, but keeping at a safe distance. Something in the eye of the other did not offer welcome.

"Give him a quater more," called Legs, who had returned in the meantime, and had been trying to catch a little sleep.

"I don't intend to pay him one little dime more!" exclaimed Wyeth stubbornly.

"Then I'll haf t' see 'n' officer," bluffed the other, and turning, he started briskly down the street. Wyeth learned later, he was sure he could not have found one. He was not looking for any, but the landlady and Legs made up the quarter, and calling him back, paid him.

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"Books is stubborn when he thinks he's been worked. M-m," said Legs, going back to bed. "Yeh, comes down to a show, believe he'd fight."

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CHAPTER TWO

"These Negroes in Effingham Are Nigga's Proper"

The next day dawned calm and beautiful, and Sidney made preparations to begin his canvassing. In one city in Ohio, and which was also a great industrial center, he had found much success in selling his book to the multitude of workers employed there. Therefore, with what Moore had already told him, he was anxious to get his work under way.

The first thing necessary, of course, would be to secure agents. School had closed recently, and he had intended coming to the city, to enlist some of the teachers for that work. Securing a number of names and addresses, he began calling on them, but without any immediate success. Late that afternoon, however, a teacher, a settled woman, gave him the name and address of one whom she felt, she assured him, would take up the work. "At least," she said, "she always does something during vacation. Her name is Miss Palmer," so thither he went.

She lived not far away, and near the center of a block in a small two story house, rusty and somewhat ramshackle. He mounted the steps, which were perhaps a half dozen, and asked for her. She was out, they informed him, but was expected to return shortly. Before they were through telling him, she came. She was a brown-skinned woman, although in the fading twilight, she struck him as being a mulatto. Of medium height and size, she gave a welcome that played about the corners of her small mouth. Her chin was long and tapered to a small point, which made her appearance unusual; her eyes were small, very small, and playful.

They were very soon in conversation, and he was pleased to learn, after he had talked with her a few minutes, that she was a woman with the strength of her convictions, although there was something about her he did not, and was not likely, he felt, to understand for some time to come, and he didn't.

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Presently he stated the object of his visit, and suggested that she take up the work during her vacation. She shook her head dubiously, and said:

"I don't mind canvassing; but I don't want to sell books."

"Why not books?" he inquired, in a tone of surprise, and then added: "It would seem that, being a teacher, selling a nice book would be preferable to something else."

"Yes, that may be," said she, thoughtfully now, "but nigga's here don't read. At least they won't buy and pay for books. Sell them toilet articles or hair goods, something to straighten their kinks or rub on their faces, anything guaranteed to make their hair grow soft and curly, or their black faces brighter."

He laughed long. She now observed him with something akin to admiration. "Then the people of your community—the black people—don't consider feeding the mind an essential to moral welfare," he suggested mirthfully.

"Naw, Lord," she replied flatly. "These Negroes in Effingham are nigga's proper."

They think nothing about reading and trying to learn something, they only care for dressing up and having a good time."

He was silent and resigned for a time. They now sat together in a swing that hung suspended from the porch. Directly, when he had said nothing for some time, she looked again at him, and with something in her demeanor that was anxious.

"What book is it?" she inquired.

He told her.

"That's a good title, and should take if anything will," she said, a little more serious now than before. She did not impress Wyeth as being much of a literary person, as he now observed her. For a moment, he felt the interest wane, that he had experienced the moment she came up. She was speaking.

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"I sold books one summer, 'Up From Bondage,' by the greatest Negro the race has ever known, and I had a time! I never want such another experience! They told me a thousand lies, and had me trotting after them all summer," whereupon, she shrugged her shoulders disgustedly.

"Well," said he, "I'm confident there are people, and plenty, who *do* care to read, and will likewise buy when the book is properly presented. So, of course, the duty of a distributor, will be to find these people, and it is for this purpose, I am here. I do not, of course, know what kind of a black population you have; but it is reasonable to suppose that, if I could and did, personally sell twelve hundred copies in Attalia in a matter of five months, I should be able to find a few readers here. Do you not agree with me?"

"Oh, of course," said she; "but you cannot as yet appreciate the fact that Effingham has the orneriest Negroes in the world. I am frank when I say that I do not have any confidence in them, but wait," she admonished, "you'll find out."

They sat together now, and conversed on topics otherwise than books and literature, which he observed, could be engaged in with more success. Moreover, as the minutes wore on, he also came to see that Miss Palmer was somewhat sentimental. She smiled freely, moved close at times, and then away, artfully; saw him at moments out of liquid eyes, and said her words with a coquetishness that came by careful practice.

And so, Sidney Wyeth, a man free to practice the arts of coquetry—if a man may do so—accepted Miss Palmer's attention, and to that end he soon became a friend.

When he departed that evening, she had taken the agency, and had agreed to go with him on the morrow.

That night it rained, a heavy rain, and when he went forth the following morning, the streets were heavy with mud wherever there was no paving—which was, in this part of town, almost everywhere. Moreover, it showed signs of raining more. It had been one of the driest springs the south had ever seen, and it was now probable that the deficiency in rainfall would be eradicated by an excess in moisture.

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Wyeth, however, was impatient to begin as soon as possible. He wished to ascertain to what extent intelligence and regard for higher morals was prevalent in this town.

Miss Palmer was not ready when he arrived, and it was two hours before she was. "Thought since it rained," she explained, "that you would not, perhaps, go out today."

"Won't know the difference this time next year," he jested, with a cheerful smile, nevertheless, surveying the threatening elements anxiously.

"If we go into the quarter districts," she advised, "we will most likely get our feet wet—muddy."

"Are there no sidewalks out there?" he inquired.

They had decided, the evening before, at her suggestion, to begin in one of the many little towns, inhabited by Negroes employed in the mines, mills and furnaces, that made Effingham what it was. These little towns encircle the city proper, laying, many of them, at a considerable distance, to be incorporated as part of the city.

Some years before—between one census and the next—this city is recorded to have trebled and over in population. It had, but in doing so, it gathered all these little burghs for miles around. Some of them were even beyond the car lines, which were built to them after the city had incorporated them, and counted the people as a part of the population of Effingham. Wyeth perhaps, as well as the world at large, had not known this. The population, at this time, was estimated to be one hundred sixty-six thousand. Of this amount, two-fifths were Negroes. Only a portion had been born in Effingham; the rest came in the last few years, in great, ignorant hordes from the rural parts of the state, and from the states adjoining. And as Wyeth soon came to know, they included some of the most depraved and vicious creatures humanity has

The most extraordinary part of Effingham, was its staggering number of churches. That is, among the Negroes. Notwithstanding the fact that the city was the resort of every escaped convict, and the city where every freed one headed for, which, of course, naturally made it the scene of excessive depravity, there was, apparently, a great amount of pious worship. Wyeth recalled, as he became better acquainted with the city and the people, that a year before, in a northern city, he had one day, gone to the library, where he found the directories of all cities of any significance. He was preparing a circular campaign, and, in going through the various directories, chanced to look through the part of those of the southern cities that had recorded the churches. Effingham had, according to an old one, almost a hundred Negro churches.

But, having digressed at some length, we will return now to Miss Palmer and Sidney Wyeth, preparing to spread intelligence among a people who greatly needed it.

"Sidewalks!" Miss Palmer exclaimed, in derision, "Lordy, they hardly have streets in some places!"

A few minutes later, they were sailing through the country—although it was counted as part of the city—to a town, a suburb, nine miles distant, a suburb of mills. "I used to sell toilet articles out there, on and right after pay days, and did quite well," said she, as the heavy car thundered along at a great rate of speed, for an inter-urban. "I am skeptical in regard to books, though, because these are 'bad' nigger's, with the exception of a precious few good ones."

They were just then passing through a district that was well kept, and apparently quiet. "We are now in a part of the town, where a large number of the better class of our people reside," she said, "and I am going to point out the homes of some of them."

"There is where Mr. Judson, paying teller at the Dime Savings Bank, lives." She pointed to a handsome bungalow, setting well back from the street, and surrounded by many young trees, with a well kept lawn upon three sides. "Now over there is where Paul Widner, contractor and builder, has his home." Following the direction of her finger, he was moved by the sumptuous and imposing structure that met his gaze. "That is the finest residence owned and occupied by one of our kind in the city," she said, with evident pride. "Still, though, here is Dr. Jackson's, which is almost as fine," and she pointed to another that was a credit. "He is the financial secretary of one of the church denominations of the south."

"See that long house over there?" she pointed to another. "That is Dr. Wayland's. He runs the drugstore."

"A preacher?"

"No; a pharmacist."

They were now in the wood, a deep forest with great trees all about, that darkened the inside of the car. The picked over and slim pines, mingled with large water oaks, rose gloomily against the heavy clouds that now rumbled ominously overhead. Before long, large drops of water began an intermittent patter on the car roof, while the windows were spat upon occasionally. And then, of a sudden, the very heavens seem to open, and the rain fell in torrents. Through it the heavy car pushed resolutely forward. The line was one recently completed, and facilitated travel between the city and the suburb wonderfully. Built of steel, the cars were long and heavy, with doors that opened near the center, allowing the colored passengers to enter on one side of the conductor, who operated the doors, from a convenient position near the furthest side of the opening.

"We will surely get soaked today," grumbled Miss Palmer, but not lightly, for she trembled on observing the terrific downpour.

"How much further is it to this place we are going?" he inquired. To him, it seemed they had been riding an hour. "You do not mean to tell me, that all that stretch of forest and open country before we got to the forest, is a part of Effingham?"

"We will soon be there now," she evaded, and then added: "Effingham includes everything that electric cars operating in and out of the city reaches," and laughed. He believed her.

At last, the big car came to a stop. They alighted in the downpour, and rushed to shelter beneath the porch of a small grocery store, conducted by a kind-faced little colored woman.

"Oh, how-do, Mrs. Brown," cried Miss Palmer, when the latter, upon seeing them, opened the door and bade them enter. "I'm certainly glad to see you," whereupon they kissed, and Miss Palmer cheered the dark atmosphere with many cute words.

"Permit me, Mrs. Brown, to introduce Mr.—I forget your name?" "You see, Mr.

Wyeth," said Miss Palmer, with a delightful smile, "I taught out here these past three years, and Mrs. Brown is one of my many friends. Yonder is the school," she pointed to an old frame building, that could barely be outlined through the storm. "They have transferred me back to the city again," she turned to Mrs. Brown. "So I regret to say that I shall not be with you next year."

Miss Palmer had a way of finishing her sentences with a show of her fine little teeth; and her chin, at such a time, reached to a fine point, which at first amused Sidney. She would bestow upon him a coquettish smile, when she found his eyes searching her mysteriously.

"Mr. Wyeth," said she, with her arm linked now within Mrs. Brown's, "is general agent for a new book by a Negro author, *The Tempest*, and for which I have accepted the local agency—why not," she broke off suddenly, "show Mrs. Brown the book?"

"She is clever and suggestive at the same time," thought Sidney, almost aloud; but he forthwith obeyed the suggestion with much pleasure, and took Mrs. Brown's order amid the rainfall, collecting twenty-five cents as a guarantee of good faith, in addition.

It had ceased raining as suddenly as it had commenced. They turned to leave the store, and, as he was passing Miss Palmer, he bumped against her roughly. She was looking at his picture on the frontispiece now, with apparent suspicion. He pretended not to see her or her suspicion, that had now grown to excitement. She was yet apparently in some doubt, as she tried to make connections.

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"Look here! Look here!" she exclaimed at last, in subdued excitement. "This picture! This picture! It is you! You!" She held the book open, and looked at him in amazement. He waved her aside depreciatively, and passed outside, while she continued gazing at the picture in a state of excitement. She followed him, and they were alone.

"Why didn't you tell me this?" she cried, unable to stem her tide of excitement. She had lost interest, for the present, in all else, and pursued: "You, the author of this book!" She now saw him as another person entirely. Feeling much put out, he felt something should be resorted to, to dissipate the spell.

"I'm not the author," he said, with straight face. "Where shall we go now?" his demeanor was calm and imperious.

"Stop next door—no, that's Mrs. Brown's house," she said, as she followed him in a meditative mood. "The next house," he heard her say, as if speaking from far away. Miss Palmer was now serious, and very thoughtful.

Disturbed by her discovery, and, in a measure, disconcerted, Wyeth concentrated himself upon the demonstration of the book to a creditable degree that morning; and, one by one, with his voice and look charged with dynamite, he secured those black people's orders, and the deposit wherever they had the amount available. Miss Palmer merely followed him, insisting upon the point of authorship, until, with a touch of impatience, he admonished her that their purpose, on that occasion, was to sell the book, the author, therefore, insofar as they were concerned, was a matter of secondary consideration.

"Going to be angry with me so soon?" she pined, looking into his eyes with a feigned appeal. In spite of himself, he smiled back disconcertedly.

"You are the author, though, aren't you?" she asked softly.

He ignored the question.

"We have eleven orders, and have collected a dollar and seventy-five cents, in exactly an hour and a half," she informed him, at the end of that time. "Whether you *did* or did *not* write this book—say what you will, I'm convinced you did—you *do* know how to sell it. I never heard a man talk so fast and so effectively in my life!"

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"I must leave you now," he said. "I have agreed to be back in town for the afternoon, and help start my young friend."

"Please don't leave me," she whispered artfully, and smiled in her winning way, then suddenly hurried into the next house.

"Thought you had quit me for good, Books," complained young Hatfield, when he saw Wyeth, on his return to the city. "When we goin' out?"

"As soon as I have fed my face, and the car will take us to—where, or what is that place you spoke of? Where the girls work in service?"

"South Highlands," he replied.

They followed the street until they came to the main street, or rather, to one of the main streets, and caught a car from the front end, that took them to the North Highlands, and not to the South, as they were accustomed to go.

"You'll have to pay carfare back, Books," said Hatfield. "I have only fifteen cents left."

"Go right over to where you see that girl, that little colored girl standing on the steps that lead to the rear, and tell her the tale of *The Tempest*, and get her order," said Wyeth, when at last they had come to the right place.

"I thought I would go along with you this afternoon," he said with a frown, but obeyed the command, nevertheless.

Two hours later, Sidney found him where they had left each other. "What have you done?" he asked holding back a frown, because he felt the student had succumbed to a lack of confidence; but he was cheered in a degree, when the other replied:

"I got four, how many did you get?"

"Eight," and they went on their way rejoicing.

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CHAPTER THREE

"I Have BEEN Married," Said She

Thirty-five years ago, Effingham was an unsuspected factor. That was before somebody had demonstrated that the chain of red hills encircling the then small town, contained immense deposits of iron ore and coal, and other mineral matter, that could be converted into practical purposes.

Effingham lay, at that time, in the valley, where, as yet, most of it is found; then, it was regarded as only an ordinary town, without any expectation of future greatness. It had, to be exact, thirty-eight thousand, fourteen years ago, fifteen thousand Negroes, and the remainder white population, including a few Chinese. Today, the city boasts of approximately one hundred seventy thousand.

Thus the city had developed, regardless of circumstances, which our story will unfold.

But Sidney Wyeth, our erstwhile observer and literary contemporary, had not been long in Effingham, before he had come to learn that it was not the city Attalia was, in spite of its great industries, and its million dollar payroll, which was employed in advertising the iron city.

To begin with, capital—hard cash—was a very expensive thing to use toward the development of its extension. When the city incorporated the many little towns that make up a large part of its present population, it began to run in debt; a great deficit was customary at the end of each year, and now, at the time of our story, it was still energetically engaged in the same task—piling up a deficit. The many little towns that are a part of the city, and where most of the great industrial concerns are located, are practically controlled by the interests. But when the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company became a vested interest, it took over all these various concerns, and merged them into a trust, which is a problem to every congress. And now as Sidney Wyeth saw it, the company owned everything. It almost owned the Negroes, and thousands of foreigners who were employed by the company.

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But there was one thing the T.C.I. company did not own, and that was train loads of liquor consumed by its black help, and, of course, the whites also, to a degree, but not in such proportion. Drink was very popular in Effingham, exceedingly popular. It operated to an alarming degree everywhere, and about pay days, held sway in certain portions of the town, and made everything run riot. And yet there were not nearly so many saloons in Effingham as there might have been. It cost too much for the privilege. At three thousand dollars a year, only about one hundred fifty saloons were in operation. But some years before, while the state was under prohibition, "tigers" became the order. And now many of them still operated. Especially on Sunday and after closing hours, they were busy. They dealt in a liquor known, in general, as "busthead;" and to say that it deserved such a title, is saying little enough.

It was Miss Palmer, who became at once a personal friend of Wyeth's, and who first told him of these conditions. From her, before he had time to observe of his own initiative, he also learned a great deal in regard to the black people.

He was waiting on the porch for her when she returned late that afternoon, in fact, it was night when she arrived. She was tired, but cheerful and greatly encouraged. She had secured eleven orders for his book, and collected considerable more deposits in connection therewith.

"I certainly did some talking to those Negroes this afternoon," she exclaimed, drawing herself upon the porch when she arrived. "I talked a blue streak; and believe me, one after another succumbed," she boasted.

"You work too late," he said, with a note of kindness and admiration in his voice. "I do not usually work to exceed six hours a day, and quit by six at the latest," he added.

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"That's the trouble with Annie," said her cousin, and a teacher also. "She has so much ambition when she sees herself succeeding, that she invariably wears herself out."

"Have you met my roomers?" Miss Palmer inquired. He shook his head and waited, while she, with much ostentation, introduced them one by one.

"This is Mr. Jones, who carries mail upon a rural route; Mr. Farrell is a student at Tuskegee. He is spending his vacation in our city. And you have been talking with my cousin, Miss Black."

Mr. Farrell was a small creature, so black in the darkness of the night, that only a gloomy outline of his features was discernable, while his white eyes reminded Sidney as he winked them, of a pair of lightning bugs on a warm June night. This was augmented by the occasional flash of his white teeth. He was studying architectural drawing. There was another student from the same school, a West Indian Negro, and who, like his kind, was always apparently desirous of learning, and asked Sidney many questions. Mr. Jones, who happened to be another cousin of Miss Palmer, and the aforementioned mail carrier, was a suave creature who read books, and discoursed with much practical intelligence.

The following morning, Miss Palmer and Sidney were starting toward the car, on their way to canvass, when they stepped in a small drugstore conducted by a tall, slender man, of about thirty-five. Wyeth had been in the store two evenings before, or the day he arrived, and overheard a big argument. He had now come to know, that this was a place for warm debate, with the druggist ever conspicuous as one of the debaters.

He had not displayed his book there, or suggested a sale to the druggist. There were certain classes of his race to whom he never made a practice of showing the book for several reasons. The first and most significant of these reasons was, that he almost always found the Negroes who were engaged professionally, including teachers, not very appreciative of the work of their race, although any of them would have been insulted if this were told them. He had also made observation from other sources, concerning the possible sale of his book. His decision to dispense henceforth with showing the book to certain classes, had resulted, because of a little incident the year before in Cincinnati. He had observed the same in other cities before he reached Cincinnati. In Dayton, Indianapolis, and elsewhere; but in Cincinnati, it was so evident, that he was, in a way, ashamed to tell it afterwards. This is what occurred:

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The colored people were making great efforts to secure a Y.M.C.A., and were, when he left the city, within fifteen thousand dollars of the amount they were required to raise. The white people had given sixty thousand. He became well acquainted with the secretary, and it was from him that he learned, without inquiring, that, of twenty-nine colored teachers who were receiving a minimum of sixty dollars a month, twenty-one had not subscribed one dollar toward this small amount the colored people were strenuously trying to raise. And of the eight who had subscribed, five had grudgingly given one dollar each. The secretary, himself a former teacher, admitted this with great humiliation.

Wyeth had always found the teachers profuse with excuses, when it came to buying the book. And he had found the doctors little better; but, to avoid what he had grown to expect, and which he invariably met, he had decided to ignore this class of his race. He did not offer criticism upon the whole teaching staff, because, of the three teachers out of twenty-nine in Cincinnati, who had actually contributed toward the colored Y.M.C.A., the professor had shown his sincerity and race appreciation, by subscribing one hundred dollars, and had paid it.

So Sidney Wyeth would never have shown the book to the druggist, with a view of sale, but Miss Palmer did. In her insistent manner, she urged him to buy. Now Wyeth, as was his custom, always went to the leading book store in each town, and had never failed to sell them a few books. The leading store in Effingham had purchased ten copies, and had placed an advertisement of ten inch space in the colored paper, that ran for a month, and which the druggist had seen. So, when Miss Palmer approached him insistently, he declared that he had seen the book advertised at that store, and, as was their custom, sometime during the year they offered all books at forty-nine cents, he would, if he wanted the book, purchase it then. Of course, he didn't want it, and Wyeth was provoked that Miss Palmer had even shown it to him; but Miss Palmer had, and, upon being told of these conditions, she at once ceased her efforts.

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Of course, the druggist was wrong, and Wyeth knew it; but the druggist didn't. He wanted to bet—any amount, that he was right—that one of the biggest booksellers in the southland, offered all books, regardless of "best sellers," sometime during the year at forty-nine cents a copy. It cost the druggist two dollars to learn that he could be wrong, or mistaken at least, even if he had *been to school and graduated from college*, which, in the minds of his august contemporaries, meant that he *knew* everything.

It was Miss Palmer who advised Sidney that Dr. Randall, for druggists were called doctors also, among these people, had *been to school and graduated from college*.... And Miss Palmer was much chagrined that Wyeth had acted so hastily.... For times were hard and two dollars was *something*.... If he had caught her eye when she tried so hard to get his, she would have gotten him outside for a minute, one little minute, and then she would have told him who the other was.... She was almost in tears as she remonstrated with him for his hasty act.... Miss Palmer was sincere and meant it, because, for some reason, she was unable as yet to account; she really liked Mr. Wyeth. "He has such eyes," she told her cousin when she returned, while the bet was being settled.

"Well, we have lost two hours, so we will have to get a move on us now, to make up for lost time. Of course," he said cheerfully, "I've made two dollars, which is as much, maybe more, than we would have made in the meantime——"

"You did what!" Miss Palmer was amazed.

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It was some time before she could be brought to believe it.

"We will go to a different part of the quarter today," she said after a time. Wyeth looked at her. Miss Palmer was very kind. And Sidney Wyeth longed for kindness. When he saw Miss Palmer as she was that day, he felt something amiss in his heart. She had said nothing today; whereas, yesterday she had acted, he thought, boldly.

The car now seemed to be flying through space. It roared like a mad thing, and filled him with a peculiar feeling; exhilaration overwhelmed him. For one moment he forgot everything, and he felt a burning desire to touch the woman. At his side sat Miss Palmer. She had been kind to him, even though he had known her almost no time. And then suddenly his hand found hers, and, closing over it one moment, he crushed it. A moment later the impulse had passed.

The powerful car thundered on its way.

Miss Palmer worked hard that day. All the hours through, she talked and talked. She simply *made* those black people buy. "The story of a young man, a young man of our race, who had the strength and courage of a pioneer, went alone into the wilds of the great northwest, and there made conquest. Think of that as an example, and incentive to effort for your children!" They nodded and joined her in seriousness, though they knew not what it all meant; but they did feel the strength of her eyes, and the insistence held them.

Wyeth suggested the route.

She offered no objection. Whither he suggested, she followed meekly, almost subserviently. And always, she sought, whenever she could get his attention, his eyes, and into them she looked for something; but it was ever something unfathomable she saw therein. But the more she was unable to fathom those depths, the more her eagerness to do so became apparent.

She talked of her work as a teacher, she told him then of her ambition, and her hopes; but Miss Palmer, withal she felt that day, could not, somehow, impart the secret of her great ambition. Vainly she tried, in her most artful way, to have him tell her something—something of himself.

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But he never did. That made it harder for Miss Palmer, for soon, she felt, she just *had* to know.

"Over there," said she, pointing to a row of new houses, uniform in splendor, "are homes that are beautiful and still economical. It is my intention to begin the purchase of one of them next year. All the people living there in those houses are personal acquaintances of mine and friends. And, as you will observe, there is a school just around the corner, which adds greatly to the value of the property. I want also to buy another home in that neighborhood, as soon as I have the first one well under payment, and so have it paid for by the time my boy becomes of age."

"Your boy!"

"Yes," she admitted, with a tired, hard smile.

"Oh...."

"I have been married."

"Oh...."

"But am now a widow."

"Oh...."

"But not by death."

"Oh...."

"No; *he* is not dead—at least he wasn't a month ago." She shrugged her shoulders, and went on now somewhat doggedly. "I am a grass widow, and you know what that means...."

He made no answer; but she knew he heard her, and was listening. She went on as only an unsuccessful and unhappy woman could. "Yes, when a woman marries a man that she loves, and gives to him the best that's in her, and, after years, is forced to give up the fight, her very heart, for a piece of paper marked 'divorce,' she is never the same woman she was, and might have continued to be. There are those who say: 'Oh, I don't care;' but I'm going to tell you, they do. The woman lives on apparently gay, but her heart is dead within her." For a long time now, there was silence. Presently, she spoke again.

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"I am living entirely now for my little boy. He is all I have, and I am willing, I feel, to slave until the skin falls from my fingers, that he may have his chance. I am planning to graduate him as early as possible, and place him in a good northern school in the study of medicine."

Again Sidney Wyeth felt a peculiarity about his heart. His thoughts went back into yesterdays, and he recalled all that he had lived and hoped for, and then for one brief moment, another stood before him. Miss Palmer was talking, but her voice seemed to come from far away. Presently she touched him. He looked up and she saw the *something* in his eyes, and suddenly all she had been feeling passed, as she now observed him closely. Her lips parted. They started to say: "You strange man. You've had your troubles too." And then something else seemed to say: "But you're game, oh you're game. You've lived a bitter pill, a very bitter pill. Look into those eyes; study them, and if you have suffered, and by that suffering you have learned, you can read that a secret lurks therein; you say nothing, but you feel, nevertheless." What Miss Palmer did say when her lips spoke was: "We'd better be going, Mr. Wyeth. It's getting late. Hear the whistle of the furnace, and across from that we hear another. That belongs to the Semet Solvay; but they both are right. It's one o'clock and thirty minutes. Time to canvass; we must go." Her voice was kinder now than ever.

They went.

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CHAPTER FOUR

"Eidder Stuck Up ah She's a Witch"

They now passed between two large industrial plants of the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company. To the left, roaring mightily, was one of the many blast furnaces, where the pig iron was made from the crude ore. Innumerable small cars, upon which sat huge ladles, whirled to and fro. Backward and forward they were pulled, out of the great shed, where they received their supply of molten matter from the largest cupolas in existence. Everywhere the white heat flashed. Hundreds and thousands of men, black and white (although as they were now seen, they were all black), worked away. System was everywhere evident. The cars, with their loads of molten heat, moved with systematic regularity, while each and every man seemed to know and fill a certain place. Only a little carelessness, a little disregard for established rules and regulation, would lead to death, of one to a score of men.

To the right of them, filling the hot summer air with sulphuric and gaseous fumes, the plant of the Semet Solvay Company was visible in all its activity. It rose grim and forbidding, with intense heat, and stretched back for a mile, seemingly, from where they passed. Even the dirt upon which they walked, as they went into the quarters between the plants, was hot and dead. No grass was to be seen. A sickly little short weed struggled for existence in this medley of industry.

And now, before them rose a hill, at the top of which were the quarters. High above the factories, as though seeking the air, and as if to be as much as possible free from the sulphuric fumes that at times almost stifled one, these houses stood, dirty, grim and forbidding. They rose sinister-like in the dull sunlight, and fell back beyond as they approached.

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When the two had reached the summit and viewed the place closer, Sidney was, for a time, awed by the sight. Row after row of little red or brown, shell-like homes they were. With a thin board porch, they made little resistance against the intense heat,

for it seemed hotter here than elsewhere.

At this hour, the inmates could be seen spread about on these little porches, if it happened to be on the shady side; or else, they could be seen in the houses, and some were even beneath them, anywhere they could find a spot that would permit of a little rest; for, from one to three weeks they must work at nights, twelve, thirteen and fourteen long hours. The furnace cupolas had not been cool, in many instances, since they were erected, and only two shifts were employed. They were predominantly black people.

Only here and there was a mulatto to be seen. Little children filled the grimy streets, that are made to stink fearfully from the slag used in the paving. And now, as the sun beats down, it was soft and stuck to the shoes, much to the provocation of the walker. Notwithstanding the apparent lack of comfort, evident everywhere in this little village of workers, these little black children, with an occasional Italian, seemed as cheerful and happy and gay, as those of the aristocrats of the South Highlands. They played busily, while their little faces, tanned by the heat, were full of joy. They were as courteous—more so than one would expect under the circumstances.

When Sidney Wyeth inquired, he learned that the T.C.I. company maintains and pays the teachers well in the schools for the education of these masses of little, growing human beings. Unfortunately, so torn and frittered by race law legislation, the city and the county and the state are far in arrears financially, and, were it left to those bodies, these little children would not all, by any means, learn the art of reading and writing; for, with all our boast as the greatest nation of civilized people, there is no law here, that compels the parent, guardian and what more, to send these children to school. Which, perhaps, accounts for the fact that forty per cent of the black population are illiterate, and almost as large a per cent of the whites.

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They walked along together in silence, Miss Annie Palmer and Sidney Wyeth. This silence was interrupted only when they drew near one or a number of these little human beings, who smiled upon them, and made eyes back at Sidney, who winked humorously, and then made them all happy with a few pennies, for he loved children. They passed through this mass, which our pen has attempted to describe, and found themselves soon in a part given over to nature. Trees had made a brave fight for the right to exist against poisonous gases, and some had succeeded, in a measure; while garden truck, closer to its mother earth, had apparently succeeded to a still greater degree. Fences were in evidence; pride as well. The children were cleaner; the houses were not quarter-shacks any more; but commodious, even large homes, and were occupied by a class, while workers, nevertheless they had employed their earnings otherwise than for liquor and dice, and other frivolities, the curse that submerges the more ignorant and prideless. They were a kind people, these were, and when approached with a suggestion of literature, they smiled and replied: "We are fond of reading."

Thus Miss Palmer and Sidney Wyeth began work that day, and until the sun was hurrying toward the west, they talked and said words of kind sincerity to the many they met, for these people deserved it. What was more important, some made effort toward their betterment. These were few in number. For this reason, such kind words of encouragement—ay, very often praise, was necessary.

So, one by one they subscribed, and hoped for the book soon, until their orders were many. The evening had approached until the hour was near six, when they came upon another, a black woman truly, but pride, apparently, she had plenty. While not the finest, in point of value, her house was one of the cosiest. It was painted in two colors, and reposed quietly behind a medley of small trees, around which was a fair stand of blue grass. The lace curtains, all clean and white, contrasted beautifully behind and below the pale green shades, while within the furniture was artistically arranged.

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They were invited in, and made most welcome. "Yes," said the black woman, "I am fond, very fond of good books, and when it comes to one which my race has produced, I want it, for such are few. So you may take my name, and bring the book as soon as you can."

They thanked her profusely, and spoke, as they had spoken many times that day, kind words of encouragement and praise. She appreciated it.

Yet some said of this woman, before the two made this call:

"She's a mean nigger, and you'll neveh be 'vited in da' house! Um-m! She has no 'commadation 'bout her, and she's eidder stuck up, ah she's a witch!" Whereupon they shook their black heads, and went their way with a mutter.

But 'ere long another—and he was himself a practical and successful man—said: "She's O.K., a fine woman; but she runs a grocery store while her husband digs coal, and, well, she doesn't credit Tom, Dick and Harry." And then Wyeth and his companion understood.

The day's work was done at last, and they were hurrying back to town. They were tired, both mentally and physically, but their spirits were high. They were, moreover, grateful, and seemed, to a great degree, to understand each other. Their friendship has reached the stage at which they could indulge in confidences, Miss Palmer especially. She regarded Wyeth, out of her liquid eyes, and smiled kindly, confidentially. "I'm glad I took up the work—now."

She smiled with more confidence than before. "Yes; I am, really. I have *enjoyed* it." And still she smiled. He did too. She smiled back, and then, in a voice that was so soft, and kind, and confidential, she said: "You wrote it, didn't you?"

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He heard the car as it crashed along through the night, for the sun had set long ago. The trees, for they were passing through the forest, flashed darkly through the electric lighted car, and Miss Palmer waited. He did not reply. After a time—shall we say minutes—she sought his eye. She was languid, and resigned to a degree. "If you would only admit that which I am positive is true, it would be so nice. I would truly be satisfied."

"What matter could it make?" and then he stopped. She might be more interesting curious than otherwise.... He remained silent.

"Oh, why do you maintain this silence regarding the authorship?" she fretted, moving restlessly about.

"Cannot we go along and sell it—that, in particular, is all that matters, isn't it?" He tried to be reasonable. "You will, as you must now see," he argued, "only need to go to the *industrial* people, and success will be yours." She was oblivious to all this. He resumed, somewhat uncertainly:

"If many people—especially those in the class to which I feel you belong—knew or thought that I am the author of this book, their possible interest might become doubtful; whereas, with no thought than the ordinary—that is the usual fetish—they *might*, after reading it, be much impressed with its message. Don't you agree with me?" He wanted to be reasonable, but Miss Palmer was silent.

She was still so when they left the car some minutes later. When they had reached the curbing and stepped upon the walk, they saw Hatfield. He had his suit case and was in somewhat of a hurry, from the strides he was making.

"Where is he going, home?" inquired Miss Palmer.

"I don't know," replied the other, "but I wouldn't think so at least. He never said anything to me in regard to it, when I left him this morning." Yet so he was, though he never said so, when they met him and exchanged a few words.

"I'm going to a friend's house," and he gave Wyeth a number. They told him of their success, whereupon he secured a dollar, and that was the last time they saw him. He went back with the same porter they had come over with.

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It was Legs who informed Sidney that young Hatfield was going back to Attalia. Legs was having some experiences of his own. Before he related them to Wyeth, he inquired:

"Well, Books, how goes it?" He was cheerful as usual—in fact Legs was always cheerful—with one exception, which we shall cite presently.

"Fine, Legs," Wyeth beamed. "Couldn't be better, which is saying a great deal. How's things with you?"

"*Could* be a whole lot better," he laughed, with dancing eyes; "but they have been worse. I've been busy though. Working right along. Got me a gal now, and won a little change today that I might lose tonight."

He did—and more. He lost all he had, borrowed a quarter from Wyeth, wanted a dollar, but Wyeth halted him, advising that he loaned only to purchase the means to fill his stomach, and then only when it was begging for bread.

After this, and for some time to come, Legs' fortune varied from near prosperity, to going for a whole day without anything to eat. And at these times, he dispensed with his usual cheerfulness.

One day, he pawned his meagre jewelry for all he could obtain thereon, which amounted to only a dollar and a half. He ate a big meal at a cheap restaurant, got his shirts from the laundry, paid fifty cents on his room rent, and went with the remainder to a game. Luck was with him, as it is with all, once in a while. True, it was only in a small measure, but he had sufficient to finish paying his rent, bought a

cold lunch that he sensibly tucked away for future purposes, and went to bed with a dollar in his pocket.

Sleeping peacefully at two A.M., he was awakened by John Moore, the man of the house, who told him—Sidney heard this—of a great game close by, and where hundreds were at stake. So Legs got up, not too cheerfully, from his comfortable bed and peaceful sleep, dressed, and a moment later, followed Moore out into the night, and to fortune. (?)

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He came back in about an hour. He was drunk and broke, angry with himself, and more so with John Moore.

"Damn that nigger!" he cried terribly, when alone with Wyeth. "Damn him, damn him, d-a-m-n him! Came in here and got me out of bed," he roared, brandishing his long arms. "When I was sleeping the sleep of peace. 'Nigga's gotta big game on; all kinds a-money. I'n beat 'm in scan, know I c'n.' And then like a fool," and here he looked down at himself, as if to see which would be the best part to kick, "I up and goes with him. Of course, he must have a drink for himself; so a quarter first went to 'get him right.' And then to the game. No sooner had we arrived than 'slip me a haf,' said he, and like a damn fool I did. He bet a quarter that a dinge who held the craps wouldn't hit, and lost. He repeated—and lost again. He wanted the last quarter, declaring his luck would begin with it; but I forestalled him and got the craps myself and threw them dancing, clear across the table, and they turned up," Wyeth waited eagerly, "—craps!"

"Doggone that nigga! 'f he comes around me again, I'm going to shoot him in the head—right through the middle of the head!" And with this solemn declaration, he went forthwith back to bed. He slept peacefully, and awakened the following morning, hungry and madder than ever, as the fact dawned upon him. Wyeth loaned him a quarter, and gave him some good advice.

"Quit it! Get a job! Work! Honest work! Come to the room with a book, read and thereby learn something and save your money!"

"I will, so help me God!" declared the other, feeling repentant all the way through.

"And remember—in speaking of the God—he helps those who help themselves."

"My father was a preacher!"

Wyeth made no further comment; but Legs was a good rustler. He did better—for a while. He looked the town from end to end for the kind of work he followed, but without success. So it continued, day after day, his great problem was to get something to fill that stomach, which was now flabby, very much so at times. He managed, by diligent application, to drop something into it once and sometimes twice a day, and one night he came to the room with an exclamation, that he had eaten three times that day, and had a dime left in his pocket. He drew this forth, balanced it on the tip of his forefinger, observed it long and earnestly, and then said: "Little one, we are friends, it's true, but such we cannot possibly remain; for tomorrow you will have to go the way of the rest," whereupon he touched his stomach with the forefinger of his other hand. "So, tonight, on a pilgrimage of fortune we must go, you and I. It's more or less—possibly nothing. So, to the first crap game I take thee. And once there in the glare, I shall risk you against the rest. Therefore, little one, prepare thyself, for soon I shall bet thee, understand, in the first crap game I come to, a nickel at a time."

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He did—and won. He continued then for some time to win and win, and resumed all the cheerfulness he once possessed. His winnings continued until he had redeemed his jewelry, paid a week's room rent in advance, was clean, and seven dollars to the good over all. Then it began to go the other way. He quit, however, and deposited five dollars with his friend Wyeth.

"I'm doing this," said he, "because these roomers, who shoot craps too, would not allow me to be otherwise than broke." Thus the fortune of Legs took a turn for the good, for one day. The next night he went broke. Thus we will leave him for the present, and return to Sidney Wyeth and Miss Annie Palmer, who sold books.

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CHAPTER FIVE

"A Bigger Liah They Ain't in Town"

John Smith was a large man, fat, and big-hearted as well, so Wyeth had been told previously. Sidney met both Smith and his wife, and she was larger still. She, too, was a good, kind woman, with a multitude of friends whom they had made by kindness to others. She was a full blood, while he was not more than half. Together they would weigh to exceed five hundred pounds. And, of course, he was a preacher.

Said he, when he had heard the story of *The Tempest*: "Yes, I'll take one—no, you may put me down for two." And then he seated himself with as much comfort as was possible upon the greasy counter, for John Smith was a successful merchant, who made his living by the sale of necessities, to a multitude of his clan, who were employed by the Semet Solvay Company. As he made the above remark, he was ready, as we can see, for a long conversation.

"Been takin' many odah's?" he inquired.

"Oh, lots of them," the other replied, cheerfully.

"M-m. Who all yu' got in that list?" he went on.

The other shoved it before him.

"M-m," said he, running his eyes over the order list. "See yu' have Lem Jackson down he' fo' one."

"Yes," said the other; "seems to be quite a fine fellow," he commented.

"M-m; but a bigger liah they ain't in town." He was not much excited by the statement, and went on calmly: "He's fine all right, though—to drink whiskey. M-m. Fight 'n' steal, and lay around drunk, and go regularly to jail, and likewise have somebody pay him out. I have done so myself, a few times, 's why I happen t' know. M-m. Two times in succession I have done that in the last thirty days. M-m; but the next time he gets his black hide in there, in so fo' 's I'm concerned, he c'n stay. Yeh, 'n' 'twouldn't 'sprise me 'f the officers didn' come rid'n up at any time fo' 'im, 'cause 'es been actin' mighty suspicious the last few days. I'n bet he's been int' somethin'."

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"Heah! Heah!" he cried, jumping from the counter and hurrying to the platform in front, "what'n the devil you all makin' all this he' noise 'bout!"

"O-oh, uncle," cried a little one, grasping his trousers and looking up, "the p'lice uz jes' gone ova the hill wi' Lem Jackson. Dey has 'rested 'im fo' stealin' coppa wiah."

Sadly, Wyeth drew his pencil through a name he had written not an hour before.

"I'm glad to get your opinion concerning these, Elder," he said gratefully. "The ones we have had down here have been pretty good, and I don't wish to be cherishing expectations that are not likely to be realized. So tell me, if you don't mind, who can be relied on."

"Aw, I do'n mind," he rumbled; "'cause them that's all right is all right; and them that ain't, ain't. So whateve' I tell you 's all the same in the end, exceptin' you won't need t' build on them that ain't."

"These people who had oh'd, 'n' took the' books so readily, 'n' did'n' haf t' wait fo' pay day, ah, among the good people we got out he', that's the reason." He took the paper from Wyeth's hand, and, pointing out the names, he began:

"He's Joe Sim's now, I see you have, 's as good as gold. You c'n count that book delivered; also I see you have Tom Hutchis, 'n' 'es O.K. Jerry Carter is also; but here's Joe Tuttle, outside-a Lem Jackson, a bigger liah, gambler—tin horn gambler, never lived; 'n' he caint read, why has he subscribed fo' the book?" The other looked at the name, and then said:

"I think Miss Palmer took that order."

"Aw, that's it. He's chivalrous, all right, and would be gallant enough to subscribe to anything a woman's carrying around; but he won't be man 'nough t' take it, 'n' he knows it." At this point he laid the list down, stuck his big stomach forward, rested his hands thereupon, and with his finger to emphasize, he forthwith gave Wyeth a lecture on Negroology.

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"I been runnin' this sto' heah fo' thoitien yeahs, 'n' lemme tell y', brother, I know these nigga's fo' what they is." He paused a moment, and surveyed the list again, critically. Then, laying it down, said: "Jump up on the counter and rest yo'se'f, I gotta story t' tell yu'." Wyeth obeyed, and John Smith began.

"I was run outta Geo'gi', 'n' I ain' 'shame to admit it; but notwithstandin' the fact, 'twas a mistake 'n' aftwa'd the whi' people found it out 'n' was sorry, 'n' wanted me t' return. That, however, was afta I was ove' he' 'n' doin' business, 'n' mo' bus'ness than I had eve' done befo'. So I jes' thanked them fo' admittin' to the mistake, 'n' stay's he'. Well, 's I was sayin', I came ove' he' 'n' sta'ted a sto'. I had owned a big fa'm back the' in Geo'gi', 'n' I received \$10,000 fo' it 'n' put's most uv it in th' sto' 'n' trusted cullud people. In three ye's I's broke—flat broke. Did'n' have nothin' but my credit. I had opened that sto' wi' the finest stock of eve'thing: Clothing, boots 'n' shoes, groceries 'n' hardware, 'n' 's I said, trusted my people.

"Now a nigga, with rare exceptions, will not pay 'n' hones' debt, oh, no! He'll lie, 'n' lie, 'n' lie! T' make a long story sho't, they lied me outta bus'ness. So I broke, but wi' plenty sense, I sta'ted all ove' agin, wi' the help of the Lawd 'n' the whi' people, what

knowed I was hones' 'n' ambitious.

"That was ten yeah's ago. Seven ye's ago I made a 'rangement wi' the Semet Solvay Company t' give these da'kies credit, and th' company has since then, held the amount from the' pay envelope. From then on I began to climb, but I had a drawback that was like a tick in my shirt, but I'll git t' that later. Now nobody c'n say I gets my money by holding up these nigga's, either; fo' I gives 's much 'n' mo' fo' th' money than does the average sto' keeper 'bout he'.

"And so, with the help a th' Lawd, and a good wife, I have now twenty-nine houses 'n' lots, 'n' a little money besides. And he' comes the drawback I sta'ted t' speak uv. Eve' week that comes ove' my head, I mus' spend good money t' get some a these low-down big mouth nigga's outta jail. Last ye', 'n' you wouldn't b'lieve it, but I spent nine hund'd dollahs a-gettin' nigga's outta jail, 'n' this ye' promises t' exceed that."

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"But why will you pay their fines?" exclaimed the other. "Why don't you let the skunks stay and work it out?"

"That's it! That's it!" he exclaimed, moving about on the counter. "I swear at the end of each ye' that I ain' go'n pay another fine, but they pr'ceed diligently t' get locked up, 'n' I, bye and bye, comes fo'th wi' the long green 'n' pays'm out.

"Now he's a incident uv it: Take this heh Lem Jackson, fo' instance. A low-down o'nry hound, it would be a blessing t' this dirty little district 'f he was in his grave; but the troubles comes by him not being there. So he, on earth a-runnin' a-roun'; but wi' a family—a wife 'n' chillun a-hollerin' fo' bread.

"It comes 'bout by his wife, who was one a-the finest girls in this burg when he married her. So yu'n see, when he pr'ceeds t' git drunk, 'n' drunk right, understand, 'n' then gets t' squabblin' wi' some other no count nigga, 'n' gets run in, who's affected?"

The other winced.

"It's the same wi' dozens of the others. I'd let them stay in there 'n' rot, so fo' 's they is concerned; but t' me comes a cry'n wife, 'n' a-string-a hongry kids, so I goes 'n' bails the devil out." He paused a moment now to breathe a spell. "'Cassionally," he resumed, "I c'n, with some 'nfluence I have with the judge, get some out without payin' a fine; but th' lawyer must have his, anyhow, 'n' a nigga, 's I done already said, would'n' pay the Lo'd Jesus when he's out; but promises to bring eve' dime he makes t' you when he's in.

"So, the're my bu'den, come day, go day. Over theah, fo' 'nuther instance, stands a nigga—see him? The one that's so drunk 'n' noisy? I got him out las' week, when he had received two hund'd days on th' gang, 'n' t'day I got his brother out who was locked up Friday."

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"Why can they not keep out of so much trouble?" said Wyeth seriously.

"Whiskey. The minute they get the' pay, the first thing they wants is whiskey, 'n' then a crap game."

"And women," said Wyeth.

"Yes," said the other; "but they won't spend any money on them; no, that would in one sense, be too much like right."

"What per cent of them, do you think, who, after giving their word as a bond, would stand to it, a promise, you understand?"

"I'm 'shame t' admit it, I'm 'shame t' admit it; but, honestly, I wouldn't estimate that more than two out of ten could be trusted to keep their word, other than t' buy a pint a whiskey, or shoot dice until they did'n' have a dime."

"What effect is the white man's prejudice having upon him directly?" Wyeth inquired.

"None! None! In the days of old, and even yet, the white man's prejudice was very hindersome; but, as time has wore on, and the races have come to expect each other as they know they will be, the prejudice of the white man is not near so hindersome as some a ouh people would have you b'lieve it. Of co'se," he added thoughtfully, "politic's is in a way denied him; but a great many more can vote than they do if they would pay the' poll taxes. All in all, you'll find so much ignorance, and ignorance by preference among them, and their minds are so polluted with the devil, until politic's as they are now, would not make much difference. I sometimes shudder when I look around me and listen, to conclude what the race is sometime coming to."

"You have a large number of churches, a hundred odd, I think. That should act as a great feature toward the moral evolution."

"Very little, very little," he returned, shaking his head sadly. "For this reason: The churches, while having, of course, many good men as their pastors, are filled up with more grafters, it seems, and mean rascals as well, until the calling is not fulfilled. I

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don't hesitate t' say that there are more grafters among the preachers, than any other profession among the colored people in this town. And the Baptists have, and still are, building so many little churches, until every dime available, and unavailable too, is used fo' this purpose, instead of some means to help the chillun."

"Don't you think, figuratively speaking, that there are too many Negro churches?"

"'Course the' is, a-course. Why there are more than seventy Baptist churches among Negroes in the town alone. That in itself, is an example of the utter selfishness tha' p'vails heh."

"How does it come about? It seems to me that the organization of the church system must be very loose, to permit of such a wholesale building of churches all the time. It would seem advisable that if they had fewer churches, with better conduct in the administration of those few, more good would result."

"Well, the Baptists are dominated, to some extent, by the association, but it is inadequate in many ways. For instance, when they rule a pastor out, he claims to a handful of devouts and friends, that he has been made the goat of a frame-up, starts him a church in some shack, or any other place where he can concentrate a few shouters, and continues."

"And what effect does all this have upon the children?"

He held up his hand in despair. "Brother, brother! That is the sad part. The colored child in this town is lucky, 'f he becomes anything else but a criminal before he does anything else. His surroundings 'n'—what's that other thing?" he stopped short, and held his hand to his head.

"Environment?"

"That's it! His 'nvironment is so bad. He is surrounded by eve' thing conducive t' crime 'n' degeneration. He sees, hears, 'n' is brought in contact, in his eve' day life, with all that is evil, 'n' learns t' drink whiskey befo' he gets into pants. And now, instead of the Negro churches concentrating their efforts toward the raising of the child, they put all the fo'ce into the preacher's lungs, trying t' convert ole sinnahs that nothin' but hell itse'f will effect."

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"A library, and Y.M.C.A., properly conducted, might have some effect for the good, don't you think?"

"A dead investment fo' yeahs t' come, fo' the reason that they would have no incentive to attend either. Without clean, intelligent parents, 'n' better conducted churches, such cannot fulfill the purpose."

"Hadn't we better be going?" called Miss Palmer at this moment. "It's getting late."

The two shook hands as they parted. As Sidney went over the hill, that sloped for a long way down to the car line, he did not seem to hear Miss Palmer, and he answered her mechanically.

He was thinking, thinking of what he had learned, in the last hour, from John Smith, merchant.

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CHAPTER SIX

"Yes—Miss Latham"

Three weeks had passed since Mildred Latham first saw the city she now called home. She considered it the only home she ever really had; because she had in one person a friend, such as she had never felt she would have. That friend was Constance Jacobs. Daily, they went forth together in their work, which was the sale of *The Tempest*. There was another, who was, apparently, a friend also. That was Wilson Jacobs—but more of him later.

Where there is congeniality, understanding and sympathy, there is happiness to a degree. When such is the case, every day—despite even an arduous task, within itself, becomes a holiday. Such were the days which Mildred Latham experienced. Constance was like a sister. One of those rare creatures, whose happiness came in her honest and sincere desire, to see that others were happy about her. She had found Mildred a girl secretive to an unfathomable degree, and, to say the least, strange; but withal, a personality, and a sympathy that was so sincere, even devout, that she loved her more than her own soul. That affection seemed to grow and become more apparent when she saw, slowly but truly, nevertheless, a cloud lifting from the brow of the girl who came to her door in quest of lodging, not long since.

"Wilson," said she one day, "do you know, can you appreciate how much it means to one to please somebody; to make one feel happy, relieved, and in turn, see that

person, come to know her, and see how genuinely she can, in turn, appreciate what one does?"

"You are dealing in riddles today, Constance. I don't understand; but I will guess. Is it Mil—Miss Latham?"

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"Yes—*Miss Latham*," whereupon she smiled upon him, and then looked away.

"Yes," she resumed, looking out of the window upon a small garden she was trying to further, "it is she. I think if I know her until the end of my days, there will always be something strange—something I do not—can never understand; but, in addition to showing a kind regard for the little things it pleases one's heart to do, she makes me so happy."

"She keeps me puzzled," said Wilson. "I can never make up my mind about her. She is indeed a mystery. I do not, as I can see, have any clue in guessing who she is—and what she is, nor can I even conjecture. She is a lady. But as you say, and have said before, there is something about her that one can never understand." He was thoughtful. Presently he heard his sister.

"She is an excellent saleswoman, although I do not think she was selling the book until she came here. I have not asked her. She is one of these people who, while not forbidding approach, yet her manner does not invite questioning. But she is a business woman—girl. I cannot come to see her as a girl, and yet, in the sense we know her, she is not a woman."

"I finished the book. That young man had an extraordinary experience, to say the least," said Wilson.

"Mr. Carroll has finished the copy I sold him, but his sympathies are not altogether with the pioneer; he criticises him."

"How's that? Oh, yes, I understand. I have heard the same thing from others. They see it; that the pioneer should have seen the evil and insincerity of the preacher, and should have governed his happiness accordingly. Yes," he went on, "but the pioneer *did* see that the preacher meant no good; he was aware, fully aware that he was about to become the victim of an intrigue. But regardless of this fact, it must be appreciated, that if this grave incident had not come to pass in the life of that young man, we would not now have the book. Men do not—"

"And women."

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"Yes, of course," he smiled, "write that kind of book unless their lives have met with extreme reverses; something in their souls has gone amiss, and, as a last resort—I can't quite find the words to explain it; but it—what they write—is a brief of the soul; while the public is the court, and to this court, as in the common court of the land, they cry out for justice, restitution."

"Well," sighed Constance, "whoever this *Lochinvar* is, and regardless of his misfortunes, writing the book has made one person happy. That person is Mildred Latham. The book is her hobby. I would give something to learn why she is so wrapped up in the work; but it gives her more pleasure, I am sure, to show it to someone, and tell them the story a dozen times a day, than it does some of those levee Negroes to get drunk. And the work, she is simply lost in it. She makes the six work days of the week seem like one, with her cheerful enthusiasm. The very life in itself seems to please her. To make readers out of multitudes who've never given reading a second thought, seems to be her great ambition. She succeeds, too. And at the end of such days, more than at any other time, she is like I fancy her to be: Feminine, lovable, sympathetic—human in all its depths."

"We certainly struck it rich when she condescended to play for the choir. And she can seem to get more out of the organ than anyone has heretofore."

"She sings too. I never knew that she could sing so sweetly, until she led last Sunday, when Bernice Waverly was ill."

"She almost made me forget my text."

"She's coming now," whispered Constance, as, upon the narrow walk, a familiar footfall sounded. Presently the screen slammed lightly behind the one of their conversation.

"I've been clear to the river, walked all the way there and back. Thirty blocks in all," she cried cheerfully, surveying both, smilingly.

"And after all the walking you did today in delivering!" Constance remonstrated softly. "You mustn't overdo your good health, dear. We would both be terribly upset if you were taken down in any way. Did you know that?" The other was taken by surprise. She was plainly embarrassed for a moment, and to dismiss it she plucked childlike at her skirts. Presently she said lightly:

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"Always saying something, Constance." And suddenly she flew into the caress of the other. "I haven't become used to such words, yet, and you'll have to be careful in using them. Because," and here she buried her head against the other's shoulder, "I might be likely to boo-hoo." The three laughed it away now.

"Constance tells me, Miss Latham," said Wilson, "that you are an agent, sophisticated in all the arts that result in a sale." His eyes now sought hers with unfeigned admiration.

"Constance is, too; and did she not mention herself?" She rated Constance now the least bit severely. "You never give yourself credit for anything. Why don't you?" She frowned, but it was too grateful—her appearance—to be accepted seriously.

"How many copies are both of you delivering weekly now?" he inquired.

"We delivered eighty-seven this week so far, and forty-five last week," replied Mildred, sitting very close to his sister on a small settee.

"Have you ever thought, Mildred," said Constance, "that selling a book, or anything, for that matter, is a task within itself, calling always for initiative. The average person has not the courage, at least he has not practiced it, that would make a salesman or saleswoman. All of us, with possibly a few exceptions, are chattels, human chattels. The ordinary person would stand on his head on a nail for an hour, if someone told him that was right; whereas, to take upon himself the task of leading anything, he is an utter failure."

"Constance is psychological today, don't you think?" smiled her brother; but Mildred accepted the words seriously and listened for more. Constance had a turn of logic, and was in the habit, Mildred had learned, of saying some very serious things at times; although she could not be regarded as entirely serious.

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"That is why I think you are so successful, Mildred," she went on. "You seem to be possessed with initiative; it seems a part of your construction; you seem charged with it; and, in addition to this, is your kind regard and appreciation, for another's point of view."

"Oh, please don't tell me so many nice things. I can't believe it; I have never seen myself in the way you speak of, and if you persist, dear," and her smile upon Constance was the softest, "you might make me vain—and I would almost rather be anything than vain—and spoil it all. Here!" She kissed her a long lingering kiss, and then flew to her room.

"Wilson," said his sister, when they were alone again, "when I think of the young man and his experiences in the story, and his make-up and point of view, I find myself connecting Mildred. She fills my dreams in that story as the One Woman. How successful and how happy that man could have been, had he had a treasure like her, for his own."

"Well, yes, possibly. No doubt; but if, taking the story as it is, if he had her now, after what has come to pass, I judge he could appreciate her real worth to a greater degree. Don't you agree with me?"

She was thoughtful a moment before replying. "Yes, I think I do. It *would* be different now." She was reflective for some time before she went on again. "The other day I said to her: 'If you had been in the girl's place in the story, how would you have accepted this father?' I shall not soon forget how strange she looked. Her entire being seemed to undergo a change. From the way I recall it, her mind seemed to go back into the past, and she was so odd for a few seconds, that I was sorry I said it. Then, after a moment, during which she seemed to struggle with something, she said: 'I would not, you may be sure, have been like the girl.' That was all, and I said no more; nor do I think I will again. She acted—ah, I can't hardly frame it; but, frankly, too peculiar."

"I'm going to bed, Sis'," said her brother now. His eyes were evidence that he should go. He was awake now for a moment. "I've been much interested in what has passed tonight, Sis'. I'll be glad to talk on the same subject again." He was silent a moment, and then, rising, he said, "Good night."

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"Good night, Wilson."

Then she heard his door close, after watching him until he reached his door; after that, she fell into deep and serious thinking. It concerned him. He was all she had—this brother—and his future was in her thoughts now, a grave concern of hers. Yes, and Wilson Jacobs was now one and thirty.... He had no wife—not even did he see women in that sense. Constance didn't think of herself now—nor at any other time, apparently. And yet she was twenty-eight; but she felt, if her brother was to be a happy man, he should consider his life more seriously. He was lost in his purpose. Mildred Latham was a girl, the kind of girl she would like to see him take notice of.

And then she was jerked back into a sudden reminder.... Wilson *had* been acting

different lately. How could she, for one moment, have forgotten it. Yes, he had been acting *very* differently.... He was all attention when Mildred was saying anything. He was careful never to disturb her. And only tonight, when they had spoken of her together, he had almost called her by her first name.

Constance Jacobs was now oblivious to what was about her. She continued to think. Mildred was kind, she was intelligent; she was—and here Constance forgot the words Mildred had said not an hour before, 'I cannot stand vanity'—beautiful.

She retired presently, but it was sometime before she went to sleep.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

"It All Falls Right Back on Society"

"Two Negroes killed yesterday in the city, is the homicide record for this town, which makes thirteen killed in the last week," said Wilson Jacobs the following morning, as he laid the paper down to take up his knife at breakfast. "Every day, at least, it is almost every day, there is a murder of each other by our people in this town. Saturday night or Sunday usually sees four or five such crimes."

"Isn't it deplorable?" breathed Mildred, seating herself at the other side. "What accounts, Mr. Reverend"—she somehow found it awkward to call him Reverend—"Jacobs, for such acts, that is, such is to be expected; but why does there happen to be so much of it here?"

"Ignorance—lack of intelligence in our people. This city has a preponderance of ignorant, polluted people among the Negroes. They flock into this town from all around, and represent the low, polluted, and depraved element of our race. They settle about the levee district, spend their earnings for the worst whiskey, give the remainder of their time to gambling and all forms of vice, and murder is the natural consequence."

"Is there no way, there are so many churches, it would seem that so many places of worship would have a good effect upon these people?" said the other anxiously.

"More than a hundred Negro churches in this town; but they are, for the most part, churches only. Seventy of these are Baptist, and they are building more right along."

"I meet it every day in my work," she said. "Always so many apparently good women, mothers and daughters, sisters, who say: 'I sho would lak t' have that book, but y' see, it's lak this. We's building a new chu'ch; or, a rally is on next Sunday, 'n' all the women is axed t' give five dollars 'n' the men ten,' etc. and etc. But that is not the most I hear; it is: 'Lawd, Lawd, honey, yu' sweet li'l chile. I sho is sorry to disappint you. I sho is. You walkin' way up heh 'n' bringin' tha' book; but don' you know, honey, that low down nigga man a mine went off Sat'dy night un got drunk, got t' fightin' and was 'rested. I did'n' pay no 'tention when 'e did'n' show up a-Sat'dy night; nor was I wo'ied Sunday; but when Monday mawnin' come 'n' no nigga, den I knowed de p'lice done got dat nigga. And dey had, Sat'dy night fo' fightin' 'n' 'sturbin de peace. So I done took yo' money, honey, 'n' got dat nigga out. 'n' now, honey, I jes' cain' say when I'll be ready, 'cause 'e done lost his job, too, so that means I gotta take ceh' a both uv us.'"

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"If we allow our minds to dwell too long on it, frankly, Miss Latham," said he, "we will become discouraged. Where ignorance is bliss, it may be folly to be wise; but it is unprofitable, from a moral point of view. So, as long as we have a preponderance of ignorance, just so long are we going to have a dreadful homicide record in this, and other towns."

"I read an editorial in the paper recently, with regard to murder and the record per city," said Miss Latham. "I see that the south leads. And this town and Effingham seem to struggle for the lead of them all. It was not decided as to which had the most, but it stated that more people were murdered in either one of them than in any other city in the world, regardless of population."

"And that is not all. In both of these cities, no data is kept of the number the police kill. I know policemen personally, and see them on duty, who have killed as many as half a dozen Negroes."

"Oh, be merciful!" she cried. "Can this really be so?"

"It *is* so," he maintained. "Why last week I stopped a few days in Effingham on the way from Attalia, and read on the front page of one of the leading papers, and which was accompanied by a cut, that an old policeman, who had seen twenty-five years on the force, and who had recently been made a captain, had never killed a man. It was this fact, obviously, that was the most extraordinary."

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"Cannot the city government do more toward the suppression of so much crime?" she asked, forgetting to eat her breakfast.

"They cannot to any great extent, because it is the task of society. The very foundation upon which this crime rests, is due to ignorance on the part of the masses. You cannot reason with a mind that has no training. Have you ever seen it that way?" he asked, more serious now than she had ever seen him before, notwithstanding he was a serious person.

She nodded.

"No one can, the law of the land cannot. It all falls right back on society." He was too serious now for a time to say anything, and he ate his meal with his face contracted in serious thought. Presently he said: "I am a minister of the gospel, and have the highest regard for the Presbyterian faith; but, honestly, when I see the Baptists with their loose system, keeping the black population that make up their body, and with little, almost no effort whatever toward the education of the children, and when I see still further, the Methodists with their better system, in that they are not held back so much by 'splitters,' I sometimes regret that the world took Martin Luther seriously. For, say what they will, the conduct of the Catholics in regard to the children, marriage and divorce, has an encouraging result in our civic life."

"I believe that if there were a Christian movement here as there is in the northern cities, Y.M.C.A. and libraries, and if those who are leaders of the race would encourage the patronage of these places, eventually, it would result to the public's good," she said, after some thought.

"Only one place in the south, as yet, seems to be making any effort along such Christian lines. And you would not believe it, but the greatest barrier to this has been the preachers. In their church effort, they have the people fairly well under control, but to their own end. In Attalia, they have almost come to appreciate the fact, that a more intelligent and cleaner populace reacts to the welfare of the church. Everything seems favorable toward getting one."

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"I am sure that would make a great difference in time," said she, heartily. "In Cincinnati, they expect to begin one soon. They have almost all the subscriptions in now." She was silent for a time, and then pursued: "Do you not think such a movement could be stimulated here?"

"Not at the present, I think, regardless of the great need of one, and of the great good it could do. It will be some time before the preachers would come to lend their support—in fact, I do not think it could be expected until they have been shown, in a majority, that such would react for the good of all."

"Oh, my!" cried Constance, entering at this moment, "you two appear to have worked yourself into a frenzy of excitement." She surveyed both, questioningly.

"We have," her brother replied.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

"Where Are You From?"

Mildred worked hard that day. As she went from the rear of one house to another, she studied the people she met, more seriously than she had done before. By this time, her work had become automatic, and she did not find it hard or monotonous, to say the same thing over and over again. She had, moreover, become accustomed to the class of people among whom she worked. She liked it now, and for more than one reason; but perhaps the greatest reason, was because it brought her into the closest contact with humanity, without regard to conventionality. The people she met daily, with few exceptions, made no attempt to be conventional. They were human, almost all of them. She met them in their vocations; she studied their environment. Some she saw, grown people with families, but themselves like children. They gave their word with apparent sincerity, and did not make any more effort to keep it than the merest babe. Why did they not? She asked this question, and then studied them carefully for the answer. It was ignorance. It amused her to find so many who were positive they did not want it, did not even read, so how could they use it? "But you can read?" she would inquire. "Sho!" would invariably come the answer. Then came argument. Force of reason on her part, and sometimes, she guiltily felt, it was by force of argument they were induced to buy. She now paid little attention when they remarked that they did not want the book. Obviously, since the most stubborn ones were, very often after argument, the most appreciative buyers, she found it reasonable to ignore their words of objection.

Mildred's life was a diversion that was much to her liking. She was learning the greatest lesson a woman could learn—the study of human nature.

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On Sunday, when she met others (Wilson Jacobs' church had for its members the more thoughtful and respectable Negro element), she was the recipient of many surprised expressions. They were, she invariably found, surprised that she canvassed among the servant class. She did not appraise them of the practical side of it; in fact, of the masses, these were more able to buy. She saw, as the Sundays went by, that much of the display was a pretense. Many of those who expressed such surprise were themselves unwilling to buy a book. Always she found (and especially among the teachers, whom she thought the most pretentious) some artful excuse. Most of them had a library which contained many books, but few by their own race. They had the works of a poet who had died some years ago; they also had a copy of a book or so by the principal of Tuskegee. And then, one day she learned, from a most reliable and unbiased source: "That those people bought the works of the now dead poet, because his name had become a fetish. The white people had accepted these men's work and called them great. Therefore, the Negroes had accordingly followed suit. So the Negro author must first get a white audience, which will laud the greatness of his pen, and then the Negroes will buy, calling the book great also."

Miss Latham found conditions thus, and governed her work accordingly. But, as time went on, she met surprises. They did not buy *The Tempest*, but they read it. She found it borrowed among them all. They never offered to buy it, but they read it nevertheless.

She did not understand this at first.

So she found the masses, often amusing, to say the least, but often with more active race regard. They had the many faults of ignorance; easy to influence into giving an order, they were still more ready to back out, lie out of taking it. Some of those who took orders, and even the books, did not read, she learned. While others could read, but did not; but when she told them all the story, the story of her hero, for now she held him thus, they were all thrilled, and inspired. Thus it happened that many bought the book because it was by a Negro, and said as much.

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Mildred Latham succeeded in her work. And with her success, there came to her each day, almost every hour, thoughts of the one of her dreams. This day, and others as well, she shuddered when she could not forget what he had been told. It was worse, and more, because he had been told the truth. It hurt her. He was somewhere, and he didn't know that she loved him; but, even if he did, he could not accept this knowledge with any delight. No, he was out of her life, or, rather, she was out of his. He would never, no never, be out of hers. Never, because, as she felt every day, it was his memory that stimulated her, made her feel and appreciate what great good a life can do. And she did all she could, in her way, to assist others. Some day, maybe, she might be able to do more.

When she undressed each night to retire, she fell on her knees and offered thanks to Him that is Holy. She asked for strength and conviction and courage to continue in the same on the morrow. She struggled to lead a Christian life, and to be acceptable in the eyes of her Creator.... She was a believer.

Mildred was welcomed everywhere, and treated with all the courtesy due to a lady. When she left a house one day, where two women had given her their order, she overheard them say she was beautiful. She felt her heart throbbing. She was not vain, but she loved to be called attractive. Then she thought of him. He had called her beautiful also. She wondered whether he, at any time, forgot the words he heard, and remembered her as he had seen her that day. The day they had danced and he—kissed her. She seemed to feel still that kiss; she hoped to feel it always. She wondered, if he knew she was working in his memory and made happy thereby, would he be pleased—and would he, at least, try to forget as much as he could what he had been told. He could, of course, not forget. That made it hard. *She did not expect him to forget.*

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When the day's work was done, and she had returned to her place of abode, she lay upon her bed, and for a time, she gave up to thoughts of him. She knew not where he was. She did not try to find out, that would make it worse. Sometimes she felt that if she did, perhaps, it might help her in her picture of him; then again, she did not think it best. That might bring him too conspicuously before her. Sometimes at night she would suddenly awaken, and her very soul would be on fire. She sat up at these times, and almost declared it could not go on this way. She must know his whereabouts; he must feel, know that she loved him. And then, when the spell had died—was killed, for its death was inevitable, she would lie down again and try to forget. But she never succeeded in this.

More than a month had passed since she came hither. She had, with the assistance of Constance, sold more than three hundred copies of the book. She had saved the greater part of her earnings. She wondered, one day, as she left a Negro bank, where she kept it, what he would think of her, if he could know. She saw him viewing her in many ways, as she was now. But always she was left undecided. Never would what he had been told, seem to leave her free and undisturbed.

One day she returned home very much excited. She didn't let Constance see her though. She had an adventure that day. She encountered a man who looked at her strangely, when she was offering the book. She had seen him in Cincinnati; and she recognized him by a scar on his forehead; but she had not known this until she looked into his face, and asked him to give her his order. Then he started. Did he recognize her? She thought not, because she had not known he ever saw her, when he used to pass by the house in Cincinnati, where she then lived. When she recognized him this day, she had bungled in her talk. This fact made him suspicious. He regarded her with undisguised curiosity. Presently his face cleared, and he said: "You remind me of a girl I once used to see and know in Cincinnati. Where are you from?" She tried to ignore this question; she pretended not to hear him. Despite this effort, she choked. He observed it, and was convinced that she was the one he had seen and known. Then she was frightened, and, of course, did the worst thing she could have done. She asked to be excused, and forthwith fled. She had not gone many steps when she heard him mutter: "Well, I'll be damned!" And still before she got beyond the sound of his voice, she heard him again: "The same. Wonder what kind of a game she is playing here. Books. Hump! Well I'll be damned!"

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She didn't canvass any more that day. She couldn't. She was too nervous and afraid. Then she was upset for other days. She feared to meet him. She could never again stand that gaze of suspicion. All that she had lived suddenly stood before her when she recalled it. Night came, and she retired early. The incident persisted in her memory. She was exhausted, and then she did what any unhappy girl is most likely to do. She cried all night.

Even if she felt Sidney Wyeth had closed the chapter of her in his life, she wanted him. She *needed* him. To have felt now that he loved her, in spite of what he had heard, he could and would protect her. He stood before her now and she saw him as she had never seen him before. How strong and brave and courageous he was! He was her hero. She went to sleep after a time, a troubled, fitful sleep, and when she heard Constance calling her the following morning, she awoke with a start and was rested, although she could not understand how it was possible. But she was calm. After all, she felt, maybe, her fear was premature.

She worked that day with her usual good spirits.

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CHAPTER NINE

"But Smith Is Not His Real Name"

Owen Beasley. That was his name, and Sidney met him while waiting for a subscriber, who failed to show up. He was a relative of Smith's, whom he had met the day before. It was two P.M., the fourth day of July, and the colored people, as well as the white, had retired to a day of delight. It was hot, and clouds rolled up, white-capped from the west. "It would rain before night," the weather man said, and it did.

"And so you came from the west," said Beasley, who had been reading *The Tempest*. Wyeth had seen him working behind the counter, and they put aside all formality of introduction. Wyeth was glad to meet someone to talk to that day. He had come out to this suburb, under promise of subscribers to take the book. And, since every one of them had retracted, he was discouraged, which is a disagreeable feeling.

"Yes," he replied gloomily, "and the day I return will be one of great happiness. I am not particularly in love with being down here anyhow; and the sooner I see the plains again, that much sooner will I be happy and contented."

"Well," drawled the other lazily, "having been born down here, and never having seen the rest of this great domain, I do not, of course, know the difference; still, I have always cherished a longing to go west. I intended going to Oklahoma years ago, and getting in on some of that government land they were giving away, but I put it off until it was too late, and then too, I had trouble in my family. My oldest daughter married a worthless rascal who burdened her with those children you see playing about the store, and I had to take care of them and her too, since her marriage left her in bad health."

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The other listened without comment. Beasley, however, went on, apparently in a mood to relate the past.

"Smith has been telling me about you, and I have been anxious to have a talk with you. Smith is my brother-in-law, and he too, has had his share of trials."

By this time, they had settled themselves on the porch of an empty quarter house. Wyeth chanced to look around, and, seeing so many empty ones, said: "How does this come to be? So many empty houses?"

"Bulgarians lived in this row," he said, pointing to them. "Hundreds of them, and when the war broke out in the Balkan states, every last one of them left here and went back to fight, and have not returned."

"Some patriotism, eh!" Wyeth commented.

"It is singular about these foreigners," he said thoughtfully. "Have you ever observed them?"

The other nodded. Beasely went on.

"They come to this country without knowing a word of our language, and from a poor country. But they are not here ten years, before they are able, financially, to buy a car load of our people. Negroes are certainly a problem to themselves. These foreigners always have money, and many of them return to the old country and retire, after a few years of just ordinary hard work here; while many of our people at the same job, if they get sick a week, are on the county.

"Clerking in a store where the trade is of the kind we have," he went on, "is an opportunity for the best study in human nature you can possibly imagine. A man like Smith, for instance, can succeed with the trade of his people, when he can get it. Smith has succeeded on the heels of his own failure."

"It appears harder for one of us to succeed, than for any other race now, doesn't it?" commented Wyeth.

"It does, it does indeed," said Beasely. "Somehow the money gets through our fingers, despite our efforts to hold it."

"This morning," said Sidney, "I had an experience that amused me. I had the promise to take a book to a certain fellow in Averytown. I called accordingly with the same, but he had just left. His family didn't, rather couldn't tell me where I was likely to find him. I came on up the street that leads here, and made inquiries on the way. Every one who knew him gave me the same advice. 'If,' they said, 'he is not home, just go to every saloon between here and there, and you will be sure to find him.' I did so, and found him at the second one."

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"And did he take it?" asked Beasely.

"Oh, I hadn't thought of it since. No, he didn't take the book—but I think he will. He had no money, and when I approached him he went to the commissary, took a scrip and got some groceries. These he took to somebody and sold them, a dollar and a half worth for a dollar. He then gave me a quarter, and told me to bring it next pay day." After a moment he said: "Smith is an exceptional business man for a Negro, and an interesting man to talk to."

"Yes," smiled the other; "but Smith is not his real name. He took that after coming here. And since we have spoken of it, I'm going to tell you the story of John Smith, alias Thomas Rollins." He laughed as his voice, very dramatic in what he had just said, came back to him.

The other listened, and prepared himself to do so comfortably, while Beasely mopped his forehead, drew his breath, and prepared to tell the following story.

Beasely was a black man—a full blood—and intelligent. Nearly fifty years he seemed to be, although, at a passing glance, he would have passed for forty. He had been a school teacher, and had some education, Wyeth had observed from his careful use of English.

"We lived in Palmetto, Georgia, where he married my sister. He was then a farmer and pastor of the Baptist church, while I farmed and taught the local country school. He had been in politics quite actively in the eighties and early nineties, as were many other Negroes during the reconstruction period, and had served as postmaster for four years. Now, in this town were what is called a bunch of pet Negroes. These were coons whom the white people used as local goats for their amusements. And, so to speak, they were a sort of privileged character, but became too familiar. As everywhere in the south, this town had its herd of the poor trash, that kept things stirred up in the way of lynching and other lawlessness. Considerable incendiarism had occurred of late, and some of these pets were accused. Friction had been evident for some time in this county and all around, and, with this burning and accusations, a wholesale lynching took place. About a dozen of these pets were herded into a box car, and burned alive. It was the most diabolical thing that could be perpetrated by human beings, and created much comment all over the country. It drove hundreds of Negroes out of the county, and you will find them scattered over the rest of the state and other parts now. Sometime after this, a strange Negro came to town, and hung around Smith's place for a while. He secured a job finally with a white man, who was one of the men who led the mob. It seems, one day, he overheard him relating how they burned the pets. This crazed the Negro, or it might have been that one of the victims was a brother of his, who knows. Well, this Negro took an ax, marched into the room, and without a word, split open the man's head.

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"He made his escape. Pandemonium reigned. Lynching by hanging and burning at the stake became common, and a general state of lawlessness reigned for some time.

"Now, after this Negro had killed the man, he came by Smith's and got the clothes Smith's cook had washed for him. He threatened her with death if she ever said anything about it. Well, a lot of the poor crackers had become jealous of Smith anyhow, and they tried to implicate him in it, while he knew nothing about it. Smith stood well with the best white people; but when any friction comes up in these parts, the cracker is supreme, because he has the numbers. So, while the mob spirit was still prevalent, they decided to give vent to their jealousy, and called on Smith with a dark purpose. They charged him with having furnished this Negro with an ax and instructions to kill the cracker. So they were on the way to see him, when I warned him at church one Sunday morning, preparing to preach a sermon. He hurried home, grabbed a few things, and left the state as fast as he could leave it.

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"That is how Smith came to be in this country and doing business; but there is another part of this chapter, and which brings us up to the present.

"A Negro worked for Smith back there, and after the thing had died out and people there saw that he was wrongly accused, this Negro came on here, and since then, this has been his home. Having known him back there, Smith trusted him in the store here, and continued to trust him until he was head over heels in debt to him. There came a day when Smith was tired of this, and called him to account. The Negro, then, instead of paying like a man, or making an effort to do so, howled his head off and was surprised, or professed to be. He told Smith that he was repaid from the fact that he had kept his mouth closed about his past, his changing his name, and all that. In conclusion, he threatened to tell the world, or that part of it in which Smith and himself were known. Now, if Smith had told all this in the beginning, it would, of course, have been different. But, having deferred it so long, he naturally hated to have it told and flaunted in his face by the Negroes here. You know, too, how Negroes like to hear anything, envious and spiteful as they are by nature. It was a nasty affair, and to hush it up, Smith let the bill go hang. But this was not to be the end of it by any means, oh, no! This Negro had the nerve to come back into the store and ask for more credit. Then Smith, with his nigga aroused, stood his ground. The Negro then got drunk, fighting drunk. He found an old revolver that had been lost for years in a trash heap, and ran Smith all over town. It wouldn't shoot, of course, but Smith didn't know that. The crowd finally got around the Negro and held him, while he raged and swore. Smith went to the phone, declaring he was going to call the officers. The Negro yelled that if he did—he knew. Smith desisted, but then into it came my sister, his wife. She has spirit and was now thoroughly aroused and with a big forty-five left-hand wheeler, she sought this shine. When the people that were holding him saw her coming, they turned him lose and flew. When they did, she began to shoot, and shot to hit. She missed; but she picked the dirt all about him, and he did some running.

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"After that, the Negro—he had been doing fairly well outside what I have mentioned—began to go down. Whiskey and craps got all his money, and then he parted with his wife. But he still had it in for Smith, and it had come to Smith and me, too, that he intends telling it all at the ball game, today. Moreover, that he will kill his wife if she plays ball or attempts to, today. Smith's nigga is up, and he is going to the ball game, and if that Negro starts anything on that diamond, look out!"

"I'm afraid of these Negroes down here myself," said Wyeth. "A few nights ago, I was standing on a corner in Effingham, when one of them came up the street slapping his wife or woman, or whatever she was, something outrageously. I felt constrained to punch him in the jaw, the brute, especially when she ran around a bunch of us trying to escape the blows he was raining on her face. I didn't, and some time later I was talking with a cop that patrols that beat. I told him of the incident. 'That's nothing,' he said. 'I started to punch him,' I said. 'You'd better not punch any of these Negroes,' he warned. 'They'll shoot you down like a dog. This is Effingham.'"

"Well," said Beasely, "I'm going to the game myself to have a hand in the affair, if he starts anything. Wanta go 'long?'"

Since he had nothing to do, he decided that it would be a good outing and some diversion, so, rising, he followed. As they started, a ragged, dirty Negro rushed up. He wanted Beasely, being unable to locate Smith, to let him have ten dollars to get his brother out of jail, who had gotten into a squabble down in a saloon and got run in.

"Let him stay there until tomorrow, and we won't have to get him out but once. If he is gotten out today, he's liable to be in again before the day is spent," replied Beasely carelessly. The other went his way with mutterings.

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They had not gone far before they came upon another. He had a load, a heavy load. So heavy that he could scarcely make it. However, with a superior effort, he managed to drag his feet along, and join them.

"Abe Thomas," remonstrated Beasely. "You are a disgrace to yourself and the human race." The other accepted the rebuke in good nature. He declared, that since it was the fourth, he was entitled by the law of the land to get drunk, and convince the public to that effect.

"The fourth do'n' come but once a yeah," he said. "But I'm a good guy all the time 'n' all the time. Fifty years I've been in this world and don't look forty." He didn't, which was an odd thing, thought Wyeth.

"Say, Beasely, lend me a dollar!" he exclaimed. Wyeth was again surprised; for Beasely, without a word, but a laugh full of humor, drew forth a silver dollar, and handed it over.

As they walked along leisurely, Wyeth remarked about the crops, which did not appear to be doing much good in the highlands.

"You know why that is?" said their companion, winking wisely. "That's because all this land about here is undermined, and the water goes on through."

Wyeth looked at him. He looked back at Wyeth and winked. "You are philosophical indeed," said he. "How far is it to the mines below?"

"Three hundred feet," Beasely replied.

"And between that is all kinds of rock, hard pan and shale?"

"Oh, sure," replied the other; "but what has that to do with it?"

Wyeth looked at him, but the other didn't gather what the expression meant, so he said: "Jok, you are full." They were passing into a cut, and he saw at a glance the reason for the plant suffering. About two to six inches from the surface was a thick layer of jip, which, as he knew, prevented the water from going into the subsoil, to come up when the sun had dried the surface, and furnish nourishment to the roots. Further argument was not necessary, for, as they came out of the cut, a saloon smiled before them, and into this their companion disappeared.

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When they arrived at the grounds, thousands had preceded them, and the same was black with people, enjoying a holiday. The diamond had been cleared, and preparations were in order for opening of the game. The contestants were a set of school boys and girls, and women, in fact, any girl or woman that could be prevailed upon for the occasion. The sun, now in the west, could be seen only at intervals, as it hung suspended above the heavy treetops. The air was unusually still and humid. The heat was intense; but, notwithstanding the fact, the future American Negro seemed to be getting all that a holiday afforded.

Popcorn and cracker-jack, lemonade and coca-cola, barbecue and fried fish, were being consumed by the crowd in every direction in large quantities, and all seemed to be happy.

At last the preliminaries were over. The game was called. On every base, in the pitcher's box, the catchers, and in the field, stood black girls. Gayly they flitted about, and caught the ball cleverly, as it was thrown from one to the other.

"Play ball!" called the umpire.

Everyone had his eye upon the game. A strapping woman, wound up like a professional, and let drive a swift ball that went far to the right of a left hand batter.

"Ba-l-l one!" cried the umpire.

"Frow lak a ole maid," cackled a big-mouthed Negro, who was immediately hooted down.

"St-r-i-k-e one!" cried the umpire, slapping his thigh, giving vent to a big laugh, as the batter swung wildly at the ball just missed.

"Dat gal's got some speed, b'lieve muh!" cried another Negro, who was a good support.

"Who dat gal?" inquired another, at this point.

"Do'n you know 'er?" someone else replied. "Dat's Bobb Lee's wife. Dey is pa'ted, y' know."

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Wyeth started. Bobb Lee's wife! Bobb Lee was the Negro Beasely had told him about.... And he had threatened to kill her if she played ball this day. She was playing. He felt a strange pulling at his nerves as he watched her, and his imagination began to play. He was afraid of these Negroes. Even if they did nothing, they could, so far as he had learned, be depended upon to commit murder. No one, perhaps, paid much attention to a Negro's threat; but he didn't feel just right in the stomach. A chilly feeling was creeping upward and held him. He looked about him. For a moment he had forgotten the game. The men were now on the bases, while the

girls were swinging in many ways at the ball. The wife of Bobb Lee was there at the bat. Around him the crowd watched her closely, expectantly. He did likewise.

"B-a-l-l one!" cried the umpire. The woman was a stout Negress, with square, broad hips, and was conspicuous in the green uniform. Two balls and one strike were against her, when the fourth came whizzing across the plate. She struck it with terrific force, that sent it just over the heads of all and beyond the fielders, making a clean home run, as well as bringing in two girls that were on bases. The cheering that followed was deafening. For a time Sidney forgot the threats of the bad Negro.

Again the wife of Bobb Lee was pitching. More speed had developed since last she held the ball, and she was apparently more clever. She hurled the ball across the plate so swiftly, that the crowd could hardly see it, nor could the batters, whom, one by one she fanned. Two balls and two strikes she had on the last one. Wyeth's gaze, wandering across the diamond, observed John Smith standing to the other side, and again the words of Beasley came to his memory. He wished the thought and the threat would not so persist. He tried to concentrate his mind on the game, but the words lingered. During his whole life, Sidney now recalled, he was peculiarly given to predestination. If he had not seen anyone he had known for some time, and happened to meet him, he could always recall that he had just thought of him a few days before, or it might have been only a few hours before. Strangely, as he watched the game, there came to him a premonition that something was going to happen. He felt it so strongly that he stood waiting for it. It was only a question of a little while.

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The wife of Bobb Lee had raised her arm and was winding up for the last throw, when suddenly, from across the field in the crowd, came a cry as of some one mad, enraged. In the still, humid air, the cry of a woman resounded, and fell upon the ears of the crowd like a cry of death. There was a shot, and so quiet did every one appear at the moment, that the noise it made sounded like a cannon. A woman rushed upon the diamond, and fell prone on her face, with a last scream that disturbed the quiet.

Clouds had been gathering overhead for some time, and now they overcast the skies. The sunlight, with all its brightness of a few minutes ago, had faded; it became so dark that the people could scarcely see across the diamond. Heavy peals of thunder added now to the darkness, while flashes of lightning struck electrically all about. The crowd stood awestruck. The woman in the box had lowered her arm, and was looking wild-eyed at the woman who had fallen prostrate at her feet. And then, through the still air came again the cry of the beast.

"Ah tole yu' 'f yu' played ball ag'in ah'd kill yu'. Ah've killed yu' doity sista, in the' stands you, 'n' the' is John Smith who run away frum Palmetto, Geo'gi', 'n' whose real name's Tom Rollins!" And with that, the woman gave a long lingering cry that frightened all those about. They turned in one great mass, the revolver sounded another shot, and with scarcely a groan, the woman staggered for a moment, and fell to the ground dead. For just a second it seemed, the crowd, tearing wildly about, halted and turned their eyes upon the two dead women. And as they did so, the murderer turned wildly in the direction of where Smith had stood, but he was gone. In a blind fury, the drunken brute whirled around dazed, yelling: "Wha' is he! Damn him! Wha' is he!"

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"I'm heah, you beast!" roared Smith, in a terrible voice. The other had just time to see him, but too late to do further murder. John Smith was on him in an instant, and all the strength of his powerful frame seemed to come to him in that moment. He snatched the smoking weapon from the hand of the brute, and, raising it to the length of his large arm, while the other, at last sensitive to the moment, saw it as it lingered one brief instant, with eyes, the sight of which Sidney Wyeth did not soon forget, it fell, crushing the skull. A mad herd now, the crowd rushed upon the fallen creature and did the rest.

Just then the heavens opened up with a mighty crash of thunder, and there came a flash of lightning that made trees tremble, while the rain came down in torrents.

Sidney returned to the city by the first car. The incident rose before him again and again, as the car crept along in the downpour. He had seen the first murder of his life, which, however, was an almost daily occurrence in Effingham. When he reached his room and related the incident, it caused less excitement than when he once witnessed a gambling raid and related it. No one took murder seriously in Effingham.

"They kill a nigga every day on an average in this town," grinned Moore. When he read the papers the following morning, he had about given up finding it at all, when his eyes came across a small paragraph in the corner, reporting that a drunken Negro had killed his wife and sister-in-law, which added to the list of casualties, making eleven for the day in Effingham. All were homicides. No deaths from other sources were reported.

As Sidney Wyeth now saw it, the people might have prosperity, and they might have happiness; likewise, they might suffer reverses and be in hard straits for a time; but of one thing there seemed a certainty, that as long as whiskey was available, crime would be prevalent in Effingham.

Sidney Wyeth had never voted for prohibition. As he saw it now in Attalia, where it was not sold legally, and in Effingham, where it had this permit, there seemed but one conclusion. Only when they stopped making it, would these ignorant, semi-barbarous creatures quit drinking it.

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And thus we find conditions in one of our great American cities, where there is forty per cent of illiteracy among two-fifths of the populace.

Having sent for a considerable consignment of books, and, due to the inability to collect from a number who spent their money on the fourth, Sidney found his finances depleted. Room rent, by paying in advance was due the following Monday, so, taking himself to one of his subscribers among the servants, he was able to collect only a dollar that day. Half of this he divided with his landlady, promising to pay her the remainder on the morrow. He did so, but John Moore desired to question in regard to the same. The truth of it was that John Moore wanted the dollar, and had figured on it, in order to shoot craps on Saturday night, as was his usual custom. So John came into the room where Sidney sat reading. It happened that Wyeth was in no pleasant frame of mind, and, calling was thus not in order that evening. Perhaps John Moore did not know this, but he did a few minutes later. He wished to know what Wyeth was going to do about the rent.

Wyeth looked at him. It wasn't a very pleasant look, to say the least. And Wyeth was one of these creatures who could not stand to be dunned. Since he had already made arrangement with the real person, he regarded Moore out of eyes now that narrowed with anger. He said something, sharp and quick, and stinging. Thereupon, a storm ensued.

"I aised you a civil question," complained Moore.

"And I tell you that I have already arranged with the landlady regarding the rent, and don't want any argument with you!"

"Then I ais you to git yo' things and get out!" cried Moore, with an air of finality.

"And I tell you that I will do no such thing; moreover, you, insofar as I'm concerned," cried Wyeth heatedly, "can go to Hell!"

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"Look out, look out!" cried Moore. "I'm a-comin', I'm a-comin'."

"Not very fast as I can see, standing there in the doorway," said Wyeth, now composed, and reseating himself from where he had risen. And yet he felt, as he had never felt before, like fighting—with his fists.

"Hole me Mary, hole me!" cried Moore, moving many ways—in the doorway. The other waited—in vain.

"Come ova' he' from Attalia, a bad nigga, 'n' tellin' me what I ain' go'n do 'n' mah house!" he cried, now derisively. "Stay! Yes, stay, 'n' be killed, 'cause 'f you sleep in this house t'night, you go'n sleep ova' mah dead body."

"Oh, but you're an awful liar," smiled Sidney grimly. He arose from his chair and moved in the direction of Moore, whereupon that worthy moved in the opposite direction. "A Negro like you ain't going to fight anyone, and talk about your dead body! Hump! If you had any idea I was going to kill you, you'd be a mile away by this time and still running. As it is, I am going to stay in this house until I get ready to leave, or at least until I am ordered out by the landlady." With this, he jumped forward quickly and caught Moore by the nose, which was, to say the least, a difficult task. He pinched it hard, and then, with well directed licks, he slapped his face with his open palm. Then, giving his nose another pinch that made the creature scream with pain, he pushed him with such force that he fell backward into the other room. A moment later, Sidney slammed the door, and, resuming his seat, picked up the book and began reading.

They were good friends ever after.

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CHAPTER TEN

"When You Have Been Grass-Widowed, It's Different"

"Oh, is it Mr. Wyeth? How-do, Mr. Wyeth. Come right in and be seated. I shall be in

presently." Whereupon, for the fraction of a second, Miss Palmer gave him a smile that was bewitching.

It was Sunday, and a beautiful cool day in July. A rain had fallen the night before, which made the air cool and radiant. Just a day for an outing. To go forth into the forest on a day like this, in company with the lady of his choice, was a pleasure all men could wish. And to go forth today, to the forest about Effingham, which could be seen from almost any part of the city, was, to say the least, a treat. From the summit of any of the many points, the observer could gaze down full upon all that makes Effingham.

And it was for such a purpose that Sidney Wyeth called upon Miss Annie Palmer that day.

Miss Palmer had been good to him. And he, a man of experience and adversities, was not the kind of man to be indifferent to her courtesy. And, besides, Miss Palmer was fairly well endowed with the art of making it pleasant. Especially was this so when it happened to be a young man who had captivated her, and, apparently, without any effort on his part.

It is said that curiosity is the inspiration of invention, and that women, although with no great record as inventors, cannot stand to be held in doubt. Sidney Wyeth had aroused Miss Palmer. It was whispered that other men had done so before, but no one spoke ill of Miss Palmer. It was so told here and there that she desired to marry. Miss Palmer found it difficult to keep Sidney out of her thoughts; daily, hourly and, sometimes she sighed, it seemed minutely. So, when he had suggested an outing, she had accepted with all the grace of which she was capable. It had been arranged for this day. She had worked hard every day preceding it, and had sold a number of books. As we now know, Miss Palmer was the mother of a very young son, and she had always had to work to care for him, herself, and her mother, who was somewhat of an invalid. Perhaps this was the best excuse Miss Palmer had for not having remarried. It was a plausible one, no one could deny. It sufficed to arouse sympathy for her, and she had many friends who unhesitatingly spoke of her in such terms.

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"Miss Palmer has a hard time," said one.

"What kind of a deal—that is, what kind of a husband was the man she married?"

"A half white nigga from Ohio, whose parents made him mistreat her, because she was not brighter in color. They never forgave him for marrying anything but a 'high yellow.' So they, through their treatment of her, snubbing her whenever they could, simply broke them up. She was a good girl," so everybody said about Miss Palmer, "and she worked night and day to help him, but he drank. His parents kept up the game of spoiling him, even after he was the father of her child. So, in the end, when there was nothing else for her to do, she had asked for, and was duly granted a divorce. That ended it. The school board, although they were overrun with applications from multitudes of colored girls, to teach in the city schools (because teaching is about the only thing they can get to do to make some money and a living for themselves), had reinstated her, and she went back to teaching, after four years of unhappy married life."

It was thus Sidney Wyeth had found her. Miss Palmer was a human being with a heart that cried silently for the love of a man, as all other women's hearts do, who happen not to be so fortunate as to have one. She had been to school, and graduated from a normal academy, that taught English as far as it goes, and, likewise, compelled the girls to learn how to cook, sew and save. Miss Palmer was mistress in all these arts, and some more. It was her delight to show them by a demonstration, whenever she could. She had proven all this to Sidney Wyeth, and he had thought it practical in her. He had said as much, but he would have said as much to any other, no doubt. And of the many good things we now know of Miss Palmer, let us not forget that she was selfish to a degree.

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Unfortunately, many of us are. But when Miss Palmer became the recipient of such kind words from the lips of this man of mystery, for as such she regarded him, and believed it, she was subtly delighted. So she had done all she could as a saleswoman of the book she was positive he had written, to prove further her ability to help him. (?) Today they would be all alone, together. She had looked forward to the same with all the anxiety of the anxious, and the day had come at last. And such a day!

She dressed in her best for the occasion. We shall not attempt to describe her; but when she appeared at the end of an hour, she was a delight to observe. "Indeed!" exclaimed Wyeth frankly, "I didn't know you could look so well!"

"Why are you flat?" she complained, with a frown; and then she added softly: "You could be otherwise."

"We will catch the Tidewater and get off at Jewell Junction, and take the Relay. That will take us to the summit of Baldin Knob. From there you can see everything this state possesses for fifteen miles," she said, as they walked cheerfully in the direction

of the car line.

Never had either experienced such a delightful ride, as the heavy tidewater cars gave them that morning. The Relay unloaded them forty minutes later at the highest peak of which the Red Mountains boast. Below lay Effingham, the iron city, a medley of smoke and many little points. Only the blast of the furnaces, and the heavy smoke they belched forth, met their gaze, as they saw it now. It seemed hardly possible that it was a city of so many thousands, it seemed so small at this distance. A mass of uneven timber appeared all about and below them, and far away were a thousand peaks. Broken by hundreds of ravines and draws, that split and tore the mighty range, they saw the city beyond. A dull haze as of Indian summer hung in the distance, as their gaze sought the horizon.

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Then they walked down a slope to a spot they had seen. She stepped on a rock that lay buried beneath many leaves, and turned her ankle so severely, that he feared it had been sprained. It hadn't; but, as a precaution, he took her arm, and that, perforce, brought them closer together. Thus they walked, until, at the foot of a pine, lay a fallen tree conveniently. They sat themselves thereon, and, leaning their backs against the tree, for a minute, possibly more, they heard their own breathing.

After saying many things that meant nothing, she said:

"Now, you are going to tell me all about yourself today, aren't you?" She ended this beautifully, and waited likewise. His reply was not gallant, if such it could be; but he merely added:

"There is little to tell, Miss Palmer—so little, I'm sure telling it would be dull for you to listen to."

"You have beautiful ways of saying anything," she said, and gave him her best smile. He looked at her now, but without any apparent enthusiasm. His smile was a little tired and weary and sad. Very often he was this way.

"Do you know," Miss Palmer now said, "you have impressed me wonderfully."

"I didn't, I'm sure; but you are complimentary." He was now a mite more cheerful. "In what way, I beg, have I impressed you? In that I can sell books?"

"I don't mean that, and you know I do not," she pouted. "And you can be so innocent, when you want to be. Oh, you are artful. But I mean, if I must say it and then explain why, there is something about you that is unusual. You are in disguise, going through the country studying people, yes, people and what they are, have been and are likely to be." She was thoughtful now, as she sat in serious mood for some time. Presently, she said:

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"I've been reading that book, and, of course, I understand you better. Is all that you say in it true?" She was serious now, and anxious too. She waited eagerly for him to speak.

He laughed. Then he said nothing in the affirmative, but indulged in words concerning other topics.

"You are more than a book agent. You have, at least, been a man of means. Really, I would be pleased to know from your own lips," she now sighed.

"I wish we could talk of something else, that would be more interesting. Cannot you suggest something?" he turned to her now appealingly.

"I cannot. Yourself is the most interesting thing I care to talk about. I have been thinking of the terrible secret you disclose in the book. Won't you please tell me if it is all true?"

"I suppose if *the* book is published as a true story, then it must be so," he said evasively.

"And she was a weak woman. No strength and conviction; nothing to protect a home. You and she will not remain as you are, will you?" Silence. "There is nothing the matter with you—and her. I sympathize with *this fellow*." Miss Palmer was more serious now. "Because, apparently, he wanted, tried to do the right thing, and was not allowed.... I know somebody else that wished to do likewise, and was not allowed.... Life is a strange thing, isn't it?"

"Indeed so," he agreed.

"And on this pilgrimage you study the lives of others, many others, and it reveals so much to you that would, could not be possible, otherwise?"

He agreed with her again.

"And on this pilgrimage you have met *women*, and you have studied them and their way of seeing things?"

"Possibly. They are all in the same category."

"Yes; but somebody said: 'I bet that fellow has *so* many girls!' I didn't agree with them. I don't think you have any; you are too preoccupied to give them serious thought. Perhaps that is why the girl allowed herself to be taken away...."

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He now looked at her. His lips, for one moment, had started to speak, and then he seemed to think better of it, and said nothing.

"Everyone I sell the book to cries when they have read it: 'If I had been that fellow, I'd have kicked that old preacher into Hades.' It's what you tell in the last part of the book that arouses the people. But they all think *he* acted with poor judgment in the end; but if *he* hadn't allowed that to come to pass, I would never have known you." Miss Palmer was tantalizing.

"Out in this *Rosebud Country*, of which the story is told, are there no colored people?"

"None."

"I should think it would be dreadfully lonesome."

"Why so? The white people are kind and sociable."

"Yes, but I would prefer my kind. Still, I suppose if one lived there and had their all there, it would be different."

"Yes," he agreed, "it would be different."

"You will, no doubt, marry one of the many girls you meet before you return, and then live happily ever afterwards."

"That is nice to listen to. Nice girls, that is, girls who are willing to sacrifice to an end that would help both, are, to say the least, hard to find."

"Yes, in a sense; but there are plenty. And all want husbands. Of course, when you have been widowed, grass-widowed, it's different...."

"Well, yes; but I see no reason, if she is the right kind of girl, why she cannot re-marry and be happy in the end."

"Oh, you don't," she essayed. "Well, there is. A woman is never regarded as the same. The looks she gets are not like the ones bestowed upon her when she, or before she married. They are looks—looks that are not honest," she sighed. He was silent.

"And the men are the cause of it. All of it. Sometimes I hate men."

He saw her now, calmly. She was uneasy under the look he gave her. And then he was silent again. She went on:

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"Of course, there are some that are different. Yourself, for instance."

"In what way?"

"So many I hardly like to say. So unassuming, for one. And then you—oh I won't say it."

"Please do."

"Not until you have told me more about yourself. Has it occurred to you that you have told me nothing, absolutely nothing about yourself?" She was looking at him now. He winced.

"Of course, if a woman is—is—well, easy enough to go into the mountains and on an outing with the man—a man who has told her nothing of himself, then, it—he cannot be censured." She watched a pine squirrel now that played near, and who regarded them out of eyes that made Miss Palmer feel guilty.

"You are like a stone wall when it comes to secrets. Did you ever really love anyone?"

"Yes."

"Oh, you don't mean it!" she cried in feigned surprise. "Who was it?"

"You would be no wiser if I told you."

At this moment, a blast in a mine near, which they did not see, went off. It broke the silence so sharply, that both sat quickly upright. In doing so, their hands met. His clasped hers. In a moment the tension was released, but the hands were not. Slowly their hands clasped each others tighter. He was in some way conscious of the fact, while she was dreamy. He looked by chance into her eyes, and they were more dreamy still. Their shoulders touched. She sat at his left, and it happened singularly to be his right hand that held hers. In that moment they seemed to feel lonely, very lonely. Both had suffered—and, to a degree, their suffering had been similar. To give up and to be human, unconventionally so for just a little while, seemed a mad desire.

She swayed perceptibly. Suddenly his left arm stole about her waist and encircled her body. Mechanically he looked down, and into her eyes, that were upturned. They seemed to tell the secret behind. To be loved for one minute was what they asked. He lingered a moment, and then his head went down. When it had retained its former position and was erect, he had kissed Miss Palmer.

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He was standing now, and was looking down upon Effingham. It lay silent and gray from where he saw it. In that moment he wanted to be back there. He felt guilty. He turned and beheld Miss Palmer. He felt more guilty than before. She lay against the tree with her face turned the other way. He felt very sorry for her then. Yes, Miss Palmer would, he believed, do the right thing. *She would be glad* to do the right thing. Oh, she had had her troubles. And Sidney Wyeth knew that when people had suffered, especially when it had been their great ambition to do the right thing and be happy, they would go through eternity to make happiness possible. He spoke now.

"Don't you think we had better be going, Miss Palmer?" She heard him, and his voice was kind, she thought. She rose, and together they went back over the hill and caught the Relay.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

"I'm Worried About Mildred"

"Wilson, I'm worried. I'm worried about Mildred. Something is haunting that girl. Something has been haunting her for days. She says nothing, of course; but I can see, I can't help but see. She is worried almost to insanity." So Constance said to her brother, some days after Mildred met the man who saw her in Cincinnati.

"I wonder what it can be," said he, thoughtfully.

"I'd give anything to know," she sighed. "The only thing I know is that she is worried. I dare not ask her. She is not inviting in her demeanor, when it comes to confidences. She seems to be looking for something, simply uneasy always, and hesitant. Some days, she seems to dislike to go canvassing; in fact, for some time now, she has been nervous every time she ventures out."

"I wonder whether it would not be advisable to ask her to lay off a few days."

"I have thought of that," said she; "but she has so many deliveries to make that she is almost compelled to go out every day. And then, if what she fears is to happen, I'm sure she would be more worried if she stayed in."

"I'm willing to do anything to help Mildred." She looked at him, but they were both too preoccupied to take notice of the fact that he had called her by her first name.

"The only time I can seem to get her away from that worried, tired expression, is when I play. She listens and becomes, at least for a time, oblivious to her troubles."

By day, Mildred, when she was canvassing, hourly expected to meet again the man whose recognition had frightened her. But the days went by without further encounter, and when she failed to meet him, she began to relax. She was worried constantly, but she was relieved after two weeks. The fright had passed, and she was cheerful again, much to the relief of her two friends. It had pained her to see that both were obviously worried on her account. And she respected them, because they were considerate enough not to ask her questions that would have annoyed her.

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"You sang that beautifully, Miss Latham," said Wilson, one afternoon, when she left the piano, after singing a song that had been introduced lately into church services; and which, while sentimental, nevertheless possessed more thrill than the average.

"Do you think I can satisfy the congregation now?" she asked sweetly. She had been practicing it for several afternoons.

"I should say you could," he cried, enthusiastically. "You could satisfy any congregation, much less our little crowd." He looked sorrowful, as he said this. She understood. The great majority did not attend his services. They went to the big Baptist church two blocks away. Many of them even smiled, when they passed his little church and observed the few people sitting therein. Mildred sympathised with him, because she realized that he was a courageous young man, willing to go to any extent, so far as effort was concerned, in order to help those about him. They needed it too, these black people.

"Oh," she cried, so kind that he choked, "you will have a larger church some day. I am confident you will—I *know you will*." And she meant all she said. "In time the

people will come to appreciate your efforts. As it is now, they don't think deep enough to do so. They want sermons, as yet, that make them feel by merely listening; whereas, it is necessary to study what you say.... That makes it difficult now. When the people become more intelligent, more practical, and more thoughtful, they will appreciate religion in a practical sense." He was overwhelmed with gratitude, as he heard these words. For a moment he couldn't speak. He felt the tears come.

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"You are so kind, Miss Latham. You seem to understand, and see below the surface. And what you have said is timely. I am one, you may be sure, who appreciates it." He stopped here.

A choking, which he didn't wish her to notice, made it necessary. She was aware of the gratitude, the sincere gratitude in his tone, and her sympathy went out to him more than ever. As she saw him sitting there, with head bowed and face hid, he seemed his mother's boy. She felt strangely that other part. Impulsively, she advanced to where he sat by the window, with the sunlight streaming in upon him. In the bright, soft light, his curly hair shone, and seemed more beautiful than she had noticed it before. She laid her hand upon it. An hour ago, she would not, could not have dreamed she would do this. And then she spoke in words, the kindest, he felt, he had ever heard.

"There, now. It will be all right. Just give yourself time. Oh, it's a great struggle, this human problem. All these black ones of ours. But you are pursuing the right course, and some day they will see it. Then will come your success. It's going to come. It will come. It *must* come. These people can't keep on going along as they are; this crime—murder. It's terrible. Someone will help to stem the tide of it, someone will lead them. They need leaders. They are not bad people, with all we see and now know of them. They simply need some one to lead them into the light. I feel you will be that person. Yes. I am sure you are the person." She paused a moment, and it was only then, she became aware that her hand still rested upon his head. She removed it now, and silently left the room.

"I love her! I love her!" cried Wilson Jacobs. "Oh, God lead me, for I know not whither I go!"

It was the first time in his thirty-one years that Wilson Jacobs had felt so. But he was a man. And the fact made him respect Mildred Latham the more. Not for anything would he have her know his secret after this. She had thought of him in no other way but to help him. That was all. He would have to go forth now with a secret from Constance even.

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He studied his text for the coming Sunday, and prepared himself to preach as he had never preached before.

"Here is an example of how much our people down here desire a Y.M.C.A., Miss Latham," said Reverend Jacobs later. "You may recall that, last spring the colored people of Grantville (which had a population, in the last census, of one hundred ten thousand people, almost forty thousand being colored), made a great campaign to secure a Y.M.C.A." He laid before her a Negro journal, published weekly at Grantville. She picked it up and read the whole article.

It went into detail concerning the campaign that was made to secure a Y.M.C.A. for the colored youth of Grantville. She had been interested in the campaign and knew that in a few days, thirty-three thousand dollars and more had been subscribed. The publishing house that printed this paper, had issued a daily of sixteen pages during the campaign, and had heralded the spirit of the colored people in their liberality. They had been liberal indeed, but it was only in subscribing. The paying was different, quite different.

After six months, only something over four thousand dollars of that amount had been paid in. The building, equipped, would cost one hundred thousand dollars. A millionaire Jew, the head of one of the greatest mail order houses in the country, would give twenty-five thousand dollars. The white Y.M.C.A. gave an equal amount. From other sources, seventeen thousand dollars were forthcoming. The colored people were expected to raise the remainder. It had been oversubscribed, but only four thousand had been paid in. Six months had passed, and she knew (although the paper was optimistic and had no other thought, apparently, than that the colored people would raise the amount) subscriptions would be paid slower now than before. She did not know what to say when she had read the article.

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"Do you realize what they are up against?"

"Yes," she said resignedly.

"And they do not seem to know it."

"No."

"It's discouraging."

She nodded.

"It would be no trick at all for any of a dozen churches in the town to raise four thousand dollars in sixty days in a rally." She remained silent but listened, and knew that he spoke the truth.

"They have hundreds of churches all over the south, that have cost, in actual money, one hundred thousand dollars, and they have paid the amount without assistance from other sources; whereas, the white people are offering sixty thousand dollars of this amount."

"And, I gather," said she, in a voice that was listless, "that Grantville, with its many schools and much more intelligent colored people, is far more likely to succeed in such an effort than this town."

He nodded.

"But this place needs it, it needs it badly. It needs a Y.M.C.A. worse than any town in the south—"

"In the world," he insisted.

"And you do not think it would be worth while to inaugurate a campaign for that purpose here, before long?"

He sighed sadly, and then grew thoughtful.

"Last week, the number of murders exceeded any previous week for two years...."

"And over one hundred Negro churches have preaching in them every Sunday."

"And from what I can learn, these murders are rarely mentioned, in any."

"I have been thinking for a long time—before you came—of a Y.M.C.A. for our people in this town, but I have never spoken of it. But since I have known and talked with you, Miss Latham, and have seen the way our people are conducting themselves, I have been constrained to take up the effort of securing one." He said this very calmly, with no undue excitement.

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"Have you, Mr. Jacobs?" She made no attempt to use the clerical term. Her tone was eager, anxious.

"Yes," he repeated. "I have decided to begin at once, regardless of the discouraging spectacle of Grantville."

"Oh, I'm so glad," she sighed, relieved.

He looked at her, but said nothing. He knew that she would be glad to hear it. He was glad, though, that she had spoken.

"Yes," he resumed. "I have discussed the matter with the heads of three of the big trunk lines operating in and out of this town, and all of whom have shops here that hire black men, and, as you might, of course, expect, they are all in favor of it. They have, moreover, advised me that they will bring such a movement to the attention of the board of directors. They have further advised me, however, that I must not expect to exceed five thousand dollars from either, and not to be disappointed if the board failed to give anything at all. That, they explained, and I understood without explanation, was due to the financial conditions of the railroads. I have met the same response from other local interests. But by them all, I have been encouraged. Of course, the white Y.M.C.A. are agreeable to giving assistance as in other towns, and have given me to understand that they will put in twenty-five thousand dollars. And then the Chicago philanthropist, of course, has a like amount awaiting. But the time limit expires in six months."

"From these, I have gone to our people."

"You went?" She held her breath now.

"To those others, the preachers."

"And they were——"

"Against it, almost to a man."

"God be merciful!"

"Of course, all of them did not say so in so many words—in fact, as you might expect, 'Yes, brother, this town sure needs a Y.M.C.A.' But when cooperation was suggested to that end, quibbling began. Most of them, not a bit original, put forward the same excuse, *too* busy. All were preachers, yet too busy to save souls. Then, of course, the next excuse was their church was loaded up with debt; they were now preparing a

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rally to raise such and such an amount. And still others had just closed a rally, which meant their flock was strapped and would be until another rally. And there are three churches in this very town that cost equally as much as this thing, all told.

"Next, I tried the teachers. The professors, of course, were full of the idea. I found only two, however, who had paid enough attention to the effort in Grantville, to know that the people were likely not to succeed. These, I was glad to hear, spoke of this fact, and we then discussed the matter from a serious point of view."

"Have you not found ignorance a great stumbling block?" she inquired.

"The greatest, in a measure, I think. To be ignorant means, that they will be easily discouraged, when they discover the obstacles."

"When do you intend beginning the campaign?"

"Sunday. I have prepared a speech to that end for that day, but, of course, I would have to concentrate a greater effort before it can be started with any effect. I have, however, prepared an article, rather, several articles, and which the newspapers, the white dailies, have agreed to publish conspicuously. But before we can expect much from the white people, we will ourselves have to show greater activity. That is where the hard part comes. It is hard to arouse the local leaders to any appreciation of such a thing. There is so much surface interest, and so little heart enthusiasm. So many will say a lot of sweet things that mean nothing, not even an effort to be serious. But I shall open the campaign Sunday, and I was thinking of asking your assistance in singing and playing."

"Oh, I'd be only too glad to help in any way I know how, but that is so little," she said bashfully.

"We will start only in a small way. I have thought it best to begin with my congregation. I have been to them all, and have already secured liberal subscriptions, all of whom paid a part of it in cash. This I will employ as a means of stimulating others. So Sunday, at three P.M., I will lecture on it and ask subscriptions, detailing first those who have already subscribed."

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"What is my balance, please," inquired Mildred the next afternoon, at the window of the paying teller.

"One hundred fifty," said the cashier, who looked surprised.

"I wish to withdraw it. And you may make it into a draft, payable to the colored Y.M.C.A."

His mouth opened slightly. He regarded her with a different look, and then did as she instructed.

A fairly good crowd greeted Wilson Jacobs, when he got up to speak on the proposed campaign for a colored Y.M.C.A. To cheer the listeners, he asked Miss Latham to play and sing the song she had practiced, and which was new to the congregation. She did so, with all the art of which she was capable, and was pleased, when she turned to face the audience, that she had given both pleasure and satisfaction. Her eyes wandered over them for a moment, and then rested upon someone she had seen before.

"Where was it," she mused, in a half whisper. Wilson Jacobs was speaking. For two hours he spoke in behalf of the Christian forward movement. He made plain in so many ways, the urgent need of such, and did this eloquently. He arraigned the high murder record, which made all of those before him feel alarmed. The time for some united effort was necessary. Eventually something had to be done. Plenty of churches, it was true, were open; but churches were arranged for worship, and not for clean sport, pool, billiard, gymnasiums and other amusements in which young men might indulge, would indulge, and did indulge; but in so many ways and places, that were not conducted in a Christian manner.

"And now," he said, at the close, "we have decided to start this movement today at home. We will be pleased to make an example we hope the other churches will follow." With that, he read the names of the donors and subscribers. Among them, one hundred fifty dollars by Mildred Latham, the organist, led in cash. They were surprised. Very few had even become acquainted with her. Now all desired to. When the meeting had closed, many gathered about her and were introduced. Then, as she was turning to go, the person she had observed when she finished playing, approached. His hand was extended, while his eyes looked into hers with something that frightened her when she saw him—and recognized him as the man she had seen

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back in Cincinnati, and who now recognized her.

When she went home that day, she had reached a decision.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

And Then She Began to Grow Otherwise

The week following Miss Palmer's and Sidney's outing, was a week of confusions for her. She was torn by them considerably. She hardly knew how to feel; whether to be happy or angry with herself for having acted as she did. He was kind to her, he was considerate; but that was all. She had exercised all her wits to make him see her seriously, but beyond that incident, he had given her no encouragement whatever. She felt guilty at her conduct. She accused herself of having acted unbecoming in her attitude toward him. Although he would not admit having written the book, which had aroused her curiosity, she, of course, knew that he had. She had finished it now, and knew all he had suffered. And, as she thought it over, time and again, she almost concluded that his life, as he had suffered, made him hard and unsympathetic. And almost in the same thought, she rebuked herself for feeling that way; because, above all else, he was certainly not selfish.

He called almost every evening when he had finished his work, and they sat on the porch in the swing if there was no one, and when there happened to be, they sat in the parlor on the davenport. And when they did so, it so happened they began to flirt. And this continued to develop until it reached a point she declared to be outrageous. And yet it persisted. At such times, moreover, she became bold. There came a time when she was almost disgusted with herself for being so weak.

After a few weeks had passed, she came to realize that her quest was in vain. Sidney Wyeth had no affection, beyond flirting, with her. And then she began to grow otherwise. He observed the change, and was sorry, perhaps. Still, Miss Palmer did not give up entirely. She was not that kind of person. After all, to kiss him and to be kissed in return, was some pastime. It was better than not being kissed or loved at all. So she flirted.

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After this became the usual thing in their acquaintance, she began to assert other dispositions that had not before been evident. She inquired boldly where he went when he didn't call in the evening, as usual. She dictated where he should go as well. In desperation she continued her tactics—even to a point where our pen is constrained to relate.

"Do you know," said she one evening, when they had flirted shamefully. "I'm beginning to care for you." She said this from his knee.

"I did not," he sighed. He was not the least excited by her acknowledgement.

"I am," she affirmed. "More and more as the days go by." She smiled into his face, while he looked tired. "Have you anyone back where you came from, who loves you and calls you her all?" she asked now, as though she could think of nothing else to say.

"No, no, no!" He looked distressed. "I wish I had," he added.

"I know you tell what is not true—feel you do," she corrected. After a pause she said: "Do you happen to have just a little, only a little regard for me?" He made light of it by blowing her a kiss, and tried to change the conversation, but she had more to say.

"Of course you wouldn't love an old grass-widow like me anyhow," she pouted. He was at a loss what to say, so said nothing.

"Why don't you say something?" she said, put out.

"You should not make such remarks," he said, with a frown.

"But it's true, it's true, and you can't deny it." She seemed angry now, and didn't appear to care what she said. She left his knee with a last retort. "And you men are the cause of it all."

He leaned his head against the back of the davenport and closed his eyes, which angered her, and she cried:

"Go to sleep, go to sleep. You are the worst person I ever knew," and forthwith she left the room.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

When Legs had pawned and lost about all he possessed, he happened upon a job at one of the hotels, and went to work. To do so, however, he had to secure a white jacket, and a pair of black trousers. This was somewhat difficult on account of his long legs, but he managed to secure an old pair, and, too glad of the chance to work where he could fill his stomach regularly, he gave good service, and was soon on the good side of the head waiter.

"Say, Books," he cried one day, soon after he had commenced work. "You should have seen me eat today. Nice hot bisquits with butter, and dripping out around the edges, um-um. Man, the way I did eat! I got all them nigga's t' laffin' over somethin' funny I said, and then I'd slip back into the kitchen, open the oven and get me a half dozen hot rolls and butter'm good, and eat, and eat, and eat!"

"There is but one thing I can't seem to get over, and that is that dollar this nigga Moore got me out of bed to lose. Say, that hurt me worse than anything in this world. I've drawn the line on him now though. He ain't nothing but an old always broke coon, a-moochin' around for somebody to stake him in a game. I could have made it all right when I came over here, if it hadn't been for him. And he never won anything, and kept me broke as long as I would speak to him."

In a very short time Legs was "on his feet," as the saying goes. He was making some money and spending it all. His good resolution with regard to gambling had been laid on the shelf until further declarations, and he shot craps whenever off duty, and when he could find a game. Moore he ignored; but that worthy was as fond of the game as a pig was of corn, so they occasionally ran into each other, nevertheless. In fact, as Sidney observed them, almost every Negro shot craps, with few exceptions. Whiskey and craps were so much in evidence everywhere he looked, that he drew this conclusion soon.

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Now a man lived overhead, and rented from the landlady, whose name was Murphy. Wyeth called him "Smoked Irish." He was a creature with a dark record, so Wyeth was told, and he hailed from a little town in the state adjoining. Some years before, he had been a man of considerable importance, but with women and other pastimes, he had fallen into bad ways, was sent to the penitentiary for fraud, and had sought other parts after the expiration of his term.

As Wyeth knew him, he was a "bahba," and shaved chins and sheared wool in one of Effingham's fancy Negro shops.

Murphy had seen almost fifty summers, was about five feet eleven, and a mulatto with coarse, stiff, black hair, tinged with gray. His features were set, like a man with experience, and he could tell some wonderful stories. The Mis' called them lies. They might have been, but it is to Murphy's credit that they were good ones, and interesting to listen to.

On Sunday, and week days also, when he was home from the shop, and in his loft, Murphy sold whiskey on the side—or as a side line, and operated a crap game in addition. The law, of course, did not permit of this, as we shall see presently; but—well, it didn't matter—as long as the law didn't know it. And Murphy made money, Wyeth was told. It was up there Legs invested most of his earnings, winning once in a while, but losing more frequently. The fact that Murphy was so convenient with his diversion, was, in a sense, helpful to Legs, because he didn't have to journey far to his bed. And always as soon as he was "cleaned," he would retire and sleep as peacefully as a babe, until his work called him the following morning.

John Moore was a frequent visitor also. Legs put Wyeth wise, when he inquired why Moore was up there so often, since he appeared to have no money. "He's a piker, a cheap piker that touts for Murphy, for the privilege of gambling and gettin' a drink a liquah, that he loves so well."

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Much to the surprise of them all, one Saturday night about this time, Moore did make a winning. Legs informed Wyeth to this effect, when he retired from the battle "clean."

"Seven dollars and a half, the dirty devil. And he'll be as scarce as hen's teeth as long as he has a dime of it too." He was mistaken. That was on Saturday night. Sunday morning after he had risen and had some good whiskey, Moore dressed himself like a gentleman, and made some of the losers envy him for a few hours. Then he went back upstairs to Murphy's. When Wyeth saw him again, he was sitting under a shade tree, reading the Bible. This was a self-evident fact that he had made an investment. As further evidence of the fact, that night at supper he offered a beautiful prayer. He had failed to do so that morning, which was further proof of Legs' contention.

Legs came up while Moore was reposing sanctimoniously, and said: "M-m! Cleaned, eh! Glad of it, the cheap sucker. He's dead broke, too. Because if he had even a nickel, he'd be upstairs. You can bet a nickel up there. The only thing against it is Murphy's cut. He cuts a nickel a pass. And sometimes he cuts both ways, going and

coming. So, with men betting a nickel against a nickel, Murphy is liable to take it all."

Moore retired early that evening, and slept peacefully. He had worked hard the night before, and that morning.

The following Saturday night, Legs came to the room, caught Wyeth half asleep, and borrowed a dollar. With this, he went for a joy ride, and got drunk into the bargain. Wyeth didn't realize that he had loaned him a dollar, until the other was whizzing down the street in the car. And then he was angry with himself. This disturbed him until sleep was impossible, so, rising, he betook himself to the porch. As he thought it over, he became more angry with himself than ever, because he knew Legs had borrowed it for the sole purpose of getting drunk and joy riding. While he was getting over it in the soft night air, the Mis' told him Legs had got paid that day, and, with the exception of what he paid her, he had lost the remainder of his two weeks' wage in a game. That made him more angry, and, in seeking a diversion, he rose, and out of curiosity, he decided to pay Murphy's den a visit.

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Murphy had a good crowd that night—he usually did on Saturday. In a room that was near the middle of the apartment, surrounded by a crowd of Negroes, stood a table over which was spread a green cloth. At one side of the table sat Moore, and he called the points and fished the cuts; while in another room to the rear of this, with doors open, stood a large refrigerator. This, Wyeth surmised, was where the liquor was kept. It was, for, as he was looking, Murphy approached it, opened it, took therefrom several bottles of beer, and served it to the many gamblers who were working hard, and perspiring freely.

The green cloth, which at one time had decorated a pool table, was, as he now observed, employed to deaden the sound of the rolling dice, that slid over it from some perspiring palm. Not any large amount was upon the table; but many one dollar bills could be seen in the palms of the gamblers. Another roomer downstairs, and who read a great deal, was on hand and shot craps too. This was something of a surprise, since he was apparently very intelligent; but, as Wyeth learned later, literary training did not make them ignore the game by any means. As he stood watching, the dice passed to Glenview, the intelligent roomer. He made a point, and then threw seven before he came back to it. The winners picked up the money. Wyeth was relieved to see the dice pass to another Negro, who had been fidgeting about impatiently. He caught them up, and blew his breath on them, as they were held in his palm, before throwing them before him across the table. Wyeth advanced closer as the game became more excited. Glenview had thrown the dice, much as Wyeth had observed the white people did back in the *Rosebud Country*—for they shot craps there as well. But now, with a "clea' dy way, I'm a comin'," he let them roll.

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"Threwed eight!" cried Moore.

"Eight I throwed! Now dice, do it again!"

"T' click-i-lick-lick-lick, 'ah eight!"

"Throw-e-d ten!"

"Haf 'e cain' hit!"

"Ah got yu!"

"Qua'ta' mo' I'n make it!" exclaimed the shooter, hesitating with upraised hand, but shaking the dice in them the while, and throwing a quarter across the table.

"Ah'll take yu'!" cried a burley on the other side.

"Shoot the dice, nigga, shoot the dice," commanded Moore.

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick 'ah-ha-eight!"

"Threwed five!"

"Ain' no eight on 'nem dice!"

"T-click-i-click-i-click 'ah, eaighter from Decatur!"

"Threwed seben!"

"Ke-hu!"

"Tole yu he coul'n't make it!" cried a big dinge. "Now gimme dem dice!"

"Bet a quata!"

"Make it a haf!"

"Ah take yu!"

"Shoot the dice, nigga, shoot the dice!"

"Yeh. Cut out d' awgment 'n' let'm roll, let'm roll!"

"Gimme room heah 'cause ah kicks!" He did too. Raising his left foot he stamped the floor with it, kicking backward viciously at the same time with the other. He caught a Negro on the shins, which made that worthy angry with pain, whereupon he turned, and let the other have a good one in the usual place. For a time the game was threatened with a fight; but Murphy, who appeared to understand them quite well, interfered with success.

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick, 'ah, seben ah 'leben!'"

"Throwed craps!"

"Ya-ha! Makin' all da fuss 'n' lose d' fus' shot!"

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"Dem dice 's crooket," he muttered.

"Yuz a liah," cried one of the winners, as if afraid they were, and he would not get his bet.

"Yuse a cheap nigga," said Moore. "Stand aside."

Next came a little Negro, with a nose that began at the ears, and peepy eyes which observed the dice suspiciously. He was displeased with the looks of them, evidently. They were a large white pair, and which, so 'tis said, can be loaded. He threw them across the table without making his bet, saying: "Ah gotta paih mah own," and produced from his pocket, a pair of huge celluloid ones, that were beautiful in the electric light.

"Haf t' use the house's dice, cain't substitute," advised Moore, judiciously.

"Why caint ah, I'd lak t' know. Why caint ah!" he exclaimed, beginning to perspire.

Moore started to say more, but Murphy came forward now, with "Let me see them." He took them carefully in his hand, held them between his eyes and the light, tossed them about, and then threw them on the table. "They're all right," and walked away. The little dinge grabbed them eagerly, rubbed them together fondly, blew his breath on them, and then, raising his hand above his head, he made a peculiar rattle and threw them bouncing and jumping across the table. The Negroes about had been observing him with ill omen, and now, as the dice jumped before them like little red devils, they sparkled in the light, and made their eyes blink.

"Throwed seven!" cried Moore.

"Dogone nigga's 's lucky 's 'e 's ugly," grumbled a loser.

"Shoot it all!" he cried, hesitating with the dice in his hand.

"Ah'll take it!"

"Haf 'e cain' hit!"

"Ah fate yu!"

"Let'm roll, let'm roll!"

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick, ah baby dolls!"

"Throwed five!"

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"Raise ut t' a dollah!"

"Make ut sebenty-five!"

"Let'm roll!"

"T-click-i-lick-i-lick, ah, phoebe!"

"Throwed five!"

"Um-m-m-m-m!"

"T-click-i-lick-lick! a-ha dice!"

"Throwed seben!"

"Jes' look ut dat fool nigga, good Gawd!"

"Sech luck, sech luck, sech luck!"

"Shoot it all!"

"Fate dis nickel," begged a loser, with a whimper.

"Trow it out d' windu' shine!"

"Now watch dis 'leben!" cried the guy with the luck.

"Aw, Lawdy, Lawdy, Lawdy, jes' look ut dat nigga agin!"

"Nigga, dem dice yu' shootin' uz sho God crocket!"

"Shoot it all!" Five dollars was the size of the pot now. It was like five hundred to the eyes that now saw it.

"Whu, whu, whu!" He blew on them; while with murder in their eyes, the losers watched.

"I'll take it," said Glenview calmly. He placed a five dollar bill over the amount that lay upon the table. Several had now gone broke, while others declared silently, that he was a hoo-doo, and feared to risk him. Several little bets were made on the side, but no one was willing to risk much against such luck as he had displayed.

"Now, Anne Jane, bring home du' bacin!" he cried, as he let them bounce on the table. It seemed an age to the lookers before they stopped somewhat to the far side. A six and a five. Eleven. He had won again. There was no comment now. Every one was silent, and surveyed him, as if he were the clouds.

"Shoot it all," he cried again. A bit of muttering went the rounds before any one ventured to cover it.

"'E cain' keep ut up, 'e cain' keep ut up," declared one who held only three dollars out of a ten dollar bill a few minutes before. He threw a dollar viciously toward him. After much parley, others joined; John Moore saw Murphy's back, eased a dollar from the cuts, and added it to the pool. Twenty dollars was now the stake, and it was like a million to those that saw it.

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The winner now uncoated himself. He had on nothing beneath the coat but an undershirt. He flung his hat in the corner, revealing a little sharp head, shaven clean and upon which the light dazzled like a smoked opal. As Wyeth observed him, he was reminded of an ape, if he had ever seen one. He took plenty of time, as though anticipating something. Rolling up his sleeve, he exposed a pair of sinewy arms that made the crowd exchange glances. Sidney was standing near the window. At this moment he happened to look out. From up the street came a sound of merry rollicking. No other appeared to hear.

The dice were now tumbling over the table in their fateful quest. More than a dozen pairs of brown eyes blinked dryly at them, as the red material flickered beautifully. Wyeth now looked carefully in the direction of the sound, and finally caught the outline of Legs. From the distance, he saw that he was loaded. He was covering considerable space—so much so that it would have been extremely difficult to have passed him on the walk, which was narrow. And behind him came another. He was about half the height of Legs, as they now appeared. Wyeth recognized him as the runt, and his name was Tom Toddy, at least, that is what they called him about a hotel that was patronized by Negroes, and where he acted as a sort of goat and flunky. Wyeth had had his life threatened on one occasion by him. It was because he had called him "Graveyard." He was old, bald-headed and measly. So this epithet seemed quite appropriate. And, thereupon, Toddy had threatened to send him into eternity, if he addressed him again in such terms. He had a load also.

On they came, and for the time Wyeth forgot the game. Toddy was now beside Legs, and they embraced like man and wife. As Wyeth smiled at the spectacle, they began to sing.

"It's a long, long way to Temporary,"

and as they came on, they changed it to:

"We're a long, long way from home."

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Wyeth laughed now almost outright; but those behind him never heard. They heard only, and saw with all eyes, that the apish creature had won again, and had strapped the crowd to cover the next bet he was now shooting for.

Legs and Toddy had reached the curbing, and, not seeing it, they tumbled over into the sand-covered street. As they picked themselves up, they sang lowly:

"You made me what I am today,
So I guess you're satisfied."

On toward the house they now came, singing at intervals. Presently they stepped upon the porch, and rattled the knob. The door was always kept locked during such proceedings. From the lower end of town, a rooster crowed long and loud; while, at the same moment, a clock from some remote tower struck two. The dice tumbled onward to their fatal end, and Legs kicked the door a bang.

In the still night, it sounded like the discharge of a cannon.

Then here came a lull. All became so quiet that the ticking of a clock upon the mantel sounded like the pounding of a hammer. Faces turned about and eyes looked into each other. They were all colors and a sight to see. The little Negro, coolest all the while, eased the money into his jeans, as the others cried all at once:

"The bulls!"

And now began the scramble, and it was a mighty one.

Under the table went many, whereupon it turned over, and revealed them all wiggling like so many eels. To the room containing the refrigerator, went a half dozen others and closed the door. John Moore stood in the center of the room where he had been deserted by the others, his knees hitting together with a sound like rocks. Cold fear, for he was an awful coward, held him like a vise. Into the closets; into Murphy's bedroom went some more, and piled in a hurry into the bed, whereupon it gave way with a loud crash, mixing many in a nasty, smothered mass, where they tried to extricate themselves with much difficulty.

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And, in the meantime, the kicking continued. "Let me in! Let me in! What in Hell!" cried Legs, and it was punctuated with a piping from Tom Toddy.

"Yes,"—he was very proper—"open up! Open up! This is a He-ll uv a way to treat two gentlemen!"

John Moore was still doing the dazzle; but, now upon hearing the voices, he gathered enough courage to stand erect, and then he turned hurriedly and running to a rear window, put his feet out, jumped out full upon the soft dirt below, and landed without injury, apparently, for, a moment later, Wyeth heard him running around the house in the direction of the kicking. He didn't permit the miscreants to see him, until he had made out fully that they were not officers. When he had made sure they were not blue-coats, he advanced on them from the rear, and took them by surprise. He appeared unable to frame words of denunciation strong enough, but at last he made it. His voice was subdued when he did speak, he was so angry.

"Yeu! Yeu! Y-e-u long-legged nigga! Yeu liver eatin' bunch a-meat! And you! You little dried shrimp! Git ready t' die, 'cause 's sho 's I'm a nigga, I'm going t' part you from this earth t'night!"

They turned now, for a moment sober, and looked at him. He went on with his tirade.

"Makin' all this noise down heh, 'n' scarrin' everybody t' death, 'n' a-breakin' up the game! This is wha' you all 'n' me meets our Jehovah!"

Legs was now too near the edge, and, suddenly with a catching to save himself, which Moore construed as an advance upon him, he went overboard with a mighty tumble.

To this day, however, John Moore didn't know it was an accident. He didn't wait to investigate. A long pair of legs, with a long body on top of them was all he cared to see, and when they landed, he was going around the corner of the house and into the kitchen.

His hurry up ingress awakened the Mis', who bolted out of bed, and demanded to know what was up.

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"The devil's up—on the front porch, a-raisin' cain."

"What are you talkin' 'bout!"

"That long-legged nigga from Attalia a-comin in heh a-kickin' on the door, and a-scarrin everybody outta the' senses!" he told her, much excited, and with his back against the door, not failing to listen in the meantime.

Wyeth descended the stair now, opened the street door, admitting Legs and Toddy. Legs entered first, while Toddy, blinking blindly, followed suit with a grip on his coat tail.

"Where is he," cried Legs. "I mean John Moore! I want to kill him! Death for him is the campaign for tonight! From this earth he's got to part! Where is he! Show him to me now, and in a minute I'll show you his heart, the skunk."

In some way, Moore did not hear this; but stood at the rear looking for Legs from that direction; and, in the meantime, declaring to the Mis' what he was going to do.

"I'm go'n throw that nigga out tonight! To-night, or I'll die tomorra, so help me Jaysus!"

Legs, who had entered his bedroom which opened into the kitchen, overheard this last. He now tore off his coat and hat, which Tom Toddy held, and forthwith sought Moore with a mighty oath. Glenview put in his appearance now from the rear, and kept Legs out of the kitchen, which fact sufficed for John Moore to make words. Our pen fails to describe this in detail.

"Git yo things 'n' go!" cried Moore near the door, and positive that Glenview was between them. "Leave mah house at once!"

"Oh, hush! Hush! Hush!" interposed the Mis'.

"Leave, leave, to-night!"

"Just let me get to him, just let me get to him! I want to eat'm," begged Legs.

"Yeh; let us have him. We're going t' skin him," squeaked Tom Toddy.

"This is terrible," cried the Mis'.

"Just let me get my fingers on the tramp, and it'll be all over in a minute," Legs begged.

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"All but the funeral," assisted Toddy.

"Orderin' somebody out of *his* house. You ain' nothin' but the flunky anywhere. If I was in charge here, I'd make you sleep under the bed!"

"I'd make him sleep under the house, the lousy rat," cried Toddy.

"Ah said you leave this house now," cried Moore. "These ah the orders from me. From me-e!"

"The Mis' ain' said nothin'," Legs cried again.

"Leave, leave, before I tear yu' t' pieces," Moore raved, stamping his foot.

At that moment, Legs gave Glenview a push that sent him reeling, and with a lunge, he cornered Moore. That worthy was frightened into Hades. He was speechless. Legs smiled on him as he reached out and got him by the ears. Grasping them tight, he essayed a bumping process against the wall with his head.

"Have you got him, boy?" inquired Toddy, making sure before he ventured forth with a small knife. "What shall I do to the sucker now? Just tell me, and I'll proceed to take off his nose or his lips; either one of them will make good dog meat."

"You shouldn't have come home disturbing everybody like this," said the Mis', and seemed hurt. This had effect on Legs, who was always considerate of the ladies.

"I'm sorry for you, Mis'; but I've had it in for this hunk a meat, ever since he got me out of bed to lose my last dollar." He emphasized the remark by another bumping.

"I'm a poor widow woman without protection, and you are ruining the only way I have of making a living." That was enough. He forgot John Moore for a second, and the next moment that worthy was locked in an adjoining room. Here he went into a tirade. Legs forgot the Mis' now and sought him, but the door was locked and bolted.

"Git yo things 'n' go nigga!" he cried boldly now, from his safe retreat.

"If you had called, or knocked, I would have come and opened the door, as I always do. There was no call for all this!" remonstrated the Mis'.

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"Don't lock me out, don't lock me out!" Legs raged.

"Git yo things and go, dy'e hear," from the retreat. Legs now became angry with the Mis'.

"Gimme a dollar Mis' and I'll go. If that thing in the other woom there is running this place, I don't want to stay."

"Git yo things 'n' go!"

"Gimme a dollar!"

"You ought to have known better than to create such a disturbance," the Mis' said.

"Gimme a dollar!" from Legs again.

"Let's get another drink!" from Toddy.

"I've always treated you like a gentleman."

"Gimme a dollar!" "Gimme a dollar 'n' a haf!"

"What we go'n give you a dollar 'n' a haf fo'?"

"I paid room rent in advance last Wednesday."

"Now! Here!" cried the Mis', "all of you go to bed and forget this noise."

"Ah'm go'n git 'n' officer, and have that long-legged nigga 'rested!" from within.

"Go to bed!" from the Mis'.

"Go'n have who arrested?" exclaimed Legs, mad all over again.

"F you do'n git out at once, I'm go'n throw you out!"

"If I ever get my hands on you again, you old cheap nigga; you old broken nigga; you

moochin' piker; you pot a-neck-bone stew!"

"Say," cried one of the roomers, just then, "a pair of bulls are coming down the street!"

That was the end of it.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

The Disappearing Chin

Some years before, back in the west, and at the drug store in a little town near which Wyeth owned land, and where, during the cold wint'ry days, the more intelligent and pretentious, as well as argumentative were wont to collect and discuss science, politics and economics, a subject came up one day, that thereafter, became the topic on more than one afternoon's discussion.

It concerned chins, and grew out of the presence of an insurance writer, who was boozologically inclined. And, being so, and a man of no great means, if any, it was a puzzle to many how he could get the means to fill up on liquor daily, and pay for it.

The occurrence had remained in Wyeth's memory, and, afterwards, he had a new viewpoint in observing people.

Fitzpatrick was his name, and he was, of course, Irish. His ability to get the wherewith to get drunk daily, and have money for other purposes as well, came up one day for discussion. The more logical and nature study debaters, laid it to the fact that he was possessed of an indefatigable will, and that, in addition, was conspicuously evident in his chin. Fitzpatrick had a wonderful chin; one was inclined to take notice of it the first time he met the man. It extended some distance beyond his teeth, and was square and firm. A chin that was set in such a fashion and did not recede, was, they argued, an evidence of will. So be it.

Chins were carefully observed at once, and lo, the druggist was the only one with a chin that was inclined to disappear. It was plain at first glance, that not one of more than a dozen, possessed a chin the equal of Fitzpatrick.

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It was then that Sidney began to see everybody's chin, apart from every other, the moment he met a person. When he had come back again among his own, after eleven years, his observation began to reveal chins, which according to the argument related, were, to say the least, discouraging. Almost two-thirds of his people possessed the disappearing chin. A bad sign, he was positive, but they had it, and he now studied this race to which he belonged, very carefully, and from an every day and practical point of view. He did not attempt a scientific study, for, in the first place, he knew little of science, and in the second place, to understand life from a practical point of view, and to apply one's thoughts and efforts to that end, seemed to him a more profitable occupation. In this research, he met many of his people who had gone through college, knew everything from the dark ages to Caesar, but many of them couldn't have bounded the state which they called home, for they paid little attention to their surroundings. As he became better acquainted with them, he was disappointed upon finding them ignorant. At the same time, they had little appreciation for another's viewpoint, unless he had *been to school and graduated from college*.

Having digressed, we will attempt to return to the story.

The druggist was not an assuming person, and admitted, very gracefully, to the fact that he possessed neither will nor determination; but, as Sidney Wyeth knew his people, he did not expect many to be so frank.

So, it came about that when he met Miss Palmer, almost the first thing he took notice of when she came out of the darkness to the porch, was that she possessed a chin, the point of which was far beyond the lips. It was that fact more than any other, that caused him to try in every way possible, to secure her services. As we have stated, he had little confidence in chinless persons, a fact, which was so much in evidence among his people.

So, when he had known Miss Palmer a few weeks, and had been convinced, from a practical point of view, that she did possess will in keeping with the set of her chin, he confided the fact to her. She smiled very modestly, and, of course, deplored it; but, nevertheless, he caught her studying the reflection of it more than once, when a mirror was convenient.

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That Miss Palmer was determined, vigorous, possessed courage and had strength of her convictions, was a positive fact. When she made up her mind to do a thing, if she failed, it was because it was beyond the range of reasonable effort to accomplish it. And it was shortly after this, that Wyeth discovered that such a fortune could be

superabundant. That is, a person could be endowed with so many of these helpful qualities that it passed beyond the range of judgment to assert them. This happened to be what he discovered in Miss Palmer. He regretted it too, because he had begun to admire her.

The presence of these aggressive facts, began later to result in a change in their regard for each other. They disagreed in their point of view, and, still later, they came to a crash, literally.

For Miss Palmer was, in addition to the agreeable and admirable things he had discovered, pretentious to an alarming degree. And it was this, which caused the trouble.

Our pen has not before had occasion to relate that the change in the life of Sidney Wyeth, from the prairies to the present, was due, in a great measure, to the evil genius of an overly busy person. And yet, such was the fact. Therefore, being an observing character, and realizing these qualities, but not appreciating them in the creature whom he would always despise, he did, above all else, wish to avoid a person thus richly endowed. He had declared many a time, that he trusted the diamond back rattlers that infested the prairies, more than he did an unduly pretentious, ostentatious person.

Therefore, when he came to notice these qualities in Miss Palmer, it led to frequent disagreements. And yet, withal, no one could altogether dislike Miss Palmer. There came a time when he felt, that if she did not try to argue on everything that came up, without first attempting to equip herself with a few facts bearing on the subject, and which would serve to substantiate her argument, he could have overlooked much of her pretense. But, as he came to know her better, she argued on everything, and sought to force her conclusions upon the other, when her knowledge was quite foreign to the question on hand. She literally murdered facts. And, as time went on, he saw that her aim was, very often, merely to dominate, with no apparent regard for what might be learned by careful listening.

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In Effingham, as in every other town, Wyeth had discovered, among his people, a set who claimed to be the more elite; they were the more intelligent, and called themselves society. On his pilgrimage, he had never sought to become a part of this society.

In Effingham, Sidney came to see this phase a little clearer than before, due to his acquaintance with Miss Palmer—that is, that side of it, the woman's side. As for the men, he met that at the drug store, where he had relieved the druggist of two dollars, and where the more elite gathered and indulged. Arguments were usually in process there, he soon saw; and when not so engaged, they gambled and drank to an alarming degree, in the back room, and secluded, where he was not invited. Cards were the custom; but soon craps, he heard, became more conspicuous. The druggist was "a" shooter, and won quite frequently, so 'twas said.

Miss Palmer took pride—as well she might—in informing Wyeth of the fact that she was a member of the colored society of Effingham, and proved it by entertaining until she was ever bankrupt; she was always up against it for money; and this fact, no doubt, brought her to selling books, as a means to make ends meet during vacation. But Miss Palmer did not, could not, of course, be expected to admit such a thing. She could have said nothing about it, which would have been as dignified; but she made it a point to appraise Wyeth of the fact, that she only did it to help him, at which times she would smile, and show her little teeth. "I like you so much," and she would smile again, "that it is my great and ardent desire to help you."

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Sidney had never appreciated it in this way.

At Miss Palmer's could often be found a gathering of teachers, of which Effingham, with its sixty thousand black people, had many. And these, to whom the masses looked to for tutor, he studied very carefully. He had, as before stated, never shown them the book; but the surprise of it was, that Miss Palmer had not done so either.

In one of the little suburbs, where they had canvassed, he recalled a row of very attractive homes occupied by the more respectable colored people. Miss Palmer had canvassed there very carefully, and had sold the book to nearly every one, but she had as carefully avoided showing it to a professor, who occupied the most imposing of the row. He had not said anything, but, of course, he could scarcely help noticing this careful avoidance of all houses where teachers lived. In some manner, the matter came up one day, and Miss Palmer merely remarked that the teachers were all broke, would be so, until school opened again.

Sidney had suppressed his criticism. But one day he called on Miss Palmer. He was just in time to meet a white woman coming out. The latter turned and thanked Miss Palmer for her kindness in giving her the list of thirty teachers, with the suggestion

that they would be interested in the set of books for which she was agent. The lady had sold to twenty-five of that number, not counting Miss Palmer, who had cheerfully started the list. And the books were in twenty volumes, at one dollar each.

Of course, Miss Palmer showed them to her friend with much ado, stating that the same would be so helpful to her in her school work. He said it was very nice; but he wondered just what particular help the books could be to these teachers, for the set were a collected list of fiction, with no care as to whether it was a work of specific interest. The set included many volumes, by authors who issued a book every sixty days, all of which were on sale at any bookseller, or by mail at that time, and for some time past, at fifty cents a volume, or twenty copies from the publishers at forty-five cents each.

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Of course, Miss Palmer did not know this, or any of the other twenty-five teachers out of the thirty who had purchased—and lest we forget, it was this lack of knowledge that had cost the druggist two dollars, because he had been shown a work by one of his race, with a suggestion to buy. The fact uppermost in the mind of Sidney was, that the teachers with few exceptions, scarcely needed any such work to teach black children. Many of them would be unlikely to read as many as half a dozen of the books in their lifetime. And yet, by borrowing the book, they were reading *The Tempest*. Some were even contemptible in their criticism; but all of them borrowed it and read it, including Miss Palmer; and she admitted it was the only book she had read that season, other than what she was compelled to read by the board of education.

But all of these people felt they were sacrificing everything for their race, and would deplore it, were they told that such was not true.

But the teachers were nice; much more interesting to talk to than the common herd. They could, almost all, smile beautifully; and they could pronounce their English more correctly, employing their "r's," and interspersing their discourse with a clever toss of the head or twinkle of the eye; and when one of the race, who had been successful, married, he invariably picked a teacher. They were sensible enough to realize that a husband who could keep the wolf from the door, was a treasure to be appreciated. It was thus Sidney Wyeth found teachers. But he could not understand why they seldom appreciated Negro literature to the point of purchasing, since they were engaged in the teaching.

Miss Palmer was buying a small home in one of the suburbs, and which was all she could boast of owning. As we know her, she secured her living by teaching nine months in the year, at forty dollars a month. And as we now know, she must perforce earn something during vacation, which was the real reason for selling Wyeth's book. So, from what we know of her, there is no reason why she should not have been conspicuous in colored society, since the masses, unfortunately, are all poor. Hence, wealth cannot be the dividing line, else there would be no society whatever.

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Miss Palmer showed more ostentation as their acquaintance lengthened. Sidney was now thirty; and since nineteen, he had lived on the western ranges. And, as is usually the case, western people are great readers. But here, his people did not read. Not that they could not do so, but because it was apparently not a preference; considering the fact that few seemed to care for much reading beyond a newspaper sensation. And, as he met the more elite, he was surprised that they paid so little attention to the condition of the masses. Murder, as we have seen, was an established habit. Of all those he had met, the teachers impressed Wyeth as having the least regard for conditions. In other words, "they never worried." They dressed the best their means would afford, and aped the rest, which was easy. And this he found so prevalent, that he was, at times, dreadfully bored by it all. But he was relieved when he looked deeper, to find that the people who were actually succeeding in doing something, paid little attention to this set, which dominated society. But the set claimed them, nevertheless.

As he had known society from reading of it only, he had judged that literature was one of its chief features—but not so with this. Gossip and hearsay were more in keeping, and obviously more appreciated.

Wyeth was a literary man now for the sake of gaining a livelihood; but he had studied it, as we know, from a modern point of view. He had never, however, any difference of opinion with them, for so few knew of the late books, purchased few, and most of them not any magazines of interest. Not one in a dozen even read the race's only periodical, *The Climax*: though the editor had once been one of them, and had written a book, a novel. It was a failure, from a financial point of view.

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The fiction they knew and talked of was in the order of Rip Van Winkle, Ben Hur and St. Elmo.

One day, when arguments were abundant, it came to a point where Wyeth made mention of the fact that so few teachers showed any interest in current events; did not read the magazines, and Negro literature they almost held in contempt.

"Is it because they feel that no Negro knows enough to write anything they would care to read?"

"The idea," cried Miss Palmer, indignant. "All the teachers take the magazines, and as for Negro literature, it has been the teachers who have robbed themselves to make the same possible."

"And yet other than 'Up From Bondage' and the works of the dead poet, you can seldom find a volume by a Negro author in any of their houses.... And, if I have investigated correctly, ninety per cent of this was placed there, after the white people had bought it and proclaimed the authors great. In the many houses I have been in with you, I have not yet seen any of Derwin's. Though one of them he wrote, and which is named after our souls, had a great sale among the white people even."

"I cannot see, nor appreciate either, your point of view with regard to the teachers' lack of literary interest, when not two weeks ago, twenty-six teachers among a list of thirty, purchased a set of twenty volumes each, and which cost them all that many dollars."

"And every volume by an author few know of, further than that he was white, and, therefore, knew something," he retorted.

It ended there and they were both relieved that it did; but neither forgot it.

Effingham, with its sixty thousand black people, had scores of drug stores which sold literature. Many newsstands also did such a business exclusively. There were four drug stores operated by colored people, and, like Attalia, not one sold magazines and newspapers as a side line; nor did any sell literature, which were operated by whites that depended upon Negro trade. Granting, of course, that many colored people bought such at white places, when they desired to read, it may reasonably be imagined how much literature was in demand among the colored people.

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Wyeth usually purchased a work of fiction weekly, and sometimes more; while some weeks, of course, he omitted this custom. One day, he was asked by the clerk of the leading book store in Effingham, what he did with so many books when he had read them. "We have sold," he said, "seven copies of the book you sold us; but I guess you'll be surprised to know that we have not, as yet, sold one to a Negro." Wyeth was not surprised, but didn't say so. "That ad we placed in the colored paper, and have had standing a month, would bring dozens of curious white people in to see what it was. And, of course, some would purchase it to see what was said. Then, if the contents did not thrill or please, indifference would follow. But when nobody buys, not even inquires, we can only feel that your people don't have much interest in books, and we have had the same experience before." He smiled when he had finished, a smile that was embarrassed. He disliked to say it, apparently, but when Wyeth was so pleasant, he added: "We have bought what few books your race has written, for the purpose of sale, and have naturally expected some evidence of interest from them, by a call and an occasional purchase. And I am telling you the truth, if we depended on them to unload this stuff from our shelves, it would be there yet, as some of it is. You have personally bought more literature, in the way of current books, since you came in here, than all the rest of your people in this town together."

Wyeth went his way then, but he was no longer surprised, as he once was, for he had heard that many times before.

One day shortly after, Wyeth happened in at the druggist's place, the hot bed of argument. He inquired why a few magazines were not carried in stock.

"Hell!" cried that one, throwing his hands up in a gesture of despair and mingled disgust, "nigga's don't read."

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The following Sunday morning, when the drug store was full, he happened to mention a new book he had, and which many of the idlers were inspecting, one by one, asking to borrow it when he was through. He suggested that it was on sale uptown, then quoted the words of the clerk, who had remarked that he, Wyeth, bought more books than did the rest of the colored people put together.

He was hooted down, so there was no argument. Each was positive that his friend had bought one; while that friend was likewise of the same opinion. And of the many, almost every one had read the book he wrote, having borrowed it from someone who had bought it. The druggist then offered an excuse for the absence of literature at his store, by declaring that almost all the people subscribed, and the same came through mail.

Miss Palmer and he were certainly very forgetful.

Literature was a dead issue, that could not be denied; but whiskey was not.

Effingham had no library for its black people, and they were not allowed the privilege of the white. Yet a part of their tax was paid to support the same. Still, no one gave

that much thought, insofar as Wyeth could ascertain. When he mentioned it to the teachers, almost without exception they replied: "No use. Negroes don't read." And it was so everywhere. Yet every class but the doctors and teachers purchased *The Tempest*, when it was brought to their attention, and Wyeth even sold to three of these (two doctors and one teacher) in Effingham that summer.

No, no one he met had any worry about a library; but thousands of black children ran wild day by day upon their streets, went to jail in great numbers before they were of age, and filled convict camps as members of chain gangs long before they could be called even young men. There was no library, nor was there a park; but there were plenty of other places conducive to crime. And still Effingham had more than a hundred Negro churches.

"Can you not realize, that in your absence of such necessities for the training of these little black children, that you are growing children for the chain gang every day?" But this never aroused any visible concern. And sometimes they did say, emphatically:

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"Aw, we don't need no library; and if we had a park for colored people, they would do nothing but fight in it." And still others would cry: "Git religion! 'n' read d' Bible; pr'pare y'self fo' Heaben." And still others were in disgust, as they replied: "A nigga ain' going to 'mount to nothin' nohow, so what's the use?"

"A library could be obtained, if the conditions here were brought to the attention of the northern philanthropists," he suggested to Miss Palmer, whereupon she cried:

"Oh, Mr. Wyeth, you bore me with your contention about libraries and parks and Y.M.C.A.'s and the like. These nigga's in Effingham are not worrying about such things; so why should you, a stranger, a mere observer, be so concerned!"

"Because, Miss Palmer, I cannot help but see all this murder and crime going on, which is undermining the foundation of colored society. Every day, when my paper comes, it's murder, murder, murder, and fully ninety per cent is among our people, although only two-fifths of the population is Negro."

"Haven't I told you all along, that the crime is among the low down, whiskey drinking, depraved element, and not among the best people?"

"Yes, but this country cannot exist in peace and prosperity and happiness; nor can this race, with the greater part ignorant, criminal and depraved. The more intelligent have, for their duty, the task of helping in any way possible, and by so doing, lift these unfortunates into a state of intelligence and self-respect."

"Well," she contended, resignedly, "that is for the churches to do, there's enough of them."

"And the teachers, because they are looked to, should help as much as they can with their higher intelligence, for the mothers are too ignorant and too depraved to do so. But of the many churches, of which seventy are Baptist, not one has any connection or interest in a school here, directly or indirectly."

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"I begin to think you are going to lose your mind, if you don't quit seeing the many iniquities of our people. If you would only see what the good people are doing, and try to interest yourself more in them, you would be happier," she said. He sighed now, and then said to himself: "What's the use."

"Quit it all, Sidney," she said softly, calling him for the first time by his first name. "Quit all this worry about these nigga's and be yourself; be sweet." And she kissed him.

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CHAPTER FIFTEEN

"Wilson, Wilson! Mildred Is Gone!"

"Wilson, Wilson! Mildred is gone, Mildred is gone!" cried Constance, ringing her hands despairingly.

"Gone," he breathed, uncomprehendingly.

"Yes, gone." His sister sank into a chair, and gave up to a flood of tears.

"But why?" he cried, only now seeming to understand that she had actually left them.

"I don't know, I don't know," she moaned.

"This is certainly a mystery. Surely dear, you are mistaken," he insisted, greatly disturbed. "Mildred would surely not have left us so unceremoniously. And, besides—why, she—she, Constance, why she gave one hundred and fifty dollars to the Christian association movement only today. And you cannot mean that she has gone!

It is hardly possible!"

"I only wish it were not so; but come," and, taking his hand, she led him to the room Mildred had occupied. It was deserted, save for the furniture that belonged there. Only once had he seen the inside of it while she occupied it. And now it did not appear the same; because then, it was decorated with much lace and woman's needle work and picture postals. But, strange as he had thought, when he happened to glance into it before, there were no pictures of girls and men, young or old, nobody excepting the picture of the author of the book which she sold, and which had been taken from the frontispiece.

"This is the way I found it when I came home a few minutes ago," she said, resigned. "I cannot make it out; I cannot make anything out, except that the sweetest friend, the dearest girl I ever knew, has disappeared strangely."

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"She sang at the meeting only a few hours ago, and sang as I never heard her sing before. She was, moreover, in the best of spirits all day, and was so enthusiastic over the meeting. Dear me," he sighed wearily.

"If she had only left some word; given some hint that she was going to leave, but, of course she knew, and couldn't tell us, so there is no use at all. She's gone and I cannot imagine how much I am going to miss her."

Her brother sank into a chair, and gazed silently at nothing. He could not think clearly of the departure. For days he had slaved for this day of inauguration, and in his work, he had looked forward to her for much help. Her encouragement, to be near her and to hear her voice daily, was more to him than our pen can describe. He had felt that he could face the mighty struggle (which he knew was now before him) with all the strength of the strong; but now only, he fully estimated what she had been to him, and what he had dreamed that she would be some day. And all that, was now cast aside; in this one moment, his hope, his greatest hope had been shattered.

His sister looked at him, and for a moment, almost fell on her knees in sympathy. For she had not been blind. She had seen the change coming over him, with no thought but to encourage him. Constance had faith and patience and perseverance, and she had felt that everything would result favorably in the end.

And then she had watched this girl during that spell of a short time ago. She had seen her appearance change, as the result of some mystery. Her eyes became dazed from loss of sleep, due to the worry and subtle fear. It was then, with great cheer, that she saw it disappear later, until she was the same again. Constance was happy then, because the other was happy. She had been happier still, because she saw that, without effort, the other was making her brother happy. He had fairly thrived under it.

Constance felt that his lot was a hard one. She was confident that he would be a leader of men, in a greater measure than he was at the present. And when she had carefully observed the practical ability, as well as the intuition and foresight of Mildred Latham, she had longed, with all the craving of her heart, for a union between these two.

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And, as she saw her brother now, with eyes dry and listless, her heart went out to him with all of a sister's love. It pained her more, when she realized that she could not help him. She would have to stand by and say nothing, at the very time he needed her more than ever before. He was too strong a man by disposition; he possessed too much will power, and was too proud to ask or accept sympathy. It would all have to be given in silence.

There was a knock at the door. She heard steps on the porch, and guessed it was the people calling in regard to the Y.M.C.A. And it was only then she recalled, that they had been invited to a supper. She called to him:

"Wilson, some one has called." She went to the door and admitted a dozen persons, members of the church, and foremost enthusiasts in the Christian forward movement.

"Well, well!" Martin Girsh, principal of the local high school cried, coming in ahead of the others. "You are both sitting here at home, when we have been looking all around for you. And you both show the effect of the strain you have been laboring under, in this affair." He said this after he had seen the look upon their faces, their efforts at self-possession, which they could not hide. They were glad he saw it that way.

"Where is the young lady, the dear young lady who showed such an interest in the movement by giving such a liberal sum?" inquired one, and it was immediately taken up by the others. It required an effort on the part of both, to explain that she was out and would not be back again that evening....

"Isn't that too bad! And all of us were simply wild to meet her, to hear her sing, and to know more of this courageous young person," said the professor, with much regret.

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"She is positively a jewel, to say the least. Upon my honor," cried another, who was a letter carrier, "I didn't know she was such a treasure until she sang, and when she led them all in a cash subscription, I declared I would have to become better acquainted with her."

"I had heard her play and sing, but, indeed, I didn't know she possessed such a voice before."

"Suppose we arrange a banquet for this young lady, have her cut in the paper, and let the people know what a race-spirited young woman we have in this town," suggested one. The others took it up by acclamation. Wilson's eyes found his sister's, with a sickly green expression. And then he heard them again.

"When can we arrange this, Wilson? It is left to you and Miss Jacobs to set a date. The incident of this young woman's contribution to the colored Y.M.C.A., can be employed to a great advantage in the inauguration of this movement."

"Fire, fire, fire!" came an alarm from the street at that moment. All eyes sought the front, where, directly across the street and one door down, a large frame house suddenly burst into flames. Forthwith the visitors rushed, in a body. A wind was blowing strongly from the west at that moment, and the conflagration seemed to draw the flames. It had not rained for some time, and in an incredibly short time, the beautiful structure of a few minutes before, was beyond saving. From the way the flames were fanned by the wind, they threatened to endanger other buildings.

In a few minutes, the place was surrounded by spectators; while a number of fire departments were rushed to the scene from different directions.

It was hours later before the flames were subdued. Only a mass of charred ruins marked the place where the handsome structure had stood.

Services at the churches were well under way before many of the watchers left the scene, and the number included many of Jacob's callers who had, of course, forgotten their suggestion to entertain Mildred Latham, in honor of the beginning of the effort to secure aid for the colored youth of the city.

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As they sat alone that evening, neither Wilson Jacobs nor his sister offered any comment upon how they were saved an embarrassing ordeal. They were both thinking, thinking, and seeing, with their eyes full of tears, a chair where one had sat and talked and laughed with them the Sunday night before.

Their hearts were heavy, very heavy, for, strangely enough, they felt that Mildred Latham would never sit in that chair again.

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CHAPTER SIXTEEN

The Beast and The Jungle

"REMEMBER THE SABBATH DAY AND KEEP IT HOLY"

This was the inscription under a cartoon in the Effingham Herald, one Sunday, following a Sunday when crime seemed to have run riot. The cartoon pictured a huge knife stuck into a human heart, and the moral was, that on the Sabbath day, when its population was supposed to be at pious worship, murder was un-Godly.

The Sunday previous to this, seven different murders had occurred in that many different parts of the town. Sidney had read the accounts, and said nothing when he saw they were all black people. Only one exception, and that was one who had shot another, and in attempting to escape, had been shot by the police.

Thus was the condition of crime in Effingham. It was a rare Sunday that didn't have five or six shootings, killings and cutting affrays. The record for the previous year showed more than three hundred murders, mostly by Negroes upon each other, and in part by the police. Eighty per cent of all murder in the city was among two-fifths of the whole, or the Negro population. But what surprised Wyeth was, that insofar as speaking of it as an everyday occurrence, and something to be expected, the colored people paid little attention to it.

By this time, Wyeth had become known as a severe critic. And, therefore, against colored people in their effort for salvation, so the critics complained. There was one, however, who saw beneath the surface, and who said, in reply to the criticisms going the rounds, that Wyeth was criticised, not for the criticisms, but for his method of bringing the truth before the eyes which did not wish to see it.

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"We've tried every way possible to obtain a library," said one.

"What are some of the ways?" he inquired pointedly.

"Well, for instance, we have asked the teachers to each give a book for that purpose. We have almost two hundred teachers in this town, and if each one gave a book, and the preachers likewise, that would make considerable of a library."

"For sixty thousand people, yes." And under his breath he added, "You fool!"

"Why do you not write an editorial and bring attention to the dreadful amount of crime that seems to have submerged your population," he said one day to Mathews, a very excellent writer.

"I'm writing of what people are doing that is uplifting," the other returned.

"Do you not consider that all this murder the Negro is committing, to the disgrace of the state, the city, the county, and the race to which he belongs, is a thing that requires some effort, or some comment on our part as citizens of this commonwealth?"

"Oh, but the best colored people don't care to read of that," he explained.

"But it's a fact, is it not; and one that is going forth every day through the columns of the big dailies, and a fact that the public is making record of, and holds up to the gaze of the world, and gives this town the name of being the most uncivilized community in the country?"

"There is, of course, Mr. Wyeth, no use in trying to argue these things with you," complained the other. "About town, although you have been here only a short time, you are regarded as a contentious person, always forcing your way of seeing things upon people, and criticising our teachers and preachers and best people for their lack of concern, in regard to a lot of criminal Negroes, that find their way to this town, from every convict camp in the state and other states. If you would struggle to get into society and mingle with the best people, you would forget what these brutes are doing. Instead of that, you can always be seen standing at a distance, viewing all of us as one."

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"Abraham Lincoln, our emancipator, said: 'This country cannot continue with one part of the people free and the other in serfdom, and thrive.' I am wholly at a loss to understand this attitude of what you term the 'best people' toward the masses." Wyeth persisted, thoroughly aroused. "We complain of the injustice of prejudice, which is well worth the complaint. But, while we see that the white people refuse to accept us on an equal basis with themselves, we cry out about the 'best people.' We cannot expect the world to accept us as a race on the reputation of a precious few. And yet right here in this town, on all sides, among the 'best people' we hear that 'you' cannot be responsible for the condition of the great herd. I do not think you are expected to by the public; but what stirs me, fires me sometimes to denunciation, is this utter disregard for the evil things in which our people indulge themselves, to the disgrace of all."

"Have it your way, Mr. Wyeth," said the other, resignedly. "That is the reputation you have, 'having your way.'"

This was the end of that, but not of murder. Everywhere it continued.

Wyeth went to the churches. He listened to the sermons; and at the drug store, where the more logical members of the city could often be found, he met the same condition. Nobody was worried. Nobody cared. Just as long as their own affairs were going along in a satisfactory manner, no complaint was forthcoming. And, as time went on, Wyeth took notice that everybody carried a revolver. One evening, at the drug store, someone displayed a revolver of a new type, which brought about some comment. Forthwith, among the twelve present, ten additional revolvers were produced and displayed, Wyeth being the only one not possessing one. He was looked at in surprise, and made the object of much comment.

"Why, I wouldn't go from here home one night, without my cannon," said the druggist. A prominent doctor smiled grimly, as he pocketed his, while others laughed and patted their weapons fondly.

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"You from out of the west and haven't a gun. Man, you are crazy," laughed one. "You better send out west there, and have them send on that dungeon."

"I never owned a gun in my life."

"What! Been living out in that wild country these many years, and never owned a cannon! What kind of people do you have out there?"

"Civilized people."

"Uh, well, I ain' never been without a smoker, believe muh."

"He'll be carrying one before he's here long," laughed a physician, as they filed out into the night.

More conspicuously here than elsewhere he had been, Wyeth saw that the undertaking business thrived better in this city than any other conducted by colored people. A half dozen companies were incorporated, with a paid-up capital stock, and declared handsome dividends every six months. And each company owned one or more ambulance carriages, or "dead wagons," as they were commonly called as they moved busily about the streets, picking up wounded and dead Negroes. Almost daily they whirled through the town at break-neck speed, to the tune of a dreadful alarm.

Then Wyeth began to see, without looking, why crime thrived. The mills, coal mines and furnaces employed thousands of men, as we know, and paid them at various times. And to a saloon they filed and drank their fill. In his observations, Wyeth had never seen saloons do such an excessive bottle business. Great cases, the length of the bar in many instances, and piled everywhere, were half pints of liquor. A man said to him one day, "You'll find, upon searching the ignorant Negro, three things almost any time: A bottle of booze, which might be empty if you searched him at his work—a cannon, if not, it is because he is not able to possess one—a knife, with a blade long enough to go through you—additionally, a pair of dice."

But it was not at the saloons that they bought all the whiskey, regardless of the great number in sight. But barrel houses and wholesale stores were operated in connection therewith. Here the tiger conductors purchased their supplies, which consisted mostly of whiskey, and the cheapest available, which was, to be exact, a dollar and a half a gallon; but, if bought in smaller quantities, it came at forty cents a quart; while the beer used by the tigers was so cheap that finally, no label was used on the bottle. And it was this kind, he learned, the tiger people used almost exclusively. It was likewise, this kind that produced the most fighting drunks, and was sold after midnight—Saturday night. So, on the outside of a good supply of drink and a crap game in sight, crime ran high in this city, and was ever in continuance.

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CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

"This Is Mr. Winslow, Madam!"

After his conflict with Moore, Legs took a silent pledge; he would quit gambling and drinking, and start a bank account. "I'm going to use some sense and save my money," he declared, with much sincerity. "There is nothing like a few dollars, in case of emergency."

"If you stick to that theory in practice, Legs," Wyeth corroborated, "you'll never have cause to regret it."

He started the same at once, with one dollar. The next week he added another, which made two, and was jubilant. The next week he added another, and at the end of four weeks, had five dollars to his credit, and was discussing investments. "I'm going to buy me a house and lot by and by," he said, laughing over his prospects.

"I own the L. & N. R.R.," cried a dirty, black, fat Negro, coming up the street. "Haf a the A.G.S. too!"

"That's Sam," said the Mis', coming to the door at that moment. "Ever since a white man took his wife, they say he's been like that. He imagines he owns railroads, and if you happen to be going by the station, you can see him standing gazing at the trains, with a foreign expression."

"Git that car back on the right switch there! Flag that engine, and make them push that section to the left! All right. Now, pull her ahead. That's all."

"How-do, Sam," she greeted him as he came abreast. He halted a moment, and gazed at her remonstratingly.

"This is Mr. Winslow, madam. Always address me as such, and in that manner hereafter. I am Mr. Winslow, understand, and I own the L. & N. R.R."

"And the A.G.S.?"

"Own haf a that too."

"And the T.C.I. Company?"

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"They wanted to sell it to me. I wouldn't buy it. Come on there with that train, engineer. Drop that car on siding G. Now, switch that other chain around on track E."

"Say, Books," laughed Legs. "If you want a get rich, quit the book business, and run into a train with your head. That guy is certainly rich."

"He carries on that way all the time," the Mis' explained. "But he is sane otherwise,

that is, he is harmless and lives with his mother down the street a few doors. He goes errands, and you can give him as much as twenty dollars to buy a nickel's worth, and he'll bring back nineteen dollars and ninety five cents. No one can beat him, and he is as honest as the most conservative."

"Let's go to a movie, Books," said Legs, when Sam had disappeared.

"All right," and together, they went down the street in the direction of the business district. When they had arrived at one of the three shows, the pictures did not appeal to them, and they strolled about the town.

The bank, conducted by Negroes, was near the center of the block, and cornered on the alley, and on either side of this was business conducted by or for Negro trade. Within a block of the bank, was located the three shows; and while operated and owned by white men, were patronized entirely by Negroes. It was a puzzle to Wyeth to see his people operating banks with more success than they could picture shows, clothing stores, and even hotels. This was the case not only in Effingham, but in other cities as well. The bank and the neighborhood immediately surrounding it, was the center for Negro gatherings, and upon this street might be found a crowd at any time. Almost every other door seemed to be a restaurant, and operated by Greeks. In fact, this line of business was, apparently, monopolized by these people all over the country. Wyeth saw that this was due to social reasons. A Greek or an Italian, or even a poor Jew, operating a business like a grocery store, or any kind of business, employing less than ten thousand dollars capital stock, lived much within his means; whereas, a colored man in the same business, invariably was, through the connections of his family, a leader in society. These Greeks did not even pretend such a thing, even in a small way among their own, which made a great difference at the end of each year. None of this class referred to would think of owning an automobile; whereas, such an asset is common among these black people. Hence, a Negro in any business other than a barbershop, bootblack stand, pressing shop, or business requiring a considerable amount of practical ability, was a rare thing.

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Being in business, he is looked to to spend more money, as well. This, Wyeth had found, was not always his preference; but his wife and family usually represented the better colored people, and, therefore, are expected to entertain; are made the object of much flattery and ostentation. There was one who ran a grocery near Miss Palmer's, whom, Wyeth recalled, was the object of much scorn, when discussed. More than once, when he suggested a purchase of a watermelon, or soda water, or some refreshment that might be obtained at a grocery store, he was advised against patronizing the "chinse" on the corner, meaning the colored grocery keeper. And he came to learn, that the only excuse for such a reference, was that he didn't "keep" his wife in society, but made her "slave" in his little old store along with himself.

For this, he was given as little of their trade as possible; but, with careful application and perseverance, he was succeeding to a creditable degree. But the most extraordinary feature of this was, that the druggist received no more of this class of trade, than did the grocery keeper, notwithstanding the fact that he was high in society, and was positively of their point of view. Wyeth passed much of his spare time talking with the grocery man, and came to find him a most obliging man in every way. When he was informed that Wyeth was selling a book by a Negro, he instructed him to bring him one forthwith, and which he was glad to own, and read it through at once.

So it came to pass, that in all he saw, Wyeth found many honest and unassuming people, and whose interest in the race did not end with a few sweet words and a shrug of the shoulders.

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Many colored men were actually succeeding in the grocery business in Effingham, and many of them were referred to as "chinse's," by those purporting to be leaders in society.

Getting back to Sidney Wyeth and Legs, who were uptown for the purpose of attending a picture show. Two of the three shows were operated by the same company, and the playhouses were referred to as capital number one, and capital number two. They were in separate blocks. Legs and Wyeth had been to capital number one, and were turning in the direction of the other, when some excitement was in evidence in that direction. They joined in the crush, and were just in time to see an altercation between a man and a woman, a nice looking woman, brown-skinned, with an unusually heavy head of hair. The man appeared to have called the woman, and was desirous of remonstrating with her about something to which she took exception. She turned to go, and it was then that, like a flash, he drew a long, keen-bladed knife from his pocket, and, without a word, drove it to the hilt in her breast. She walked calmly, perhaps a half dozen steps, and than, with a sudden clutching at the air, she cried: "Oh, I'm so sick!" Wyeth saw her eyes for one moment, and the next, she reeled about, and fell dead at the feet of the crowd.

The murderer saw her, and it was only when she fell, that he appeared to take any notice of the fact that he had committed murder. He now turned and fled up the

alley, while the Negroes about him fell back.

"There goes the beast!" cried Legs, pointing him out to Wyeth, and the next moment they followed in close pursuit. A cry from the crowd went up as they disappeared. It warned them that they would be dealt with likewise, but they heeded it not.

They ran up the alley that opened ahead into a wide street. The murderer led them at considerable distance, and, as they hurried after him, they saw his head turning from left to right, evidently looking for some opening in which to escape. But their pursuit was too close. Arriving at the end of the alley, he halted one brief moment, and then turned south.

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This street fell rapidly a block, and reached a level in a railroad yard, where long trains of cars stood silently in the pale moonlight. To these he now ran, not looking back at his pursuers. A few minutes later, he had, for a time, disappeared from view behind a car. But determined, with their blood now boiling, the two flew on after him. When they got inside the yards, they caught a glimpse of him crawling along to the other side of a line of cars, to which was hitched an engine.

A moment later, this began to move, and, suddenly, while they were yet some distance away, he swung aboard one of the cars and stood on the bumpers. They hurried forward, and caught a car each, a few cars to the rear; while the speed of the train increased. In a few minutes it was flying, and they were hanging dangerously to the side. With quick intuition, Wyeth climbed to the top of the train, and called to Legs when he stood over him, to do likewise. Hurriedly, Legs clambered to the top. As he settled panting on top of the moving train, in the rear and hurrying forward, the light of a brakeman approached. They darted forward, looking carefully between the cars, to ascertain which contained the fugitive. The train now hurried around a bend toward the outskirts of the town, and, as it did so, they saw the creature drop suddenly from between the cars and roll over the embankment, and down the grade which was, perhaps, at this point twenty odd feet.

The train was tearing along now at a speed that made it positively dangerous to alight. Still, the light of the brakeman was only a few cars away, and, inasmuch as they would most likely be severely dealt with if found, they were, for the moment, at a loss what to do. The fugitive had now arisen, and was running again to safety. All they had seen before the electric show now came back to them, and, without regard for the risk they were taking, they quickly clambered to the bottom and fell off the train, just as a curse greeted their ears from the brakeman above.

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A moment later, the roar of the train was lost in the distance, and they were alone, but, fortunately, uninjured. The fugitive had, apparently, made good his escape. Disgusted and disgruntled, they started back down the track in the direction from whence they had come. They had gone, it seemed perhaps a half mile, when suddenly a groan came to their ears. They stopped and listened.

From near where a few stray hedge and weeds had grown up and were tangled and enmeshed, they caught the outline of a man, stretched apparently helpless therein. They hurried forward, Legs in the lead. As they did so, he sighed perceptibly. Legs had now reached the man, and was in the act of bending over him, when Wyeth grabbed him from the rear and jerked him quickly back; but he was in time to save him from the other, who had, like a flash, sprung up and lunged forward with upraised knife.

Having missed, the murderer tumbled forward on his face, and bit the cinders, while Legs raised himself off Wyeth, who had been pushed backward and down by the sudden collision. The other had gained his feet, however, before they got their wits together, and with a mad curse he tore down the tracks. As Wyeth raised himself, his fingers encountered a piece of cinder, heavy with iron. Unconsciously, his fingers encircled it, and when they again started in pursuit, he grasped it.

"We'll kill that beast as he killed that woman," cried Legs, panting dreadfully, but more determined now than ever. With a clear track, and nothing to obstruct the speed, it was now evidently only a question of minutes until they must surely overcome the other who was shorter, and whose speed had become noticeably slower. Legs had got within a few feet of him, when suddenly he stopped short and whirled about. Too late! Legs seemed doomed to meet the point of the upraised knife that glistened in the moonlight. Wyeth at that moment saw the danger of his companion, and, with a cry, he hurled the cinder full at the crouching fugitive. It went straight, and took the beast full in the face. With a cry, the other fell backward across the track.

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Legs tumbled over his prostrate form, while, at that moment, from down the track came the sound of an approaching train. Both now looked up, and it was only then they were aware that it was so near. They were blinded by the light, but with a cry they sprang free, as the light fell full upon the face of the fugitive, who at that moment came to his senses. He staggered forward, and then with a cry that rang above the roar of the train, he stumbled forward, but in rising, one of his feet had

caught in a frog and held him fast. A screwing of brakes could be heard, but in a moment the heavy engine crushed over his writhing body, and mangled him until, when he was taken from beneath it, he could not be recognized.

Legs and Wyeth were present the next morning at the inquest. There was no visible excitement over the death of either. A small paragraph at the bottom of the back page of the morning paper reported the death, by stabbing, of a Negro woman; while a still smaller one made notice of the death, in an unusual manner, of the murderer.

And so it was in Effingham. If one desired notoriety he had to do other than kill a Negro, or be killed by one. For such was soon forgotten among other and more unusual sensations.

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CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

"Thou Shalt Not Steal!"

During Wyeth's canvass among his people, he had become accustomed to regard men who indulged excessively in drinking, as a problematical feature. And when that same man gambled, in addition, and failed to keep his word or oath, he was not in the least surprised. And, moreover, when he became acquainted with a person who loved liquor, gambled likewise, and who did not struggle to secure a job, but was content to walk about in perfect peace, without any effort in that direction, he was not surprised if that person stole, in addition.

The people he stopped with were, in a measure, secretive. That is, they did not always take the trouble to state where they purchased all they had about the house. He took meals with them occasionally, and saw them eating every day; and, although chicken was very high, exceedingly high in Effingham, they had it every day.

The druggist, whose store was a block distant, had inquired of them, and made known the fact that Moore was indebted to him two fifty, but Wyeth paid little attention to this, since, during the warm afternoons, under the cool of the electric fan, he indulged in such reminiscences, and Wyeth knew almost everybody who owed the druggist anything, including Miss Palmer.

Two robberies had occurred in less than two weeks at the place, and both were shrouded in mystery. The first had been explained away very reasonably. A window that was almost hid by vines had been left open, and through this, a "nigga," as they put it, had made his entrance and gotten away, carrying with him a suit of clothes belonging to one of the roomers, who kept himself pretty well soaked with liquor; this roomer happened to be employed at a wholesale liquor house, and was, therefore, able to drink with economy. Sam was his name, but he was not, however, the one who owned the L. & N. R.R. But Sam was an easy go-lucky and didn't care whether school kept or not; and, likewise, didn't make a big noise if something did crawl in through the window, and steal a new thirty-five dollar suit.

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As was stated, it was explained, John Moore lost an old derby the same time—at least, this was how he reported it. The green stain upon the window-sill, from the vines his knees crushed, was further evidence of the ingress and the egress. Considerable indignation was shown by Moore, and a great many words were employed over the affair; but, in due time it had died away and was forgotten, when the second came to pass.

The victim this time happened to be a gloomy and forlorn creature, who could well boast that no miscegenation had prostituted his ancestors, and whose teeth, in the night, flashed like a diamond necklace. Griffin was his name, and he did not shoot craps, or fight, or get drunk, and Wyeth didn't think he drank, until he saw the Mis' go to make his bed one day, and, in turning back the pillow, revealed a half pint of John.

Griffin reported that it was employed as a medicine, and Wyeth allowed it to go at that, but indulged a smile upon Griffin that meant more. Wyeth had a way of joking with the eyes that kept him out of difficulties, but convicted and judged those near him, and they could only laugh and look guilty.

One of the other good things we know of Griffin, is that he read the Bible, and nothing else, and said so; moreover, he deplored the reading of anything else, declaring it to be contrary to the laws of God. Griffin rarely said Jesus, and never "Jaysus." And—yes, he was a Sunday school teacher, and went to services to a church that was at the other side of town; he shouted when the preacher delivered a soul-stirring sermon, and expected to go to Heaven when he died. Only one thing did Griffin indulge in, though he was careful to keep that to himself, and that was woman

—but we are a long way from our story. And still, we cannot leave it, this part of it, until we make known that she was a "high yellow" which is perhaps unnecessary to state, for when the color is like Griffins', they scorn all other kind.

The robber this time employed a more machination method, and he was a very congenial robber also. Out of consideration for Griffin's regular attendance at church, he left an old greasy suit that, due to the great amount of the foreign matter it contained, was likely to last him until finances would enable him to restock for the benefit of the robber.

This robbery occurred one night when he was away, and did not return until the following morning, which was in itself singular, for Griffin was rarely away. It was, like the other, mysterious. Griffin was a miner, and since he would not—so 'twas said—pay twenty-five cents a week for warm water and a towel to clean himself at the mines, he preferred to sleep in the kitchen, because he was unfit to occupy any other portion of the house, unless it was the attic. And since there was none to this house, we leave him in the kitchen, where he slept in a dirty, but warm bed, and kept his clothes—he had some pride—in the strongest trunk Wyeth thought he had ever seen. On the outside, he kept it locked with the strongest Yale spring. With all the high-priced advertising done in regard to the safety of such locks, this robber didn't seem to give a hang, but, with a steel poker, he had twisted and twisted, until Mr. Yale had resigned himself to the inevitable, and permitted ingress. Within were four nice, clean suits, awaiting Griffin's subtle occasions.

Legs, Wyeth and Glenview, who were very agreeable roomers, didn't hear of it until the second morning. And they might not have known then, if it had not happened that they were together in the adjoining room, and overheard Griffin crying over the loss. That happened to be Friday. Legs had become something of a hero, with his successful running down of the murderer, and now played, very successfully, the part of a man. Legs did not positively condone the light fingered method. When they had been led, by their curiosity, to investigate, and had returned to the room, he remarked:

"It beats Hell the way this place continues to be robbed!"

"It is indeed singular," commented Glenview, whose English was always the most careful. And he never swore.

"Yes," said Legs again, "it *is* strange. So strange that I'm getting suspicious," and he closed an eye meaningly. "There's a man in the house who has not worked this summer.... He cannot *seem* to get the kind of work he follows, true; but the fact to be considered, is that he *has* not worked this summer. He likes to gamble, and is particularly fond of liquah...."

There was a pause, and he closed that eye again, and looked across at Glenview. Glenview closed an eye and looked at Wyeth. Wyeth held his open, but did some rapid thinking. He now recalled that, upon entering, the robber had cut the screen, it was shown to them; but now as he remembered it, the ends of the wires where the screen had been cut pointed outward.... Also, it was reported to have been cut with a hatchet; and the hatchet was on the ground near the window, which was logical.... It was very strange indeed, this robbery.... Legs was speaking again:

"This man who has been out of work all summer, at least has not worked all summer, and who loves liquah better than I do, and who could shoot craps forever and be happy, sleeps within four feet of that trunk. The only thing between him and the trunk is a door that has not been closed this summer.... And who, moreover, if you will recall," he closed that eye again and held it so a second, "awakens always when we enter late at night, and inquires, 'who goes there.' *And this man slept through all this with the trunk almost against his head, and didn't hear it being opened.*" He paused again and closed that eye, it was the right; Glenview closed his left, Wyeth closed his too. From the other room came sighs, and a restless turning on the bed where some one lay. On the front porch, John Moore sat with the Bible open before him....

"Have you observed," said Glenview, in his Englishy way, "that the ones who have been robbed, are those most likely to take *his* story about it, and are not capable of investigating on their own initiative?" Three eyes closed simultaneously. "For instance," he resumed, "there's Sam, always full you know; when I inquired what he had done about it, he replied that he had inquired of one pawnbroker—and you know there are perhaps a hundred in this town—if any one had offered a suit as security for a loan that fit that description. Think of it! And now here comes the instance of this old creature we hear sighing in the kitchen; and who reads nothing but the Bible, and goes to church on Sunday. He hasn't sense enough, and nerve, he doesn't know; he has perhaps called on the Lord to restore those things. Why haven't some of our things been stolen?" ... Again three eyes closed, while memories became the order; the memory of Wyeth's conflict, and they didn't forget that of Legs. "We leave them laying around, and none of us lock our trunks.... You," he said, seeing Legs, "have more suits than any of us, and they hang on the wall...."

John Moore had fallen asleep and the Bible had tumbled to the floor. A street car line came past the door, and the cars, when passing, filled the house with noise. One passed at this moment, and he was suddenly awakened. Looking about hastily for the Bible he had held, he saw it on the floor at his feet. He stooped to pick it up, and as he did so, saw that it was open. As his hand touched it, his eyes lit upon a chapter, whereupon he straightened up quickly. A moment later he picked it up, and rising, entered the house.

The words of the chapter that had disconcerted him for the moment were: "*Thou Shalt Not Steal!*"

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CHAPTER NINETEEN

They Turned Her Out of Church

Saturday night of that week was a beautiful night, and everybody sought the open air—no, almost everybody. There were a few that didn't, in fact they sought the closed inside for a purpose.

Murphy had a good crowd, for it was pay day, and everything was "sliding" along O.K. Glenview, who had purchased a new novel from Wyeth, who bought them and sold the same at a discount when he had read them, was there too. So was John Moore, *he* was always there. Wyeth was below, and so was Legs, for, strange as it may seem, he had kept his pledge thus far. He was glad of it, too, which is ahead of our story. Easy.

A game was on, a big game, and darkies were uncoated; perspiration flowed freely. Wyeth retired about twelve, or it might have been earlier—it makes little difference. The game was on, and so was somebody else. Wyeth felt himself being shook, but could not seem to awaken at once. Words came to his ears, and it was the voice of Legs that spoke:

"Get up," it said, in subdued excitement. "Get up, you fool."

"Go to the devil! Are you crazy? Don't awaken me. I'm tired and want to rest," he answered unconsciously.

"I said, arise—at once. Somethin' doin'."

"Will you go to the devil, or shall I hit you in the ear and dispatch you forthwith! I want to rest, you pair of Legs."

"Listen! Listen! Hear them, Books!"

Books heard something, but he didn't know what it was; moreover, he didn't care—in fact, he didn't want to hear. He wanted to sleep. It was a fine night for sleeping, too. The soft air floated in through the window at his head, and the vines and garden the Mis' raised, and which grew within a few feet of him, perfumed it with nature's own. Why should he be concerned about what went on up in Murphy's den. He kicked at Legs, when he repeated.

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Legs went into the other room, but the noise from above persisted.

"Look out there, nigger!" it said. "Don't start nothing, don't start nothing! Get around there, you, beside that other nigger! Now, here, you, ink, put these cuffs on the two niggers against the wall. Right around the wrists, you fool. I've put them on you often enough for you to know that they don't go on the shoulders. And don't be so damn nervous. You shiver around there as though it was the first time you've been arrested. Are you done? Well, stand over in that row beside them other niggers! Don't think because I know you that you c'n ease out that window. And don't figure I'm going to play any pets! Heah! Heah! You little black rat! You, I say, with the pop peepers! If you try any monkey foolishness, I'll put'm out, I'll put'm out! Hear that nigger, hear that! I'll shoot you nigger, I'll shoot you!"

"Hear'm Books, hear'm! It's the police. They're upstairs. They're making a raid. Hear'm Books!" came Leg's voice, as he came back to where Wyeth lay. Sidney had awakened now. Sitting up in bed, he listened to the voices that came down from upstairs. It was still a little vague, but Legs spoke again:

"They are coming down now." And so they were. A noise of many feet tramping about, began to file downward on the rickety steps.

"Wait, Frank," came a voice. "Let me out on the front, so I can hold a gun on these niggers. Now come ahead. Now, niggers, the first one that makes a break, remember, out goes his light, bingo!"

"Mary, oh, Mary, bring me my coat and hat." Wyeth was dressed now and peeping out the window. Yes, it was John Moore, and he wanted his coat and hat. He was

going away, on a journey. The Mis', very much frightened, hurried forward, and held them out to him. He placed the hat on his head, and took the coat on his arm. He wore cuffs, so that made a difference.

The Mis' fell into the room a moment later, and gave up to silent anguish. It was not the first time she had witnessed a raid. Sometimes Wyeth felt sorry for her. For, once upon a time she had been a good woman, she was yet when she could be. At least she was always kind; but when liquor was voted out of the state some years before, he, her husband then, took up the sale of it, contrary to the law. He had been caught once, and then twice. He had then been caught the third time. The third time is when you go to the mines. You may never return from these places, so 'tis said. "They kill you out there," is what John Moore had told him once, grimly. "Yes, they *kill* you out there. It's *Hell!*"

They killed the Mis's husband. And she had a son, and he sold liquor too. He was a dissipated youth. The mines had him six months. They gave him back to her. T.B. He died. And at this time she mourned his loss. She was now alone in the world. She had, at first, made an honest living, and was a member of the A.M.E. church. She became acquainted with John Moore. Well, they turned her out of church some time afterward. They would have done so sooner, but she was pitied, and black people have sympathy—even for criminals. The Mis' had lost her husband, and then her son and—but they turned her out of church. That's bad. Oh, it's awful bad to be turned out of church. Black faces, crooked often, regard one with dark suspicion when he is turned out of church, especially if a woman.

And now they had *him*. The other, her consort, for such he was, because you see, be merciful, she was a human being.... And all human beings cry out for love, yes, *love*....

"Take along his Bible, Mis'," grinned Legs. And then he looked at her.... Yes, Legs knew the story too.... He was sorry, terribly sorry. They were all sorry for the Mis'.

Legs and Wyeth now stood on the outside. It was safe now. They watched the arrangement.

Four abreast they now stood lined in four rows. They were all handcuffed together. John Moore was there, bringing up the rear. Murphy was, too. Being the man of the house, he was honored with a place at the front. And behind these sixteen men, walked his honor, the police. And so very insignificant they were, apparently. Yet, they were the *law!* And that means more than our pen can describe here.

Black people claim to fear God and no other. They don't. The most of them do not understand it in a larger sense. No. But, notwithstanding the fact that, in Dixie they are forever breaking it, they *do* fear the law—and the white man.

They filed now, a row at a time, and a few feet apart, across the street. Under the flaring electric street lamp they passed, some bareheaded, but all downcast, discouraged and remorseful. Oh, this was the law. The law of Effingham declared: "Thou must not game!" In the middle of the street they walked, and a few minutes later, they passed under the light of the lamp at the next intersection, and disappeared in the direction of the station. And it was only then, Wyeth recalled, that among them he had not observed Glenview. He was not there, he was positive; and yet he was at the game. Where was he? Where did he go?

He turned his eyes in the direction of the rear, and at that moment Glenview walked into view.

"You!" cried many voices, for a curious crowd of crooks had gathered. Good people had long since retired.

"Well?" he smiled.

"Well...."

"I'm *here*. Not *there!*" And his eyes went in the direction of the others, who were now passing under another light, into a bigger light.

"Well?"

"I saw they were nothing but a pair of snots."

"Well?"

"The window was open."

"The window?"

"And the *outside* air was *very* inviting. Much more than that *other.*"

"Oh...." It was becoming clear to all now. The Mis' looked disappointed. Sometimes she had not liked Glenview.... He winked and went to the front of the house.

"Well," sighed the Mis', resignedly. "They certainly got a bunch of them," and then laughed, a laugh that Wyeth had heard before and knew. Not a cheerful laugh, but a dry, hard laugh. One that was possible after years of bitterness.

By this time, a score or more Negroes, denizens of the night, had gathered and were exchanging opinions, offering theories, and executing objections.

"Some low down nigga done turned'm up." This was what a large Negress, with imposing hips, was saying. She sold liquor across the way, and conducted a house for any kind of purpose.

"Some doity li'l stool pigeon," added another, who was more doubtful still. Wyeth regarded them a moment in disgust. They were dressed as they were when they arose that morning or that afternoon, or whenever it was, which was not in the last hour or two.

It was Glenview who detailed the raid now at some length. "A big Negro was shooting for three dollars. A little guy, who appeared to be very drunk, kept making a fuss, finally asking to be let out. He went, and when Murphy opened the street door for that purpose, well, in walked the bulls—no, the little snots."

"I'm going upstairs to see how it looks after the scramble," said he, and a moment later his feet were heard in that direction. He had no sooner hit the landing, than from above came a dreadful noise. A crashing of window panes indicated that someone was trying to get out of the window. A table turned over with considerable objections, judging from the noise it made. The whatever-it-was appeared to be coming toward the stair in post haste now. Chairs were cast aside, without care of how they might land, and then it appeared on the landing. A moment later it came down, much a tumble, and not in the usual way. Hands and legs and feet seemed altogether, as they did many stunts on the way down. Eyes were opened wide, while breaths were held, as the spectacle was observed closely. And then it landed. One moment it lingered, and made a funny picture for the many eyes. Then it became erect—and behold! It was a man.

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But he hadn't taken the time to dress entirely. He had, upon coming down, or deciding to do so, donned only a coat; while his large, loose knee lengths stood out conspicuously from the small legs, that reminded one of pipe stems, smoked ones—coming out of huge corn cobs.

It came about when Glenview ascended the stair, and met it in the act of looking about to ascertain whether the coast was clear.

For a time that may have been a second, possibly more, he stood hesitant. Wild of eye and trembling in the legs, but conspicuous to a humorous degree, he soon came to appreciate the spectacle he made, and forthwith betook himself hurriedly back up the steps; but, alas! Not many had he ascended when he made a miss, and, with a smothered, embarrassed cry, he fell, and the next moment came back.

While all this performing was going on, he was not aware that the officers had long since departed. And when he again landed at the feet of his onlookers, who were now given over to a fit of snickers, he cried in a subdued, but intensely excited voice: "Don't let them get me! Don't let them get me!" He was wild, as he hesitated before attempting to return. And in the meantime, he whined like a poor thing, which made the Negroes who stood about, give up to loud laughing.

At last, he was calmed to a point where he took himself hurriedly up the stairs, and disappeared. And then there was another commotion! Apparently the house was coming down, from the scrambling, and the way chairs, and beds, and tables—and everything seemed to be turning over.

"Say, say!" came the voice of Glenview. "The officers have disappeared a half hour ago. Be quiet. Those are not officers below. They are curiosities." But it was some time before he was able to communicate this fact to a point that brought quiet. When he presently emerged, the onlookers saw not two, Glenview and the other, but five. They slipped down the steps like ghosts, looked wildly about for one brief second, and then melted into the night like vampires.

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As they floated away, some one recognized one and called him out by name, and these words came back to those who listened:

"Hush calling my name, you fool!"

The plate at the head of the table was not turned that morning. The Mis', notwithstanding the words she uttered when the raid had been made: "I'm glad of it! It'll stop that gambling, and I hope, Murphy's whiskey selling," she was, nevertheless, sad-eyed, and all upset. All that day she so remained, grew worse, if anything.

"Don't worry, Mis'," comforted Glenview kindly. "As soon as some word comes from them, I'll hustle about and secure bail." But it was late in the morning before any word came, and then, alas! It was a surprise.

There is a law in regard to gaming in Effingham, which makes the penalty heavier if caught gaming during the week; whereas, it is lighter for Sunday. Therefore, being well aware of the fact, no serious anticipation was held as to how the gamesters would be dealt with, since they had been caught after midnight Saturday night. In fact, when the excitement attendant with the raid had passed, those directly interested, looked hourly for those who were caught, to be released.

"What'll it cost them under this law?" inquired Wyeth of Glenview, who appeared to be fairly well informed regarding the matter.

"Oh, not much," he replied. "Perhaps five or six dollars. You see," he explained, "the city considers gambling through the week as a business indulged in by professionals; whereas Sunday, they construe that they may be workmen engaged in a pastime."

Wyeth understood, of course, but it appeared singular at first.

"They will be taken to the city lock-up," Glenview resumed, "and if collateral to the amount of twenty-five dollars be offered and approved, they will be allowed to return, and when they appear tomorrow morning, they will be fined five dollars and cost. If they were caught during the week, it would be ten and cost, and possibly more, depending."

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It was at the end of this conversation that they got their surprise.

Murphy came in. He seemed tired and worn; he was a picture, in fact, of the result of such a raid. He sat himself down with a sigh that was not altogether one of relief. All waited, with drawn breath.

"That's the worst place I have seen the inside of," he said, and shook his head in emphasis.

"Where did the wagon pick you fellows up?" inquired Glenview. "I don't recall hearing any."

"No wagon picked us up. We walked all the way. They didn't carry us to the city pen, but to the county jail."

"What!" cried the Mis', while Glenview appeared to regard it with incredulity.

And then all were silent, with a cold feeling creeping through their veins, as the grim reality came upon them. It would now be thirty-seven fifty, and not five dollars, for the county made no exception for Sunday.

All the day through, John Moore raised from his hard seat, and gazed out through the heavy bars that penned him in. "Will they never come, will they never come!" he cried to himself, but only the heat and multitudes of Negroes greeted his gaze, as it eagerly sought the door to freedom.

And all day Glenview walked from one bondman to another.

"No," said the wealthiest Negro doctor, who had bailed out many. "I've quit going anybody's bond. I don't think, from the experience I have had, that I would be justified in going my brother's hereafter." He had a few to jump them, and it cost him a pretty penny, he afterwards told Wyeth, to get them back.

"He's worthless," said the druggist, apparently amused, at least satisfied with his solution for the present. "He owes me two fifty for medicine I sold him, and trusted to my sorrow. But I'll tell you what I will do." He changed his tone to one of thought, then went on. "Now you tell the Mis' if she will come down here and give me seven fifty, five of this is going the bond that'll put the thief on the street, because it is he who has been doing that stealing up there, and all of you don't seem to know it, and the remainder, two fifty, is what he owes me. Tell her to bring it to me in cash, understand, the long green, and out he comes, to go back soon where he ought to be, for he has honestly no right to be free."

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Of course, Mis' never had such an amount, so Moore, insofar as this source was concerned, was doomed to stay in the hot place for some time. Glenview went to another.

"That nigga! Hell! Why I wouldn't go his bond to stay in Heaven, he is so crooked and undependable."

That was the end of it for that day, and the night settled down.

It would cost ten dollars cash to secure release through professional bondsmen; and,

inasmuch as John had not the tenth part of that, he reposed for several days in his new place of abode, and became very dirty and bedraggled in the meantime. Always so clean and tidy—thus the Mis' kept him, that he was hardly recognizable, when a few days afterward, he returned. It was Murphy who secured bond, and Wyeth came upon him in some surprise that evening. He sat quietly on the porch with the Bible in his hand, so, greeting him, Wyeth asked how he "liked" it. The other said:

"Whew! The worse place I was ever in." He had been in them before, but not this one; but he did not, of course, deem it necessary to make this mention. It had been made by others. "Two hundred nigga's in the room I was in, and God knows how many more elsewhere. And they were one-armed and one-legged, one-eyed and toothless, earless and one-eared; but the whole bunch, every one of them, were filthy. And the place was rotten!"

Yet more than five hundred Negroes, most of them young men, preferred the place to freedom.

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CHAPTER TWENTY

"I Love You!" She Said

Miss Annie Palmer had about despaired of winning Sidney Wyeth, and by this time was not nearly so considerate when he called, as she had been some weeks before. And, besides, Wyeth had an insistent way of seeing things, which was not the custom of her friends. When he called, sometimes, instead of giving up to the easier things in life, and which concerned the select few, he was liable to bring up a subject concerning the future of the Negro of the south, as he is today, etc., etc., etc. So it came to pass, that Miss Palmer was only good at times; and at those times, she was liable to be good by fits and starts, and then she "got cranky." Notwithstanding the fact, they were still friends, nothing more, and, as Miss Palmer sometimes sighed to herself, "Will never be anything more."

"You were, I thought," she declared one day, "the sweetest kind of a boy. But of late you are so concerned about Y.M.C.A.'s, and libraries, and schools, and the like, for our people, and how many are being killed and all that, that I am sometimes serious in my belief that you are losing your mind."

"I came to show you the article in *The Herald*, by the park commissioner, with regard to the establishing of a park for Negroes. I suppose you have read it? I am certainly glad to know that you have white people in your city, who are showing some interest in the civic welfare of our race; and from what he has suggested, with regard to this park for our people, to be centrally located, there is conclusive evidence, that the white people are coming to appreciate that the evolution of these black people can be brought about otherwise than in the chain gang."

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"Please don't today, Mr. Wyeth, please don't," she begged. "Promise just once that you will try to be, if it's only for a minute, as you were when I became acquainted with you. Let's drop this matter about the park and all that today. These Negroes here would do nothing with a park but fight in it. And a library, they don't read; so what's the use." She came to him, and before he could say a word in protest, she had gotten on the davenport, and beside him very closely. In that moment, Miss Palmer felt that she wanted to hear him say something about her.

"Listen," she said, in a voice that was full of feigned passion. "Do you care for me?" It was so sudden that he did not know how to accept it, whether as a joke or serious. He had, of late, been backing up on the flirtation. However, she was evidently serious, so, with a jolly word, he talked with her at some length about nothing. Presently she became meditative. She spoke of her unhappy life with a sigh, and then fell to accounts regarding her little boy.

"My entire hope is centered in him. I intend to make a doctor out of him, and to do that, I will have to work hard and save money to put him through school when he is grown up, and you see what that will call for."

He was a lad of ten years, and the image of his mother. The future of the American Negro was bright in his eyes; and he assisted commerce to a degree, by consuming as much coca cola as he could buy, with as many nickels as he could gather; likewise, peanuts, crackerjack and candies.

"He's *some* boy," glowed Wyeth, enthusiastically. "I wish I possessed a lad like him. I would feel proud."

"Wouldn't you like to have something to do with him?" she said, and he replied jokingly:

"Sure."

She nestled close, very close. So close that he felt her hot breath upon his cheek. "You do care for me a little, don't you?" she almost implored. He was embarrassed, but replied:

"Of course, I *like* you."

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"I love you," she said. "I love you," she said again.

"Ooh, mamma!" cried her son, at that moment. "Come and see the funny man coming down the street. Ooh, but he is so funny!" She moved away guiltily. A moment later, he arose and took his leave.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

"Please Git d' Ole Man Outta Jail"

"Ump-um-um! Man, you done bring dat book heah t'day 'n' I ain' got a cent. Nary a cent!"

"Oh, but you're a good joker," he laughed, depreciatingly. "You drew four or five great big dollars Saturday night, and I know you saved a part of it for the book, as you said you would, didn't you?"

"Yesser, yesser, ah knows ah said I would; but sumpin' done happened since then; sumpin' I wa'n't figurin' on. Sumpin' I sho wasn't lookin' fo'."

"Oh...."

"Yes," embarrassed. "Y'see, it's lak dis: Ma ole man 'e went down town Sat'dy night 'n'—well, 'e got'n a li'l trouble. Yes, lak a nigga, y' know. Got in dis heah trouble, 'n' it done took all I had t' get'm out; 'sides, I did'n' have 'nough 'n' had t' borra frum ma whi' people."

"That's too bad indeed," said Wyeth. Sometimes he said this freely, and again, his voice carried a touch of disappointment and impatience, because, sometimes he met a half dozen such instances, when he went to deliver on Monday. As a rule, and since he was by now accustomed to it, he offered sympathy to the unfortunate wife who had to pay so many fines, and went his way.

"Yeh. 'Es allus gittin' in sumpin'. Las' yeah—ah maybe 'twas las' month—'e got in jail, 'n' when I got 'im out dat time, I swo' I's gwine let 'im stay du nex' time 'e went off'm heah and did'n' come back. 'N ah did'n' get'im out right away dis time. Ah let'm stay tree days, but 'e jes' keep sendin' up heah 'n' worrin' 'n' worrin' th' life outta me—'n' I was worried anyhow—wi' 'Uh please ole 'oman, jes' please come'in git du ole man outta jail.' So 'e jes' promis' so faithful, 'n' jes' begged so 'a'd until I was at last p'vailed on wi' du 'elp a-Jaysus, t' git'im out jes' this time—'n' you c'n jes' depen' on it, its the las' time I gi'n git dat no 'count nigga a-mine outta dat place, so help me Jaysus, du las' time!" And she bustled about her duties, with a determined set of the head.

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"How did he come to get locked up this time?"

"Ugh! Yes, yes. It's lak dis—so 'e said. 'E was down t' a s'loon 'n' got t' argin' wid annuder nigga. 'N so den, dis udder nigga done 'posed on 'im; 'n' den dey got t' squabblin' 'n' d' p'lice dey runs in on'm 'n' line'm up. So d' wagin come 'long 'n' hurried 'm up t' jail. So, a'cose, Jedge Douglass 'e 'poses a big fine on'm and dey is jes' waitin' fo' somebody t' come 'n' pay 'is fine, 'cause, y' see, I done paid it a-fore already. So dey is jes' waitin' fo' me t' come 'n' pay it agin, 'n' don' send dis nigga t' du stockade, 'cause dey's done got so many triflin' nigga's out dare, until dey hates t' feed so many, 'n' wou' ruther git th' money 'f dey can."

And thus it went. Wyeth found the women, in a great measure, trying to do right, as they so regarded it. But the men, from the saloon to a tiger, thoroughly soaked themselves, regardless of the cost, so long as they had it. And then, to a crap game, where they lost the remainder. Evidently there must have been some winning; but Wyeth never happened to find the winner. They were all losers. If he had their orders and expected to deliver the book, he had to plan to deliver the same on Saturday night, and before they found the enticing game. And for telling the truth, they drew the line on that—refused to have anything to do whatever with keeping their word. When he ran into a man who was as good as his word, and which he did occasionally, he was so surprised that he became nervous. Many of the white agents and collectors informed him, that, with a few exceptions, they drew the line on any credit business with the men, because they simply could not trust them. Of course this was not among the so-called "best" people; but with them, he had a hard time securing an order, since, to make appearance was their obvious effort, in a large measure. When the cook advised him to see the butler, he forthwith inquired whether he gambled or drank; for, if so, he thanked her for her kindness, and made no effort to get the

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order, for it was useless, in four cases out of five.

Hence it came to pass, that Sidney Wyeth learned that his people were the victims of liquor and gaming, and this was the result of ill training, ignorance, and lack of civic observation. If John Barleycorn was at the bottom of most of the crime—which grew, in most instances, out of discussions and differences of opinion regarding trifling matters—ignorance was at the bottom of the indulgence.

On this day, when he had completed his work, he stopped at the library. This was not open to colored people, which he knew; but, since what he desired could not be obtained elsewhere, he decided to go to the desk and make known the fact, and leave it to the civil regard of the librarian. He was ushered into a room to one side, which was not always used, and they brought anything to him that he wished. When he took his leave, he was invited to call at any time, and he could expect the same accommodations.

Some time later he did, and while looking through the matter which was the occasion of his visit, the librarian approached him, and said:

"You will perhaps be interested in hearing that it is the desire of the board, to take some steps toward a library for the colored people of the city."

"Indeed!" he replied. "I am sure I am interested. Nothing, I assure you, is much more needed."

"Yes," the other went on earnestly. "It has been the desire of the board to do so for some time; but, owing to the fact, I regret to say, that—well, those in your race whom we have waited for, and looked to, to take some initiative with regard to the matter, have not appeared to care much—well, not any, as yet." He paused a moment, while Wyeth waited.

"I presume," said he presently, "that you are one of the professors."

"No, I am not. I am not connected with any school, in fact, I am not connected with anything here, other than a book, of which I am the author, and which is being circulated by myself here in the city. But I am deeply interested in anything pertaining to what you mention."

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"Oh, I see," said the other, and disappointment was evident in his tone. "I had hoped, from the interest you show in literature, that you are connected with one of the schools. But I will state what we have planned on, and what would be necessary on the part of your people, in order to stimulate such a movement.

"This city is, of course, unable to make such an investment; but it, the board, is willing to cooperate with the leaders of your people, the teachers and preachers, in bringing this to the attention of northern philanthropists, and, with a little effort concentrated on the issue, it is reasonable to suppose that, in view of libraries given to the different colored schools in the south, the securing of one here is quite possible."

"That is the way I have been compelled to see it, through knowledge gained in observation," Wyeth agreed.

"Oh, it can be obtained, it should be obtained." He paused again hesitantly, then went on, somewhat determinedly: "This city has a dreadful record for crime; and, while I regret to make the mention, yet, I think you will agree with me—"

"That the great amount of the crime is among the black population," Wyeth assisted, unembarrassed.

"Exactly. It is a dreadful affair, this daily murdering of human beings, and this continual herding to the chain gang. These people go there and get in so much trouble, because their minds are untrained—and this is due to their environment, which is bad. It is a distressing condition which the state is facing. A library will, in time, have a marked effect upon existing conditions. There is no park either, in fact, there is nothing but the open street, the schools and churches for the colored youth; whereas, the white children have everything to help them become the proper men and women. And yet, and here is where it becomes awkward for the public to do anything. You are aware that the south is poor, and, therefore, unable to give even their white population what the north can in regard to uplift; but, as I remarked, the leaders appear to show such little interest in betterment.

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"Now, for instance, if the teachers and preachers would unite themselves into a body, for the purpose of securing a library for the colored people of Effingham, and persist in this matter, eventually they would have a building, and not less than fifty thousand volumes. But, as it now stands, rarely do any of them call in the manner you do. And, before anything can be done by the board, it is expedient on the part of these people, to get some public sentiment, in favor of the proposal. Now, what is your opinion of it?"

"Of course, I cannot be otherwise than heartily in accordance with such a proposition. And, I regret to agree with you, that the people we, or you, look to as our leaders, show little interest in this matter. Publicity is necessary. I could, for instance, write an article calling attention to such a movement, and have it published in the colored paper; but they would not read it with other than a passing interest in such a sheet. I have had it in view for some time past of doing something—or, I should say, saying something. I shall not yet, however, state just what or how I will say it; but suffice that I am going to say something, and say it at a time and in such words, that the Negro public, as well as the whites, will, I hope, sit up and take notice."

"I am glad to hear that. Drop in at any time, and if we can help you in any way, we will be only too glad to do so," said the librarian, enthusiastically, and extended his hand.

When Wyeth got to his room, he thought long and deeply upon the subject. And when he retired that evening, he had begun the formulation of a plan that would wake up this sluggish resignation, which seemed to possess the race to whom the white people looked to for initiative.

The following Sunday, when he received his paper, *The Herald*, an article spread over the front page, double column, caught his attention, and he read it through, as no doubt every one did, who was interested in civic welfare. It was another by the park commissioner, and was in regard to a park to be centrally located, and to be used exclusively for the use of the colored population of the city.

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In Effingham, there are perhaps a half dozen small and large parks, and all for white use exclusively. During the hot days of the long summer, black people must roast in their stuffy little homes, perhaps a fourth of which face alleys. Black children have no place to play, no place to exercise their little bodies, or give free vent to their desire for child play. Crime, therefore, is their greatest environment.

Stealing is so bad in this city, that the druggist remarked to Wyeth one day, that if he should awaken at two A.M. and see a Negro pushing a box car up the street, not to become excited or even be surprised. Since he had been in Effingham, a man who lived to the rear of his abode, and who owned a horse and wagon, had, on three different occasions, and in less than two months, found it in a remote part of the city. It was tied to a tree or a fence, or maybe not tied at all. It was nothing uncommon. The horse was used to haul stuff that had previously been spotted and later stolen. It is this that the colored children see and become acquainted with in their alley homes, and which makes criminals of so many long before they are of age.

The article by the park commissioner dealt with these conditions, as well as with the great amount of murder committed in the city. It was the desire, to locate a park near the heart of the city, so that these little children with the ebony faces, might find some relief from their alley homes, and in that way, help a little toward the discouragement of so much crime. The jail was overrun with both women and men prisoners; the funds for the purpose of building a larger jail was not forthcoming, so the city could do the least by giving these people some place of recreation.

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However, went on the commissioner's article, neither the city nor the commissioner could be expected to make any move toward giving this to the colored people, until the colored people themselves, through their leaders, the preachers and teachers, of which there was estimated to be in the neighborhood of three hundred, would show, in some manner, that they desired it. To purchase the ground and remove the buildings thereon, prepare and dress it down to a park, would, of course, require a considerable outlay of capital. The commissioner, therefore, would be glad to consult with this body of people with a view to that end. If it was not convenient for all to come, he added, kindly write him their views and desires with regard to the matter. But the commissioners would consider it more demonstrative, if the teachers and preachers of the city, colored, would call upon him in person; and, in conclusion, he set a day, and requested that as many, if not all of them, would call at his office on the afternoon of the following Wednesday.

Wyeth spoke of the matter to those he knew; few though, had concerned themselves as much as to read it even; while others made idle remarks, and so the day came.

Yes, it came, and to the office went, to be exact, five teachers and three preachers out of a possible total number of three hundred. The commissioner was too discouraged to keep these precious eight very long, so, with a few words, announcement was made that a pasture, five miles from town, could be leased for a small figure, and that a car line went within a mile of it; so that it was moved and seconded, and the colored people got a park.

The following day, the papers were considerate enough to make small mention of it, and that was the end of the matter.

When Sidney Wyeth had learned the details, he decided upon a plan which will be unfolded in a later chapter.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

"This Man Is Losing His Mind"

"Hello, stranger," said Miss Palmer one beautiful morning, when he came strolling by. "I haven't seen you for a long time," she said, smiling not overly pleasant. In fact, Miss Palmer looked worn, and acted likewise. She did not present a hopeful example, as Wyeth saw her now. She was sweeping the sidewalk in front of her place with a broom that was worn to the last threads, and more. These had been cut, and only the small wire held it to the handle.

"Good Lord!" he exclaimed, upon looking at it. "What do you call that?" and pointed at it with a laugh. She looked sad and replied:

"That's my broom. Isn't it a shame? But it's all the broom I have. Won't you buy me one, and give it to me as a present? You make plenty of money, and I have five fifty in the house for you myself." She smiled up into his face now wearily, and he was touched. He was, moreover, sorry now for what he had said. But to make amends, he replied cheerfully:

"Sure, sis. Take any part of what is due me, and use it for that purpose."

"That is so sweet of you," she smiled, gratefully. "I always believed you were sweet, regardless of the fact that of late you have become so awful."

"How's that?" he inquired, curiously.

"Oh, I have been constrained to believe you are losing your mind. You have succeeded in criticising about everybody and everything, that pertains to the good colored people of this city."

"Oh, Miss Palmer," he cried, looking hurt, "I have not criticised everybody and everything. I have only shown that I think a lot of the so-called good people are four-flushers and selfish creatures, with no real love for the race, nor any regard for the civic improvement of these black people. But I know lots of good, kind, sincere colored people in this town, that I am proud of as members of the race."

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"Come into the house," she invited, and presently they were seated in the parlor. At once Miss Palmer took up the discussion of society, and the buying of homes, which had reached a degree of impracticability among the colored people, notwithstanding the sound idea.

All over the country, during this pilgrimage, Wyeth had witnessed this purchase idea with a mark of encouragement. And, to say that they were succeeding, was a fact that meant a great deal to their future welfare.

Miss Palmer delighted always to discuss the buying of a home, and marrying. Another teacher was visiting her that day, and likewise shared her views. Wyeth did too, but he always had questions to ask, that sometimes made the discussion rather upset.

Now he read the Negro paper, and had fearfully observed that an unusual and alarming amount of foreclosures was the order. In conversation with the numerous real estate dealers, he learned, moreover, that many of the attempts at purchasing, were foredoomed to failure when made; that to own a home, in a great many cases had become a fetish, and was, therefore, not based upon a practical consideration in the beginning.

A very successful dealer, colored, had told him confidentially, that he sold many homes, and would have bet, if it had been expedient, that they would not be able to keep the payments up for a year.

"How does so much of this come about?" he had inquired.

"Notoriety. Too many people do not study, although they may have a liberal school training among our people. It's the great ambition of too many, to get into a home with the first object of being seen therein, to show to their friends and put on airs. They buy with no idea whatever as to value, liability or anything. They have simply stunted themselves until they have managed to save a few dollars, and desire to get into the biggest home possible, to be where they can be seen by their friends."

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"The rate of interest appears to be very high, I have observed," said he, by way of comment. The other looked at him meaningly, and then said:

"Interest eats these people alive here; just sucks their life's blood—but it is not that alone. Not one in five knows how to arrange a loan. They permit themselves to be governed by some dealer, who, in almost every instant, is the worst grafter possible. They will make a loan with a life of three years, at eight per cent interest, and five per cent commission. Now you know that no loan running three years, on property

that poor people are trying to buy on the installment plan, is practical. Yet that is the kind of loan that most of these cheap sharks offer to the masses of our people, who have no judgment. A Negro is unable, as a rule, to realize that three years is a very short time. He is compelled to learn by bitter experience. The worst feature of this is, that at the end of it, he is so discouraged, that often he does not benefit by this experience, because the failure has gotten his heart, and he is done for.

"At the end of three years, which seems like three days when they are trying to buy a home, the shark is around for a renewal of the mortgage, and must, therefore, collect another cash commission of five per cent. Think of it! In two-thirds of such instances, it takes every dime they have paid in those three years. Sometimes more. Now how can people pay for a home under such conditions! But there is another side of it. And it all comes from the inability of our people to see further than their noses.

"Almost all these purchases are made beyond the extension of the sewerage, often the water works, positively no street improvements, and side walks are rare; but, in three years, in order to boom the property, the promoter is active in bringing some of these improvements within reach of this property. That adds about one-half to two-thirds more to the cost of the property he is trying to buy. Moreover, when these people know anything, they will not buy a house built by these promoters, for it is nothing but the cheapest shell they can get to stand, but attractive from the outside. In two years, the occupant is fortunate if he doesn't have to build another.

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"Then comes the great day. These people cannot pay that commission over again, and the loan company doesn't care to increase the loan, maybe, by including the commission in a new one. If they are unable to make arrangements with a bank, and that means they are going to deed them the property, seven cases in ten, foreclosure proceedings are instituted. The property is finally deeded by the sheriff to the mortgagee. Now here is another phase: This piece of property can then be sold quicker than before, for this reason: It is very easy to frame up a tale, to the effect that a party who was purchasing the place was a shiftless drunkard, or anything, and imagination can supply the rest; but, inasmuch as they had taken the property back, they are now offering it at a greatly reduced price and better terms. There are so many subtle ways of drawing people in, that it would take a volume to relate them all; but they come to the same in the end. Installment property at two thousand dollars can be bought for about twelve to not exceed fifteen hundred. Instead of commission and everything else, buying by the installment plan in this, and every overboomed southern town, costs from twice to three times what the property would actually cost, if the purchaser could pay half of the purchase price cash, for, in that way he could secure terms, and could pay interest rate on the remainder. In time he would get the same paid, and have his little home."

"And that, you feel, is the reason for all this foreclosure?" said Wyeth.

"That is the *cause* of it. Why, advertising property for foreclosure has become a feature of competition, between the three Negro papers in this town. They get more money out of that end, than they do from the advertisements through straight business, for the purpose of selling it originally."

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"It would seem that the people would get on to such methods by and by," Wyeth commented.

"Some, of course, do, and avoid it; but you cannot imagine how many do not. It all comes about through a lack of general intelligence. Too many of our people do not read anything; are, therefore, without any vision or judgment of their own. They don't know. And, of course, are made the goats of those who do."

"So that explains why a portion of this town to the west, and which is occupied almost exclusively by our people, has such dreadful streets and no sidewalks whatever."

"That's it. They will, perhaps, have none for the next twenty-five years. Too much property is being bought, and so little is being paid for, that it is a continual change about."

"I find a great many of the people—intelligent people—who do not care to see this side of it," Wyeth remarked.

"Half of the school teachers, for instance, seem to wish not to see it. And they get stung! But they are so anxious to be seen, and to be referred to in a position beyond their means, no wonder."

So Sidney Wyeth had to take this man's point of view for more than one reason. Like Attalia—but worse, these people considered literature, as a whole, dead stock. More than sixty thousand in number, the demand among them for books and magazines, was insufficient to justify any one's running a place for such a purpose. It was not large enough to justify either of the Negro drug stores carrying periodicals in stock, even those that were carried by all white drug stores, excepting those in districts occupied and patronized by the colored people. And with all this, there was not the

least claim for that kind of knowledge. More than a hundred churches never encouraged the people to read anything but the Bible: apparently, the obtaining of a library had not worried any but Sidney Wyeth; it has been seen how they worried over the securing of a park. Is it a wonder, with all this under his observation, that Sidney Wyeth, who came from a land where people read and thought, and had some perspective, eventually came to be regarded as a chronic critic? He had witnessed more murders than he had in all the days of his life.

Having digressed to such a length, we will return now to Miss Annie Palmer, who was possessed with the ambition to be established in a home of her own, and to be seen by those who knew her.

"Just think of it, suga'," she said to the other teacher. "You can get the nicest kind of a home in the west end for a moderate sum, and only fifty or a hundred dollars down on the best of them. The rest is paid just like you pay rent, and no more." It was this, Wyeth recalled, that got them. "It cost no more than to pay rent after the first payment."

"Um-um," from the other.

"And the sewers, and sidewalks, and streets and lights are all there," said Wyeth kindly.

"Oh, there you go for an argument," Miss Palmer retorted, angrily. Wyeth grinned.

"Well, these things have all been completed to include this property...."

Miss Palmer said nothing to him in reply.

"And you can get it after the first payment like paying rent," commented the other teacher.

"Um-m," let out Miss Palmer, sweetly.

"What sweet real estate dealer offers such bargains and *easy* things?" said Wyeth, humorously. The druggist, who knew everybody's business, had told him that Miss Palmer, at one time, was the object of every real estate shark in Effingham. And then some one lodged her in the suburbs, and since, she had been left alone. So he wondered whether it was because Miss Palmer, as a lady high in colored society, could not conveniently get such an amount together.

"This man is losing his mind," she said, to the other teacher. The other now regarded Wyeth dubiously. He grinned and then said:

"If you start buying, or biting on one of these *easy* homes in the west end that you refer to, you are going to lose your head."

"Oh, is that so," Miss Palmer essayed, with much spirit. "Do you suppose, that with me teaching in the schools of this city for thirteen years—" and she had begun at twenty-two, so she told him once—"I do not know something! And if you infer that I haven't a hundred dollars, then you haven't become acquainted with Annie Palmer! Don't you worry about her, for she always has a roll convenient. And you never see any collectors coming here, and leaving without what they came for." She was very dignified now, as she went to the door to answer a knock.

The room in which they sat opened into a small hallway, which was entered from the street by a glass door. It was at this open door, that a man stood, who, however, could not be seen from where Miss Palmer's company sat. He could be heard, though. And they, the company, couldn't help hearing. They were not eavesdropping. It was then that Wyeth learned Miss Palmer was vain. He could not help recalling, that if "no collectors went away without what they came for," it was because they expected nothing when they came. So, when Miss Palmer had completed her trite sentence and sallied forth to answer the knock, they could not help hearing her say very quickly, and with some embarrassment:

"Oh, you are too early. Come back tomorrow. I have my books to deliver this afternoon, and will be ready for you tomorrow, so—"

That was as far as she got. And her company could not be censured for overhearing the rest of it, that is, what the other made in reply. The chances are the other was not aware of their presence, a few feet away, but that is a matter for conjecture. Miss Palmer could be heard attempting to finish with him, without his words that came in a flow. She was nervous, but he would have his say, and so he said, cutting off her discourse:

"I'm tired of this stalling, all this stalling you have been handing us for months. This has got to come to an end."

"I'll bring it to the office, I—"

"You'll do nothing of the kind, and you know you won't!"

"I'll pay you tomorrow, sure, sure, sure!" Why didn't the man be a gentleman and go, go, go! Plainly Miss Palmer was dreadfully nervous, more, as she could be heard by those who were listening. She was plainly in agony. The collector was on the warpath, and went on relentlessly:

"If you haven't made some disposition of it by Monday a week, get that stuff ready for the wagon," and a moment later his steps died away in the distance.

For one moment, Wyeth saw the face of her friend, but he couldn't believe it! And still, when Miss Palmer returned and resumed her discussion with regard to buying homes, he would have sworn that the other had to smother very quickly a gleeful expression.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

"I'll Brand You as a Faker"

"Eh, there! Get that car on switch A! Now, let her come back to the left. All forward no-ow! Engineer, what's the matter with you today? Are you drunk? Pull that train forward and back it up as I tell you, or I shall report you to the superintendent! You're devilishly contrary today."

"Oh, Sam," called some one.

"Aw, don't bother me today. I'm in a hurry. I am called by the board of directors to talk over the purchase of the A.G.S. I am chairman of the committee, and have no time to talk with you."

"Hello, Sam," greeted Wyeth, as this worthy came hurriedly by. Sam halted a moment and gazed at him, then walked forward and extended his hand, crying:

"Mr. Morgan. I'm glad to see you. I am called by the directors of the Southern Railway, with regard to purchasing that line and merging it with the L. & N."

"I see. Who owns the L. & N. now," he inquired, casually.

"Me."

"And the A.G.S.?"

"I only have a half interest in that now."

"I understand that you refused to buy out the controlling interest in the Tennessee Coal and Iron Company."

"Yes, I refused. I don't like the line-up in the directorship. And, besides, I cannot see my way clear to act as chairman of the board of control, therefore, I considered it unwise to invest any millions in the thing."

"Well, I won't detain you, since I know you are so busy. Good day."

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"Good day, Mr. Morgan. Try to call at my office in the Empire building before you leave town.

"Engineer, if you don't switch better, call at the office this evening and get your time. I will fire you," and Sam hurried to his office, just as John Moore came from another direction, sleepy-eyed, and looking like the "last rose of summer". The Mis' was waiting for him, and as soon as he was inside, she inquired with concealed suspicion:

"Well, where were you last night?"

"In jail."

"You seem fond of that place of late."

He shrugged his shoulders sleepily.

"Where did they get you this time?"

"Rosie's."

"You've been quite a frequenter about there of late...."

"That's mah business. Don't try t' hand me no argerment this morning. Fix me something to eat. I'm hongry."

"Didn't you have breakfast up there; but then it seems you left before breakfast? How came you back so early? I didn't look for you so soon."

"How did you know that I had been got? You are too smart nowadays anyhow."

"Who went your bond?"

He regarded her out of impatient eyes now. He glared at her, but said: "I was eight dollars winner, and had two dollars besides."

"Um-m. So you give that to a professional bondsman."

"Hello," came a call from the outside.

"Hello," called back the Mis'. "Come in."

"Is John Moore here?" said a bad looking Negro, with a head like a monkey and no chin at all. Moore looked uneasy.

"Oh, here you are," said the other, as he spied Moore. His tone was full of contempt, and a touch of anger was mingled. "Where is my part for the stuff you disposed of?"

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"Ssh! Not so loud."

"Not so the devil! You can't shoo me away any longer. You ain't paid me for the last bunch a chicken I brung heah; and now you want t' shoo me away on this last stuff we done stole togedder."

"Will you hush. We'll talk this matter over outside."

"We's go'n talk it over heah, 'n' you go'n hand me ove fo' dollah's, ah I'm go'in' t' take it outta yo' stinkin' hide!" He looked at Moore now with an evil eye, and that worthy backed up and picked up a pair of scissors, that he had brought in late one night from one of the mysterious directions.

"Oh, you go'n push them things through me, eh! All right, ole nigga. This is wha you 'n' me mixes it. I gi'n fix you ah you gi'n fix me," and with that he started in the other's direction.

"Now, Sha'p Head. Ain' I done always treated you right?" Moore whimpered.

"Naw, naw! 'n that's what I'm gi'n land on you cause!"

"Now just name a time when I ain'," Moore temporized, nervously.

"Naw, I say. Git out that winda 'f you don't wanta be killed. Git out wi' out awgument, cause I g'in to make you run some. Don't you b'lieve I'm go'n run yu?"

"'C'ose I b'lieve you. I b'lieve you go'n come in heah 'n' run me outta ma house, outta ma house," cried Moore, piteously.

"Come pickin' up a pair a-scissors two feet long to push in me," roared the other. "I got a notion t' run yu ontell yo' ankles gits hot. I'll run yu six blocks, you lop eared bull dog!"

"You outta be 'shamed t' treat me that way, Sha'p head, 'n' you know you outta!" went on Moore, soothingly.

"Come outside, John Moore, 'n' leave yo' coat inside. I'm go'n' run y' six blocks, so help me Gawd!"

"All right, Sha'p Head. 'F you jes' gotta run me outta ma house, then go on outside. I'm a-comin."

The other came through the room where Wyeth and Legs were trying to play a game of checkers. He was puffing so hard, that he appeared to be afraid of himself. "That low down skunk! I'm go'n run that nigga ontell 'is ankle's done be so hot that the streets go'n melt behind him! Doggone 'im!"

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"Are you outside, Sha'p Head?" called Moore, nervously.

"I'm out heah, you liver eater. Come out wi' yo ankle's greased, 'cause you go'n run six blocks faster yu ebber did in yo' life; 'n' when you gits to d' end of it, I' gi'n kill yu!"

"Bang!" went the door, and the key turned. To describe the indignation of Moore for the next few minutes; what he would do; what he ought to have done, would be beyond the possibilities of our pen. He was positively so bad that he had much effort to keep from doing injury to himself. Legs winked at Wyeth, and then, rising, unlocked the door and slipped out quietly. A moment later, a terrible banging was instituted upon the door. Wyeth held it closed, with a great feigned effort.

"Let me at him! Let me at him!" cried Legs from the outside, but John Moore didn't wait to hear any more. A crash and a rattle as of falling glass scattered about, showed that an exit was unconventionally made in the rear. Wyeth and Legs came around in time to see him going over the back fence. The next time they saw him, he was leading the other by about two rods, as they went up the street.

"Jumped right into his jaws," laughed Glenview, as they watched the chase from the porch.

Ten minutes later, some one tore into the house, and turned the key of the door so quickly, that it seemed like an automatic spring lock.

It was John Moore.

"Let's go down to the drug store," suggested Wyeth. Legs didn't hang out in that direction, so Glenview was the recipient of the suggestion. He couldn't, so, presently, Wyeth went alone.

"They are going to fall down in both those towns, on the securing of a Y.M.C.A. for Negroes, and I knew they would when they started," the druggist was saying, when Wyeth entered.

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"Negroes can secure nothing but churches down south," commented another.

"They have only a few weeks left, before the time limit on the appropriations from the Jew expires. He offered twenty-five thousand to any association where the people secured an additional seventy-five thousand. Now six months after the campaign for the association in Grantville," so said a mail clerk who ran to that city, "less than five thousand in cash, out of a total of more than thirty-three thousand dollars subscribed, has been collected to date. How can this—what is the name of the secretary of the proposed association—yes, I have it, Jacobs—Rev. Wilson Jacobs, figure they will be able to secure one in that town?"

"It's all stuff. Nigga's down here would do nothing with an association no way," said the druggist.

"I stopped at the Y.M.C.A. when I was in Chicago this summer," said the bookkeeper in the Dime Savings Bank. "It appears to be conducted with great success, and is surely a fine, clean, up-to-date place to stop, regardless of the fact that almost everything is open to Negroes in that city."

"Yes, but the Negroes in Chicago are civilized," said another. "These Negroes down here would have to have a half dozen police standing around to keep order, if they had one."

"But don't you feel such a thing in this town would act as a great moral benefit?" suggested Wyeth, at this juncture.

"We now hear from Tempest," smiled the druggist. He had not been able, as yet, to reconcile himself to the bet he lost some months before, and had since a grudge against Wyeth.

"I see by today's paper, that Wilson Jacobs will address the people of the city in regard to the Christian forward movement, and will be assisted by several white men of high standing in the city."

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"Well, speeches will be all right; but I'd bet a dollar to a dime that they will never secure a Y.M.C.A. in the town he represents. As for Effingham, no chance."

"You seem to be successful in getting the biggest kind of churches here," said Wyeth.

"Yes," returned the druggist, "and they will be paying for them, as they have been for the last—since I ever knew anything."

"But they have the churches, nevertheless."

"Oh, so far as that goes, yes."

"They must have had to pay as much as forty per cent of the cost, to secure a loan for the remainder?"

"Yes, Tempest; but what has that to do with it?"

"Well, if the big church on the corner up the street could be secured at a cost of seventy-five thousand dollars, half or more of which I understand has been paid, then, a like amount should be available in a town of this size, and which has an equal number of colored people, shouldn't it?"

"Tempest is out for argument," said the druggist.

"No argument, when almost every large city in the north—and some not as large as this town—have a Y.M.C.A. for its black population. And more than half that have such, have not nearly the colored population that this town has, and positively have not nearly the need."

"Tempest has been worrying about a library, a park, and everything else for this town, in the months he has been here," the druggist said, looking almost amused. Wyeth took exception.

"I *am* interested in this town, and in another, where I see and read of more crime and murder, than I ever dreamed was possible."

"Then, Tempest," said the druggist, naively, "you ought to get one. Or, at least, you ought to awaken, by some initiative on your part, some enthusiasm to that end. You see all we need, you do, a globe trotter, and you have certainly criticised to that end, and now," his voice took on a cold, hard tone, "I say: Do something to prove this criticism worth the while, or I'll brand *you* as a faker—a frost, with all your premeditated ideas!"

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Every one about was silent, while their eyes turned and regarded Sidney Wyeth. About the corners of their mouths a smile that spelled of a sneer, played subtly. If Sidney Wyeth didn't see it, he at least felt it. And in that moment, he realized that he would not dare show his face about this place, lest he be scorned henceforth, if he didn't take the stand the druggist had taken.

"Very well, Dr. Randall," he said, rising. "*I shall do so.*" He regarded them all for a moment, with a firm sweep of his eyes, and, next, he turned and left the store.

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CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

The Arraignment

"I guess that will do," whispered Wyeth to himself, arising from his typewriter at one-thirty the following morning. Carefully he placed the typewritten pages in the drawer, and retired.

"A colored man to see you, Mr. Byron," said the clerk, to the managing editor of the *Effingham Age-Herald*.

"Show him in," said the other shortly, and kept about his work. A moment later, Sidney Wyeth stood before the editor.

"Well?"

"I should like twenty minutes talk with you, Mr. Byron," said the other calmly.

The editor laid down his pen, and raising his eyes, he began at the feet, which were somewhat large, ran the gaze up a pair of long legs, and finally saw a chin, a nose and the eyes, and there they stopped. He had been in the act of freezing, what he was confident was a crank, a fool, or a knave. To walk calmly into the office of the managing editor, and ask for twenty minutes of his time! It was incredulous. And yet, when he saw the eyes of the other, something therein told him strangely, that this man was no fool, nor a knave—nor any of the things he had been feeling. He was—well, he was a colored man, which made it stranger still, for colored men had not been in the habit of coming to his office at all, much less asking for such an amount of time on his busy day. He shifted his position, and finally, after swallowing guiltily, the words he started to say, he added:

"Be seated."

"I realize that you are busy, very busy, Mr. Byron," Wyeth began rapidly, not waiting for the other to say anything more. "But my business is a matter of grave importance, of the very gravest importance. And that is why I have called, and asked for the amount of time which I am aware is not customary for you to grant."

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The other said nothing. He knew of nothing to say; but, somehow, he simply sat viewing Sidney Wyeth out of curious eyes—and waiting. The other unfolded one of several papers; they were, the editor now saw, previous issues of his paper. He wondered. He had been very careful to kill stories that smelled of strife between the races.... He did not conduct his paper with an appeal to race prejudice. Mr. Byron was proud of the fact, too. Moreover, while he had doubts as to the hurried evolution of the Negro race to a place in the least equal to the one of which he was a member, he had always tried, when he could conveniently do so, to say a word of kind encouragement with regard to the colored people. Only that week, he had run a strong account on the front page, with regard to the governor's visit to Tuscola, at the invitation of its principal, who had extended it. The invitation came for the purpose of allowing the state government to see, by a personal inspection, whether the colored schools were entitled to a portion of certain funds, the Federal government had appropriated for the purpose of farm demonstration work. Following his return to the city, the governor had, without reservation, announced that the appropriation would be so divided, as to allow Tuscola Institute and another Negro school, a liberal portion of said funds.

Steven Byron justly took some of the credit for this, and now is it a wonder that he held his breath, while this young Negro, whom he had never seen before, unfolded the paper and finally began.

Coming to the side of his desk, Wyeth reseated himself, and, pointing to an article, said: "You recall this incident?"

"Yes," said the editor, still wondering.

"And this one also," said the other, with another paper unfolded and spread before him.

"Of course."

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And for the next few seconds he showed him others. The other was still wondering, when Wyeth said:

"Do you recall following this particular Wednesday, when you published this article in regard to the park for colored people, the number of teachers and preachers who presented themselves as the commissioner had suggested and requested?"

"Well, yes. There were—"

"Eight, to be exact. Three preachers and five teachers."

"Yes." The other was still curious.

"Have you any idea what number of preachers and teachers you have among the colored people of this city?"

"Why, a great many, I am sure."

"Three hundred or more, according to the directory. I don't think they got all that teach elsewhere, and make their homes here during vacation; and I know they have not all the preachers, but that is neither here nor there.

"In regard to this article about securing a library for the colored people. How many visits, can you recall, were paid you by any of the teachers and preachers following the publication of it? And can you recall how many letters you received, or anything else connected with the instant?"

"I can quite well, I regret to say," replied the editor; "for the simple reason I received no letters nor any visits."

"You requested, in your paper of recent issue, and which is before you, that the leading colored people—and of course this includes the teachers—should call at your office to make arrangement for the coming lecture in regard to the need of Y.M.C.A.'s for the colored people of the south. I suppose you have been favored with many visits?"

The other shook his head sadly, as he replied: "No one has called among your people."

"Very well. Has it ever occurred to you, Mr. Byron, that an unusual amount of crime appears to be the order in this city?"

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"Who couldn't realize it, that lived here or knew of the place through the columns of the papers?"

"And, unfortunately, eighty per cent of the murders are committed by a certain two-fifths of our population. That two-fifths represents my race."

The editor nodded.

"Then, in view of what I have just called to your attention, does it occur to you that the leaders—or the should-be-leaders of my people of this city, are indicating, by their actions, that they care a hang what becomes of the race?"

The elements were beginning to clear now. The editor said: "It certainly doesn't appear so."

"And yet how many of these people, in conversation, are ever ready, when there is a mob demonstration, to exploit—which in itself is much in order—the 'best' people. And what consideration should be shown them, regardless of the ignorance and crime of the masses? Does it not occur to the casual observer, that a great deal of negligence is the order when it comes to moral uplift, on the part of the leading Negroes themselves?"

"I cannot help but agree with you."

"Then, Mr. Byron, I have prepared an article arraigning this element of my race, that I have brought with me, and ask you to examine it, with a view to publication. I beg you to read the same carefully, and if you feel you would like to run it, I shall appreciate it. And if you do not, I will call tomorrow and get the same." Forthwith, he

handed the editor the typewritten pages he had prepared the night before, and, with a bow, left the office.

"The colored man that was here yesterday, Mr. Byron, has called again, and waits outside."

"Show him in, show him in at once," cried the editor, turning about, and preparing himself for a conversation.

"Well, sir," said Wyeth, after greetings had been exchanged, "you, of course, realize what I am here for."

"And I am certainly glad you called," returned the editor, with a serious face. "I have read the article, and reread parts of it." He paused, and was thoughtful before he went on, "and must say that it is certainly strong. Whew! The colored people are liable to lynch you for such an arraignment, if I know them a little."

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"I had considered all that before I submitted it," said the other, resignedly.

"If a white man wrote such an article and brought it to the office, I would not, under any consideration, publish it. But, since it has been written by a colored man, well, that makes a difference." He was silent again.

"Do you know," he said, regarding Wyeth keenly, "I thought over what you wrote all last night. I have thought of it in that way before, but it would never have done to give utterance to it, me, a white man. But, take for instance" (he drew out the manuscript, and turned to a certain page): "You say here, that multitudes of these so-called leaders have accepted the work and the teaching of the wizard of Tuscola, merely because the white people have; and that, in accepting him and his views for the welfare of the race, it has been merely to be on the popular side, because the wizard is so much so; but that they have no sincerity whatever in the words they say about him." He laid the sheets down, and, raising his finger, said: "How true that is! Why I know personally, scores that would kick him for the statements he has made, if they could do so. But, as you say further, they seek to get into the band wagon, at any cost. Now you refer, at some length, to the proposal to secure a park.

"It is a positive fact, that the good white people of the south, are made the object of bitterness by the northern people, on account of something for which they cannot always be blamed. Now, who would believe at the north, that the white people were willing and ready to give the colored people a park, a place for an outing for the children; and the colored people didn't want it?" Wyeth shook his head.

"Nobody!" declared the editor. "Nobody in the world, and yet here is an example in this very town, which has more murder and crime among its black population than any city in the world, regardless of the size! And your race; that body of people, the teachers and preachers, to whom we have naturally looked and asked for cooperation in securing a park, have simply ignored our invitation!"

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"Now, in regard to the library. Here is the article, and which I, with care, prepared myself. What good has it done? I have asked their cooperation, not their money; but I have been ignored, the same as the commissioner was in regard to the park. And before and since then, crime continues.

"We know the law-abiding colored people cannot be altogether responsible, for the crime of the polluted and the criminal; but, Lord! One would not suppose that they would so utterly disregard an effort on our part for their civic welfare.

"In the end, you call attention to the churches and the condition of the pastors. It is certainly time someone is calling to time ignorance in the ministry. Frankly, I have long been of the opinion you advance in the article, that an educational requirement should become a law with regard to preachers, as well as to men in other professions. Think of it! A profession, calling for the highest general intelligence, having the lowest rate of intelligence!

"And, again, this church building bee has submerged the Baptist church, among the colored people. How can any of them be of any practical service, when there is one for every one who can say 'Jesus!'

"You draw attention to the inability of the southern cities to secure Y.M.C.A.'s, where the great masses of black people, of course, live. Not a one is in operation, as they are conducted by the whites, or by the colored people of the north. It is easy to excuse the matter by pleading poverty. But, while that is a plausible excuse, it seems quite feasible to build great big churches for a certain few. They have two churches in this town that would cost more than a Y.M.C.A. building, complete. And yet, in Grantville, and the other town, and Attalia, they are required to raise only about one-third of the amount necessary.

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"What, then, is the cause of this failure? You have answered it in the pages of this manuscript.

"I am going to publish it. And in doing so, I am forewarned that it is going to arouse a world of indignation among your people, or I miss my guess. But it needs to be done. Something should come before them, to awaken this sluggishness with regard to uplift among their own. So you may look for it—the entire article, on the front page of next Sunday's issue. Good day!"

"That was sure a dirty deal Dr. Randall and Dr. Bard handed Tempest, wasn't it?" remarked L. Jones, editor and owner of the *Effingham Reporter*, colored, to his assistant.

"I don't fully understand. What was it? I hear that Wyeth bet, or rather, made a bet with Dr. Bard about something," said the other, attentively.

"Made a bet with Bard and beat him a mile and Bard, through his friendship with Randall, who has had it in for Wyeth since he came here, over a bet that Wyeth won from him, hedged on it the dirtiest you can imagine."

"Tell me in detail about it," requested the other. At that moment, a private detective entered the office, and, upon overhearing the conversation, said:

"I can tell you all about it, because I was there when the bet was made.

"It was like this, or came about in this way: Down at the drug store, Wyeth has had the nerve—I guess that is how you can place it, since the bunch, including Bard and Randall—especially Randall, don't appear to appreciate that any one knows anything but themselves. At least, they have been this way in regard to that fellow Wyeth. So an argument came about that Wyeth got into. He quoted an editorial in regard to the prosperity of California, and mentioned that California had more automobiles, in proportion to population, than any state in the union. Randall had no reason to take exception to this, further than he was so anxious to put this Wyeth in the wrong. He started an argument, but, of course, he had his dose last summer and knew—if he would have admitted it—that Wyeth was not arguing on something he didn't know. But Bard, who accepts Randall as the man who knows everything, and who has argued so much that he would try to down anybody for the sake of it, was regardless as to the merit. Bard took exception. Those fellows cannot appreciate anybody's knowing anything, unless he is a doctor. So, in the course of the argument, Bard offered to bet Wyeth five dollars, that the state of Iowa had more automobiles than California, in proportion to its population. Wyeth called him, and they put up the money.

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"I heard Bard explaining to one of their friends, that Iowa had so many automobiles; but was away down when it came to population. Wyeth overheard him, and agreed that Iowa *did* have lots of machines, but that he was wrong in regard to its being away down in population. That, in fact, Iowa had almost as many people as California. The crowd ridiculed such an idea, and cited the big cities of California, as an evidence of the fact. 'There is no call for argument when the same is down in black and white. Look it up in the census,' Wyeth declared. Bard colored, while Randall fished around in his belongings, and found a book containing the last government census report. Now, what do you think of a bunch that are always arguing, and not one of them knew the population of either of those great states. Not a one, and most of them graduated from college. Which showed that they have not studied what is around them, while Wyeth had.

"The report they found, had Iowa's population for fifteen years before. 'Wrong,' said Wyeth calmly. 'Well, here it is in black and white,' they all cried at once. 'But it's wrong, I say,' declared Wyeth. 'You can't convince Tempest on anything,' declared Randall disgustedly. 'You cannot convince me that Iowa has not increased in population in fifteen years. The census you are poring over there, is fifteen years old.' They were taken aback. They looked at the top of the page and saw they were all wrong again. Not a word did they say. No, they wouldn't admit in words to him, that they were wrong when it was before them. Wyeth called the population, and when they looked just to the side, there it was. It was the same with California. And still, not one of that bunch said: 'By jove! He's right.' No, but they all knew then that he had won that bet. And Dr. Bard was sick. Just sick, while Randall was sore with himself.

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"Now here is how they hedged and kept from paying it: Wyeth wrote to two of the biggest motor magazines, and to the department of commerce. The department of commerce wrote back that the information he required, could be gotten by consulting the magazine he had written to, and stated what issues gave it. Wyeth brought the issues and the letters. They then claimed that they would accept the information from the secretaries of the states only. He wrote to these people, and,

strange to say, they did not answer. And that was how they hedged. There was only one of the bunch that frequents the place regularly, who was man enough to tell them how cheap it was, and that was Dr. Landrum. He purchased Wyeth's book and read it, and told Wyeth that he had done finely for a beginner; Randall has had more criticism to offer upon it than any one else, but would not, of course, honor Wyeth by buying one."

"I guess he more than paid for one, from what I have heard," laughed Jones, and related the incident of the bet, which had become known about town.

"Well," said the detective, "they are giving him the laugh down there now, about how Randall called him on his criticisms."

"I heard about that, too," said Jones. "But you take it from me. That fellow is going to make a fool of those fellows yet. The man has something up his sleeve behind all this criticism he is accused of, and I am looking for him to do something. I don't know what it will be; but I feel in my bones, that it will be something that we will all know about."

"I agree with you," said the detective. "That fellow has no college education like Randall and Bard, and others, that feel they are the only fish in the pond; but he is a walking encyclopedia when it comes to every day facts about our country and the people, and some day we are going to hear from him otherwise than through the pages of his book. He didn't know all about writing when he wrote that; but it's some book at any rate," and with that, he rose and went his way.

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Sunday was a beautiful day. The air was calm and soft. A crowd was on hand early at Randall's pharmacy, as was the usual custom on Sunday.

"Well," said Randall cheerfully, "today is fine. Wonder where Tempest is." And he looked about at the others, amusedly. A tittering went the rounds.

"He appears to be somewhat scarce about these premises, since you called him some days ago," said Bard, whereupon there was some more tittering.

"Well, guess I'll look over the paper, since our wise friend isn't around to teach us something," and, smothering his glee, he uncovered the *Age-Herald*. Laying the funny pages aside, he allowed his gaze to fall upon the front page of the general news section.

"What in Hell!" he exclaimed, in the next breath.

"What is it, Ran?" cried the crowd.

"NEGRO SAYS RACE FACES DREADFUL CONDITIONS, DUE TO LACK OF INTEREST BY THEIR LEADERS. SAYS SELFISHNESS IS SO MUCH THE ORDER THAT THERE IS NO INTEREST WHATEVER TOWARD UPLIFT. PROFESSIONAL NEGRO THE WORST."

"Have you read this?" cried Professor Dawes, bursting in a few minutes later. "What do you think of it?" He was very much excited. So were many others.

"That Negro's crazy!" cried Professor Ewes, of the Mater School. Professor Ewes had read Wyeth's book, which was loaned to him by one of his teachers, who had purchased it from one of Wyeth's agents, in two payments. She had loaned it to Professor Ewes, and Professor Ewes had, in turn, loaned it to Professor Dawes, and Professor Dawes had, in turn, loaned it to another professor, and after all three had read it, it was returned to the original purchaser, who had seen the advertisement, that it was on sale at the biggest white store in the south, and had been inspired to subscribe for it, on that account. When the book was returned to her, she had read fifty odd pages and liked it, so she told Miss Palmer. She further said, she hoped some day to know the young man, who had written such a great story. And then Miss Palmer told her. Forthwith, all interest became an argument.

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"Do you mean to say, that fellow is the author of the book?" she inquired of her professor.

"Oh, yes," he said.

When the agent called for the remainder due, he was handed the book, with a statement that it was positively N.G. When the agent opened it, as he was leaving the rear of the house of the wealthy white people, a book mark dropped from between pages fifty and fifty-one.

"Did you read what he said about the teachers?" exclaimed a supernumerary, stopping in at the drug store, and seeing everybody excited over the article. Jones came in behind her.

"This is where you come in for a big article in your next week's issue," said Randall,

who didn't take any Negro paper, shoving the article under the eyes of the Negro editor.

"I'm afraid Mr. Wyeth has said all I would liked to have said," he replied calmly.

"What!" several cried, in consternation. "Do you mean to say that you would have talked about the best people as this man has!"

"I mean that I would have tried to. I do not consider that I possess the ability to arrange it as he has. You see, his range and vision is beyond mine, which has been confined to the southland. While he has studied every section of the country we call the United States, and he has, as you will observe, written this article in appreciation of that point of view."

"But, great goodness, Jones," cried Randall, very much excited, and likewise forgetting that he did not subscribe for nor advertise in Jones' paper, which was the best Negro paper in the state. Because, he said to everybody but Jones himself, it was N.G., and didn't pay to advertise in it. "See what he has said about our teachers!"

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"I have seen it. What of it?"

"It's dreadful—terrible!"

"About the park and library, you mean?"

"Sure!"

"How can you say that—or anything to the contrary, when you know all he has related there is true?"

Randall hesitated embarrassed for a moment, then said: "But he needn't have made such an issue of it!"

"But it's true?"

"Well—yes—of course it's true. But—"

"And about this crime, etc.?"

"Yes—but—"

"He shouldn't have told it where the white people can read it," assisted Jones, grimly. Those about became quiet very quickly, and looked at each other. Jones saw the lay of the land, and took his leave.

"At last, at last!" he cried to himself, as he went up the street, "the turning point has been reached. When I write again of civic conditions in my paper, and show up the fallacies among our own, it'll be read and notice taken of it."

All that day, indignation meetings denouncing the article by Sidney Wyeth, was the order among Effingham's black people. All the week following, it was further denounced. And thus we come to the end of this part of our story.

As for Sidney Wyeth, he left Effingham. He left shortly after writing the article, and went to another city. In that other city, he came back to where he started—that is, something had come back to him which was his dream, when we met him in the beginning of our story.

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BOOK III

CHAPTER ONE

"That Gal's Crooked!"

When Mildred Latham left the church, she hurried to her room, greatly excited. Without delay, she threw her belongings together as quickly as possible, and without care. When she had them tied and ready for moving, she went out, locking the door behind her, and paused briefly to gaze up and down the street. After a moment, in which she satisfied herself that neither were in sight, she hurried down the street to where she knew a man lived who owned a dray.

"Can you get a trunk and other matter for me at once?" she inquired, subduing her excitement.

"I guess so. Sometime this afternoon. What number, Miss," he replied, regarding her with admiring eyes. She bit her lips in vexation.

"But I would like it moved at once—right away," she said, quelling her excitement as best she could.

"Oh, very well. Didn't know you were in such a hurry." He called to a black boy in the rear, and, after instructions, turned to her and said:

"Fo'kes out, eh! He-he! Where you want it dumped?"

"Oh,——why, yes—oh,—you may just keep it here until I call for it, please." Without further words, she hurried away. Down the street she came to a boy with a push cart, directed him to the address, let him in, saw to the loading of her luggage, and, when this was completed, slipped quietly out behind him. When a few doors away, she paused long enough to gaze longingly in the direction of the number she had just left. And then, after a smothered sob, she caught a car that took her miles to another side of town, and where the houses were recently built near a new extension of the car tracks.

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Two hours later, she had succeeded in getting a room from a woman who had a daughter about her age. She would get her meals at a small restaurant nearby, until she could arrange to cook them in her room, or, maybe, she might be allowed to cook them in the kitchen, on the stove of the family. She didn't request that privilege this day, for she was too greatly excited to say more than she had to.

"It's terrible," she moaned silently, when alone in the room she had secured. "I would not have left them like this for anything in the world; but I could never stay there and take the risk. I could never look in their faces again.... But, oh, how I dislike to be away from them! It is almost the only real home I ever knew, and the only ones who ever really loved me—but Sidney.... I must not think of him, I must forget. But can I? That is what has worried me these months. I can never forget how he looked at me that day; that day when he would have spoken...."

"And then he came.... That night—but that was the end, the end of my dream. And yet, only yesterday, I don't know why, I couldn't seem to help it; but I had hopes, dear hopes—but today——" She went to sleep after a time, and all the night through, was asleep and awake by turns. It seemed that morning would never come; and when it did at last, she arose with heavy eyes.

She decided to go for a walk, and not canvass that morning. She was glad now that Constance's work was in another part of the city, and she could at least go about hers without any likelihood of meeting her.

"Did you rest well last night?" inquired the lady of the house, a hard-faced dark woman, whose appearance did not appeal to Mildred the night before, and now she was less impressed than before.

"Oh, very well, thank you," she replied quickly. So much so that the other looked at her keenly, and when Mildred saw her eyes now, she detected an air of suspicion therein. She flinched perceptibly. The other saw this, and was more suspicious still.

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"You seem worried, nervous," said the other, with feigned kindness; but even in the tone, could be discerned a mockery.

"I never sleep well when I change rooms and sleep in a new bed," said Mildred, calmly. The other nodded.

"This is my daughter," the other announced, as a tired looking black girl came forward. Mildred accepted the introduction with forced courtesy, and only returned the greeting. The other did likewise, while her mother, appearing to wish to tantalize the feelings of her roomer, said:

"You and she can be partners. You must take her, Myrtle, around to see your friends." She now turned to Mildred and said: "Myrtle has many admirers, so you and she can go out anytime and turn on a 'stunt.'" She smiled a dry hard smile, that almost made Mildred shudder. She made an excuse, and hurried into the street, preferring the outside air to the evil atmosphere she felt within.

"That gal's crooked," said the black woman to her daughter, who had just come in that morning.

"How do you know?" said the other coldly.

"How do I know!" she repeated derisively. "Do you suppose I have been in this town and seen a thousand gals with her sweet face, and not know that she ain' got a white man—maybe two or three—on her string."

"You're crooked—so crooked yourself, Ma, that you see everybody else the same way," said the other, sinking into a chair and closing her eyes.

"I've always tried to make you straight, and you know that," her mother retorted grimly.

"A crooked mother can't raise a straight daughter. It's up to the daughter—and I've

failed." A moment later, she was snoring loudly. The other regarded her now, with a pang in her evil heart. It always made her sad to see her only daughter like that. She had fostered hopes, while this one was growing up, that she would be a lady; she had sent her to school with the funds she got in any way she could; but heredity was too strong. They wouldn't have the girl after six months, at the boarding school she attended in Grantville. No, they expelled her with an emphatic letter, that she should not return the following season. She swore when she read the letter from the president, and forthwith sent her to another. The offense was repeated. She sent her then to a catholic convent. But in some way she escaped from this, and when her mother saw her two months later, she was living in adultery.

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Mildred renewed her canvass that afternoon, and, under the spell of the work, she was able, after a time, in part, to forget the worry that possessed her. She returned to her room, humming a little song, much to the surprise of herself. She hushed, however, when she approached the house. The face of the black woman seemed more cruel every time she saw it. She wished she had another place. But, since she had moved in, she decided to make the best of it.

All that week she worked away diligently. She worked to forget what had frightened her away from her friends, and her success was great. She placed the book in scores of homes through her concentrated efforts, and when she returned at night, she was invariably so much exhausted, that she retired early, and fell asleep the minute she touched the bed, and awakened each morning, rested and spurred on to a greater effort.

Sunday came again, and, having grown accustomed to attending church, she knew it would be a long day for her without doing so. She inquired of the people regarding a church, and was embarrassed to have the woman remark:

"Oh, you attend church! Well, there's a big Baptist church down the street and across five blocks; while there's a smaller one two blocks up."

"Thank you," said Mildred so sweetly, that the other looked after her with open mouth.

"I can't make that gal out," she said to her daughter, as they sat together at breakfast.

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"I'm glad of it," growled the daughter, without looking up.

"She's a puzzle. Sells a book; but I will never bring myself to believe that she doesn't do something else on the side."

"Evil to him who evil thinks," said her daughter, still looking in her plate. "I think I might possibly have been something, Ma, if you hadn't been so evil. Now what right have you trying to trump up something against that girl. Supposing she ain't straight, does that give you any call for all time tryin' t' make her what she ain' showed herself t' be?" Myrtle was impatient, and her mother had a way of hushing up when she was in this mood.

"She c'n certainly make herself look good," commented the black woman, as Mildred passed out, and went down the street in the direction given to the big church.

"Has got some clothes, too," she commented further, as the other remained silent. "She certainly knows how t' have her men. Don't none of'm bother about where she lives; and 'she goes t' church on Sunday.'" She laughed a low, hard laugh, but did not look in her daughter's direction.

Mildred found the church. It was indeed a large structure. And a large crowd attended it. She sat to one side, where a window was raised, and the soft air floated in above her. As she caught the strains of the mammoth pipe organ, and heard the music from a score or more voices in the choir, she thought of her friends as never before, since she left them. She had told Wilson—who was so good—that some day he'd be the pastor of a big church. A big church like this, where thousands of people attended. Only forty members comprised his congregation; he was delighted, she recalled, when as many as one hundred attended. And she had wanted so much to help Wilson Jacobs and his sister in their great effort. As she recalled how unceremoniously she had left them, and at the very time they needed her more than ever, she experienced a pain that made her turn in the pew.

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She heard the pastor now. He was preaching. She settled herself for a long sermon. That was the kind the Baptists preached, she judged. Soon she found herself listening to the words that came from his lips. He told the story of Damon and Pythias. How glorious, she thought! Pythias was a man—and so was Damon. They were strong men—with, what was that, she was thinking of it all the time? Yes, they were strong men with the strength of their convictions. "Amen" came all about her. And still the pastor was preaching. And he was preaching a good sermon. She heard it all, and it concerned men—and the strength of their convictions.

"To be a Christian," she heard him now, "you must be strong. You must be

courageous, and willing to sacrifice for your brother, as was Damon for Pythias. There are those who are Christians with all the feeling—on Sunday. Monday, they are like any other sinner. This version of Christianity and religion, is the reason Hell is getting so many people every day. Sometimes when I think it over, I don't wonder; because, all my life, I have been constrained to observe, that too many people regard Jesus as the individual, and not as the moral. It is the moral of the Christ, his teachings and example, that we are to follow. We do not know him, insofar as the Christian sense is concerned, as an individual. But it is a fact that so many of our preachers wax eloquent, and literally bring down the heavens, and, likewise, great demonstration from the congregation thereby. But, to be a successful practitioner, one must be strong; he must stand for something; to be a successful farmer, a man must be practical; to be a successful business man, requires application and fortitude; to be a good husband, and the father of a happy family, requires strength—in short, to be anything in this life, requires strength! Therefore, dear friends, fancy, if you can, how a weak man can be a Christian. For, to be a Christian, requires the strength of all things."

She was moved. Oh, it was a relief to listen to a good sermon! And she was glad to hear a Baptist preacher speak so forcibly in such terms. She was not so very well acquainted with this denomination and its pastors; but, from her observation, she had almost concluded that they appealed to the emotion, rather than to strength. She wondered now, as she saw him making gestures in emphasizing his words, whether he had taken any interest in the Y.M.C.A. She decided to find out, if she became an attendant of this church.

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When the sermon had closed, she contributed liberally to the table, whereupon she was looked at closely by the man who took collections. When she had reseated herself, and glanced in the direction of the table, she saw the man pointing her out to the pastor, whose eyes, for a moment, rested upon her in curiosity.

When she was leaving the church at the close of the services, someone touched her arm. She turned quickly, with a pang of the heart, recalling with fright, having been touched a week before. She had no need to fear, however. It was the man who had taken collections.

"The pastor would like a word with you, Madam," he said, with his hat in his hand, and all politeness. She blushed, and then, turning, followed him back into the church, where she came upon the pastor, standing among several people.

"Ah," he said, advancing as soon as she drew near. "And this is the young lady we observed. Pardon me, Miss, but you are a stranger among us. We wish you to feel welcome in our church. I hope the service didn't bore you." He was a good man. Her ideal of a true Christian. She replied with embarrassment, and blushed fearfully:

"Oh, no, indeed not, Sir! I enjoyed the service—oh, ever so much! And I am delighted to be made welcome here. I hope to come to services very often—every Sunday. I think you preached a wonderful sermon!" She paused now, too embarrassed to go on. He saw it, and made haste to dispell it. Introductions followed, and invitations were the order.

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It was over now, and she was happy. At that moment, she felt at peace with the world. And this included the evil black woman with whom she roomed, and who didn't attend church. She grasped the hands that now sought hers, and murmured kind words. Then she turned, and before her stood the man with the scar. She uttered a low cry, and the next moment, fell prone upon her face, in a dead faint.

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CHAPTER TWO

"It Was In That Church Last Sunday!"

The Sunday following Mildred's departure was a sad one in the Jacobs' household. Since she came to it months before, Sunday had always been distinguished from other days. It was then that all talked and smiled, and indulged at length in other pastimes that make home happy. And that is why today was the saddest day they—Constance and her brother—felt they had ever experienced. Neither could keep their gaze from wandering to the empty chair, and down in the hearts of each was a constant cry, though both surpressed it with a mighty effort: "Where is she today?"

It was Wilson who broke the silence. Was it perhaps the one woman who had filled that empty chair only last Sunday, gay, cheerful, happy and hopeful? Wilson Jacobs felt as though he should choke. Constance saw his emotion 'ere he spoke, and experienced a choking sensation also. She hadn't become reconciled to the absence, and all the week through, she had been like one in a trance.

"Can we ever give Mildred up, Constance?" Constance did not reply. She did not raise her head for fear he might happen to see her eyes. But after a time, she could

hold back the tears no longer. All at once they came in a flood, and her whole being gave up to convulsive sobs.

"There, there, dear," he cried, rising and coming hurriedly around to where she sat. Whereupon she became worse. He raised her to a standing posture, and took her affectionately in his arms, but the weeping went on unchecked. He held her and stroked her hair with his hand, but said nothing. He could not, for he was too overcome himself. By and by, he knew it would pass, and then they would speak of her in the terms they had known her. She was a good girl.

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"Oh, Wilson, I will never get over it—never, never, never!" Constance moaned and gripped him convulsively. "Just think of it, too, and when we were beginning to realize how much she was to both of us. And just think how she acted about the Y.M.C.A.! Went to the bank and drew all the money she had saved this summer, walking by day in the sun to sell the book, and gave it, every dollar of it, to the cause of our people!" She cried harder now than ever. He drew her closer, and as he did so, one tear dropped from his eye upon her hair. She never felt it, and he would not have had her know for anything. He was a strong man, and had ever kept from tears.

"If we could only do something, only help a little," he said now, in a constrained voice. "I would give the rest of my life to the cause of that girl," he said, with words that spelled of fire. "Whatever this lurking evil is that has driven her from the protection of those who love her, *it was in that church last Sunday!*" He paused now, and while he stood silent, his sister released herself, looking at him for a moment sympathetically, and then sank again into the chair.

Their breakfast had been neglected, forgotten, and was growing cold. "Come, Wilson," she called softly, and pointed to his plate. He heard her and obeyed. They ate in absolute silence, automatically putting from their minds the emotion that had possessed them.

And even as he ate the food, with the strength it required to force it down, his mind played about the incident connected with her strange leaving. He tried vainly to recall who was at the church that he did not know. And it occurred to him that there were many. Yes. There were many; then he remembered suddenly how cheered he had been, when he saw his little church filled to its capacity. He recalled with a pang, that, as he stood at the rostrum, Mildred had passed, and, upon seeing him, had glanced at the congregation that had gathered, and then back at him and smiled. He continued his meal, but he knew he could never forget that smile.

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Mildred Latham had wanted to help him. And when she saw his small church filled with people that day, some there purposely, while others were merely curious, she had, in that smile, shown how glad she was. It was that unselfishness about her, which was evident in many little ways, and which had finally won him.

And she had played and sung that day with all the strength of her body and soul. She had struggled in every way she knew how, to help him in his great effort. She had gone to the bank and drawn all she had saved in the months he had known her, as further evidence of her regard for this human welfare. She had acted, in doing so, at the most opportune time. With such a sum from an unknown girl, others, during the week, had surprised even themselves by subscribing sums that made the success of his work seemed assured. And cash was given where it might not have been otherwise. He knew his people a little. And when someone started the ball rolling, by means of patience, fortitude, hard work and application to the task, others can be found who will keep it going.

And why had Mildred Latham done this? Certainly she had not done so because she was in love with him. She had never shown any affection for him in that way. She had been interested in him, because she felt that he was sincere in his effort to help fellow men. And she had given the sum to the proposed Y.M.C.A., because she was *interested in humanity*, and that was her mite to prove it....

And on the heels of this, she had—almost in the same moment, been driven from the place she had appreciated as home.... Who was this beast, for positively he was a beast.... When he got to a man in the case, he could never go further. For, think as he might, he could not, in some way, connect her with a man. A man it might be; but he felt positive she had no relation with anyone. And yet, what was it? Just something, and after that, all was blank.

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They had finished their meal now. And he rose and strolled out upon the porch. He drew a cigar and, lighting it, started to smoke. It was a beautiful morning, and one to make even the sorrowful happy. But Wilson Jacobs was not happy. He gave up to the delight of the moment, and for a time, he forgot the harrowing sorrows.

The trees that lined the street were heavy with foliage, and gave forth the sound of many song birds; while a soft wind made the leaves rustle ever so little.

Presently, a man came down the street. On he came until he was even with the house, and then, for a brief spell, he paused at the gate. Until then, he had

apparently not observed the man sitting on the porch. He glanced up and saw him. Then, with something akin to an air of guilt, the stranger passed on, and, as he did so, Wilson gave a start. His thoughts flew back over the past, with electric rapidity. Where had he seen that man before? "Where, where, where?" His thoughts were fairly alive. His lips grasped the cigar so tightly, that the lighted end fell to the floor, for he had bitten it in two, in his excitement. He kicked it from him with impatience, while he ransacked his brains in deep thought. "Where, where, where?" he cried, now almost aloud. And, strange as it seemed, in some way he connected this man with the disappearance of Mildred Latham. He raised his hands to his head to steady the thumping there, which by now had reached a state of violence. Just then the sexton rang the bell of his church next door. The same broke forth upon the clear morning air in stentorian tones, and floated beyond, and then Wilson Jacobs sat up quickly, bolt upright.

"I have it! *I have it!*" he cried in a subdued voice, while his very frame trembled. "It was at the meeting. That man came in late, I recall it all now. He came in late and I saw him. He, I recall now, appeared to have no interest in the service; but his eyes sought something, and then I caught him looking at Mildred with a cunning expression!" Why had he not thought of this before? It was all clear to him now, as he arose.

And then it occurred to him to follow. He tore into the house, and seizing his hat, hurried out and through the yard, came into the street and looked in the direction which he had seen the other take. No one was in sight. He hesitated a moment, and then hurried forward in that direction. He presently came abreast of a house where people sat upon the porch. He halted a moment as they called out his name pleasantly, bidding him good morning. He calmed himself, and after returning the greeting, inquired quite casually whether a man had passed that way recently, and he gave a description of him.

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"No; but such a man as you describe came down as far as the corner back there," one of them explained, "and turned in that direction," and he pointed west.

"Thank you," he nodded calmly, and then retreated until he came to the place the other had turned. He stood for a moment, apparently lost in thought, while the people on the porch stared at him carelessly. A moment later, he passed in the direction the other had taken.

But, while he had been advised that the other had gone in that direction, no one was in sight, he now saw with sinking heart. He walked for two blocks, making inquiries as he went, but no one had seen such a man. He was downcast for a time. Presently, he returned to his home in a disappointed mood. As he came by the church, the doors were open, and his few members were filing scatteringly in. He hurried into his clothes, and a few minutes later, stood before his congregation reading the text.

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CHAPTER THREE

"Uh! 'es Got'im a Nigga!"

When Mildred awakened, she found herself stretched upon a pew, with her head in a woman's lap, while the pastor and many others whom she had met a few minutes before, stood about with anxious expressions. Two ladies were fanning her face vigorously. She awoke with a start, and recalled quickly the moment she had fainted. She had never done so before, and had often wondered how people must feel when they fainted. She knew now; but that was not what she thought of, when it became clear to her. The man was her chief concern. She sat up and looked about her quickly. If she saw him, she felt that she must certainly lose consciousness again.

He was gone. With a sigh, she sank back into the arms of the woman for a moment. The fanning was more vigorous now than ever. All was quiet about her. She did not first understand it. Was it because they were afraid it might disturb her; or was it—had they seen—and *understood?* She was too weak just then to speculate about the situation; but she was delighted to hear the pastor say, a moment later, stroking her forehead kindly:

"You feel better now, Miss?"

She nodded, and felt now like crying. She understood facial expressions, and they had not seen. She was so relieved—for the present, and did not think then of the future. She had that to worry over later, and for this moment at least, she was relieved. These good people hadn't suspected the cause of her swoon. She sat up now, smiled with thanks upon those about her, and wiped the cold perspiration from her forehead. Someone held her hat, which they now handed to her. She placed it upon her head, covering the mass of hair that many were looking at a moment before, with natural admiration. Thanking them again in a kind and embarrassed

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manner, she turned and left them, while they followed to the door, and went their many ways.

When she got back to her room, she experienced a spell of nervousness when she entered. She saw the black woman's face for a moment, and was again relieved. The other had not been there, so she nodded coldly, and entered her room. She closed the door, and, removing her apparel, got into a kimono and threw herself upon the bed.

She had no thoughts for a time, but surrendered herself to idleness for perhaps a half hour, and then her mind began to react. It took the form of reminiscence. Sidney Wyeth came back into her memory, and for a long time she lay thinking entirely of him.

It was he—and he never knew what had started her on this strange journey. She now recalled—or tried to recall why. And then after a time she knew. Yes. She loved Sidney Wyeth, and it was that which had made the difference. But what kind of love was this that had no hope? And yet did she not hope?

As she lay with the hot air floating in upon her, she gazed out into the street, where a dozen or so little black boys played. She thought, with her mind idly drifting, and she saw these boys as men, in her idle fancy. They gathered presently in a circle, and when she watched them in her half-conscious, half-waking manner for a few minutes, she saw they were shooting craps. Think of it! These boys, ranging in years from eight to twelve. And they were already engaged in that demoralizing pastime. She trembled with sorrow as she watched the game proceed. Soon she saw that an argument of some kind had come up. They became very demonstrative, and while this was going on, suddenly, from a remote direction, a blue-coated policeman appeared upon the scene. There was a scramble and they flew in many directions. All escaped, with the exception of one. He was a cripple, and as he tried to hobble away, the burly cop swooped down upon him. He grasped him, without regard for his infirmity, and disappeared up the street, dragging the cripple with him.

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And that was a common occurrence in this city. Hundreds of young men—boys—were started on a career of crime by premeditated arrests. They were often placed in jail when they were so young, that it was a tragedy. When they came out—for the courts could not bring themselves to sentence below a certain age—they were then pointed at as having "been in jail." And since they had the name, they often thereafter diligently sought the game.

As the policeman passed up the street with the pitiful cripple, she rushed to the window to look after him. A little boy stuck his head through a broken fence, and she heard him say, as they went by: "Uh! 'es got 'im a nigga!"

Mildred stretched herself upon the bed again; but her thoughts were now of something else. The Y.M.C.A. and Wilson Jacobs. At this same hour last Sunday, she had been with him in his effort—his great effort. And the need of such an effort had just been demonstrated a few minutes before, almost beneath her very eyes.

There was no place to go; no place, as a rule, where young men would go, and this helped to make it so bad. Young men will play pool, some of them, and they will seek some kind of diversion, other than the church. Their natures call for these things, and she knew it. Since freedom, the Negro has not been sufficiently practical to appreciate this point of view. Plenty of churches are available, and services are held all day Sunday. And it is easy, so easy, to say they ought to go—everybody *ought* to go. But *does* everybody go? *Would* everybody go? And the most discouraging part of it is that *everybody does* not go.

Some young men, if there were a clean place to go and indulge in the pastimes that are a custom with many of them, would be glad to avail themselves of the opportunity. Yes, they would be glad. And, by so doing, they would perforce meet others, who were likewise seeking amusement. Thus brought together, they would know and appreciate the good in each other. And still further, when they would go their many ways in life, they would naturally spread the gospel of good, or whatever was worth while. Such was the natural tendency of environment. She had just witnessed such an example, a mere incident in the city's life. Those boys had not all known the game when they began to play. But those who did know it, and had likewise learned it from somebody else, had, of course, in turn taught it to these others, who would in turn teach it still to others, and so on. Evil environment, bad influence. She had seen these lurking evils in so many places in this city of the south. And, as the months went by, they took heavy toll in startling numbers among the black children.

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The effort of Wilson Jacobs would not soon be appreciated. It would take years for all these young men to see and know the real worth of such an institution. But it was the duty of society, nevertheless (and what was the church but the center of society), to put forward all its efforts toward the evolution of its members.

Oh, some day Mildred Latham hoped she could do more. Apparently, for the present,

she had done her best. But, as to how she could continue doing that which she loved better than anything else to do, helping others, she could not now see clearly. She had no plans whatever for the future, as she lay stretched across the bed this warm afternoon. She had no thought of leaving the city, and still, she now knew that it was only a question of time when she would hear from this man again. He had said nothing, but she had read evil in his eyes. He *would* strike sooner or later, of that she was sure. But she was now resigned to the inevitable. She decided to continue her work the next day, and to be brave. She was away from those whom she would dislike to see embarrassed. Maybe he might go about his business, if he had any, and let her alone. That was all she asked. If he spoke to her again, and forced himself upon her, she would ask him to do so. She would even beg him not to annoy her. And in the next thought, she realized how useless this would be.

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She was in the street now, and was walking along. This part of the city stood upon a considerable hill, and some distance away ran the mighty river. Its muddy water could be seen from where she stood. In that moment, she wanted to be within its shining ripples. They led to the mightier ocean, hundreds of miles below. Impulsively she now sought the river, and decided to walk all the way. She had walked to it when she had stayed with her dear friends—yes, very often. And then, as she thought of them, a fear arose in her bosom, that she might possibly meet them. That would never do, and she turned back. Oh, why could she not meet them? How much would it have meant to her to feel herself in Constance's arms; to feel those kisses upon her cheek, and to know that someone loved her. Yes, to see Wilson, and appreciate his great kindness. When these pleasant thoughts had spent themselves, she realized they could never be anything more to her. No. She could go back there, and they would take her in and ask no questions; they would be good to her, and appreciate her desire to do good; but it would always be different—now. No. Her life was before her—she must work out her own destiny. Whither would it lead? She made no effort to answer this question.

She thought now of Wyeth. She formed his name with her lips, and spoke it aloud, and was made strangely happy and forgetful of that which troubled her, when she heard it pronounced. She repeated it: "Sidney." Oh, but to hear him call to her now as he did that day! The day they danced, and she had heard him stifle the passion; she had seen his eyes, and they had hypnotised her; and, in that moment of sweet insanity, she had not resisted the kiss that she saw he would imprint. No. And she had never been sorry. Somehow, that one moment had been her guiding star. She would continue into the future, and thus it would always continue so.

She arrived at the place—not home. She could never call this place home; but where she had her room. She came around to the rear; she did not know why. And then she was sorry too. Ranged about, without regard as to how they sat, were men and women. Their faces were flushed, while their smiles were amorous. She almost choked as she begged pardon, and hurried around to the front. She had not gotten out of reach of their voices, when she heard the men say: "Gee! Some kid! Who is she?"

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"Aw, she's a little nicey, nicey girly, that don't drink, nor smoke, nor chew, nor—anything; but goes t' church on Sunday," the black woman answered, and laughed a nasty laugh.

She was in her room and was glad she was shut away from the comment. To forget it, she busied herself with the names of her subscribers, and worked over the same until the sun had disappeared for the day, and twilight was in the air. She lit a small lamp, drew down the shade, and, taking up *The Tempest*, read until sleepiness drove her to bed.

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CHAPTER FOUR

"Please Go!" She Cried Hoarsely

Weeks had passed, and Mildred Latham had not seen the man since that Sunday at church. She had become an active worker in the big Baptist church. She had no thought of becoming so, but, somehow, she couldn't keep out of it. Such a great crowd of people attended it each Sunday! But they are not the select class of people she had met at the Presbyterian. They consisted of all classes, and from every walk in life. Among them, she met many of her subscribers, and was pleased to be remembered by them. They impressed her, all of them, as being good people. In fact, she could never believe many of them bad. They were simple and too free in their thoughts—when they had any. They impressed her, at times, as so many children. Many of those who came to the church regularly, did not, she observed, pay the least attention to the sermon. For the most part, the large majority could not even have remembered the text.

And yet they came every Sunday in great numbers, in droves even. Many of them

were very beautifully dressed. There were no kinky heads among them, albeit, the original had been so. The most of the hair which was theirs by birth was all straight, while the acquired portion was beautifully matched.

But the point that reconciled her, was the fact that the pastor was a good man, and a fit one. He preached always the sermon that spoke of practical uplift. And this, she judged, after a time, was why he was not liked by all, and why also, a great many made not the slightest effort to listen to his sermons.

"Aw, Reverend Castle don't preach this religion lak I wants to hear it preached," some complained.

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"Um—m!" exploded others.

"They ain' no 'ligion no mo' 'mong the people; they is all out fo' style!" still others said.

And thus it went. "Out for style," was, in a great measure, quite true; but Reverend Castle's sermons could easily be understood, if those who attended made any effort whatever to do so. But they did not, and Mildred could never reconcile herself to this.

Back in Cincinnati, she recalled when she used to attend a certain theatre. The only reason colored people were allowed to purchase admittance, was because they did not come in great numbers. There were theaters where they were denied entrance, because they made such disgusting disturbances. And it was only because they would come and make no effort to understand the performance, unless it was something below par, and something entirely comic.

In this city, she had attended a great motion picture drama. It was a play built upon an incident in the history of the struggle for Christianity—the effort to overthrow the power of Caesar. Above all, it was a play for Christians, which these multitudes professed very loudly to be. And yet the entire performance was disturbed by the gallery, where only the *black* people were allowed to sit. They were assigned this portion, because so few understood or made any effort to understand the play. These were some of the facts in the lives of her people, which exposed the Negro to the contempt of the white race.

Wilson Jacobs and Reverend Castle were preachers of a new type, and there were many other such ministers; but the masses continued to preach in the old style, regardless of the fact that many had prepared themselves to preach as these men did. The old type still continued to work upon the emotional fibre of the congregation. And, likewise, in so doing, others were disturbed who wished to be taught. But the sermons of Reverends Jacobs and Castle were not disturbed by emotional demonstrations. The people were, if the truth be known, inspired to higher ideals and a more lofty conception of life. Christ was pictured in such sermons, not as the moralist, but in the highest type of perfection, as an incentive to noble conduct.

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Autumn finally came with its many varied tints, and the leaves were falling. Jack Frost had placed his feathery designs for the third time upon the window panes, and, in the meantime, the work for social betterment went on apace.

The effort toward the securing of the colored Y.M.C.A., as it was referred to, had proceeded to the extent that it was on everybody's lips. Wilson Jacobs had proved to be a secretary of unusual efficiency.

Mildred kept herself informed of it through the columns of the papers, and was always delighted to see that subscriptions were being paid to an encouraging degree; but she saw that, of the thirty-five thousand dollars to be raised by the colored people of the city, only six thousand dollars had been paid in, after two months campaigning. This was encouraging, nevertheless, for Grantville, with a much more intelligent Negro population, had only secured two-thirds of this amount at the end of six months. Yet twenty-nine thousand dollars were to be paid in. This amount had been over subscribed, but, getting the money was a different story. Would the black people of this town pay the twenty-nine thousand dollars before, or by the first of the coming year? For, on that day, the time limit of the Jew's contribution would expire; also, that from other sources; but it was the money from the Jew philanthropist, that figured most prominently. Frankly, when Mildred saw it, she smothered her doubts as to their ability of obtaining the desired amount.

Rallies for the purpose of raising money were given weekly, but winter-time was approaching, and colored people very often had little set aside for such a purpose. Then, already work was shutting down, and had shut down in many cases. Hard times had been felt for some time, but were beginning to be felt more so. Men by the hundreds walked the streets in search of employment, and found instead, trouble. Arresting for vagrancy had been stopped by the order of the court. Many preferred being locked up, for they complained it was so difficult to secure bread, and even at

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times an impossibility; whereas, while locked up, they could eat. And that meant much.

Churches were now begging for money to buy coal; the annual interest on indebtedness was past due, and Reverend Castle did double work—the Y.M.C.A. and his church.

And it was about this time, when one evening Mildred returned from her work, and was informed by the black woman, that she had a caller. She was surprised, and looked it. The black woman was too, and she likewise looked it. Moreover, she made comment. Mildred had never had a caller before.

"A gentleman," said the other, when the look of surprise spread over her face. The other winked and continued: "Some guy, too. Yes, swell," and laughed in a way which Mildred always disliked to hear.

"Who was he?" she presently inquired, thinking of someone with a growing fear.

"Didn't leave no name; said you wouldn't know it nohow," whereupon her black face took on a look that was tantalizing. Mildred ended it by going to her room. She felt the call would be repeated. And then would come the climax. She experienced a tired feeling. This being sought by one whom she did not seek, was nerve-racking; but she steeled herself for the ordeal. She hoped, since she now felt that he would call, that he would come again that same evening, and she would have it over.

And he did.

She was about to retire, but not to sleep. For, as the time passed, her nerve began to break under the strain of waiting, and she was fatigued.

"The gentleman has returned, Miss," announced the voice of the black woman, as her fingers played upon the door. Mildred opened it forthwith, and—yes, there he was. He pushed himself in without being asked, and, being surprised at the intrusion, Mildred let go the knob, whereupon he grasped it, and closed the door. He smiled at her now; a smile that lurked, that boded no good; and she felt this, with a heaving of the breast.

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"Haven't seen you for some time. Why don't you bid me welcome?" he leered. Her eyes stared at him coldly, but her bosom heaved, nevertheless.

"Don't stare at me as if I were an iceberg," said the other, with his smiles. "Just an old acquaintance from"—and he jerked his thumb in the apparent direction of Cincinnati. He smiled a cruel, hard smile, as he did this, dropped uninvited into a chair and lit a cigarette.

"Have one?" he invited, and then snickered. "You are real cute now-a-days, I observe," he tortured. "Quite a church lady, ha, ha!" And he gave up to his mirth for a few seconds. "Quite cute with the preachers. Wilson Jacobs is 'bugy' 'bout you. Awful bad for you t' get up and steal away so mysteriously." He looked at her now with ill concealed glee, and then continued: "I didn't know you'd 'beat' it until the next Sunday; when I passed I didn't see you sitting on the porch with him; but, instead, he sat there alone, looking like the devil before dawn. About the time I saw him, he saw me, and looked at me as if he had caught me trying to break in his house, or something, so I lit out. I 'hunched' you'd fled d' coup then, 'n' as I was 'beating' it down the street in no slow gate, I see's a drayman a-greasin' his old hack. I had a premonition this guy, the way he regarded me, was likely to follow. So I just slips into this old crow's nest, and gets behind some-a-his junk, and gets int' conversation with him, and, sure enough, it wasn't three minutes before this 'preacher' comes walking by a-lookin' right and left for me. I laffed in my sleeve, and continued talking with the old skate. A bent key encountered my hand on the ground, 'n' I raised it up. The old buzzard spied it, and cried: 'That's a gal's key that come down heah t' have me move her in a hurry las' Sunday. I oughtta sent it to'r, but 'lows I ain' got the time.' Just lak a flash, I get's wise, so I says t' 'im: 'Was she the girl that stayed up at Jacobs'? If so, I'll carry it to her, since she's a'friend a-mine's.' 'By gad,' he coughs, 'n' I'm the one that'll let y' too,' and looked grateful. 'Where did she move to?' I inquired like I didn't care, and then added: 'Y' see, I know the place by sight, but I can't find it 's I'm turned around down here a little.' He puts me next, and I beats it up to where youse 's roostin' 'n' I comes up, I see this ole black hen a-workin' away with the house all open, 'n' nobody about, I dopes at once that you, sweet little girlie, is off some'eres to church.

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"You know the rest," and rising now, he came toward her. "You ought t' be willin' t' give me a kiss now, honey, for showing how hard I'm willin' to hustle for a sight a them eyes." He advanced to where she stood. He smiled as he came, while she recoiled from the sight of him, and retreated. That appeared to please him, and he began a merry chase, dodging behind chairs and jumping up and down playfully. "Wants t' tease, eh? That's a way with you little women, yu lak t' tease! Ah! That's what makes us lak yu'. 'N', kid, I sho' does lak you. You are a pretty little wench—I mean little gal," he corrected, continuing his chase.

"Please go!" she cried hoarsely. "I don't know you. I don't want to know you. Why do you torment me!" He only smiled now, and looked grim and determined, as he at last cornered her. Between them was a chair. She got behind it, and grasped the back of it. He halted on the other side, and showed his teeth for a full minute, before he said a word, or a word was spoken.

"Did you hear me! Why don't you go! If you were a gentleman, you'd go!" His eyes narrowed to mere slits, and then he suddenly opened them wide.

"Just a kiss, dearie, why all this argument. Sometimes it goes so far that it spoils all the sweetness. Just allow me to turn this chair until I can be seated, and then I will draw you down, nicey, upon my knee, and everything is O.K.—see!" He now grasped the chair, which, despite her efforts to hold it as it was, he twisted slowly from her grasp. The next minute he had succeeded, and nothing was between them. He made one step in her direction, whereupon she recoiled in fright. He caught her wrist with his right, and then with the left, he proceeded to encircle her waist. The next moment, she felt his hot breath in her face, and then, with her free hand, she struck him a resounding smack full on his cheek, with all her strength. He released her so quickly, that he staggered backward blindly for a moment. The next he had recovered, while his face was colored with the blood she had brought to it. His eyes were narrower now than ever, while his voice, as he spoke, came in gasps.

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"Why, you little wench! You little imp! You little fourflusher! You little — strike me, when I have kept my head closed all this time, while you sailed about here with these big niggers, the nicest little nicey. Ha! *Nice—Hell!* How long do you figure these church people would kite you about, if I told them *what you were back in Cincinnati!*"

She flew to the door now, and jerked it wide. A bundle of meat with clothes on, fell in with a scream. It was the black woman, and she had heard all.

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CHAPTER FIVE

The Time Limit

"What is the total, Constance?" her brother inquired wearily, as his sister poured over a long list of figures on a balance sheet before her.

"In a minute," she said and continued her figuring. Presently, with a sigh she straightened up, and handed him a sheet, showing a list of names, at the right of which was registered various amounts.

"Seven thousand six hundred fifty-nine dollars and fifteen cents," he repeated, half aloud. He looked at his sister, and saw in her tired eyes, failure staring them in the face. Unless something extraordinary occurred, the chances of securing a Y.M.C.A. for the colored youth of the city was doomed to failure. He laid the sheet down, and picked up another piece of paper—a letter. He had read it several times, but now he read it again. He didn't want to believe what was written upon it, and signed by the Jew philanthropist. But it was before him in plain, typewritten words, and was to this effect:

Mr. Wilson Jacobs,

Secretary Y.M.C.A.

MY DEAR SIR: Receipt of your letter of December 1, is here acknowledged. I note carefully what you say in regard to your efforts in relation to the securing of funds for the Y.M.C.A. for the colored youth of your city.

You are of course aware that my offer, made five years ago, in which I agreed to give the sum of \$25,000 to any city, where an additional sum of \$75,000 was forthcoming from other sources. The time I made that offer was five years ago January of the coming year. Therefore, the time will expire at twelve, December 31, this month.

With regard to extending the time limit on these gifts, I regret to say that I have made no such provision. Moreover, with the present condition of the financial outlook, I cannot see my way clear to do so. However, all cities that report favorably up to that date, I will fulfill my agreement.

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Regretting that I cannot write you more favorably, but hoping it will be possible for you to comply with my offer, I beg to remain,

Very truly, J. ROSENTHAL.

He laid the letter aside. He had known before he wrote, what to expect, for announcements had come from Grantville, that the philanthropist would not extend the time on his gifts for this purpose. Hard times had spread over the country, until not enough was being collected to maintain the cost of the office and advertising, notwithstanding the fact that they secured it at the smallest possible rate. Both were compelled to acknowledge now that a failure seemed imminent. To secure the gift of

the Jew, it was necessary for them to raise still more than twenty-seven thousand dollars.

Could he raise such a sum in view of prevailing circumstances?

"Have you received a decision from the railroad president, who personally contributed five hundred dollars, Wilson?" Constance now inquired.

"The hoped for appropriations for such purposes have been deferred indefinitely," he replied. "So there is no hope now, only from the local interests, and they, I fear, are hopeless."

"And you see no place where such a sum might be raised—in so short a time?" she asked again, a trifle nervous.

"Only to go north, and try to enlist the sympathy of other philanthropic persons."

"And—will—you go?" She looked at him now, anxiously.

"Yes, I will go," he returned.

"May God be with us!" she sighed, and picked up the afternoon paper. She glanced over it, and saw the usual accounts relating to the shutting down of various industrial concerns, and, as she looked further, there were the same accounts regarding the colored people. The business of fighting and stealing and getting drunk went on more actively than usual, if such were possible. She laid it aside presently, and picked up her subscription list. She was still selling the book, and had a great many sales for the holiday trade.

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When she paid the charges on a consignment of books a few minutes later, and unwrapped them, she thought of her dear friend who had brought her attention to the work. How much she would have liked to see her, she did not conjecture; but she was glad now she had taken up the work. The returns from the sale of it, had meant a great deal to the home in the past months. Wilson, who usually made some money otherwise than what he received from the church, which was small, had been unable to look after or give his time to anything but the work of the Y.M.C.A. Therefore, the money from the sale of the book had come in at an opportune time.

As for Mildred, the earth seemed to have swallowed her, insofar as they had been able to ascertain. Wilson had worried to a point where he now looked ten years older than he had six months before. Grantville had given up in despair. Five thousand dollars was all they had been able to raise, and, therefore, realized how useless it was to continue the effort, which had subsequently come to an end. She believed in her brother; she was confident he could raise the amount necessary, if he had the time. If the gift from the Jew could have been possible a year hence, she was confident he could raise the balance; but, with less than four weeks, it seemed hopeless.

And yet, "as long as there is life there is hope!" He would go north the coming Monday—this was Friday—and she hoped he would be successful. Until he returned, she would not despair. She made preparations for his departure, by packing his steamer trunk, washed his handkerchiefs, purchased many little necessities from her own purse, and placed them along with the rest of his belongings.

"Will you go to New York or Chicago?" she inquired as they sat at dinner.

"I suppose the chances are better beyond New York. I shall, of course, go directly to New York, but from there I will go into New England. I have credentials from several well known white people, as well as letters from the secretary of the white Y.M.C.A. here, and at Effingham and Attalia, so I think that part is quite sufficiently looked after."

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When Reverend Wilson Jacobs had dined, he felt like walking, and, drawing on a light overcoat and cap, he strolled out into the chill December night. The air was still, and the stars gleamed brightly, as he strolled down the street in the direction of the river. When he had gone three blocks, he decided to walk to the river, and look out upon its water for a spell. So, increasing his speed, he walked briskly in that direction.

To reach the river by the street he was following, it was necessary to pass through a district of the town that had not the best reputation. It was a part of the town, inhabited in former days by denizens of the underworld, and was interspersed with many halls and buildings that had been built for such purposes. Since liquor had been voted out of the state, and the city likewise, while the women had also been forced to scatter, due to the enforcement of the law relative to their profession, the neighborhood had been given over largely to bootlegging. Places operating under the guise of soft-drink shops, sold liquor as freely as the saloons had, when they operated in the same places a year ago. And, in this district, holdups and other cases of outlawry were a common occurrence.

He had arrived, and was passing leisurely through this part of the town, when, ahead

of him, a figure crossed the street, and entered one of the dives. Something about the swing of the arms, made him recall that he had seen that person before. He thought it over, as he approached the place the other had entered. He had not reached it, when the other emerged, and made his way up the street ahead of him, only a few yards. He studied the character, and when he turned into another place a few doors up, he recalled where he had seen him. It was the man who had paused before his gate months before, and whom he had started to follow, but who had eluded him. He saw no reason for paying him further attention now, and passed on to the river.

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He returned by the same street, and as he came abreast of an open door, he overheard voices and caught a glimpse of the man again. He halted, and leaned beside the door in the shade of the building a moment, out of sheer curiosity. The voices came to his ears plainly, as he stood there.

"I have reason to believe she has money," said one, whom he surmised was that of the man he had seen.

"If she has, you have spoiled your chances of getting hold of any of it."

"How do you figure that out?" said the other gruffly.

"Well, what you should have done was to have communicated with her while she was stopping up here with that preacher and his sister, and made her come across to keep you from putting them next. Now, 's I figure it out, you blows in on her with your recognition game, and frightens her out of her wits, and she flies the coup. And then, to make matters worse, you trail her across town to where she 'beats' it, and, instead of using a little diplomacy, you blow in on her and frighten her away from there. You played a deuce of a game, you did." The tone was impatient, and, from the way the other shifted, it was quite obvious that he was not playing a clever one either.

"Well, she was such a good looking little wench that, to be truthful, I lost my head over her," the other laughed a low, hard laugh, as he said this.

"Lost your head, hump!" growled another. "I can't get into my nut, how you blame nigga's get in your ugly knots, that a gal that's got the sense you say this gal has, is going to fall to a cheap nigga like yourself." The voice showed that the speaker was plainly disgusted.

"Aw, old shine, I've had some a's good looking a gals as her on my string, don't fool yourself 'bout that," the first speaker retorted.

"How much sense did they have in their nuts? None! If they had, they'd a never fooled with you."

"Well, I'm still trailing her. I ain' give up yet. I'm determined I'll bring her to time, or I'll know the reason why," the other declared, determinedly.

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"Don't the ole cat down where she was roosting, know where she has gone?" inquired the other now.

"Don't know a thing. Swears that she don't, and I b'lieve her. She's a little sore 'cause I blew in and scared her away. Funny, too, 'cause that old woman's so crooked she cain' lay straight in bed. And, say, you know Lizzie, the good looking black gal that comes over to Dago's place, and licks up so much booze?"

"Who, Slender Liz? Sure! Why?"

"That's her ma."

"The dickens!"

"Sure is!"

"That beats the devil. I know her; but I didn't know until this minute that Liz was her brat. And you mean to say this little gal what you lost your head about and chased away, was stopping with the old woman?"

"That was where she slapped me blind at."

"Well, I'll be darned. I shouldn't have thought she'd have stayed around her very long, when she got next to what was going on."

"Well, the little wench was so frightened when she left this preacher up here, that she didn't know where she was going, and she got into the place hurriedly, and then after she had got tied up there, she seemed to have decided to stick it out until she could do better. Then, besides, the old woman told me that she don't think the gal knew she sold liquor, and ran a crap game every Saturday night. Her room was so located that the gamesters came and went without going near her room. Then, the gal kept herself shut in like a prisoner, when she was around, besides."

"I wish you hadn't spoiled this deal. I believe we could have dug enough dough out of her to stake us into a game, when we're settin' 'roun' broke like we are now."

"I'll get her, just be patient. I don't believe she's left town; but I can't pull the old woman for any more information. Besides, she ain' got over me frightening her away, 'cause she said the gal was sure a fine roomer, and that she is sorry now that I found her at all. These old crooks can be won over when you come clean at that."

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"Bet your life they can. And when you get the friendship of one like that, they'd go through fire for you."

There was a shuffling about now, as if someone was coming toward the door. Wilson hurried away, and walked rapidly in the direction of home.

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CHAPTER SIX

The Black Cavalry's Charge—"Onward Boys!"

"Mildred, my Mildred, where are you, dear heart?" said Wilson Jacobs, as he hurried in the direction of his home, after he had overheard the words of the two men. He was in a turmoil of excitement. He had reached no decision as to what he would do, that is, as to how he would find her; but he was determined that he would search the city to the very doors, until he found and brought back that girl to his home.

"She is being persecuted, being hounded out of her life, as she has been out of the place she called her home—and by those brutes." And he trembled with anger, as he thought of the dastardly creatures who were pursuing her.

"I could corner that brute and make him confess what is behind this mystery; but then I have overheard him admit that she has eluded him; therefore, that would be useless. Until he ascertains her whereabouts, it would be foolish even to whip the cur for his villainy." One thing he decided on 'ere he had gone far in his reflections, and that was to keep it from his sister. It would only serve to upset her more, and she was worried enough already.

"My poor, dear little girl; my brave little girl; and you must bear this burden and sorrow all alone," he murmured in a strained voice, as he approached his abode. "Somewhere in this city she is in fear tonight, in fear of these dark creatures. I would give half my life to find her this very night. Oh, that I had some clue! She would not have me find her, but that is a matter that I would waive aside. Her happiness, even her very life, is in danger. And, whatever this evil may be, I will never believe, even from her own lips, that Mildred Latham is guilty of any act that would not become a lady. Somewhere in the past, she has, in some way, become involved, and this, in some manner, is the occasion of the mystery; but I have faith in her above all others." And so, with this thought, he entered the house and his room, where he walked for hours trying to form some plan of action.

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"I will find her. I *must* find her," he declared, with compressed lips, time and again; but, as to how, no way seemed clear. "I must leave Monday on the mission, and I must try to find her before then. I don't care what it is—has been, and might be in the future—I love you, Mildred, I love you—nothing else matters. I have faith in you; I believe in you above all others; with your presence, under my protection, I feel I could do the things you had faith I could do!" He almost raved at times, during the still hours that followed.

All the kind words she had said to him in the months gone by, came back to him as he trod the floor—thinking, thinking, thinking. "You will succeed; you will become, 'ere long, a leader of men," she had said once. "For it is you, courageous, with the strength of your convictions, this race needs; and it is you they will eventually find."

She had said this with all the fervor of her soul. And he had listened; he had hoped, and then he had worked. Yes, Wilson Jacobs had worked hard to raise those few thousands, that would revert back to the donors in four weeks, if a preponderous sum was not raised by midnight of December thirty-first. December thirty-first, midnight? God, how that sounded in his ears now. The fateful night! One minute after that hour, sixty-seven thousand dollars, waiting from other sources than the black people of this town, would be no longer available. Seventy-three thousand dollars for the future moral welfare of thousands of young men of this race would no longer be available, unless he, Wilson Jacobs, could raise twenty-seven thousand dollars in a day over three weeks.

That was his burden.

If he, Wilson Jacobs, could raise such an amount, innumerable black children yearly, and until the end of time, oh, how long... *Until the end of time*, would be saved and have their chance, their great chance, to become *men*! How much they needed it,

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these black youth! Only to see any daily, *every* daily paper, would answer this! And how much would they appreciate it? Yes, how much would they appreciate it?... And yet, what did that matter?... Yes, there were plenty who would say off-hand, "They would not know how to appreciate it; they are incapable of appreciating it." ... But that was from those who did not think deeply—and, yes, the majority, by far, of this race to which he belonged, did not think deeply. But Wilson Jacobs did. He had made it a part of his young life to think deeply, and in the interest of those who needed him.

And *now* they needed him. Oh, *how* much they needed him, and how *much* strength he needed to raise twenty-seven thousand dollars before midnight of December thirty-first!

"Black people *do* appreciate that which is for their good; but, *be merciful, dear God*, they know it not. But they *will*, and when they *do* come to know it, how *much* life, how *much* feeling and enthusiasm they will exert! *And may we not say the same of all of us!*"

He had been a very young man when his country—yes, *his* country—regardless of the fact that many of this race now said, with pent up anger, "This is not *our* country, it's the *white man's* country." How much bitterness they put into the words, he could not soon forget; but this *was his* country, and he proclaimed it as such, and had enlisted and gone away to that little island to the southeast.

He was with that cavalry; that cavalry of black men. And when thousands of aimless bullets poured upon America's greatest cavalry (commanded by the greatest American citizen since one immortal one, who met his death cruelly, but for *this* country), and tumbled them from the saddles like so many playthings, he would never forget that battle cry, "Onward boys!" And from another direction, they came, *black men*. Up a hill that was forbidding in the abruptness of its ascent, they went. Under the heavy fire of the enemy, they did not flinch.

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What they did on that memorable day in our modern history, the world knows. And if a part of our citizens *did* not appreciate it at this date, one did. And he proved it in after-years. So, when he heard these poor men of his race now bemoan their fate, crying "This is a white man's country. We have none!" he sighed, and felt pity in his heart for them.

After the war, he had gone to Arizona, and spent one summer there at a ranch during his vacation. And this ranch was among the Navajo's. Dull, listless, inert creatures they were. They did nothing to make this country a better place in which to live, and they had *never* done so, nor were they ever likely to. But, in spite of that, they are the primitive inhabitants and heroes; but not in the best sense, could anyone live among those people three months and conscientiously regard them as *men*. And yet they were given every consideration, while black men were thrust aside. And this was after three hundred years, out of which two hundred and fifty were spent in developing that which is called Dixie.

And, in spite of these conditions, Wilson Jacobs was the most optimistic of all men. He conscientiously believed that this was a black man's as well as a white man's country. Yes, he heard those others say: "This is a white man's country!" and they said it very loudly; but these same men were the scions of those who had tried, at the price of all their wealth and blood, to divide it. He never let his memory dwell upon this. Other black men did, though. So much so, that they made themselves unfit for this new generation. What has been done, he always considered could never be undone. If prejudice against his people was the custom here, prejudice against the Jew elsewhere, was usual also. "But it isn't right!" they would deplore. And, of course, he could only agree that it wasn't. To hate thy brother, is contrary to the laws of Christianity, under which we live.... But the prejudice remained after all that could be said. "It's growing worse!" they cried. "Yes, it appears to grow worse," he also agreed. "Then, what have you to say?" And he answered: "Nothing!" And then asked: "And you?" "Nothing!" "Then, what are we to do? Become examples of dull inertia by grieving over it, or shall we struggle to become *men*, and through the strength of our mind and bodies, make this a better place in which to live, if only for ourselves? For live, we must. Not since the beginning of the world have ten million souls sunk into oblivion." The pessimist always departed at this point.

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After all, Jacobs felt sorry and pitied both—the ones who bemoaned their fate, and those who boasted. Both were in error. For, regardless of what was said, he loved America, his home and "*a man's country*!"

So, when college had given Wilson Jacobs his degree, he drifted about for a year among his people. He had never thought of the ministry as a vocation. And it was only when he had seen his people as they were—not altogether as they *ought* to be, did he appreciate the fact that he might be able to help them. He had learned while at school, but more in actual life, that Jesus lived and died as a moral example. But his people saw only the individual.

So back to school he had gone, where he studied five long years, to fit himself for his present calling. His success was yet to come. Mildred Latham had said *it would come*. "Oh, Mildred! For you I would go through eternity," he declared feverishly. But only the silent walls answered him.

After many hours, he retired. The sun was shining, although it was December, when he heard Constance calling him to breakfast. How much he would have liked to have said: "Constance, Mildred is somewhere in this town, our Mildred! She is being persecuted, Constance, our Mildred is being persecuted—being hounded out of the sweet life we know she lived, and inspired in those about her!" And he knew that Constance would say: "Go forth, my brother, and find her; bring her back into our home, that we may love her and make her our sister, for it is as such she was, and more, these many months." That was the spirit of the Jacobs. But he kept his peace, and ate in silence.

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Monday came, a cold, dreary day. Snow fell all over the country, and Dixie land, far south, was white mantled. Wilson Jacobs went to the depot, for he was leaving on a great mission. Would he succeed? He hoped so; others hoped so; and Constance hoped so, as well as Mildred Latham.

But he never knew.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

"Please Stop—and Save Me!"

"Breakfast is ready, my dear," said Mother Jane, for as such she was known and called by all who knew her. She was speaking to Mildred Latham.

A moment later, Mildred came out of her room and seated herself at the table, at the head of which sat an old gray-headed man, and at the foot sat Mother Jane, whose head was white also.

"And did you rest well, my dear?" inquired Mother Jane of Mildred, bestowing upon her a smile full of kindness and tenderness.

"I slept beautifully," Mildred replied as kindly, and beamed upon the old soul with all the consideration—maybe more—of her own child.

"And you sell a book?" inquired the elder woman, after a moment.

"Yes, ma'am, I sell a book. A book by a young colored author."

"By a young colored author? I do declare!" exclaimed the other, with enthusiasm. "It is delightful when I know we have young men who are doing something else besides making convicts." Mother Jane was known for her wit.

"What is the text of this story?" she inquired later.

Mildred told her.

"Delightful, to say the least." The elder woman had secured some learning in her childhood, and had studied by consistent reading, until she was well informed, and used the most perfect English. "Went out into the great west. To the *Rosebud Country*. Well, well. I read all about that country when it was opened to settlers some years ago. I wanted my son to go; but—he went elsewhere," and she paused to swallow, while a tear shone in her old eyes. Mildred spoke of other things. The other didn't say, but quick intuition told her that son had gone to the chain gang.

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She had found this place two days after the visit that was paid her by the unwelcome guest. It was far removed from the black woman, and she was glad of it. And yet, when she was taking her leave, that apparently evil creature had shed tears and begged her to stay, saying that she would not be molested further. Mildred felt a human pity for her, but she knew she could not have stayed on. The longer she lived, the more she was learning that secrets are not good things to share with others, or for others to be in possession of, regardless of their good will thereto. She now knew that the only way she would have people to know these things, people she might chance to live with, would be to tell them before she moved into the house. To have them find out afterwards, and from others, would be, she felt, an infringement upon their kindness. As for the man who had, with his persistency, driven her from two places, she hoped he would not succeed in finding her in the present.

The following day, she went about her work with heavy heart. She felt she must continue in the work as long as she was in the city; and besides, she had accumulated many orders for the holiday trade, and could, with her efforts, secure many others. But it was not this alone that held her in this city, it was something else.

She was following the effort of Wilson Jacobs to secure the Y.M.C.A. Each week, she carefully noted the details in regard to the same, and had fearfully observed that it might fail. She was aware of the time limit, and she was worried over the lack of the twenty-seven thousand dollars. "How can he raise such a large sum in so short a time?" she asked herself many times each day. And yet she still hoped he would, even when less than four weeks were left in which to do so.

She had managed, by dint of economy and hard work, to accumulate almost two hundred dollars since she left them, and this she would give at the right moment, when she saw there was any possible chance of his succeeding. She would have to send it anonymously; but desire for his success was her gravest concern.

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Sunday came, and she stayed at home for the first time since she came to the city. The sound of the bells made her feel terribly sad and lonely. To have heard Wilson Jacobs, or Reverend Castle, would have been a privilege of which she would have been thankful to have availed herself, but fear kept her confined to her room all that day. She felt positive that he would visit all the churches in search of her that day, and other Sundays. So, with this pleasure denied her, she felt more lonely now than she had ever felt before, since coming to the city.

She purchased a book, a new novel, the evening before; so in this she concentrated her mind all that day. It was an unusual story, which made it more interesting. It seemed that, in England, where the plot lay, a postmaster was likely to be removed through subtle influences. To save the position for him, because of her love, his wife, who was all to him, made a sublime sacrifice. It came to his attention, and in doing so, the fact of her past was also revealed. It was a terrible book, to say the least, but between the lines was a moral that the reader was compelled to appreciate. In the end, the man was redeemed to her through the church—the Baptist church.

Two weeks passed without event. Her work went along nicely, and she succeeded in delivering to almost all of her holiday customers. It was about this time that she became deeply concerned with regard to the possibility of securing the Y.M.C.A. Wilson Jacobs had not returned, nor had any word come from him, so far as the public knew, as to whether he had met with success. But Mildred entertained grave doubts regarding the matter. If he were succeeding, it was her opinion, that some word would be wired that cheer might fill the hearts of the anxious ones waiting. She wished she could go to Constance, and comfort her during these anxious days. That desire became so uppermost in her mind and heart, that it was with difficulty she kept herself from rushing madly to the house, and throwing herself to the other's feet. She felt strangely guilty. She had convicted herself in their eyes, by fleeing. It couldn't be changed now. No, she could not go to Constance, as much as she wanted to. And, as she looked into it deeper, she came to realize that she could never go to Constance again.... That was the hardest part of it. Never to go to her again. Oh, the anguish it gave her when this was regarded as a reality.

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"Constance," she prayed on her knees that night. "Constance, will you, can you forgive me; can you forgive Mildred? She loved you and your brother, and it was because she was weak; because she felt that she could never have stood to see both of you know—felt me otherwise than as you knew me. Oh, I have suffered, Constance; I have died a living death. Daily I long for you; I pray in the only way I know how that he, your brother, whom I know to be so strong, and noble and good, may succeed in this great effort; this effort which these others so much need. Some day, oh, Lord, may it come to pass—though my mind cannot now see it, I hope to feel that love again."

And then it came to pass, the next day she met the other upon the streets, He smiled upon her through his ugly teeth, and in soothing words, offered greeting. She passed him by, but knew, without looking back, that he followed. She had completed her work for that day. Many copies of *his* book she had placed in other hands, and that night many eyes would begin an acquaintance with those years in the west. And now, at her heels followed her vendetta. He would follow her to Mother Jane's? And then she trembled. She could never allow Mother Jane to even think she was any other but "her dear daughter." For it was such Mother Jane now called her. Anywhere now—but there.

She increased her steps, made them faster in a direction that led to—she knew not where, nor cared; but anywhere but to Mother Jane's. Supper would be awaiting her there at six-thirty, as it had waited for her every day these past weeks; but Mother Jane would be disappointed this evening. Mildred Latham would not see Mother Jane at that hour today, and maybe she, Mother Jane, might never see "her daughter" again....

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On she went. Before her, over a hill, came a car. She could not catch that one, but others would come that way soon. Maybe by the time she arrived beside the tracks, another might meet her. She hurried. She never looked back. She was too frightened. But intuition told her that he followed. She wished she knew how far he was in the rear. Maybe if the car came before he arrived, she could elude him. Oh, if it would! She was trotting now. She was so near the tracks at this time, that they glistened like

steel rays in the distance. From a direction, which was not the way the other car had come, she heard another car. It was approaching, and now it flashed into sight.

The sun had disappeared long ago, and the stars stood out like a million diamonds in the skies above. The evening air was chill, and she rushed—she was running now—past the houses. The car was almost at the crossing. Would she make it? She cried out and waved her hand frantically. It was going to pass her, although she had arrived at the crossing, and regarded it with eyes that were frantic—wild! "Please stop, Mr. Motorman!" she cried piteously.

"Please stop—and save me." It tore by her, the front end. In the rear, she heard the crunch of feet upon the gravel street. She saw the side of the car. It dazzled her. She was lost. She could almost feel the presence of the other. One terrible moment she swayed, and the next, the rear end of the car was before her. Welcome did the inside seem. She *must* catch that car, she felt—or *die*. A brass rail touched her hand. Like electricity, it closed over it. She was raised and then felt her body speeding through space. A cry from the inside and a "ting," then a shutting of brakes, and the car came to a stop.

"My God," the conductor was saying, "why did she grab that rail? This is the only line left with cars with the open entry. None of the others can be caught without the consent of the conductor." She looked about her. She sat in the rear of the car that was now speeding into the business section. About her were many anxious faces.

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"Why, oh, why," their eyes and lips spoke, as soon as they saw her, "did you take that terrible risk?" But she did not see their eyes, or hear their words—for her eyes were looking for another. He was not there.

And they never knew.

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CHAPTER EIGHT

What Her Eyes Saw

"Our daughter is late tonight, Gabriel," said Mother Jane, coming from the door, where she had been many times. "It is now almost seven, and she has not yet arrived. I am uneasy. But I will be patient. Maybe she had to wait on some of her customers. It is so near the holidays, that some may have been downtown buying presents for their friends, and she is compelled to wait. Of course, she has never been late before, which doesn't mean that she might not be late today—but, oh well, I'll wait."

Gabriel, her old husband, played with his fork and said nothing. He never said anything. He had not said anything since '65. The rebels at Fort Pillar stopped him from saying anything further, for since then he had been speechless.

"We will have a big Christmas this year, Gabriel," said she. "Mildred's being with us will make a difference." She was silent now, listening to the fire that cracked in the grate. Presently her eyes sought a place at the table. It was the place Mildred occupied, but she was thinking of another. This other had been all to her, for he was her son. Tears came to her eyes now, as she thought of the years gone by, and the times she had fixed that place for him. Yes, she had fixed the plate there for him a thousand times. But he did not—had not eaten from it for many a meal now. No, he ate *elsewhere*. As she looked at the place today, strangely she felt he would never eat there again. And he was her only child. If he failed to carry the name beyond his present circumstances, then the name of Gabriel Ware ended with her mute husband, who sat waiting patiently.

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"It will be so nice, Gabriel, to have her with us this Christmas. And she stays right at home and reads to us both every night. She is a sweet child, is Mildred. She has been our own daughter since she came here. It has been a treat for me, because I love so much to read; while you have liked since '65 to hear me; but my old eyes cannot follow the lines with the accuracy they used to. No, the lines run together so often now, and when they become clear again, it is so hard and tiresome to find the place. But since she came, with her young eyes, her cheerful smiles, her endless patience with old people, who at the best are hard to get along with, I appreciate that things have been so different."

Gabriel nodded. They lived easily, these two. This may be a "white man's country," but our "Uncle" took care of Gabriel and Mother Jane comfortably. These many years, he gave to them many dollars at the end of every quarter, and he had increased this, until now Gabriel received ninety dollars four times a year.

A step sounded upon the porch. "There she is, God bless her," said Mother Jane, and flew to the door, opening it wide, and then, alas! No Mildred stood on the threshold—but a man.

His teeth shown, and his hat in hand, he stood with a bow, and inquired if Miss Mildred Latham was within.

On the main street of the town, where all cars find their way, Mildred alighted, and, crossing the street, she waited for the car that would take her to the suburbs which was near where Mother Jane lived.

When Gabriel and she had built and settled, it was far from the town, and they had not dreamed, that some day before they died, that their ten acres would be surrounded. But the city grew, and they had sold the ten acres long since, in lots for big prices. They had money, she now knew, a part of which they had received for the lots, and they owned other houses. But a part of what they had was gone. It had been invested in a shoe store, incorporated and conducted by colored people. They knew not how colored people act in such capacity, so, in due time, they failed; therefore, going the way of thousands of such attempts in Dixie. For, you see, these black people had not known how to conduct such a business. They only knew how to wear shoes, when they were fitted by the other race.

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"Now for home," Mildred sighed, as she settled back and listened to the hum of the car, as it sped on its way. "Oh, how glad I am that I eluded him," she breathed happily. "I'll be late, which I dislike; but it's better late than never. Blessed old dears," she added, impulsively. And then fell to planning for the Christmas day. It was so near now, that she would have to hurry in her few plans. Months ago, she had hoped she was going to spend a real, genuine, merry Christmas with her friends, the Jacobs; but now, long since, of course, she had given that up. But she was glad that she had found this new place, and had been there long enough to be so high in their favor, as to be the star guest for their holiday.

They were industrious, and raised almost all they ate in a garden of a half acre in the rear. And chickens! Mother Jane had raised two hundred fifty. So they had this meat almost every day. For supper they would have some surely, so, soon she would eat, and then the two would prepare for the coming event. She was impatient to be there.

It was freezing outside. Ice could be seen from the car window, gathering wherever there was water. A nice hot fire they would have, she knew; while she had a good new book that was half read through. After all was done, she would read to them, and so all three would be made happy.

She fell to thinking, to thinking of others, and Sidney Wyeth came to her mind. Last Christmas she had received two nice books from him. He wrote no letter, nor did he autograph the same—he didn't even let her know by word or letter that they were from him, but she knew.

Where was he—where had he been since? She wished she knew, for if she did, as she thought now, she would send him a nice book for a Christmas present. But he would never know it was from her. Her pleasure would be in the giving. That was why presents were given. For the pleasure of giving a token of remembrance. Some people did not consider it that way, but then they were not Christians. She wondered, as the car sped along, how many people who belonged to church did not know they were not Christians.

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"I wish I knew where he is," she said again, this time half aloud. "Somehow I believe he would—forget—for a day." And then she thought of Wilson Jacobs, and in doing so, recalled that, in the months gone by, she had seen him at the end of a talk, and was forced to look away. She could not stand the pain in his eyes. Did he care for her? She wouldn't trust herself to believe it. It wouldn't be right. No. She was glad now that it had gone no further. It wasn't right that he should be allowed to do that, and then learn the truth. Oh, the truth! That was *her* burden. The other had learned the truth, and then he went away. He would never return. No. And Wilson Jacobs would do likewise. She had struggled these months to keep it from him. If he learned from other lips, it would be as sad; but she would at least not have to face him, and see another suffering in his eyes. With Sidney Wyeth, it now seemed different. As she had grown to feel, she believed she could meet him. She felt now that if she could find his whereabouts, she would go to him. Yes. She would go to him and see him, and let him see her. Oh, as much as she loved him—for her love had never died—she believed now she could look in his eyes and ask him to forget. She suddenly made up her mind to leave and seek him. "But I can't," she moaned. "I can never leave here until I know the worst in regard to the Y.M.C.A. No. I would never be happy to leave them to their fate until I know the best—or the worst." Somewhere in the great north, Wilson Jacobs had either by now, succeeded or failed. Which? Until she knew, she couldn't bring herself to leave.

By this time, she had arrived at the getting off place. She sprang lightly from the car, and walked briskly to where a light shone, for one always shone from Mother Jane's window. And it was this light which guided her now. She skipped lightly along,

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humming a little song as she did so. Again was she at peace with the world, and forgave all who sinned against her. She had no malice in her heart against anyone, as she approached the house—the house of the Wares'—where already the smell of nourishment was in the air.

"Oh, how delightful it is to have a home. A place where someone with love in their hearts awaits you, and, when the door is opened, gathers you in welcome." She thanked Him that is Holy, for being so kind to her.

She had arrived at last, and with a delightful sigh, raised her foot to the step, and as she did so, her eyes glanced through the window. The next moment she fell back, and placed her hand upon her breast, while her heart thumped violently within.

Then she turned, and disappeared into the night, while those inside waited.

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CHAPTER NINE

"Wha's Y' Man?"

On she flew. Across the car tracks she stumbled, but she didn't stop, nor did she look to see whether anyone was coming or not. She thought of nothing, but to be away, away, away! Down the street that was dark and rough, and led to where she did not know, nor did she even care. She was going away, away from everybody. She would hide herself from the world. She could go to another city, but there was no use in that either. She cried half aloud as she hurried along: "I can stand it no longer, I can stand it no longer! I want to die, oh, I want to die!"

"I know," she choked at last, as she stumbled down the middle of a dark alley, in which she now found herself. "I know," she cried again. And she hurried on, as soon as she had caught her breath. "It is the river. Yes, the river." She quickened her pace as she came into a street that was at the end of the alley. It was wider. She hastened down a hill that seemed to her a mile long, and maybe it was more. But when she had hurried two blocks along this, she left the middle of the street and took to the sidewalk, and slowed to a walk. "I can't go on like this. It will excite people. I must walk, but I must hurry, hurry, hurry!"

She had covered many blocks, when she came abreast of buildings occupied by colored people. There was a barber shop where men were being shaved, and a restaurant where others were eating; a soda fountain also, and she wondered whether the people who conducted it made any money this time of the year.

The night seemed to have grown much colder, from the frost that was on the windows, but Mildred Latham did not feel it. Her face, she felt it for a moment, was flushed. And then it occurred to her that her throat was dry. Oh, yes. She knew why, now. She had cried all the way from Mother Jane's to here—wherever it was. And her face was hot, her throat was dry, and she wanted water. She must have water, or she could no longer swallow. For a moment she hesitated before the soda fountain. Then she opened the door and entered. A man who sat in the rear approached. He was a neat man, with a heavy mustache. He invited her to a chair at a table that was near a glowing fire. She took it. He waited her order politely.

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"I would like some—a-soda water, if you please," she said hesitatingly. He looked at her a moment keenly, winked his right eye, and then his left—then his right eye again, twice. She looked at him without understanding. He repeated it. She wondered what he meant. Presently he moved behind the counter, and returned with her order.

While she drank it, another, a woman came in. Mildred watched him incidentally. He repeated the winking process, while she glanced at the other, who repeated it. He went now to a room in the rear, and when he returned, he handed her something in a package. The woman gave him a half dollar, and waited for no change.

"You're a stranger about here, Miss?" he said, observing her a bit dubiously.

"Yes, sir," she replied, "I am a stranger about here."

"Oh, I see," he said, now gazing at her very keenly a few moments. "You're one of the solicitors for the Y.M.C.A., I suppose," said he, after a moment's thought.

"No, sir, I am not," she replied with a start, and wondered why he asked her.

"They was a-planning t' have a meeting overhead here t'night, was why I asked," he said.

"Oh, is that so," she commented, and then added: "I am not connected with it in any way, but I am very much interested in it."

"Well, it's too bad," he said thoughtfully, "but I don't think we will ever get such a

thing in this town. It's going to be a failure, so I hear."

"Indeed," she echoed, "how so?"

"Well, unless they get twenty-seven thousand dollars together in a week, it's sure to be. And 'f anybody c'n raise that many dollars, 's hard's times is now, I'd lak t' see them," he smiled grimly.

She wanted to ask him about Wilson, but hesitated. Had he returned? He was speaking again:

"They ain't had no word from the secretary since he left. He went north some time ago, and it was hoped that he might succeed in raising the amount among the wealthy northern people. But it's dollars t' doughnuts that he don't. 'Cause I figure it's lak this: 'f he'd a-had any success up there, some word-a come back by now from 'im."

So no word had yet come from Wilson Jacobs, and as she thought of his possible failure, all thought of herself and what had been in her mind a moment ago, left her. When she left the place she was calm. But where to go now was another problem. To go back to Mother Jane, never entered her mind. She wandered about for an hour. She now recognized the locality. She was on the same street she had found upon her arrival in the city—Beal street. She walked up this for two blocks, and where many Negroes were assembled. Several picture shows greeted her, but she had no inclination for such amusement.

Presently she turned into another street that led down to the river. It was narrow and poorly lighted, and the people, what few she saw, were ragged and dirty, and forbidding. She walked some distance on this, until she came across another that led in another direction. Into this she turned aimlessly.

She had gone about three-quarters of a block, when her eyes, in glancing up, caught sight of a house, dark and weather beaten, with a glimmering light on the front, under which was written:

LODGING FOR MEN OR WOMEN
RATES RIGHT

She paused. Her hand touched her forehead; it was hot and throbbing. She felt tired, and her eyes were heavy with sleep. She hesitated, turned into the gate, and approached the door timidly. It was a forbidding place, she saw as she came nearer. The door hung weakly upon its hinges, while light came through the many cracks. She shuddered. How different it was from Mother Jane's, where everything was spick and span, clean and well kept. Oh, if she could be home now with Mother Jane! She wrapped lightly upon the door, and it seemed a long time before someone shuffled in that direction.

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Presently, after a turning of bolts, or it seemed more like someone was drawing a peg out of a staple, with a squeak, the door opened about a foot. In the dim light, the face of an old woman looked out from a very wrinkled face.

"What d' ya want?" she asked gruffly.

"I see you have a sign up here," and she pointed upward, "that says rooms," she replied, timidly.

"Yeh. Is yu 'lone. Wha's yu man?"

Mildred shuddered, and then she recovered. She was tired and wanted to sleep. Tomorrow she would try to do better. She replied as politely as she could; "I am alone. I have no *man*."

"Hunh!" grunted the other, opening the squeaking door wide as she said: "Come in!"

Mildred entered and stood looking about her, while the old witch regarded her suspiciously.

"So you're alone, uh? Got no man. Hunh! That's funny." She hobbled to where a lamp set, with chimney smoked, and upon which a crack had been patched with paper. "There's a chair. Sit down, gal." She shuffled about, and when the light was better, by turning it up a bit higher, she came near where Mildred sat, and took a seat in an old rocker which had a sack filled with straw, to make it more comfortable.

"How much do you charge for your rooms?" Mildred inquired.

"Two bits when you're alone. Thirty-five cents if yu got a man." Mildred had surmised that would be the charge, and had the amount ready. She didn't care to have this witch see that she had money. She handed her the quarter. The old creature took it, held it to the light, and examined it a moment before she dropped it into an old pocket.

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"Wantta go t' bed now?" the other inquired, a little kinder than she had spoken

before.

"I feel sleepy," said Mildred, and looked it.

"All right," said the other, rising with much difficulty. "Ah, gal, that's rheumatiz. Bad. When you gits lak dis, life don't hold much fo' you."

Mildred tried to look sympathetic as she followed her, and murmured something inaudible.

They had entered a room now that corresponded with the remainder of the house, except that the ceiling seemed to be lower, and the room was a bit cleaner. A small fireplace was in one side of the wall, and the bed stood in an opposite corner. Two chairs, a table, a bureau, a wash stand and a pitcher with a clean towel spread over it, made up the meagre furnishings. A rag carpet covered the floor.

"I don't fu'nish fiah," said the other, when she saw Mildred's eyes rest for a moment upon the fireplace. If there were a fire, she now felt she would rest better.

"I should like to purchase some fuel of you to make a fire, if it is possible," she said.

"I'll sell you a nickel's wo'th."

"Very well. Bring it in." When the other was gone, she took fifty cents in change from her purse. She displayed this that the other might see and feel that she possessed little. A few minutes later, she was alone with a fire cracking in the grate, that soon made the room quite comfortable.

She retired when the room had become warm. The heat, in contrast with the air she had just come out of, made her yawn. So, after barring the door securely, she retired, and was soon fast asleep.

She might have slept for an hour, or it may have been only a minute, but she was slowly awakened by a stream of light that poured in through the window. She sat up suddenly, and blinked as the rays fell across her face, and saw that she had forgotten to draw the blind and that the moonlight was streaming into her room.

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But it was not that alone which had awakened her. There was some commotion in the street, or rather, in the house next door. A wagon stood at the front, and into it, policemen were pushing men and women. The wagon was a police patrol, and they were making a raid. In a few minutes it was all over, and, dropping back, she was soon asleep again.

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CHAPTER TEN

"Kick Higher Dare, Gal!"

Christmas day had come and the whole country was gay and festive. In the city of our story, the sun shone beautifully, and from the way the birds sang, it was hard to believe it was late December. The streets, at an early hour, were filled with pedestrians seeking the open air, freedom and merriment. Fire crackers filled the air with noise; while the discharge of blank cartridges and an occasional gunshot, as well as a cannon now and then, added to the confusion. The sharp noises made many people start suddenly, and then smile when they recalled that it was Xmas day; the day when Jesus, our Saviour, came into the world, and began a Christian civilization.

But there was one person who was neither gay, merry, nor festive; although she had cherished hopes, dreams, and desires for that day.

Mildred Latham lurked in the confines of the room she had taken, seeing the world—a small part of it—from the window of the room she had taken a night or two before. She had remained in it ever since, venturing out only to get something to eat and drink. She was almost oblivious to the fact, that it was Xmas day, until the discharge of firearms and crackers came to her ears from the street. And then she awakened to the reality of what she would lose that day.

A Chinaman ran the restaurant where she bought her meals. At one of their stores, she had purchased a few dishes and a knife, spoon and a fork, so she brought the meals to her room, and ate the same at the table. She had no plans now for Xmas day. She tried to forget it, but the noise from the street did not permit her to do so. As the sun rose higher, the revelry became more pronounced. She tried to forget the day Mother Jane and she had planned to spend together. She tried to shut out of her mind the day she might have spent with the Jacobs. And she tried, likewise, not to see the dreary day she must now perforce spend—alone.

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The sun rose higher and higher, and the day became warmer. So warm about noon, that she raised her window and permitted the soft breeze to float in upon her, filling her lungs with it, and sighing contentedly. She watched the few people that passed

that way, and noted that they all appeared so happy. They were all apparently carefree and desirous of getting all the enjoyment that the day afforded. Presently it occurred to her to venture forth and get something. It was bad enough that she must spend it alone; but to hover in the four walls of that little room, was a fact she could no longer submit to.

She passed into the room that may have been called a sitting room, and where the old woman was stewing some meat on the rusty stove. Before the other turned at the sound of her footfall, she scrutinized her for a moment, meditatively. She wondered who this old woman was, who lived thus alone. She fancied what her life must be; she had other roomers, she had observed; but they came in late and left early, so she had no idea who they were, or what kind of people stayed there. She hesitated for a second, and then the other turned and faced her.

"Uh, gal," she creaked in her shaky old voice, "be goin' out t' see a li'l' Xmas, ha, ha! Sho' you might. Cain' stay shut up in that room all time!" And she grinned, which made her features repulsive to Mildred.

"Yes, ma'am, I thought I would step out and look around a while," she answered kindly. "I shall be back presently."

As she went toward the gate, the hag looked after her and shook her head, as she muttered: "That gal's a puzzle, a devilish puzzle. I cain' make her out; but of one thing I'm certain, she's straight. Huh! Yes, she's straight," and she continued shaking her head.

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And it was that fact that made her a mystery to this old woman.

She walked along slowly when she got into the street, looking from one side to the other. At the end of the street, in the direction she had taken, was the warehouse district. In the old days, this had been a prominent shipping point by water; but now this had been largely substituted by railroads. The yards were quiet today, as she made her way along, while scarcely a wagon was in evidence around the many large buildings.

She walked in the same direction until she came to a street that led down to the river. She turned into this, and followed it until she stood on the banks of the stream that flowed gently southward. It was filled with a number of boats, while ferries plied back and forth to the other side. For a half hour she stood thus, with her mind free of all care, and enjoyed the stiff air that came with the breeze from the river. When she presently turned to go, she felt strangely invigorated, and decided to walk about more.

Without regard to direction, she finally found herself on Beal street, which she recognized at once. She paused briefly before venturing into it, but the street was filled with music; while across the way, several electric shows invited the crowds that poured in and out. So she went forward timidly. She stopped at length before a black boy who was turning a street piano. The music was exhilarating, and she gave him a nickel when he was starting away, whereupon he dropped the handles and played her three of the popular airs. She gave him another nickel, and he took delight in turning on three more. By this time a crowd had gathered, and, thinking quickly, she slipped away and continued her way.

She stood before a large picture show for colored people a few minutes later. At the front were gorgeous pictures, advertising the show within. She hesitated briefly, and then, fishing a five cent piece from her purse, she entered the show, and took a seat to one side. In a minute her attention was centered on the screen, where a western play in which red Indians and cowboys were in a mimic battle was being shown. The play aroused much interest in the audience, which fairly raised from the seats at times, especially when there was a gun play; and since gun playing seemed to be in evidence, much excitement was attendant during the whole time the reel was being run.

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She recalled suddenly, what she had read in the book of Sidney Wyeth, with regard to Indians. He had dwelt at some length upon this subject, and had concluded a chapter with words to the effect that the Indian, as he was today, and had been for years, was in no wise what he was pictured upon the screen, or in novels, but a shiftless being, without spirit. In truth, only an example of dull inertia.

The next reel was much more original, she thought, and, therefore, more interesting—to her; but it wasn't to many of those about her, who, as she heard them, made little effort to catch the moral of it.

It was a play of present day life, in which the hero was a man employed as floor walker in a large department store, while the heroine was a girl, employed in the most insignificant position in the basement of the same. She studied the play, and was carried away with the great human interest conveyed in the plot. It was a difficult task to keep her mind and thoughts upon it, however, because all about her, many remarks came from impatient creatures, who continually muttered aloud,

demanding that it be hurried off, and something with "ginger" put on.

"Hu'y, hu'y, 'n' git hit off! Git a gal out the 'n' some song 'n' dancin'," said one who sat next to her, and who, she observed, was ragged and dirty in the bargain; his long, kinky hair stood erect on his head, and made him resemble something recently departed from the jungle.

When the vaudeville in connection therewith was put on, she was filled with disgust. It was not refined vaudeville, and in no way corresponded with the pictures that had preceeded it; but of the most vulgar sort. It brought shrill cries from the throats of those about her, and remarks that showed the character of the crowd.

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"Put the sof' pedal on it, kid, ke-ha!"

"Dat gal sho kin' sing, nigga, believe muh!"

"Kick higher, dare, gal! You ain' done nothin'," growled one, who was not satisfied.

Mildred arose to go out. To get to the aisle, she must pass about ten people, mostly men in rough clothing. "Set down, gal, don' git in front-a me!" one next to her complained.

"Don' spile my gaze when dat gal's showing up lak she is," said another. With a sigh and a disgusted feeling, she sank back and made herself patient, until the disgusting performance was at an end. She had no trouble then, for all those between her and the aisle filed out ahead of her. Apparently they came to the show for the purpose of witnessing the vaudeville only.

When she was on the street again, the sun was getting toward the west, but she did not feel like going back to the hovel she called a room yet. The noise and music seemed to make her forget her troubles and worries, and, mingling with the masses that now filled the sidewalks, she followed them aimlessly along the street. She stopped before other shows, and, when, at last, finding one that appeared to have no vaudeville in connection with the pictures, and which did not appear to have such a big crowd about the entrance, she entered and took a seat toward the rear.

She had been seated about half an hour, when she chanced, upon looking back, to see someone whose face was familiar. She looked toward the front, and then, after a few minutes, in which she tried to recall where it was she had seen it before, she turned her head slowly, and looked again. Behind her, and just seating themselves, were not only three women belonging to Wilson Jacobs' church, and with whom she was well acquainted—they had been her best friends, and had admired her playing and singing—but in their midst, sat Constance herself.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

"My Wife—Sick—HELL!"

It was the day before New Years, and the city was in the grip of a severe blizzard that has swept down from the northwest, and had driven the people from the streets and into their homes, where they stayed closely shut in. From her little room, Mildred Latham peeped out through the small window, and was glad it was an ugly day without; for, being so, she did not feel as lonesome, and so desirous of going forth, as she had the few days previous; or, since Xmas day.

She would never forget the moments she went through, wondering how she would extricate herself, when her friends entered the show and seated themselves behind her.

She had sat with her heart beating a tattoo against her ribs, and hardly dared to breathe. The play was a deep one that flashed upon the screen, but her attention had wandered. She was trying, with all her senses, to think of some way out, and the way would have to come quickly, for if not, at the best, it would be only a question of minutes, possibly seconds, before one of the trio saw and recognized her. She was almost choking when there was a noise in the rear. All eyes turned quickly, and then there was a snapping of films, or something; but, whatever it was, the place was dark in a moment.

Now was her chance, she thought, as the theater was suddenly plunged into darkness. She arose. Could she make it? In a flash the lights might be on. "Great God!" she trembled. "Suppose they should be turned on!" And with this fear gripping her heart until the perspiration started, she struggled toward the door. She stepped on many toes, while growls and complaints came from the lips of the owners, but she felt her way resolutely forward and toward the aisle. It seemed like an age before her feet found it. Through the place now, matches were flashing. She glanced for a brief second in the direction of those from whom she was fleeing, and, as she did so, someone struck a match. In that moment, the faces of the four came full into view.

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"Oh, my God!" she cried inaudibly, "they are looking straight at me." But before the flare had died, she breathed a sigh of relief, for, at that moment the lights came on, and they were looking toward the screen.

She passed quietly out, and, when once outside, hurried in the direction of her room.

They had not seen her.

The day was fading into twilight. The sun had set, and with it the wind had fallen; the air had become still, and the stars shone brightly from above.

"If I don't get out of this place for an hour, I will surely die," cried Mildred, walking the floor in a fit of impatience. Having become accustomed to plenty of exercise, the days that had come and gone since Xmas day had seemed like an eternity. Perhaps it was hard for her, because she had not been further than the restaurant since that day. She admitted to herself that she was afraid to go anywhere now. She had not the courage to run the risk of being seen again, and had, therefore, remained confined to her room.

She paused before the window, and looked long and earnestly into the street. Never before had anything seemed so inviting. She was simply mad to be in it, if for only a half hour; but to be in it, she felt she must. After a time, she resolved to run the risk. She fixed herself as best she could, and shuddered when she realized that she had not changed her clothes for a week. At last, with a suppression of her excited nerves, she slipped out of the house, and entered the street just as darkness had set in, and the stars were the brightest.

She hurried along, and when she had arrived at the end of the street, she turned into another, and in a direction she had not been before. Along this she hurried, feeling the sting of the air, which brought the blood to her cheeks, and made her feel real life, after many days of fear and worry. She had been downtown one day before Xmas, where she dispatched a telegram, and now, as she hurried along, it occurred to her to go to the office again. She walked boldly in that direction, and a moment after she had entered, she came out with a satisfied smile playing about the corners of her mouth.

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"Now," she whispered softly, "where shall I go?" Without answering her own question, she began walking. She walked until she had exercised her limbs, and they were tired. So she felt like sitting down and resting. Still she continued the way she was going until, in turning a corner, she ran fully into someone and fell back with: "I beg your pardon!" And then suddenly the other fell back.

"Why, Miss Latham!" the other exclaimed, amazed.

"Miss Jones, I declare!" echoed the other, and stood abashed.

"I have not seen or heard of you for months. Indeed, I thought you left town long since!"

"No-o," Mildred mumbled, frightened and embarrassed, all in one.

"And—what—what are you doing—in *this* part of town!" the other exclaimed, now regarding her suspiciously.

"*This* part of town?" she echoed bewilderingly. "I—I—don't understand. *Why* this part of town?"

"Yes, *this* part of town." She paused a moment and surveyed Mildred in wonder, and then went on: "Why, didn't you know? *This* part of town—is the *restricted district*!"

"Oh—Miss Jones!" she wailed. "Heaven help me! I didn't know!"

The other looked at her keenly and a little dubious, and then she said, with a toss of her head, as something seemed to have occurred to her when the other looked at her strangely:

"I guess you wonder *what* I am doing down here, too."

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The other started, and her lips opened to say she had not, but before she could say anything, the other continued:

"Well, I don't mind admitting what *I* am doing down here, since I see *you* here, also; but I have been coming down here for a long time. Yes, you see this is not the first time. I have been down here before," and she laughed a hard laugh, as she ended with another toss of her head.

Mildred stood frozen. She could not collect her shattered wits to say anything, but she was thinking. Miss Jones was a member of Wilson Jacobs' church and sang in the choir. "It can't be possible!" she murmured inaudibly. "It can't be possible!" And

then, all of a sudden, she felt sorry for Miss Jones, because she had liked her, and thought her very sweet. And now she met her face to face *in the worst* part of the city! How could this be explained! Miss Jones being encountered in the *worst part* of the city!... And Miss Jones had, with her own lips, admitted that 'she had been there before. *She had been coming there for a long time.*' "Oh, God," Mildred cried almost aloud: "This is terrible!" *Why* did Miss Jones come to this part of town?... Miss Jones came to this part of town and *knew* she was doing so.... Then, if that were true—which it surely was—Miss Jones was a *bad girl*.... Miss Jones a *bad girl*? She could not believe it; and yet, before she could get all this through her whirling brain, she heard Miss Jones speaking again. What was she saying? It couldn't be true! Surely Miss Jones could not mean what she was saying. Oh, horrors! If Miss Jones meant what she was saying, then, Miss Jones regarded her as a *bad girl*, too. "Miss Jones, Miss Jones!" Something in her now was crying, although her lips moved not. "Please don't, please don't! I am not that way. I am not a *bad girl*, oh, no, please, *please!*" And still her lips had not moved. She stood like a dumb person; but she heard Miss Jones clearly:

"Let's go over here to a place *I know*," she said. "It's safe—nobody but a swell bunch goes there, no tramps or *talkers*."

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She felt all she had heard a moment before now running through her mind, and yet she did not speak. Miss Jones was speaking again:

"We are both in the same boat; one's as *bad* as the other. No questions asked...."

"Oh, Miss Jones," Mildred heard again, but her lips still were not moved. "How can you, oh, how can you!" *Why didn't* she do something? She heard herself, but words were not spoken: "Why *do* you stand, Mildred Latham? Why do you not go—*hurry*? You have stood *too* long now. Hurry, hurry! To Mother Jane's—to Jacobs! Yes, to anywhere; but go, go, go!" And still she stood in flesh, and made no reply.

"A swell bunch from the north, railroad fellows with plenty of coin. Some good time, kid. Come on at once. Let's don't stand here and be looked at."

She was in a trance now. She couldn't stand there; she was aware of that. That would be worse. How to get out, she did not know, for she had now forgotten how she came in. But she had no notion of following Miss Jones. No. She would go to Mother Jane's—no, she would go to Jacobs. Jacobs? *Who* were they? Oh, yes. She remembered now. And when she knew the Jacobs, she had known them for *the truth*. If she went to them and told them she had just come from the—oh, no, no, no! She couldn't go to Jacobs.... But now she had it. She would go to Sidney Wyeth.... Yes, that was where she would go. He would welcome her. He would be good to her; while she—she—*would tell him everything—yes, everything*. Oh, she was glad she had thought of him in time. Because if she had waited a little longer, she *might not be fit* to go to him.

They were going now, Miss Jones and she. Miss Jones was going, where? She didn't know, but she, Mildred Latham was going to her lover, Sidney Wyeth. Oh, how she loved him—she had always loved him; but now she loved him more than ever. And she was going to him, and when she arrived, the first thing she would do, would be to get on her knees, as she did when a little girl, at her prayers. She would tell him all. All the truth from the time she was old enough to remember, until today. Yes, she would tell *him all*. She would show him how faithfully she had worked in the sale of his book. And she would tell him how she had been driven from place to place, until she had no home nor friends; but, withal, she had remained clean. *Clean?* Yes, that was why she had struggled so. She had fought *everything*, to keep clean.... And he, oh, he—would be happy. Oh, he would be *so* happy. And then they would both—yes, *both* go to the *Rosebud Country* together. Wouldn't that be delightful? They would go to the *Rosebud Country* together and live happily.

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"Here we are," she heard Miss Jones saying. She rapped on the door in a peculiar fashion. Presently the door opened, but no one stood beside it or behind it. It had opened from the top of a stair, which they mounted the moment they entered. This led to somewhere, but she followed.

Now they were at the top, and paused for a brief moment; then, turning to the right, they crossed a hallway and entered a room. The door closed behind them, and it was some time before her eyes became accustomed to the darkness within. *Why* was the room dark? She wondered; but just then it became a blaze of light. She looked all around her bewilderingly. It was a beautifully furnished room, with a soft, heavy carpet, while about the room were many heavy chairs. In the center was a table, and around the side were smaller tables. "What was this place?" she asked herself, feeling the back of one of the heavy chairs. To one side of the room was a huge buffet with a number of glasses, all thin and of many varying sizes, artistically arranged. On the other end was a piano, with an electric cord reaching it from above. And as she stood looking at it, a light within it flashed, and it began to play a song that made the room resound.

"Hark! What was that!" she cried, with her lips closed. She saw the eyes of her companion, as her ears listened to the music. A smile, a wild smile danced in the eyes of Miss Jones. She caught Mildred suddenly about the waist, and before she was aware of it, was whirling her about in a waltz. And the tune—was the *Blue Danube*!

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In the midst of the sweet old tune, the door they had entered a moment ago swung open, and two men entered. They were striking looking men and were dressed in the latest style of clothes. They were both smoking cigars, and the room was soon filled with the aroma. But they must have been good cigars, because the odor they gave off was pleasant—so Mildred thought.

Miss Jones dropped her at once and flew to one of them, who gathered her in his arms, and dreadful, before the others he kissed her. As Mildred swallowed, she turned and nestled in his embrace, and with his hands he pulled her head back until her round throat stood out beautifully, and kissed her again and again.

Mildred was shocked at such immodesty; but before she got over it, the other stood over her, smiling down into her face with eyes that danced like fire. She fell away from beneath his amorous gaze, and ran across the room and got behind a chair. She turned and looked at him wildly now. He hurried after her. His lips were pursed to say something funny, and then he saw her eyes. He stopped suddenly and fell back a step, while his smile died and his gaze, as he saw her now, grew pointed.

"Thunder!" he muttered slowly. The others disembraced themselves, and regarded them for a moment. They looked from one to the other, and then three pairs of eyes rested upon her alone. At first they were dubious, and then, as they saw the frightened look, they changed to something akin to contempt.

"Aw, kid," cried Miss Jones—and Mildred had never imagined she could be so coarse. "'Cut' it. He's a *good* guy, he is. A *thoroughbred*!" She looked at the man now, who appeared a trifle angry. "You're spoiling it all. He'd *like* you; but he don't want too much of the kid play."

"These good lookers are always hard t' land," said the man. "But this trick appears the hardest." Then to her he said: "Come on kid. Look over my hurry of a moment ago. That face of yours, I must say, got me 'daffy'," and he laughed with a toss of the head.

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Her tension relaxed, and she permitted herself to come from behind the chair. A moment later they were seated around the large table in the center of the room. A waiter now stood over them, with eyes askance.

"Little Sunny Brook'll do me," said one of the men. The other nodded the same; his eyes rested upon Miss Jones, who tossed her head gayly, and said:

"Aw, Dickie and Joe, I don't like it straight. Make mine a dry martini."

He attended Mildred now, while the others conversed. She did not know what to say. She had not thought of anything to drink; but in that moment she knew she would have to order something.

"A coca cola," she said quietly.

Three pair of eyes regarded her then with surprise evident. As it became clear to them, all threw their heads back and laughed loudly. The waiter stood with a little smile about the corners of his mouth, which showed he possessed a sense of humor.

Mildred was silent and looked at them in surprise. Presently, when they had quieted, Miss Jones said a little impatiently:

"You're a good one, kid. I must say so. Coca cola! ha, ha! But they don't carry coca cola at this 'joint'," whereupon they laughed again.

"Yes, ma'am," now spoke the waiter. "We carry *coca cola*, but it's used as a wash." They laughed long and earnestly.

"Bring us a quart of Sunny Brook," said the man who was nearest her. "And—yes, bring this little girl here a coca cola—for a wash."

He lit a fresh cigar, and smiled.

"Play cards, kid?" he inquired, and looked at her. "Why don't you say something, sweetness? Gee! Has the cat got your tongue?" he complained a trifle nervously, as he flicked the ashes from the cigar.

The waiter had returned now with many glasses and bottles, and their drinks were before them. Before her was placed a small bottle of the drink she had ordered, while two glasses were arranged beside it, while a larger glass filled with ice stood beside them. The others had before them likewise, all except Miss Jones, whose drink was in a peculiar glass with a long stem, and flashed green in the electric light.

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The others poured their glasses about half full, while Mildred poured a part of the

fluid in one of the glasses before her. It foamed! She stopped, and when it quit foaming, the glass was only about a third full. She had not observed how much it lacked of being full, when suddenly the room resounded with the music of the electric piano. It took her so much by surprise, that she turned quickly and looked. When she saw that it was only the piano, she turned to them again, as they raised their glasses. She took up hers, at a sign from them. It was full. They all drank together.

She had a mighty effort to swallow hers. When she had succeeded, she made a wry face, and tasted the stuff gingerly. She had never drunk coca cola that tasted like that before. The others smiled naively. She felt strange. She raised her hands to her head. It felt stranger still. She wondered at such a strange feeling after a drink of something she was fond of? She had drunk as many as a half dozen bottles a day, and as many as three bottles in an hour. But three bottles had never any effect; while now, her head was whirling terribly. Everything about her swam. She saw the others smiling, and then she heard herself talking and laughing; but she was not aware of what she was saying.

It was perhaps an hour later, or it might have been only a half, but she was on the street. She was trying to walk, but apparently she was not succeeding, for the man she had run from was supporting her. He had his arm about her waist; while his free hand held both of hers. She was not talking now. She was resting. Her neck was limp. Presently they turned into another place. She did not know where. Before them raised another flight of stairs, and up this they walked—that is, he did and almost carried her. A full minute it took before they reached the top. An old woman met them. Mildred saw her for a brief moment, and recalled that she resembled the one where she had a room.

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"My wife is sick," she heard the man say, "is sick. I wish to get a room."

"His wife?" she repeated, but that was all. Darkness was all about her now; but the man repeated his words, and at the same time handed the old woman a half dollar. A moment later a door closed behind them, and the next a key turned.

But Mildred Latham didn't hear it.

The old woman looked after them a moment, as she rubbed the new coin in her palm. She raised it to her lips and kissed it with a smack. She regarded the door of the room in which they had disappeared, and then she burst into a fit of laughing.

"My wife—sick—*Hell!*" And went about her duties.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

Midnight, December Thirty-first

Wilson Jacobs sat in his study, gazing across the room at a clock. It "tick-tocked" as it always had. The minute hand slipped from notch to notch. There was nothing whatever wrong with it. It was a good clock. As he gazed at it, he recalled that in the years it had stuck to the wall there, it had never stopped; it had never varied from standard city time more than a minute or two during those years. And yet he watched the clock as though it were something strange; something uncanny; something that spelled his end.

For it was, and it marked the failure of his great effort.

In a few hours now that clock would show another year, for it was the night of December thirty-first.

In a few hours, it would tell him, as it had told him before, that a new year had come. Yes. But this year it would tell him more. How much more? It was hard to estimate. He made no effort to do so. He had already done that in the past few days—the days he would always remember as the darkest in his life of hope.

A noise in the other room came to his ears. It was a sigh. It was Constance, and he was sorry for her. Yes, Constance had hoped until the last minute that he would succeed. But he had failed....

Vainly he struggled in the great northeast, to secure those thousands to complete the amount necessary. He had gone from town to town. The people were kind; they were considerate, and they listened patiently; while he waxed eloquent and forceful in his appeal for this great purpose. He met the nicest people he had ever met—he knew that. So refined, and how much they appreciated his great cause, was shown in every town, large or small. They took him through many of the buildings. They were perfect pictures, and the management was the best. The per cent of people who could not read or write in those parts, did not include any of the native born. He had never, he recalled this now strangely, met people who were so courteous. He had been so long

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in Dixie, and, therefore, accustomed to the country there, that he found it hard to believe that white people could be so courteous to a Negro. True, but they held to their money. They shook their heads and pointed across the water—and he knew.

He had raised less than three thousand dollars. He lacked almost twenty-five thousand of having the proper amount when he returned home.

His sister met him with a kiss. She looked hopefully into his eyes at the same moment, and knew he had failed. So they had said nothing about it. Others came in as soon as they learned he had returned, and it was with a heavy heart that he told them the result.

"Well," said the professor of the colored high school, "you made a brave fight, Reverend. Yes, you made a brave fight. More than ten thousand dollars in such a short time is going some. You beat Grantville by twice the amount, and did it in one-third the time."

"By the way, Doctor," said a mail clerk, as he was passing out. He stopped, and lighting a cigar, continued: "What ever became of that young lady who played at the church, and who started the cash subscription?"

"Yes," said the professor, "I have intended to ask you myself."

"My friends," said Wilson, "it is the strangest thing I ever knew; but we have not seen that young lady since the day you were here—in fact, we have not seen her since she left the church that Sunday."

"Indeed!" both exclaimed. "That is strange!"

"The strangest thing, I should say," he declared. They spoke of it at some length, and then they took their leave. Others had come, and made it harder for him to tell. Words of consolation were given by all, which made it still harder.

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He arose after a time, and walked back and forth across the room. He thought of the Y.M.C.A. in a northern city for colored men, and where he had stopped. Such a delightful place it had been. There was a pool hall, a cafe, a barber shop, a complete gymnasium, a swimming pool, a reading room with piles of the latest magazines; in fact, there was everything to keep young men out of bad company, and, at the same time, provided for them a place for clean, manly sport. He had stopped there three days, and during that time he had observed the great good it was doing the young Negro men of that city. The Negro population was not one-fourth that of this town, and still the schools there were the best; while almost everything in the way of public conveniences was open to the black people. If the Y.M.C.A. could be of such great good in a community of that sort, words, figures, estimates, all were inadequate to describe what a great benefit it would be to this town.

And, until the last day he did not despair. He hoped and he worked. "The administration has balled the financial situation up so badly, that it is useless to seek subscriptions for anything," one had told him.

"A million and more dollars he has given away," said the secretary of a millionaire he had consulted. "Yes, I will arrange an appointment," but from the way he said it, he was sure it would do no good.

"Crime and evil environments have undermined the foundations of our society; those people, for whom a million men went to battle fifty years ago and freed, have reached a place in our American society, where it is the greatest mistake of a decade that they are not provided with better surroundings." He said this time and again, and the people heard him through, but in the end it was the same.

By some he was greatly encouraged. If the gift of the Jew could be extended a year, all would be well, he was sure; but that had been settled.

"I am asking you for assistance, because we have at our disposal three-fourths of the amount necessary; but, without your assistance in this, this three-fourths reverts back to those who have offered it."

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"The country is in a bad shape," and they pointed again across the water.

And now he had returned, and had to admit to himself and the others that he had failed. He forgot his own desire; he wanted the association for the great good it would do his people.

He seated himself, and mechanically his eyes sought the clock again. It tick-tocked the minutes away, and the minutes became hours, and every hour drew him near the end. If he could present twenty-five thousand dollars to the Y.M.C.A. by twelve o'clock that night, it would be saved.

Suddenly it occurred to him to go into the street and walk about for a time. Maybe he could forget it. He picked up his hat, that he had thrown on the floor in his absentmindedness, and drawing on his overcoat, made his way thither. It was a crisp

night, and the chill, as he struck the street, made him quicken his steps, and he walked briskly in the direction of the river.

He observed with a start, presently, that he was going in the same direction and the same street, he had taken before going north. The incident and the words he had overheard came back to him, and he thought of Mildred with a pang of the heart. "I wish I could see her now," he said; and then, in the next breath, he said no. "I would have to tell her that I had failed, after her kind words. She said I would succeed. Yes, she said that—and meant it." He walked on, and finally fell to talking to himself aloud.

"Yes, Wilson Jacobs, with all you have been through, you have come to this in the end. You've failed." And then something somewhere in his mind said: "Yes, you have failed, but don't despair. All may not be lost. As long as there is life, there is hope." He laughed at this, and wondered then at the strange caprice of the human brain. "Wonderful," he commented. "I wonder how did man ever come to be. In the years when he was wild, that was different. But now he is becoming so wise, that almost miracles are accomplished. He continues to grow wiser as the years go by, until I wonder what it will all come to in the end."

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By now he had reached the place where he overheard the voices of a few weeks before. It was dark. Not a soul nor a sound came from within. He stood where he had heard the voices, but no voices came to him that night. He presently retraced his footsteps. He could, at least, be home and comfort his sister. She could not be allowed to be alone while the old year died and the new sprang into being. He dragged himself along in an aimless fashion, not hurrying. As he figured in his mind, he had yet two hours.

When he arrived at the house and entered, he resumed his seat in the study, and, since there was nothing else to do, he resumed his task of watching the clock. Not as much time was left as he thought for. It was now almost eleven. In one hour and a few minutes, it was goodby to seventy-five thousand dollars for the purpose of building and establishing a Y.M.C.A. for the black youth of the city.

He heard Constance in the other room, breathing heavily, and wondered whether she was sick. He watched the clock now as a man who waits for the death knell. Time seemed to go slowly, he thought. He would call his sister when the clock reached a quarter of. Yes, and together they would watch, watch, watch. He dozed off to sleep. Suddenly he awoke with a start. He had slept the old year out, was his first thought. Then he looked at the clock. No, not quite. He rubbed his eyes.

And then he listened. Had he heard someone, or something? "Of course not," he muttered half aloud. "This game is telling on me," and he raised his hand and grasped his head. And still he felt something had happened. He arose and walked back and forth across the room, and then sat down again. As he did so, his eyes saw the clock.

It was now eleven thirty-five.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Into the Infinite Long Ago

"That is the Ponca, dear," said Sidney, taking her hand, as they walked up the road.

"But you did not call it that in your story, Sidney," said Mildred, squeezing his hand fondly. "I have never been on its banks. When are you going to take me there?" she now said poutingly.

He placed his free hand under her chin, and dared her to look into his face with such a frown. She failed, and laughed instead.

"But I want to go," she cried, swinging the hand she held back and forth. "Won't you take me soon—take me today?" she begged.

He drew her to him, placed his arms about her, and kissed her fondly.

A moment later they walked down the wide road.

"And this is the *Rosebud Country*," she said, allowing her eyes to stretch over a land to which she saw no end.

"Yes, this is the *Rosebud Country*," he said contentedly.

She regarded him a moment closely, before she spoke. In that look, she appeared to see him as she had never seen him before. This man was her husband, and he had spent the prime years of his life in this land to the northwest. He loved it, and now she would love it, because he did. In the years gone by he had hoped—he had built

his hopes here, and into that life had come another. After that things had been different. Yes, things had been different, and that was why she was here. But she was happy. Yes, she was happy. He was too, so that made her more happy.

"See those rocks on yonder hill?" she heard him say, and she allowed her eyes to follow the direction of his finger.

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"Yes, and oh Sidney, I gaze each day at them, and at the smaller one just this side of it. Tell me of them, and of the little one, too."

And as they strolled together down this prairie road to the valley of the Ponca, Sidney Wyeth, her husband, told her the story of the two hills.

"Many, I know not how many years ago, yon hill was the scene of many a crime, so the squaws told me." And he sighed, as he seemed to look back over the time. She placed her hand now in the curve of his arm and held it closely. It seemed to satisfy him, and with a glance at her, and a far away look in his eyes, he proceeded to tell the legend of the hills.

"It was before the days of the mighty Sitting Bull, and Red Cloud, too; before the days of the cowboy—and even the squaw man. It was in the days of Chief Stinking Eye, who was the bravest—so the Indians say—of all the great Sioux warriors. Stinking Eye and Chief Bettleyon loved one and the same maiden—the daughter of Chief Go-Catch-The-Enemy.

"Go-Catch-The-Enemy was a great chief, and owned all the land in what is called the Bull Creek district now, while Bettleyon lived with the tribe of his father in a part of this country far to the west, in that part which is now called the Cottonwood Creek district.

"This vast tribe of red men lived by hunting principally; but their women discovered that crops could be grown in this soil, and, with rude plows and hoes, and whatever they had, they dug little patches in the soil along the creek, and in springtime, they planted these patches in maize and beans; so, when the zero weather of winter made the wigwams the most comfortable place, they kept from starving by feeding thereon. Of course, that was in the day when the buffalo was plentiful, and they had meat; but with cornmeal this was made more delicious. So, in this way, the Sioux Indians came through many cold winters, and went to war again in the early springtime; that is, the men did, while the women repeated the task each year, of planting the patches to Squaw corn or maize.

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"How they fought, and bled and died, is a matter not trivial. About this time, there came a man. He rode a pony, and he had on boots—not moccasins—and he wore a hat on his head. He carried a rifle in his hand, and that was the first time *these* red men had seen such a weapon. Strange, as it was to them, he talked fluently in their tongue, and withal his cleverness, he became a favorite among the many. Before long he was, in reality, chief over all. From the Niobrara across the Keya Paha, including the Ponca, the Mastadon, on to the Whetstone and Landing Creek and to the White River, he ruled. They named him Rain-In-The-Face, and he made them all believe that he was next to the great white father.

"There came a day when he made love to Go-Catch-The-Enemy's daughter, Winnetkha, which was her name, and she was said to have been the most beautiful daughter of the Sioux Indians the *Rosebud* had ever known.

"This, as you might expect, made enemies of Young Chief Bettleyon and also Chief Stinking Eye. But the white man was shrewd. He thought at night, when all was quiet and the Indians slept. So the mornings were used in carrying out the thoughts of the night before, while the Indians had to think of war.

"So, before any knew, the white man had made Winnetkha his own, and took her to live in a real house, that he had made the Indians build for him, of straight ash logs, with bark peeled off and hewn on the inside, until the white wood glistened like silver.

"That was the beginning of the breeds, and after that, many became crossed and have not stopped until recently; but Bettleyon and Stinking Eye never got over it, and when the pale face was spending his time herding the cattle that were now replacing the buffalo, they intrigued cruelly against him.

"Winnetkha overheard their plan, and informed him when he came from the herd that night, and so he kept watch. They came late, with a band of picked men and loyal followers, and began at once to make war on the big house. All night they fought, but the Indians were shrewd this time, and fought from long range. They shot at the house with arrows that were heated red hot on the point, until at last they set it on fire. This, of course, drove the white man and his squaw out. They managed to escape and reached safety ere they were discovered. But the white man was angry, and he swore to have revenge, so, loading his rifle, he saddled his horse and came down single-handed on the Indians and killed many, and routed the rest.

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"He was not bothered any more for years afterward, but the Indian, you know, never forgets, so, one day, when he was grazing his herds near the top of the hill, he looked up to find himself almost hemmed in by the skulking red devils. He rushed to safety behind the rocks at the top, where you see them. Here he fought until his ammunition was exhausted, and he was without defense, with the Indians all about him.

"And it was then that he looked about for other weapons of defense, and discovered a den of rattlers. Then, one at a time, he allowed the Indians to approach him, and as they did and went to look for him, they were struck in the face by a rattler. More than twenty were bitten, so 'tis said, and more than half died from the effects. And then they killed him.

"Old Go-Catch-The-Enemy made war on them afterward and a reign of outlawry began; but to the white man, his son-in-law, he gave a great funeral, and did not bury him on a tree top, where buzzards picked the bones, as had been the custom; but the Indians preferred such a burial rather than that a coyote should dig them up from the earth. He was buried on the top of the little hill to the side, as you see, with stones arranged about him, and so deep in the earth, that the wolves never bothered.

"So, that is the legend of those hills that you see, and they are the land mark. Those who live here will not soon forget it."

They stood on the banks of the Ponca now, and listened to the happy birds that filled the air with music like thousands of little bells. As they stood, arm in arm, they appreciated all that life held in store for them.

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Suddenly from the west came a great noise. "Hark!" cried the husband. "A prairie fire? Of course not. The settlers made that impossible long since." He looked anxiously in the direction from whence came the noise. The sun could not be seen, and everything at once grew dark. "A tornado!" cried Sidney, and, grabbing his wife, he started to fall to the ground, but too late! A sudden wind seemed to pick him up, and a moment later whirled him into the air, while Mildred cried out in agonizing tones:

"Sidney, Sidney, come back, come back; don't leave me!" But on he flew, with the wind raising him higher and higher into the air, while she moaned until she felt her heart would break. Everything was so dark about her that she could not see, and then, suddenly it began to clear. Darkness was not about her, for overhead burned an electric light. She lay across a bed. She stood up and looked about her.

Her brain throbbed terribly, while she tried to recall where she was, and then slowly it all came back to her. Miss Jones—the visit to the blind tiger—a bottle of coca cola—"Oh, my God!" she cried in piteous tones. "I'm lost! I'm lost! I'm lost!"

She rushed to the door. It was bolted. She paused a moment as she stood by it. Where had *he* gone! She had a watch on her wrist; she looked at it. She had not been there long. She recalled looking at it just before drinking the stuff in the glass. That was exactly an hour before. It was fully a half hour later when she had been brought to this place. But *where* was the man.

She looked across the room to a chair. Over the back of it lay the overcoat he had worn. Then it became clear to her. He had stepped out a moment to get something perhaps. She walked to the door quickly and tried the knob. It was locked and the key was gone. She became frantic as she ran around the room. She tried the window again. Useless. Besides, when she peeped under the shade, it was too far to the ground. She stood dumbly for a moment. Presently, mechanically, she walked to a dresser that stood to one side, and peered in the glass at herself. She recoiled when she saw her face. It was swollen, and her eyes looked strange. She could not believe herself. She looked again. "Yes," she whispered, "this is *I*!" She looked away. The top of the dresser was covered with a newspaper. Mechanically she found herself looking over it. It was not a city paper, she could see, so, somewhat curiously, she turned it over and saw the front page. Her eyes chanced to fall on an article two columns in width. She read a few lines, and then, with a muffled cry, she staggered backward, clutching the paper. She sought the chair or the bed—anything, she was too weak to stand now. But, ere she had reached either, she suddenly stood stiffly erect, while the blood seemed to freeze in her veins.

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A step sounded in the hallway, and a moment later, a key rattled in the lock. The *man* was returning.

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

"Go Brother! In God's Name, Go!"

"I am truly sorry to see the colored people of this town fail in their effort to secure a

Y.M.C.A. for their youth," said the secretary of the white Y.M.C.A., as he rested his elbows for a moment upon the cigar case.

"And they won't get it after all," said a young man whose father had given five hundred dollars to the cause. "They certainly need something of the kind. The crime and condition of the colored people of the southern states, give this section a bad name in the eyes of the enlightened world," he commented, lighting a cigarette and sprawling his legs in front of him, when he had taken a seat.

"I regret it more because that fellow, Wilson Jacobs, the secretary, has been a faithful worker, if there ever was one," the secretary said thoughtfully.

"How did they happen to fall down on it? I understand that the white association has subscribed twenty-five thousand dollars?" inquired another.

"So did a Chicago Jew, and likewise seventeen thousand dollars were subscribed from the city and other places, by the white people; but only ten thousand dollars could be raised among the colored people—or rather, only about five thousand. He secured about the same amount from the white people here and in the north."

"I met that fellow down here one day, and say!" exclaimed another, "he impressed me as much as any person I ever met, I want to tell you!"

"How did they ever come out with the effort over at Grantville?" inquired another.

"They failed," said the secretary, and then added: "The gift from the Jew philanthropist has run for five years, and expires tonight at twelve o'clock." So saying, all eyes sought the clock that hung on the wall above them.

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"They have only a few minutes left, according to that," smiled one.

"Say, wouldn't it be a sensation, if that fellow came tearing in here at one minute to twelve," said one, and laughed. The others joined in, but the secretary did not share in the joke, notwithstanding that it was not meant to be depreciating.

"If he should," said the secretary, walking from behind the case, "I am authorized to acknowledge the same, and the colored people would get their association. But, of course, I do not anticipate such miracles tonight."

A moment later, they all filed to another part of the building, where hundreds were gathered to watch the old year out and the new in, and where music soon made them forget the subject they had been discussing.

Twenty minutes of the year was left. In five minutes Wilson Jacobs would call his sister, and together they would watch. But the new year would bring no joy to their hearts. It meant that a great struggle would end in failure. He watched the clock by the minute. It was now eleven forty-one. Nineteen minutes left.

Presently he heard a light footfall. He looked up and saw his sister coming toward him. She looked tired and worn; the strain she had been laboring under was plainly evident in her face.

She came straight to him. What was it that made her regard him as she did. Had she seen, in these last minutes, how much it hurt him to have to pronounce his great effort a failure. She advanced to where he sat, and impulsively bent over and kissed him. As she raised up, both pairs of eyes saw the clock, and both pair of lips murmured:

"Eighteen minutes left." And then his lips said:

"Yes, sister, eighteen minutes left to raise twenty-five thousand dollars for the Y.M.C.A. for our people." He lowered his head, and sighed long and deeply. She placed her hands about his forehead, and let them slip back over his hair.

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"My poor brother, my poor brother!" And then, for the first time she observed a package. With womanly curiosity, she inquired:

"What is this, Wilson?" and pointed toward it. He sat up quickly as though he had been asleep.

"That," he replied, blinking. "Why, I don't know. I declare. I didn't know it was there." He was thoroughly awake now, as well as curious.

"Wonder what it is," she said, curiously.

"I don't know," he breathed, turning the package over. "And you are sure you didn't put it there?"

"Oh, no, but I am curious to know what it contains," and she turned it over, while her face lit with a little smile that was carefree. He saw it, and said:

"Why dear, if it will please you, open it as the last thing in the old year."

"Oh, brother, that is so nice of you," and she took the knife he handed her, opened it, and quickly cut the strings. A package was enclosed, tied with paper. She pursued the task of cutting strings, and then, as she unwrapped the paper from about it she mused:

"Oh, I wonder what it can be!" It was open now, and two pairs of eyes opened their widest, while her voice cried:

"Wilson, Wilson! My God! It's money! *It's money to save the Y.M.C.A. for our people!*" Both now regarded the clock. Fifteen minutes was left to reach the Y.M.C.A. building thirteen blocks away! It was she who spoke:

"Go brother! In God's name, go!"

Had it been any other night but the night of December thirty-first, a man who tore wildly down the middle of the street, bareheaded, and with a woman with hair flowing loosely behind her, the officers on duty would surely have made an arrest. But as it was, they only smiled amusedly, as they remarked a new freak of meeting the new year. How little did any feel or know that upon that wild run, depended one hundred thousand dollars for the salvation of thousands of black youth, until the end of time....

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The papers carried the account in large headlines the following morning.

"REVEREND WILSON JACOBS SPRINGS A COUP

"Energetic worker and secretary of the Y.M.C.A. for the colored people raised twenty-five thousand dollars, and completed the condition of the association at two minutes of twelve o'clock last night. Two minutes later, more than seventy-five thousand dollars would have been unavailable for the purpose."

In a column and a half, the people of the city and elsewhere read the account of the wonderful victory that meant so much for the colored people of the city, of which the population was two-fifths. It was likewise a victory for the white people, all of whom could appreciate the fact. In securing the same, the city, with the unenviable reputation of being one of the most criminal cities in the world, now took first place in the line for uplift among the colored people, as it would be the only city in the south to have a Y.M.C.A. for its black population.

The fact made thousands of black people buy the blind tigers and drugstores out of whiskey on New Years day. *It was their greatest day since freedom!*

In Grantville, everybody wondered how they had done it, and in Effingham and Attalia; and then the people of the fortunate city wondered too, after their excitement had cooled and they could think. Wilson Jacobs wondered likewise, and so did Constance. Everybody wondered.

But they never knew.

END OF BOOK THREE

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BOOK IV

CHAPTER ONE

"*'Scriminatin' 'G'inst Nigga's*"

"Do you read d' papers?"

"A' co'se I does. Wha' kind-a 'situations y're tryin' t' pass on me, nigga?" said one, whose feelings were, at that moment, very much injured.

The heavy train pulled cumbersomely to the summit, and stopped a moment, while the switch engine attached to the rear, was uncoupled. A moment later, it continued on its way.

Miles to the rear and below Effingham it struggled for one brief moment, and then, as a curve in the mountain was being made, it finally disappeared from view.

Sidney Wyeth settled back in his seat in the front end of the Jim Crow car, and, with

his feet spread over the seat ahead, prepared himself languidly to enjoy the four hundred odd miles that were before him.

Only half a car, possibly not that much, was given over to the use of the colored passengers. It was as comfortable as the other part of the train, however, so no discrimination was evident. The portion given to them was, of course, next to the baggage car; while far to the rear, as he observed when the train rounded a curve, fully eight or ten cars were more or less filled with white passengers. About half the number were Pullmans.

"Den 'f y' read d' papers, yu autta know 'bout dis 'scrimination dat is a-goin' on up dere in Washington," he overheard between three or four Negroes a few seats to the rear.

"Ah reads th' papers eve' day; but I 'on know wha' you's a-drivin' at," contended another.

"Den you do'n read d' papers den, case all dis occurred up dere las' fall, 'n' dere was a big awgment 'bout it, 'n' all de no'then papers done took sides ag'inst d' president."

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"Aw, sho!" cried the second speaker now quickly. "Ah knows what youah talkin' 'bout now, sho thing!" And he nodded his head understandingly. The other observed him nevertheless, dubiously, but was patient while the other enlightened him.

"Yeh; you 'ferrin' t' dat bill dey had up dare about 'scriminatin' ag'inst nigga's. M-m. Yeh. Des 'ere bill was a pretest from—well, somebody up no'th, a'-cose; but it's to make dem stop havin' nigga's eatin' in d' kitchen, dat us it, sho," and he looked about him into the faces of the listeners.

The first speaker, confident at first that he was going to show the other up as not knowing as much as he, looked a trifle disappointed; but he didn't grant the other the benefit of the doubt.

The second speaker went on:

"Yeh, I don read all 'bout dat. Yu see," he explained very ostentatiously, "dare was 'n' editor, a sma't nigga frum Boston who had done *been t' school 'n' graduated frum college, and knowed ebreting*, 'n' 'e 'as a bill down dare t' Washington, 'n' eve' body says t' 'im: 'Why 'on' you take dat bill up 'n' make d' president sign it!' So dis nigga 'e finally git mad 'n' takes it 'roun' to de president's office, 'n' shows it to'im 'n' tole him: 'Sign it!' Now, dy president he look at it, and read it over a little. Then 'e jumped up outer 'is chaeh, 'n' says: 'I won' sign tha' bill!' 'N' dey says 'e got awful mad, 'n' sto'med aroun' fo' 'n' houh.

"So dis Boston nigga 'e got mad den, too, 'n' den 'e got du' president tole. Says 'e: 'I voted fo' yu; 'n' so did a lotta udder crazy nigga's, 'n' now we 'us about t' be drivin' outta du race, kase why? So now, I dun come all d' way heah frum Boston wi' dis bill that I wants you t' sign, t' make dese secretaries quit fo'cin' nigga's t' eat in d' kitchen!' Den du president 'e got madder still, 'n' wants t' fight. But they pa'ts 'm, but d' president 'lows: 'I won' sign dat bill, I won' sign it!' 'E stamps 'is foot den, 'e be so mad. But dis nigga, 'e ain' no southern darkey 'n' 'e stans pat, an 'monstrates dat 'e will sign it, ah dare won' no mo' nigga's t' vote fo' 'im fo' president. Well, du' president 'e is so mad dat he sto'm, 'n' finally says: 'I won' sign dat bill, I won' sign hit! Befo' I'll sign that bill—'n' 'e strikes 'is desk wi' 'is fist—I'll qui' mah job!'"

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"But," said another, who, up to this time, had taken no part in the harrangue, "the president, ah taut, ain' axed t' sign a bill ontell it had been acted on by congress."

The others looked at each other now, in some surprise. Then they observed the speaker, in a manner that was serene with contempt, for his apparent ignorance. (?) Then the second speaker said:

"Aw, dis bill, y' see, 'us a secret. Dey wa'nt but three people knowed 'bout it. 'N' dey was du editor and du president—'n'—," he was thoughtful now, as he meditated for a moment, and then said, "*Roosevelt!*"

By this time the train had gotten under way, and it thundered on its way southward, down among the scrub pines that stood back from the single track. Croppings of iron, Wyeth observed, reached far to the south of Effingham, while the country, as far as soil was concerned, was a desolate lot of red clay and rock. The train tore through numerous little towns, consisting of a number of shacks, built mostly of plain boards, standing straight up and down, with smaller boards nailed on the cracks. Before some of these shanties played white children, whose appearance showed the life they lived, which was apparently that of poverty; while at some distance, he also observed were other houses, not as respectable as those behind which white children played, and occupied by Negroes. Little patches of cleared land that was scratched over, denoted that agriculture was attempted in even this poor soil. By the slenderness of the dead stalks, he could see that it would take many acres to produce a bale of cotton.

On to the south the train hurried, and as they neared the capital of the state, he observed, with some encouragement, that the soil grew a little deeper; but, at the best, would have been laughed at back in the *Rosebud Country*. And the same sight met his gaze all along. This had once been a proud, aristocratic state; but, he wondered if it became so by the returns of crops from such poor land. Yet he was seeing only a small part of it from the car window.

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A cotton gin greeted the traveler at almost every station; while everywhere the scrub pines and rocks were largely in evidence. If all the state was like what he saw from the car window, with the exception of that which lay about the capital for a distance of fifteen or twenty miles, he scarcely wondered that so many Negroes preferred the city, where wages were sufficient to give them something in life.

It was a cold, disagreeable day in the beginning; but, as afternoon wore on, he was cheered to see the elements clear, and the air become warmer.

The highlands were behind them now, and had given place to great trees, while back from the track log houses interspersed the forest here and there. The further south the train pulled, the deeper became the swamp, while the trees towered to heights that could not be fully estimated from the car window. The atmosphere, which had before been dry, was now charged with a peculiar dampness, that seemed to rise from the earth, which melted away from the tracks.

After many miles, in which the afternoon sun barely penetrated the deep forest, the train passed through another pine district. The trees were slender and scattered, while thousands of stumps stood lowly and darkly about. As he looked closer, he saw that among the standing timber, at the base, were little buckets. He made inquiries and was told that this was where turpentine came from. He laughed then at his ignorance. He had forgotten entirely that it was the south which produced the greatest amount of this article.

"And when they have tapped the tree for such a purpose, I suppose it is of no further good but to be cut down?"

"They cut them down at once, and make most of them into cord wood," replied the person of whom he asked.

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"Now these people," said Wyeth, pointing to the black people, "they attend to the most of it?"

"Yes; the women to the turpentine, and the men to the timber."

The train had now come into a land of swamp. As far as eyes could see, there was a profusion of vines and palm leaves. He wondered if that was where the palm leaf fans came from. If so, the harvest was abundant. For miles and miles the swamp was thick with them, and they appeared to be all of fan size. Water stood a foot deep, while the track rose, perhaps, upwards of four or five feet above it all. The trees were a strange variety to him, while nowhere for miles did it appear possible for anyone to live. The mosquitoes, he judged, must surely find this place a haven when the days were warm; while fever could fairly thrive.

Now the train had left the deeper forests, and was rolling across numerous trestles that stood high above the water. Great lagoons were crossed, where large birds, sea gulls and others not so large, flew about undisturbed. Miles away at last, rose church spires and ship hoists, and he then knew they were approaching a city that was a great seaport.

A half hour later, they stood in the station. He found his way out over the tracks and into the station, where he entered the colored waiting room and lunch counter. They were supposed to stop twenty minutes there; but, before the lunch he had ordered was served, he observed the train pulling out. He tore out and was about to pass through a gate that was open, but was halted by a young white man, who informed him that it was the gate white people passed through.

"But I'm traveling on that train, and it is pulling out," he cried frantically.

"Don't make any difference," said the other coldly. "Enter through the niggers' gate," and pointed to the rear. Wyeth tore down there, but it was closed and locked. He gave up. Aboard the train was his luggage, while he must stand and see it go on without him, simply for the sake of a rule, that Negroes and whites cannot walk through the same gate. He was disgusted over such an occurrence, and stood watching his train disappear. It had gone well toward the end of the yards, when it came to a stop, while the locomotive attached thereto, whistled two or three times. Another man came to the gate, and Wyeth said to him:

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"I'm traveling on that train. Can I not pass through this gate and catch it?"

He was permitted to, and breathed a deep drawn sigh. As he passed the fop who kept him back, he gave him a look, and wished they were both in the *Rosebud Country* at that moment....

A waiter, who had seen him go into the station, had the vestibule of the diner open, and it was through this he entered, as he caught the moving train.

"I knew you would get balled up!" he exclaimed. "I saw your controversy at the gate.... And wasn't surprised, for you see, this is a *white man's country*." Thereupon he smiled a hard, dry smile. Wyeth passed forward to the Jim Crow car, and forgot the incident, for it was best so.

They had now come into the greater city, and he got off.

"Where can good accommodations be had here?" he inquired of the porter.

"Want a place to stop?" His face lightened perceptibly. "If you will wait until I get through—say ten or fifteen minutes—I'll carry you to a good place," he said, and Sidney waited.

He sat in the waiting room listening to the noise without. About the four sides of the wall, sat many little girls—that is, girls. They smiled upon him, and made immodest advances. He wondered at it, but then he recalled that this was supposed to be the most profligate town in our states. He paid little attention to them. Others entered, and they smiled upon them also.

Presently the porter appeared, clothing changed, and dressed neatly. Several of the girls gathered about him, and said many foolish things. He smiled upon some of them, while he told others to go to the devil; and still others he told to go to—but we will stop here. And then they told him he could go there, too. They left then, and Wyeth and he walked up a street that was the widest, he felt certain, that he had ever seen.

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"Where are you from?" inquired the porter.

Wyeth told him; whereupon the other whistled.

"That's a long way from here. How do you like these parts?"

Wyeth didn't answer the last; but to the first he said: "Yes, a long way," and fell silent.

"Ever been here before?" said the porter.

"Twelve years and more ago."

"See quite a difference now, eh?"

"I was not here long enough to see what there was in the beginning."

They walked up a street that was intersected at various and irregular intervals, by numerous other streets, that were as narrow, if not more so, than the one they were following was wide. In the center of the wide street were four car lines. This part of the street was raised above the other, and was protected by a curbing, that prevented anything with wheels from crossing, only at the intersections. Wyeth remembered this. It was something he had never seen elsewhere, and he wondered who could have conceived the idea of making one street so wide, and then crossing it with others that were so narrow that only one single street car track was possible, and, when passing down it, the wagons on either side had to hug the curbing closely, or be collided with.

"A beautiful place," he commented, pointing to the maze of electric lights that lined the narrow cross streets, and made their way as bright as day—brighter, he came afterwards to see, when it rained.

"This town was settled by French and Spaniards many years ago, and they were very artistic in planning for the future of the city," said the other.

"It is apparent on all sides; I can see that," Wyeth agreed.

"There are some of the most beautiful colored people here you ever saw," said the other.

"There is one now," said Wyeth, as a woman, different from the kind he had been accustomed to, passed by.

"Creole," advised the other.

"And this is their native soil, so I understand," said Wyeth, turning his head to take another look at the woman with the beautiful face.

"There are some," said the porter, "who cannot speak English at all."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Wyeth.

"Yes," went on the other. "Plenty cannot speak a word of English, and they may be found in what is called the French district. It is there you find them with the most beautiful skin, and the finest and heaviest hair you ever saw."

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"I hear they have frightful tempers," said Wyeth. "Is it true?"

"I would advise you to avoid any conflict with them, lest you find out," said the other, smiling amusedly.

"What is that?" said Wyeth, pointing to a bar before which stood many men drinking.

"Why, what?" said the other, then replied: "A saloon."

"And they are open on Sunday?" Yet he was not surprised when he had thought, for he had seen the same elsewhere. But the other replied:

"The saloons never close here."

"Never close! What do you mean?" said Wyeth.

"What I say," from the other.

"And still I do not understand you," said Wyeth. And then added: "What time do they open in the morning?"

"They do not close at night; therefore, they do not have to go to the trouble of opening in the morning."

"Uh huh!"

"There are saloons here that boast of having not closed since before the Revolutionary War."

"Good night!" Wyeth laughed. "Something historical down here!"

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"You'll learn more when you have been here a while. This is the city of history—American history. We turn here."

And Wyeth came to see for himself. They were crossing the wide street now, and went up another that was as wide, but no cars ran up that way.

"This is Basin court," said the other, as they paused outside of a two-story structure, that opened its doors upon the street.

A big, fat, brown-skinned man appeared presently, and bade them enter.

When they were inside they met another—a woman, and she was fatter still. It was the man's wife, and she appeared to be in charge, from her statements regarding the rental. They were from Alabama, and one glance was sufficient to show they were not creole.

Wyeth bought some beer, and the fat man went for it with a pitcher. He returned with as much for a dime, as would have cost twenty-five cents in Effingham. He said so to the other, and then the others laughed and said:

"This is the city where they drink it. They drink more here than anywhere else in the world." Wyeth recalled a year before—but then these people had seen only a small part of the world, as their conversation later revealed, and, of course—but it didn't matter.

"You genemens goin' to the dance?" said the woman.

"To the dance?" Wyeth repeated. "This is Sunday!"

They smiled at him now—all of them—and then said:

"Sunday is the day of sport in this town. More dances occur on Sunday than any other day."

Wyeth whistled.

"This is the creole city," and they smiled again.

"This gentleman is from a more pious territory," said the porter, appreciatively. He seemed to be very intelligent.

"What kind of work do the genemen follow?" asked the hostess.

"Books," Wyeth replied.

"They don't read much down here," she said, dubiously.

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"Some do everywhere—more or less!"

"They are strongly engaged in the art of having a good time here," remarked the porter, and laughed.

"I suppose so," said Wyeth. "And, since practically half of the colored people of the state are illiterate, I am, of course, compelled to agree with you."

They talked on other topics now, and Wyeth, not feeling sleepy, suggested venturing

out sight seeing. He went alone, and what he saw, he did not soon forget.

When the door had closed behind him, and his steps died away in the distance, the fat man winked and the woman smiled; then the pair spoke, in the same breath:

"Books—huh! He he! Books—huh! He he!" They regarded the porter with a smile; but he did not, strange to say, share their point of view. But they had their say, nevertheless.

"Books—huh!"

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CHAPTER TWO

At Last She Didn't Care

Mildred stood in the middle of the room, directly under the electric light that filled the room with its bright rays. She could see the end of the key, as it turned in the lock, and, in that moment, a scheme entered her head, like a flash. Locating the direction of the door, and facing toward it, she reached up suddenly and switched off the light. Instantly the room was engulfed in darkness. She hurried to the door, and stood just to one side. Presently the knob turned and the man entered. He stood on the threshold a moment, and she heard him say:

"Ah, the little girl is sleeping peacefully," and laughed. "That was a devil of a dose a-whiskey that girl gave her, though! Knocked her stiff! Darned if I don't believe she was handing the straight dope after all." He advanced now toward the middle of the room. Quick as a flash she stepped out, and, seeing he had left the key in the lock, she jerked the door closed, and, turning the key, which she allowed to remain, rushed to the end of the steps, and hurried down as fast as she could safely venture.

It was dark outside, and no one stood about the entrance. She struck the pavement, looked up and down a brief moment, and then hurried in a direction that led to whither she knew not, but to escape was her only thought. She hurried along for fully three blocks, and then turned in another direction, and then one block in another, and paused—feeling safe at last.

Up to this time, she was not conscious that her head was aching to a point that was almost splitting. She placed her hand upon her forehead, and only then was she aware that she had the paper she had picked from the dresser, closely clutched in her hand. The words she had seen there, made her at once forget her headache and all else.

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She thought of something then. She looked at the watch on her wrist. "Yes, thank God, there is yet time." An hour later she came back to the place where she had stood, and continued in the direction she had been going, looking from right to left for a lodging house.

She stopped at several places where a sign over the front advertised rooms, but, at each one they wanted men only. She had no thought of going back to where she had been stopping the last week; and, besides, she knew not where she was, nor did she know the street or number where she had been stopping, therefore was confident she could not have found it, had she wished to return.

Upon the street, she encountered many people celebrating the event of the coming year, and then she tried a small house that set back in a yard, and which appeared very neat from where she viewed it. She secured a room, and retired at once. Setting the oil lamp on a chair next to the bed, she unfolded the paper and read the article on the front page carefully, over and over again. It was an Effingham paper, and a date of some time before. When she had read it, until she was convinced that she was not dreaming, she sighed restfully as she murmured:

"At last, oh Lord, at last!"

It was the Effingham *Age-Herald*, and the issue contained the article by Sidney Wyeth, in which he severely arraigned the leading people of his race in that city for their disregard of the general welfare of their people.

"I'm so glad, so glad," she whispered softly. "And to think that it came to my attention in such an extraordinary manner!" She felt her forehead, and winced when the heat and throb came into contact with the touch. She made a wry face, as she recalled the taste of stale whiskey. Only then did she become aware, that when she had turned at the sound of the piano, someone had filled her glass with liquor. And she had drunk it before she realized that it had been doped. She thought of the incident; from the time she had met Miss Jones at the corner, and had been informed of the part of the town she was in. She shuddered and drew the coverlets closely about her, as her mind went over it again. She then tried to recall how she had followed Miss Jones to the place where she had met the men. And there she had

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drunk for the first time in her life, whiskey, although she was not at the moment aware of it. She rose out of the bed, as the dream came back to her; how the tornado had taken Sidney into the air, and then the story of the hills and the Indians. She pondered for a time, and wondered if such a thing had been the history of the *Rosebud Country*. And Sidney Wyeth had not been caught in a tornado, but had swept a multitude of people with his pen, in a burning article. She read over a part of it again. The very evils he had berated the most fiercely, were the things she had heard Wilson Jacobs deplore, and speak of more than once. Yes, Sidney Wyeth had written the truth. And from the way it was pictured, she reckoned that it must have created a bit of excitement. And that was the kind of man Sidney Wyeth was. She smiled as she thought of it.

"And I love him. Was it because of these principles, that I strangely felt were inherent in him, that he has been my dream, which has grown larger in my estimation, in the months I have had no word of him?" she asked herself. "I am going to him—I am, tomorrow. Of course," she replied to herself in the next sentence, "I am not going directly to him.... He wouldn't quite appreciate that—oh, he wouldn't appreciate me at all; but I love him, and am going where he is, and after that—" she had no other words, nor thoughts. To be where he was, maybe to see him, became the uppermost desire in her mind.

She did not, strangely enough, think any more about the Y.M.C.A. She thought of her lover as, with a peaceful smile, she fell asleep. She did not dream that night, but lay as she had fallen asleep, and it was six o'clock the following morning, the first of January, when she awakened.

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She lay a half hour without any thoughts in her mind, and then, observing a window next to the bed, she raised it slightly, and peeped out. It was not yet so very light. It was, apparently, a quiet street, occupied by working people who were now in many numbers on the way to their work. A boy with a bunch of papers under his arm was passing in their midst, and then suddenly she wrapped on the window pane. He looked up, being accustomed to doing so, and, catching sight of her hand, entered the gate and stood under the window with an upraised paper, while she fished out a nickel and dropped it into his hand.

She smiled with an expression of satisfaction, as she read the article relating to the Y.M.C.A. for colored youth of the city, and was glad to note that Wilson Jacobs came in for a great deal of praise. She laid it aside for a time, and was thoughtful again.

"Yes," she whispered to herself, "I will leave the city at once. The one thing I so much desired, and which has kept me here through these weary months, has been obtained." She closed her lips and planned further.

She decided to go to Effingham. She would send an expressman for her things at Mother Jane's that morning. She would then purchase a ticket and go by the first train. She turned to the editorial column of the paper, and was made happy by a lengthy editorial, relating the effort for the Y.M.C.A., and praising Wilson Jacobs further.

She did not know, however, that the editor of the paper that she was reading, and who was one of the most ardent supporters in the Christian forward movement in the south, had been at the Y.M.C.A. the evening before. He had come with the others, out of curiosity, when Wilson Jacobs had torn into the building, bareheaded and looking like an insane man. And he had written the article the first thing in the new year.

She arose and dressed herself at seven o'clock, and slipped out of the house without awakening anyone. It was getting light now, and she went some blocks before she encountered an expressman that satisfied her. She gave him the instructions, and walked about, impatiently, while she waited for him to return. As she was waiting, she became possessed with a desire to see the little house occupied by the Jacobs, and where she had spent so many happy, hopeful months.

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She had no trouble finding it, since light had given her an acquaintance with her surroundings. She found that she was not far from it, and then recognized with a start, that the same drayman she had sent for the goods, was the one who had taken the same from the Jacobs' a few months before. He had not recognized her, and she now gave him no further chance to do so.

She walked until the house was in sight, and then, going around a block, she found herself within a half block of it. Smoke was coming from the kitchen chimney, and she knew they were astir.

"Bless them!" she murmured, as she realized how happy must be their hearts that morning. "And that is why they are astir so soon. They do not usually arise until nearly eight o'clock."

As she stood gazing longingly at the house, she saw Constance emerge from the rear, and scatter wheat to a few chickens they had taken a delight in raising the past summer. "If I could only go to her in this minute, and feel her caress for just a

moment, I would leave the city the happiest woman in the world." She stopped when she had said this. To realize that she was slipping out of the city like a criminal, without greeting the friends she had there, made her feel peculiarly guilty. She had no enmity in her heart toward anyone—not even the man who haunted her into the position she now assumed, and whose sole purpose had been to satisfy an animal desire. She knew she could not go to Constance, nor to Mother Jane's—nor to anyone. She would leave the city without saying goodbye to a soul. She turned her face away, as she recalled that she had left Cincinnati the same way. She had no friends there, and had avoided making acquaintances. She almost choked with guilty anguish as she asked herself:

"Is it always to be this way? Am I forever to go from place to place under cover like a criminal? Am I always to be without friends?" She couldn't make answer. She could have a certain kind of friends; but she shuddered when she realized what kind they would be. She had never told anyone the secret.

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She had no desire, strangely, to do so. Only one person among those she loved knew it, she now conjectured. And she would leave to be near him soon. He knew—a part of it ... and he had turned away and had passed out of her life, when he learned it. He would never come back; he would never forget it—and even if, through any possible chance, she proved to him that it was all a very different problem, could he ever forgive her? Perhaps that was what made it harder to bear. She almost believed he would not. In reading his book, she had marked a cold, decided stand, and she felt that, if he had made up his mind against her, which he had apparently done, he was not likely to change.... It depended upon the strength of his resolutions. She could never get beyond a certain point in her dreams. But in spite of that fact, something within her longed to be near him; to see him; not to ask forgiveness—not to do anything; but just to be near him, that was all.

Wilson Jacobs stood on the porch at the front of the house now, smoking a cigar in a way, she could at this distance see, he enjoyed. Yesterday morning he could not have smoked in so much peace; but today, the future was brighter than it had ever been for him; she felt this, and it was true. As he stood looking about him, Wilson Jacobs was happy. He was not happy over his own success—for Wilson Jacobs did not feel that he had made the success—but he was happy from the fact that the young Negro men of that wicked, criminally torn city, would soon be the recipients of a movement that would insure a brighter future, less tinged with degradation and vice.

Presently he turned, as though responding to a call, and entered the house. Mildred surmised that he had been called to breakfast. She turned on her heel, and went back to the expressman's place, and met him returning with the things.

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They were all packed. The trunk only required a rope around it, and it was ready for the station. She instructed the expressman to this end, and met him at the depot, where she purchased a ticket for Effingham.

She strolled outside and to a nearby restaurant, where she partook of a hearty breakfast, for she was hungry. She returned to the station, and waited patiently for the arrival of the train from the north, that would take her away from the city where she had been for many months. If it had not fallen to her lot to encounter the man who had known her back in Cincinnati, she could have left the city with friends at the depot, and much more ceremoniously; but she was glad that she was leaving it as it was. When she had awakened the evening before, she had, for a moment, felt that she could not leave it without a terrible pang of conscience.

The train had arrived, and the people were hurrying in that direction. She joined them, and, as she was passing through the gate, she turned for a moment, and looked into the face of the man who had sent her away like this. She regarded him without a tremor of fright. At last she didn't care. A moment later she entered the car.

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CHAPTER THREE

"They Knew He Had Written the Truth"

"Yes," said the man, "I knew Sidney Wyeth well. He was, in fact, a personal friend of mine; and, let me tell you, Madam, there never was a fellow more interested in the welfare of his people, from a general point of view, than the one you inquire about."

"Indeed!" she echoed, with a pleased smile.

"Yes, Madam, I speak the truth. My name is Jones," he said. "I am the editor of the *Reporter*, and Mr. Wyeth used to drop into the office here quite often, and talk with me about the condition of our people in the south. He was a conscientious fellow, void of pretense, and with a regard for anyone's point of view. Yes, Wyeth was a fellow who insisted upon calling a spade a spade, not a hoe; but there is an element

of people here—or was, rather—before the appearance of an arraignment by Wyeth, who had only contempt for anyone's opinion other than their own. Oh, I'll tell you, Miss, you cannot imagine how this has been worrying me for years. I have been conducting this paper for some time, and have struggled to make it a good sheet; but, of course, we cannot collect from advertising and make our paper pay, as we would like to see it." He paused a moment, and then, making himself more comfortable, he fell into a long conversation, in which, with much fervor, he told Mildred Latham, whom he had observed was a careful and appreciative listener, of the conditions Sidney Wyeth had seen and had written about.

"The papers told about the success of Wilson Jacobs in securing a Y.M.C.A. for the town northwest of here, and God knows how glad I am to see that our people in the south are coming to appreciate a Christian forward movement. We have been, in a way, steering in a direction that got us nowhere, and that was the way Wyeth used to discuss it. We have here, and in the town just mentioned, the worst Negroes under the sun, and yet counted as civilized people. And it seems to have been forgotten or overlooked, that our salvation, in a moral sense, as well as in a practical and progressive, depends first upon our own initiative. I cannot account for the selfishness that has so pervaded the lives of our professional people. Last summer, in a lengthy article, a Mr. B.J. Dickson, editor of the *Attalia Independent*, scored the physicians of that city for a little incident, that in itself showed a mark of narrowness that few would or could be brought to believe."

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He then related the article in brief, stating that the color line had been drawn among the colored people themselves, and became very much worked up over the fact that most of the people who had been invited, did not, as a rule, employ Negro doctors for professional purposes.

"I have hinted at the things Mr. Wyeth attacked in his article, and I have, more than once, pointed to the evils in our own society; but no one paid any attention. No, they were too self-opinionated. They could not see their faults in a Negro paper; but, when it was brought to their attention on the front page of one of the most conservative papers conducted by whites in the south, well, then, it appeared altogether different.

"They stewed and deplored, became indignant, and all that; but the truth cannot be played with. With all the noise that followed the publication of the article, conscience became a burden. They knew to the last one, that Sidney Wyeth had written the truth, and nothing but the truth. And, thanks to God, there were enough good people to say, when the demagogues were decrying it, that it was the truth. So now, in this city, where times are hard, and many people are out of work; but with plenty of time to think it over, there is in evidence a decided change, and it is my opinion, that next summer will see this new idea put into effect—at least started."

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"So, Mr. Wyeth has located permanently here?" she inquired, after a pause.

"Oh, no," he replied quickly. "I had become so stirred, when I recalled how much life and appreciation that article of his had inspired in the order of existence about here, that I forgot to say that Mr. Wyeth has left the city. In fact, he left the city immediately after the appearance of the article."

She caught her breath, and swallowed with surprise and disappointment. He had left the city. Where had he gone to? She was afraid to inquire. But Jones was speaking again, and saved her the embarrassment of inquiring.

"Yes, he left a day or so afterward. He is not likely to locate in the south. And, moreover, his mission in these parts is not, I am sure, one of locating or hunting a location. He appears to be one seeking the truth about our people." He told her of Wyeth's departure to the creole city, and then, obviously anxious to unload his burden of opinions, to which she listened with patient interest, he continued:

"I am of the opinion that he will write a book on these conditions in the near future. And, if it compares with his article and carries a romance interwoven, it will meet with public appreciation. He always spoke of his home out west with much longing, and I suppose that the atmosphere out there must be of the progressive spirit, which makes a difference when one is forced to tolerate the conditions of sluggishness down here."

"How are the people here on Christian forward work?" she asked.

"They had never thought of such a thing until Wyeth wrote the article, and it was the same in regard to a library and a park. You see, Madam, it has been like this," he explained: "Our people have been in the habit of accepting everything (when it came to uplift) from the white people as a matter of course, never letting it worry them, as far as their own efforts were concerned. Then, again, what few books have been written, with some exceptions (novels especially, and of which our race has produced but few) have dealt with the Negro as a poor, persecuted character, deserving everybody's sympathy. In some manner, the authors have been either careful to avoid his more inherent traits, or they were so fired with their subject matter, that they

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forgot it.

"Yes, Wyeth brought in a couple of books he had sent for, and which were written by the most successful fiction writer our race has known. He read them, and pointed out that only a slight mention was made therein, that the Negro would lie—'excuse the expression'—and steal, get drunk, and fight, and kill and gamble to such an extent, that he would lose his last dollar, and lie out of paying an honest debt.

"Anyone who conscientiously knows the Negro, must certainly be aware of these traits. Why then, should a writer build a work of the imagination, in which he seeks to reveal to the reader the white man's hatred for his black brother, without including in the same statement, that the Negro has inherent traits, which are some of the worst evils good society is called upon to endure? Wyeth judged this was the reason why these books did not sell and the authors ceased to write, since they could not work without a living profit.

"Of course, when we allow ourselves, our thoughts, rather, to dwell upon the white man's prejudice, we will surely become pessimists. Who is not aware of it? But it is the purpose of the practical Negro to forget that condition as much as possible. To allow our minds to dwell upon it, and predict what is likely to happen, is only to prepare ourselves for eternal misery. So far as I believe, it is my opinion that the white man will always hate the Negro. It may be argued that it is un-Christianlike, which is true; but the fact to be reckoned with, and which remains, is that the white man dislikes Negroes. But, when we have our own welfare to consider first and last, it is logical that we turn our energies to a more momentary purpose.

"I read Derwins' first book, a work of sociology, and which met a great sale, and thereby brought him into public notice. Then I read his late one, a novel, in which he portrayed the evil of prejudice. Like the other author I refer to, he built his plot entirely upon that, leaving the fact that the Negro possesses the many vices I have mentioned to be understood. Of all races, the Negro is the most original and humorous. Those who know him, even the least, look for some humor. Fancy, then, how people must be disappointed, when they purchase and read a volume concerning that race, and find it void of humor! The work of both these men, like works other than fiction, by Negroes, is couched in the most select words; but the people look for what they know to be current. And when they do not find it, they are likely to lay the book aside, and pick up something that is more to their taste.

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"And, with all due regard for the writings of these men, if you read their works carefully, you will discover their own lack of confidence in the race whose cause they champion. I will relate a little incident to show this:

"Follow the romance, and you will find it invariably centered about a white couple. Why have they done this? The answer will be, a moral; but, in my opinion, they could not imagine a Negro character strong enough to weave into the plot, and, therefore, substituted white lovers, because, in their imagination, it was more fitting.

"These men have quit writing, from the fact, that it did not pay; for, it takes a world of thought, concentrated upon a certain purpose, to write a novel. Any man with the ability to put a great thought into words, and to employ words that are select, in the manner these men did in their books, could, at least should be, practical enough to do so in such a manner as to win an audience that would pay sufficiently for their work to maintain them. Instead of that, they have both quit writing. They were sincere, but did the worst possible thing by quitting. For the quitter never gains anything; and, when it comes to championing the cause of a people, the persons who have attempted the same, should certainly adhere to the task." He paused now, as someone knocked at the door.

"Come in," he called.

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A woman, neatly dressed and attractive in appearance, and apparently intelligent, entered.

"How do, Mr. Jones," she cried, stretching forth her hand. Mildred rose to go, but Jones waved her back.

"Mrs. Langdon," he said kindly, "I am glad to see you. Be seated." She took a seat. She turned to Mildred, who looked as though she felt she was intruding, and said:

"It is nothing private!"

She drew from her bag a few sheets of paper, and, smoothing them out, she handed them to the editor with: "Here is a little article I have written, in honor of the young lady who is soon to make her appearance here in recital, as you know, and which has been well advertised. I wish to have you publish it in your paper," and then she smiled sweetly and affected much modesty, as she added: "It will not be necessary that you mention the same is written by me."

"But I wish you to have all that is your due, Mrs. Langdon," he protested.

"Oh, very well, then," she said, and rising, with a few more words, she took her leave.

Jones glanced over the page, and then started. "Excuse me just a moment, Miss," he begged, and read the pages which were neatly written and punctuated. When he had finished, he smiled and said, under his breath: "That is certainly nerve."

Mildred regarded him curiously. He looked at her, and handed the manuscript across the desk, saying: "Please read it."

She obeyed, and when she was through, said: "It is a nice eulogy," and then her face showed the wonderment because of his expression of a moment ago.

"Yes," he agreed, "it *is* nice, but take a glance at this," and forthwith drew from the top of the desk, a pamphlet with the picture of an attractive colored girl thereon.

Mildred observed the picture, and then read the article on the other three pages. When she saw the editor's face again, she understood, but she didn't say, in fact, she didn't know what to say. The editor continued:

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"These pamphlets are scattered all over town. Can you imagine a person with her appearance and obvious intelligence doing such a thing? And yet, this office is the recipient of many such instances."

The article had been copied from the three pages of the pamphlet he had handed her, and which were scattered all over the town.

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CHAPTER FOUR

The Woman With the Three Moles

She was now in the creole city. Before her lay the wide street that Sidney Wyeth had followed; but it was lighted by the sun, for she had arrived in the morning, whereas, he had come at night. She traveled with only a handbag to encumber her, and, therefore, did not take a car, but walked leisurely up the broad highway.

The street, she at once observed, was very wide; it was so wide that the buildings appeared very low that lined the sides. She counted the stories of one building, and found that it was not the wide street alone, for the buildings were not high after all, not nearly so high as any of the towns in which she had been. She wondered why they were not; and, of course, it did not occur to her, that the city was built over water that was only a few inches from the surface, and which, in fact, seeped and stood upon the top whenever it could. Keeping the water below the surface, in short, had been this city's problem ever since its location. And it is no wonder, for, if anyone takes notice, the water of the mighty river (that makes it possible as a port and encircles it largely) is very often above the town. At several times in the history of this city's existence, these waters have become so high, that they threatened for days to spill over, and, therefore, submerge all the city in a few minutes. But our story is not concerned with the possible submerging of the town; we are concerned in following Mildred Latham, as she walked curiously up one side of one of its broad highways.

She wondered, as had Sidney Wyeth—and as perhaps anyone else given to observation would wonder—that it should build some streets so wide, and at the same time make others so narrow that they were not adequate for an alley. The buildings, as she saw them, with few exceptions, were old; only a few had, apparently, been erected in the past ten years; while over most of the sidewalks were sheds.

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As she continued her indefinite wandering, she observed many curiosities, not to be seen in other cities. "But, of course," she murmured, "this is the creole city, and is known to be much more historical than the rest of our country."

There are not so many colored people encountered on the streets as in other southern towns; although, viewing its last census of five years before, there should be now not less than one hundred thousand of that race within its limits. She saw many, however, and looked at them curiously. Here and there was one that looked like a creole; while most of them, were the usual kind.

Never had she seen so many cars on one street, as she saw on the four tracks that ran down the middle of this one. They were arranged with a curbing to protect, or keep slim-footed mules out of their way, so they had to avoid the pedestrians only. Many police protected at every intersection; but withal, she was nervous as she hurried across, at the beckon of one who wore the bluest uniform, and a white hat—no, it was a helmet.

She had arrived at Basin court, and did not know that she was within a few doors of the man she loved. She gazed about for a time, and then went on her way. She came,

presently, abreast of a man—a colored man—and he was neat looking and intelligent. She paused with some constraint, and said:

"Could you advise me, Mister, where I could secure lodging? I am a stranger, and—I do not know where to go."

He looked at her keenly for a moment. Then his eyes glanced away and down a street that intersected. On either side of that street were houses—small houses that made a specialty of a room to the front, and these rooms contained—but we have not come to that. And then he looked at her again.

His eyes wandered back down that other street, and he thought for a moment. He looked at her again, and then spoke. This girl might be stalling—so many of them did—but still she was intelligent, and that made a difference.

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"I could not, Madam, I regret to say, for I do not live on this side. My home is in Tunis, which is across the river. That is why I do not know."

"Oh," she said, and her tone was sorry, "you do not live on this side?"

"No, ma'am. You are a stranger here?" He eyed her keenly again.

"Yes, sir. I have just arrived," and she told him also, that she sold books.

Her tone was pleasant; her words were correct; and she said them in such a way that he forgot his suspicion, and then showed her forthwith much courtesy.

"Indeed," he commented. "I wish I knew a place; but I am not so often on this side, for I am a physician, and my duties keep me mostly over there; but if you had happened to be wishing to stop over there, I could place you." She thought quickly.

Sidney Wyeth was on this side, undoubtedly. She might at any time encounter him. And she didn't know why, since that was what she had hoped for; but she rather feared to encounter him right now. She had no room or place to go, and, as she meditated, she could not see any reason why she should not as soon be on the other side as on this. She liked quietness. So she said:

"I had not decided whether I would stay across the river or here, though, of course, I expected to stay on this side. I would, however, as soon be on the other side, I think."

"In that event, then," said he, "you can accompany me home, for my wife—we are recently married and she is a stranger and would be glad of companionship—has a room, and it is for rent. So, when you have seen it, and in case you are satisfied, you could have it. The charge, I think, furnished, is seven dollars a month."

"That will be nice," she said, and was beside him. "I am sure I shall be satisfied."

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"Thank you," said he, "I am going over now, so if you are agreeable, we will catch a ferry forthwith."

They now walked back down the broad highway, at the end of which could be seen the stacks of many steamers. He pointed out, very kindly, sights of interest and explained them.

"Now, here," he said, "is a store. The family who own it are rich, as rich as any in the city, and it is said they are part Negro; though, of course, they do not admit it. The city, you will find, is a historical old place in many instances." And as they walked down the broad highway, he told her a great deal that was so interesting, that it made the distance which had seemed a long way an hour before, appear real short. They went up to the river, and boarded a ferry.

It was a nice ride to the other shore. Once in the middle of the river, which was very wide at this point, the creole city rose and stood outlined in all its splendor. The waters near either shore were decorated with many river steamers, and as many, if not more, ocean liners. Great docks, grim and dark, opened their roller doors along the banks; while the steamers before them swung great loads of freight in their cellars.

"Miss Latham," said the doctor, when they had arrived at the house, "this is my wife, Mrs. Winnie Jacques."

They greeted each other, and murmured many words, and, when the introduction was over, Mrs. Jacques turned and asked Mildred to follow her. As she did so, upon her neck, which rose above the loose kimono she wore, was a mole; to the right of it another. Almost midway between the two, but an inch below, was another. And now Mildred Latham gave a start, then she swallowed hard. *Where had she seen the moles before*—the three moles? Only one person in the world, she was sure, possessed them. She followed the other to a room, and that night she didn't sleep.

The next morning she kissed the other, before she left, but Mrs. Jacques didn't know why. But she watched her strangely, as she walked toward the ferry.

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CHAPTER FIVE

"Hello, Brown Skin!"

He came abreast of a depot; it was new, with an imposing front, over which was inscribed TERMINAL STATION in arched letters. It seemed quite a long way back to the colored waiting room, and the station was very narrow. It ran back several hundred feet, where four or five tracks received the incoming and outgoing human traffic. The station, like the one he had come into a short while ago, was filled with men and women, obviously idlers. He lingered only a few minutes, when curiosity led him further. He left the station from the side entrance, and found himself upon a very narrow street. He paused, and as he did so, strains of ragtime music came to his ears. He was curious to see where it came from, and to hear it closer. He crossed the street, and found that it came from a place—a cabaret—but for white people only. He turned away and went down the street, where something odd caught his attention.

He stood where the walks intersected, and gazed to his left. Yes, it was a *feature*. On either side of the street stood a row of one-story houses. Lights were bright, as bright as day, on either side, which fact filled the narrow street with light also. He passed down one side; and there were multitudes of men sauntering, as he was—but there were no women, excepting in the one-story houses. They stood behind open doors, some of them, while others sat in chairs before a grate fire; but one and all, he noted, were thinly dressed and smiled on everybody—but himself (for, you see, they were white women)—with amorous eyes.

"Come here dearie," said one—and many others said the same. "I have something to tell you." "Indeed," he conjectured, "but secrets appear to be the fashion here."

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He walked to the end of that block, and where that street intersected with another. And before him, on eight different sides, was a myriad of the same. Women, thinly clad—and it, you understand, was the month of January....

It was a sight to be indulged; a pastime that was diverting, to say the least. And, since so very many others—men—were seeing it, why then not he?

He saw it—at least a large part of it.

He strolled another block, and the same sight met his eye; but, as he got further away from the station, the lights grew dimmer; the women fewer, but plenty, at any rate.

Now he had reached a place where the crowds had not penetrated—only stragglers lingered like himself—and where the women were of another race, for now they were colored.

"Hello, Brown Skin," they greeted him, and he smiled back, but didn't stop—not even to hear the secret that almost everyone had to tell him.

"You are sure some brown, kid. Just come here a moment. Don't be afraid, I won't eat you."

"Indeed," he said to one who was very small, and could smile with more effect than the others. "But I'm afraid." And he laughed aloud as he went upon his way.

He had stopped now. He had to; for, before him was a brick wall—no, a brick fence. It was painted white and was about eight or ten feet high; while inside raised something sinister. "Gee!" he exclaimed. "But that is a sight one does not appreciate."

He turned now, and passed down a side street, which was occupied by the same. But he couldn't forget what stood grim and determined on the other side. It had been there a long time too—before, oh, long before these women had. Yes, and it would be there long after they had passed away, and others, not yet born, had come to take their places. And as he passed down the street, under the subtlety of those night smiles, that place seemed to say—kept on saying:

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"Play on she cats! Oh, play on! Hell's got your soul; but I'll have the rest by and by." He turned the next corner and walked another block, and lo! There stood another! "Kick high little girl; sin as you please; Hell's got your hearts, but I'll have what's left—I won't say how soon...."

"The devil!" he exclaimed. "This is the worst place for cemeteries I ever knew. I'm going away from here, to my room." And he went.

"Where do the wealthiest of the wealthy white people live?" he inquired the next morning, when he had arisen, and dined at one of the Chinese cafes.

The others regarded him now with a question in their eyes. "Yes," he repeated, "where do they live, for it is to their servants I prefer to try to sell the book, for which I am agent."

They caught his logic then, and replied:

"Take a car at the next corner, ride until you come to a park that is called d'Ubberville. There you unload, and find yourself in the midst of the wealthiest of the wealthy."

He went down to that street, which was the aforementioned wide street. All that money could buy, was on sale along its broad highway. He sought a bookstore, where he wished to make inquiries, and, of course, found a number. He strolled about, making inquiries, until his watch said it was time to return, and go forth in quest of that part of town, where he wished to begin his work.

It was certainly a long way to his destination. Indeed, he made inquiries of the conductor, until that one told him he would tell him when they arrived at the place where he wanted to stop. So, he sat in patience after that. He allowed his eyes to feast upon the splendor and magnificence of the beautiful buildings. Yes, they were elegant homes; they were the finest homes; and they were beautifully arranged, not to say artistically, on either side of the street, which, while not the same, was another one just as wide. So wide, indeed, that the middle was converted into a lawn, on which many palms reared their graceful foliage.

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"The creole city," he murmured. "For a long time I have wished to see it as it really is; to know the people and to learn of the many things and wonders it is said to contain."

"Here you are," said the conductor at last, and Sidney Wyeth alighted at once.

"Whew!" he exclaimed, standing entranced, as he looked all about him. "*Such* homes; *such* trees—*such everything*." And then he walked in the direction his face happened to be turned. He was slightly nervous for a time, but presently, with a bold front, he turned into the most insignificant of the many houses, and rapped quietly at the back door.

"Come in," someone called, and he knew the voice belonged to one of his race. He had many times thought it strange, but it was always easy to determine the Negro by his voice alone.

He entered, and looked at the owner of that same voice. She was a stout, brown-skinned woman; and there was another also, but she was black. One, the large woman, was the cook, for she worked over the stove, while the other was obviously the washer-woman, for she was ironing.

In his talk, he told the story of the book, and filled them with enthusiasm, to a point that both subscribed. He said he was just commencing, and was glad they had favored him with an order. He thanked them again, and, turning, he left and betook himself across the street, where he encountered another brown-skinned woman, but she failed to buy. And the excuse she gave for not doing so, was one he always regarded. She was not able—having other irons in the fire. He left her, went across the street on another corner, and entered the rear of the smallest house he saw on the street. He was turning to go, when another brown-skinned woman put in her appearance. She was beautiful, he thought. And she could smile until he—well, she smiled. She said she'd take one, to be sure, so he wrote down her name, and asked her about herself. She was married, and laughed tantalizingly, though he had not asked her that. He left presently, by the way he had entered, and went to another house, and still to another, until the watch said five; then he betook himself to a car line. It was not the one he had come out on, and soon he saw other homes, which showed the creole element.

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That night he went rambling; he couldn't seem to be still. There was so much to be seen, and it had a peculiar fascination for him. He went in the direction he had gone the night before, and met crowds of people. He strolled until gay music arrested his attention. About an electric entrance, from which the music came, stood colored men. He got a peep inside, as some one entered, and saw that the occupants were Negroes, so he entered.

A waiter showed him a seat by a table. Around the room were plenty of others; there were women and men, and others came and went all the time. The music had ceased when he entered; but, 'ere long, it struck up, and the room was filled with the strains. Couples arose and stood face to face, and did what he had never seen, as he recalled. The music played was a two-step; but they did not two-step—at least not the way he had done it years before. They made only one step where he had made two. Across the table from where he sat, a girl smiled upon him invitingly, as much as to say: "Let's dance!" He was tempted, and then he recalled that they had begun this dance since he had quit some years before. So he kept his seat, and she smiled upon another. He escorted her, and they joined the dancers. A hesitation, they called it,

and he was positive he would—could never learn it.

Presently the music stopped, and the couple returned to their seat.

"I know you are going to buy me a little drink," she said, whereupon the man said "nix" and left. She glared after him, and called him "cheap."

Wyeth was glad now he had kept his seat. He didn't like bold women, even in a cabaret, and this was the first one he had ever entered.

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It was a place for amusements, he soon saw, for, between dances came songs by many girls and a man or two, while clever dancing and "ballin' the jack" was a feature; and it attracted to the performers many nickels, that they did not hesitate to pick up 'ere they had fallen, and "balled" again and again, until it seemed their legs must sure be tired; but you see, they were accustomed to that.

"Some town," he said to himself, when he took his leave. "A good place to forget, to live?" Well, it seemed that way.

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CHAPTER SIX

"Who're You!" She Repeated

And now we arrive at the end of the pilgrimage of Sidney Wyeth. He had ceased his critical observations, and had secured a room on the fifth floor of an office building, that was owned and controlled by a Negro lodge. He began an effort toward the distribution of his work, that he believed would be successful now, since he had learned, by contact, the art of reaching his people.

He placed a large desk in the office, and put a carpet on the floor; a large table for wrapping purposes to one side, while upon the door and the windows he had an artist painter inscribe the letters:

CRESENT DISTRIBUTORS COMPANY

"Now, then," he said, "if I can induce someone, here and there, to go to the people and follow the instructions I will cheerfully give, I think *The Tempest* will be placed into the hands of many people. And to that end, I shall bend all my energy."

And thus he began work permanently. He decided to canvass every afternoon, and to attend to the office and correspondence in the mornings, until such a time, when it would not be necessary to do so.

He filled the country again with circular letters; but before he had completed this task, he felt an illness pervading his usual healthy physique. "Biliousness," he said. "It'll be over in a few days," and he went to work much harder, in an effort to forget it.

For days he held it in check by the effort he put forth. But, as the days came and went, it became harder. He didn't go to a physician, but waited. But before many days had passed, however, he became conscious that it was more serious. So there came a day when he felt strangely sick; when he laid down, everything about him swam; he felt dizzy, but withal, he kept up the fight.

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"I won't give up to it, I won't!" he declared. And he earnestly tried to overcome it.

He arose from his desk, and, despite the fact that his knees trembled and his whole frame quivered, he went into the street. He felt a mad desire to see this city, although he had been seeing it every day. So, to the wide street he went, and boarded a car that took him around a belt. It brought him back to where he had entered, and the route was twelve miles long. It led him through the district where he canvassed, and which was occupied by the richest. He saw their magnificent homes this time, strangely. At times his eyes would close, despite his effort to keep them open. And then, when he awoke, it was with a nervous start, and he was surprised each time, to find himself aboard the large cars that thundered along between rows of the finest houses in the city.

He could not interest himself in them now; they appeared dull and without life. The car came down, and went through the business district before it came back again into the wide street. He got off, and almost fell in doing so. He stood for a time, at a loss to control himself. He wouldn't go to bed, that was sure; but where to go, he could not think for a time. Then it occurred to him to see that place—that place where a thousand and more women, vandals, were hurrying life to its end.

So he walked in that direction, reeling at times, until some regarded him as if he were drunk. He passed down a street that was called Bienville. In that neighborhood it was the broad highway. And it was crowded. It was then about nine o'clock, and the sidewalks were filled. The girls were merry—they were always merry,

apparently.... They called to him as before, that is, a part of them. The others—well, the color line was drawn here too, and white men came first.

"Hello, Brown Skin," smiled one he had not seen before, and winked. He regarded her for a moment strangely. She took it as an evidence of encouragement. She beckoned to him vigorously, and *promised* so very much. He turned, and before him rose one of the ghostly, silent places—the cemetery. It aroused him, for a time, from his apparent lethargy. He looked at it, and thought how strange it was this city had so many. And they were always silent—waiting, waiting, waiting.

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He shuddered and moved away from it, and in a direction that he had not been. On all sides the girls were gay that night. He went around a block, ignoring invitations. His brain was clear for awhile, and he thought: "Who located such a place?" A place where each day someone died and went to hell! But, as he thought the more, he concluded that dying was not necessary. It was a living death....

"Come in, Brown Skin, not a man has been here tonight." He looked up, and in the doorway stood a woman. She was tall and slender, and brown. She smiled with an effort, he could see, for, in truth, the woman was hungry.

"I'm hungry," she faltered, "and that's on the square. The landlord took every dime I made last night, for rent this morning. Not a bite have I eaten this day. Every day he calls early for his rent. Business is rotten—everybody's broke; but he must have his rent, or out into the street I go." She paused and looked tired, and then went on: "I'm so weak. I'd slip out of this hell hole, and try to make an honest living, but I have no clothes, and besides, I'm afraid that while I was gone, he might come along and turn the lock, and carry the key with him. And too, the bulls are filling the streets tonight, and fly cops are everywhere. So I might be arrested, and go t' jail. I don't like that place up there." And she sighed a long drawn, weary sigh.

"Why would you be arrested?" he inquired, speaking for the first time.

"Why would I be arrested?" she exclaimed. "You must not know the rules of this district," she cried. "Why, we are not allowed to leave it. When we enter this, we agree to stay!"

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"To stay?" he echoed.

"Yes," she replied. "To stay...." He followed her gaze. She was not aware of what she saw, no doubt; but he was. Before her gaze rose gray, grim and sinister, one of those places—the abode of dead things. Yes, and it was waiting, silently waiting. He turned and regarded the woman. She was quiet. A man came by crying:

"Hot sandwiches—hot tamales—five cents apiece!"

He saw her gazing at them with eyes that were dry, but hungry.

"Here," he cried, "with your sandwiches." And then turned to her:

"Take as many as you want. All you can eat tonight, and some for tomorrow!"

Her eyes widened. She beheld him now with wonder. "Do you mean it?" she whispered, in a subdued voice.

He nodded, and handed the man a half dollar.

She ate ravenously, while he watched. Presently he started, while she watched him strangely, as if he were something unearthly. He turned suddenly, and came back to where she stood. He ran his hand into his pocket, and drew forth three silver dollars. "Here," he said, and a moment later he was gone.

She stood transformed, and then, dreamlike, she cried after him:

"God bless you!"

Back toward his room he now walked, and at times stumbled. But all the way the words of that woman rang in his ears: "God bless you!" "God," he murmured, "do You know these people? Are You acquainted with these women who are sinning? They don't know You! Their souls are burning now in hell!" He didn't know the direction he was going, nor did he hear the invitations; but soon he came to one of those walls, and looked up. Yes, they were inside.... Those who had known this life in the infinite long ago. And they were waiting for those others....

"Brown Skin," he now heard, and then much gayety followed; but he looked up and saw the others, who were likewise waiting. "Sin on little girl. Satan's got your soul, and you'll burn in hell some day."

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He went a block where, on one side the gray silence greeted him, while on the other gay life was the order.

"Come in boy, I've something to tell you." But Sidney Wyeth made no answer; all the while he could feel that silent spectre, the grave. And it seemed to say: "We are

waiting, waiting, waiting."

He went now in the direction of his room, and as he went along, the gray court kept telling him: "These are mine—all of them. And, do you know, they come to me each day. Oh, they are gay—now! The devil's got their souls, but I always get the rest. Meanwhile I am waiting, patiently waiting."

Gay music came from the doors of a cabaret, and he saw it was for colored people. White people were not allowed within. He entered. The accustomed crowd lined the walls. The same girls came each night—he now saw. They welcomed those who wished for drinks, which came at fifteen cents apiece; a half of which they received at the end of the night, and that was how they lived.

He avoided them. On the floor were the dancers. The music was inspiring, and "balling the jack" was the order. A rain of nickels came down upon them, and they quit only when they were exhausted.

He was awakened by a waiter, at the table where he had fallen asleep. So he ordered a drink, gulped it down with an effort, and took his leave. He emerged, and had walked a few steps, when someone touched him. He looked down into the face of the woman who had been hungry.

"Who're you?" she said. "*Who're you?*" she repeated, "to feed a starving wench and ask nothing. Don't look at me so strangely. I followed you. I saw you enter there. I would have followed you in; but they don't allow *us* in there.... They don't allow us anywhere but—oh, well, I didn't come to tell you my troubles. And then," she added, "I wouldn't wish to disgrace you by having others see; but won't you come back?"

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He gazed down into her eyes and saw the truth therein. "A lost soul.... Yes, a lost soul." And then something within him seemed to burst. The world about him became a maze of darkness, and he knew no more.

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CHAPTER SEVEN

"At Last, Oh Lord, At Last!"

Mrs. Ernestine Jacques very soon became devoted to her roomer, Mildred Latham. She told her husband as much when she had been in the house a few days.

"She's a delightful girl, a fine companion, and I am glad she made inquiry of you in regard to lodging."

"I am pleased to hear it," said her husband. "I am glad to have found you a companion, and now you won't miss me so much, will you?"

"Of course, I will," she pouted. "I didn't mean that," she said. "But women, you know, seem to require friends, even when they have the best husbands in the world."

We leave them at this point, and return to the subject of their conversation, who had begun a canvass in the sale of Wyeth's book, and had met with success, which is neither unusual nor strange, since it depends upon the efforts of the worker.

She estimated that he would confine his work to the aristocratic section, where the multitude of servants were, so she decided to try the colored people in their homes, to begin with. Therefore, from one she learned of others, until she had a list of people whom she worked among, and with excellent results. She became an attendant of the Methodist church, where she met many, and made acquaintances that increased the success of her work. And thus her life flowed serenely along, uneventful for many weeks. But she had not seen or heard of the one she sought, although, in the course of time, she came across the book, and knew it had been bought from him.

It rained at times, until whole days were lost, for it was too wet to enter nice homes. She stayed in her room at these times, and talked with Mrs. Jacques as little as possible, although she longed to do so very much. She was glad to see, as the time went on, that the two were devoted to each other. Dr. Jacques was a good man, and was even a better husband.

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"Some day," she sighed, "maybe I'll be like that." She pondered now for some time.

Mildred had reached no decision, as yet, in regard to her plans. She was nervous, at times, on the street, fearing she might meet Sidney. She worked hard to occupy herself, and thus it went along, until she had gotten her work well under way.

"Have you ever been up in the Perier building?" a lawyer, who purchased a book, inquired of her.

"No, sir, I have not. Where is that, and are there colored people about it?" she said.

"Yes, ma'am. It is a building occupied and owned by Negroes. There are a great

many people located in it who would buy the book, I am sure," he informed her. "I would advise you to go."

"I thank you ever so much, indeed," she cried gratefully. "I shall go there tomorrow."

The next day was a beautiful one; the air was fragrant with the perfume of roses, and the birds sang, seemingly, everywhere.

"A storm of some proportion will reach this place before night," said Dr. Jacques. "A day that begins as this one, always ends that way!"

"My husband is a weather prognosticator," commented his wife, humorously. Mildred smiled knowingly from across the table.

"And you have been very successful with your work, Miss Latham?" said he, surveying her appreciatively.

"Oh, very much so. But it has been so elsewhere." She told him of her work in the city she had just left.

"It was a strange coincidence," said he, "how they came to secure the Y.M.C.A. in that town. I keep myself pretty well informed regarding uplift among our people, and it was truly a delight when I read, that, at almost the last minute, money that was lacking, but necessary to fulfil the requirements, was brought to hand.

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"It was too bad Grantville failed in the effort to secure theirs. And they wanted it so badly," the doctor continued. "I attended school in that city, and always have a warm spot in my heart for the place."

"Well, dear," said his wife, "how did they come to fail in the effort in Grantville, and succeeded in this other town? I understood you to say that Grantville had a much more intelligent set of colored people, and more progressive."

"So it has! So it has!" he said quickly; "but by some strange coincidence, the money necessary to complete the arrangement, was brought forward at almost the last minute. Otherwise, they had acknowledged failure."

"I wonder where the money came from?" she mused.

"I suppose I must be going about my work," said Mildred, rising. "I am going to canvass the Perier building today. I have been told there are many offices occupied by persons who might buy."

"Most assuredly," said the doctor. "There are many I am sure." He was thoughtful a moment, and then continued: "Our people in this town are not possessed with that race spirit which it is claimed Negroes have in other cities. They are accused of lacking unity; but, in spite of that, when one applies himself to the task with patience and fortitude, enough of the spirit can be aroused to make work like yours remunerative. But, nevertheless, I am often distressed when I realize, that we haven't a first class local race paper here; for, without one, it is impossible to reach the people—the colored people—through advertising, unless a high rate is paid in the columns of the white paper, and that is not practical."

"Are you much acquainted in the building?" Mildred inquired.

"Oh, yes, I know everybody—that is, almost everybody. The last time I was over there, I observed that an office had been taken by one who is a stranger to me; and I observed, also, that he appeared to be studious, so it might be worth while to see him too."

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She thanked him, kissed his wife, and a few minutes later, her steps died away in the distance.

"Dear," said Mrs. Jacques, "don't you know that she reminds me of someone I knew a long time ago. But who it was, where it was, I do not know; but I always feel queer when she kisses me."

"You're becoming fanciful," he smiled, lighting a cigar.

They talked about other subjects, and Mildred was, for the time, forgotten.

"A story of the northwest, by a Negro pioneer, eh?" said a man, upon whose office door was written: *Real Estate, Loans and Renting*. "M-m. Looks like a good book. Negroes don't write many books, although there are a great many that come the rounds about Negroes, but gotten up by whites with a sketch about Tom, Dick and Harry, and exaggerated estimates of the Negro. So, in view of the fact, I guess you may put me down for a copy, and deliver it next week."

"Thank you, sir," she said, as she wrote his name, and the date of delivery.

"Having much success?" he inquired.

"A great deal, I am glad to say," she replied pleasantly.

"Glad to hear that. There are always readers to be found, if one looks for them; but, on the whole, the people of this town have not much of a literary turn of mind."

"Indeed!"

"No, it is such a care-free, happy-go-lucky place, that not all the people who should, try to concentrate themselves in reading." He was quiet and thoughtful for a moment, and then said: "Have you tried many of the school teachers?"

"A great many," she said.

"And how did you find them?"

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"Well, just fair. I sold to a few of them."

"A few of them, eh! It would seem they should welcome the fact that Negroes are beginning to write books."

"Obviously, yes."

"And the preachers?"

"They buy; but some of them dislike to, so much so, that I have dispensed with going to them."

"And the physicians?"

"They are very nice." She didn't say how nice, and he didn't ask, so it ended there.

She went from one office to another, and almost all purchased. Some out of real interest, while others subscribed merely through courtesy to her, and from the fact that it was rare to meet colored people selling, or trying to sell anything.

She had completed the third floor, and was ascending to the fourth, when the then overcast skies became darker and rain began falling fitfully. She made all the offices on that floor with her usual success, and started upon the fifth. Twilight was gathering, and, with the darkness from the clouds, lights were soon aglow.

She had made the fifth and was just passing to the elevator, when she chanced to spy an office that she had overlooked, and, in that moment, she recalled the doctor's statement about the stranger. The office was at the end of the hall—a hall that was not much used, evidently. Mildred observed, as she approached, that the door was slightly ajar. She knocked lightly, and then, receiving no invitation, pushed the door open and entered.

A man sat at the other side of the room, and he seemed to be sick, or asleep—at least he lay with face downward across the desk, at which he sat. She approached him, disregarding his apparent lethargy, and when she had offered a greeting, and he had raised himself slightly, she told him the story of the book.

He was sick, she soon saw, and she felt sympathetic. She bathed his head—his forehead—with a damp towel; then she inquired if he felt better, and looked for the first time into his face.

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"At last, oh Lord, at last!" she cried, in a subdued voice, as she bounded down the steps. "I have found him, I have found him!" She walked hurriedly on her way to the street, and did not wait or think of the elevator that would have saved her strength. When she was on the street, she hurried through the rain—for it was pouring now—and did not stop until the ferry had been reached.

Once aboard this, she hid herself in the darkest place she could find, and there, as the paddle of the propeller came to her ears, she cried: "Sidney, my Sidney, I have found you. And never, never, until the end of the world will I be far from you—Oh, my love!"

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CHAPTER EIGHT

"Well, I'm Going!" And She Went

"Typhoid-pneumonia," said the physician, rising from over the patient, who had just been brought to the hospital.

Sidney Wyeth, unconscious, was carried at once to the section of the great hospital reserved for patients with contagious diseases.

"What do you think of it, doctor? Is it a serious case, or just a light attack?" inquired one of the assistants, who was making a specialty of a study of fever.

"Serious," was the reply, "very serious. He will be lucky if he is able to pull through."

"I just missed you, Miss Latham," said Dr. Jacques, coming in a few minutes after Mildred had entered the house.

"Indeed, I am sorry! We could have come over together," she exclaimed, smothering her excitement for the time, and smiling regretfully, when he had told her that he was in the Perier building just before she left.

"Were you very successful with the people in the building?" he inquired pleasantly.

"I received eleven orders there today."

"Too bad the young man, the stranger, took sick. You might have gotten a dozen," he said.

"Who took sick?" she inquired, with a start.

"The young man I spoke to you about this morning," explained the physician. "He was carried from the building shortly after you left, with a serious attack of typhoid-pneumonia." He was standing with his back to her when he said this, and, therefore, did not see her start and open her mouth. She swallowed the exclamation, and he was no wiser. Hurrying to her room, she entered, locked the door, and sat down with a wild look in her eyes, plainly frightened.

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"Sick," she mumbled. "Typhoid-pneumonia. Oh, merciful God!" She was silent then for a long time. Outside, the rain continued to fall, while in the other rooms she could hear Mrs. Jacques singing softly, as she busied herself in the preparation of the evening meal.

"If I had only known," Mildred whispered to herself. And then she was compelled to dismiss what she was thinking of, as being impractical. She continued to sit and meditate, until she was called to supper by Ernestine. She arose and bathed her face, realizing it would be advisable to appear unconcerned, for, as she now estimated, she would dislike to be questioned.

When the meal was over, she inquired of the physician where the patient had been taken.

"To the charity hospital," he replied.

"I see," she said calmly. "Is that a good place?"

"Oh, the best in the south. The Sisters of Mercy have it largely in charge, and they give the best possible care to all patients—black or white."

She went to her room, slightly relieved, and fell at once to planning.

The fact that he had taken an office, was self-evident that he was preparing some extensive campaign with regard to his book. As it stood now, whatever he had been arranging would stop at once.

It was late that evening when she retired. But, before sleep came to her eyes that night, she had decided upon a course of action.

Mildred arose early, dressed, heated some tea, and ate a light lunch. Then she threw on a dress, hurried out of the house and down to the ferry. An hour later, she was at the hospital.

"I called, beg pardon," she began, "to inquire about a patient who was brought here last evening, and who, I understand, was stricken with typhoid-pneumonia. His name is Sidney Wyeth, and he is a colored man."

After a moment, in which the record was consulted, the informant turned to her and said: "Sidney Wyeth, a colored man, serious attack of typhoid-pneumonia. In the ward of contagious diseases. Cannot be seen, Madam, I regret to say."

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"Indeed—ah,—did you say—it—was—quite serious?" she inquired, tremulously.

"Quite serious, Madam. Quite serious."

"There is no doubt, however—ah, that he will recover?"

"We are not allowed to give out information of that nature. He may recover, and still he may not; but we cannot say."

"Just another question, sir," she said hesitatingly. "About how long would it be, in case he should recover, before he will likely be on the street?"

"Cases as serious, and of that nature, rarely leave the hospital under two months, possibly three, and sometimes it is even four; but, if he should recover, it would not

be possible under two months."

"Very well, I thank you," and, bowing, she left the desk.

Mildred walked down the wide street upon which the hospital faced. She had not consulted any one else, and in truth, had no idea that the disease would last so long.

"What can I do, what can I do?" she asked herself several times, as she passed down the street. "He has just started up, and to think that such a misfortune should overtake him at the outset."

She walked on down the street, until she arrived at the corner, where she paused for a moment. She turned, and only a block away rose the Perier building. She could see his office. It was toward the rear, and, as she stood looking up at it meditatively, she caught an outline of the desk at which he had sat, when she came into the office, with no thought that she was near him.

"I am going up there, to the custodian of that building, and—well, I'm going," and she went.

"Are you the custodian of the building, sir?" she inquired a few minutes later, of an elderly man with a pointed beard and cleverly trimmed mustache.

"I am, Madam," he replied. "And at your service."

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"A gentleman, who has recently taken an office here, was yesterday stricken with typhoid-pneumonia, and was taken to the charity hospital."

"Yes, Madam, so he was," acknowledged the other. "Too bad. He took the office only a short time ago, and seemed to be a very progressive young man. You are acquainted with him?" he asked, observing the worried look upon her face.

"Yes, sir. I am acquainted with him."

"Indeed! I suppose you are a relative or a close friend," he said, and then paused before proceeding. "His office is open—that is, no one is there to attend to it, and he seems to be the recipient of considerable mail, I have observed. So, if you are interested in his affairs, you may have the key and look after the matter, if you wish too." He was very cordial, and the fact saved her from explaining what she had in view when she entered.

"Yes," she said, "I am interested in his affairs, and it is very kind of you to make the suggestion. In truth, it was on his account that I called here. I should be glad to look after his business while he is indisposed," she ended bravely and kept her face straight.

The custodian gave her the keys, and a few minutes later, she found herself in the small office, looking curiously and guiltily about.

She assorted the mail, and then, going through what had been opened, she soon got an idea of his plans. Being engaged in this same work, it was easy for her to collect the broken threads, and resume his task. She carefully opened the mail that had come that day, and, a moment later, was typing replies to a score or more, in the manner he would have done, had providence given him the opportunity.

She worked late that evening, and neglected to canvass at all, although it was a beautiful day.

She saw, by the copy in one of the drawers, that he was advertising for agents, and in an apparently successful way. Now, it had occurred to her before, that white people preyed upon Negroes as agents, and, moreover, from her own experience, she had come to realize that they would (white agents) attempt to sell anything, if inducements were made that seemed plausible.

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When she was in her room alone that night, she did some more planning, some figuring, and some estimating. In the end, she decided to take the risk.

Being a business woman had always appealed to her fancy, and the work was, to her, a most absorbing diversion. She had learned how to operate a typewriter when she attended school, and was very clever at shorthand also, could keep books with proficiency, and was now glad she had learned these things, although, until she had taken up the sale of the book, she had had no occasion to use her ability.

The following day, she arrived at the office at eight o'clock sharp, and went to work at once. When the mail came, she was cheered to receive twenty dollars in the same, and also, to note three orders from agents, who were selling the book in other cities. She attended to all this, the packing and shipping of the books, wrote replies to all letters, including some of encouragement to those who were succeeding.

She had lunch at a nearby cafe, and returned to work immediately. She then made up a list of carbon copies, which she mailed before going home, to several newspapers all over the country, inclosing a money order in each to cover the cost of insertion.

"And now," she sighed, "I am happy. I feel better than I have felt for some time...." She closed her eyes meditatively, and thought of him. Would he survive? Typhoid-pneumonia was a dreadful disease, and she was considerably worried. When she retired that night, she prayed a long prayer, and went to sleep with a smile upon her lips, at peace with the world, and with hopes for the best.

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CHAPTER NINE

"I Hope You—Won't—Won't be Angry"

"We cannot give out information as to the condition of the patient, Madam," said the informant at the hospital, when Mildred had called to inquire regarding the condition of her lover. She turned wearily away, and went back to the office.

She was anxious to know the worst, if it came to that, and was worried daily, until she could not restrain the desire to visit the hospital each morning, before she went about the duties she had preempted.

"He is not dead," she whispered to herself, "and if I go each day, I can work with my mind at peace; whereas, I would surely go crazy, if I were compelled to go along, and not know whether he is living or dead."

Two weeks passed and he still lived, and at the end of that time, she was advised at the hospital, that recovery was expected, but that he would be, in all likelihood, unable to leave the hospital under two months from that date.

She went to the office that day in the highest spirits, and was especially cheered to find a pile of letters in answer to the advertisements. Replies were many during the following days. In due course of time, she had secured a large number of agents, and a greater portion, upon following her instructions, were successful. Orders for books began to fill the office, and after she had been in charge of the office a month, she was pleased to see that she was actually succeeding. Each mail brought money and express orders, and then, the work being too heavy for one, she looked about for a stenographer to help her. She was successful in securing a very intelligent girl, a creole, with French ways and a command of that tongue which, at times, especially when excited, conflicted with her English to a degree that was amusing.

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As the days went by, business increased, until at the end of six weeks, more than a thousand dollars was finding its way to the office each week. Mildred was encouraged, she was delighted. She deposited the money to his credit in a savings account, and used only what was necessary for expenses and for her own living. She became so enthusiastic over the same, that she almost forgot he would return, and then—but she got no further.

"He will be able to leave the hospital in two weeks, possibly ten days," the informant advised her the last day she called, which was eight weeks after he had taken sick. It was only then that she became fully appreciative of the position she held. She now became uneasy, as, after thinking it over for some time, she was unable to decide what to do. The business was now so heavy, that it was impossible to be away from it; money came in each mail, and sometimes in large sums, while orders and inquiries for the agency, kept her dictating letters for hours each day. She permitted herself, that day and other days that followed, to become the heroine in a wild dream. She saw him well, which he would be soon, and she fancied how much she could help him. But always, when she recalled the past, there came a choking, and she would turn desperately to her work in order to forget.

"And yet," she said to herself one day—and that was only a few days before he was expected to return—"I must do something. I cannot sit here and allow him to walk in upon me, because—he, oh, I'm afraid he might resent it."

One morning the mail was heavier than usual, because it was Monday, and Saturday had been a holiday. Springtime had come, with its time of blossom, and the air was fragrant. She hummed a little tune and was happy that day; happier than she had been for a long time. She went about the great amount of work with a calmness and precision, that resulted in finishing it before five o'clock. Ordinarily, there was enough to have kept them busy until the next day noon.

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"Well, Katherine," she said to the stenographer, "we have been very industrious today, and I am going to bring you something nice tomorrow. You are very helpful," and with a quick impulse she kissed the other, who returned it as affectionately.

In that moment, she almost felt inclined to tell the girl the burden that was upon her, but she thought better of it quickly, and, with a kind word, she turned to her desk, and for a time listened to the other's footstep in the hallway, where she moved occasionally, while waiting for the elevator.

From a drawer she took some letters, and glanced over them reflectively. They were letters from a girl she recognized in the story, and from their tone, she surmised that the other had once loved him. That love, however, had changed in the course of events, and now they were only friends.

She sat for a long time and gazed dreamily out over the city, and then, suddenly, it occurred to her, that she was sitting in the same position he had occupied, when she had entered his office almost ten weeks before. She stirred uneasily. At that moment a step sounded in the hall, and came in the direction of the office. It paused a minute outside the door, and then it was opened, and some person stood on the threshold.

It was getting dark, and as the man paused, she observed that he looked about the office strangely—doubtfully. In so far as he knew, he had felt the office was a thing of the past, and at this moment he muttered: "Hump. Guess someone else is in this place." Presently, with another muttering, he came toward the window. Mildred sat stupefied, and seemed unable to move any part of her body. She felt strangely paralyzed. When he got near the middle of the room, he suddenly bethought himself of the light, and turning, he went to the wall, where the switch was located, and pressed the button.

She had rearranged the office, that is, she had added to the number of lights, since there were only two bulbs when she came. Now there were six. Over the desk set one, and it had a reflector. When he pressed the button, the room became instantly illuminated by the bright rays, while the one on the desk reflected full into her face.

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She said something and turned her face, while he gave a start and cried:

"You!"

The next moment, he fell back and observed her strangely. She sat as he had found her, with head lowered and heart thumping violently. He advanced after a pause, and stood close to her, regarding her with a look that was stranger still. He appeared to be at a loss what to say or do; then he raised his hand to his forehead, while his gaze was one of utter blankness. It occurred to her then, that he might be impaired in some way, after such a severe illness. So, with an effort, she rose boldly from the chair, and facing him, said:

"Yes, it is I, Sid—Mr. Wyeth." She was compelled, by the thumping of her heart, to hesitate for a moment, and then she continued, more calmly: "I have made bold to come here during your illness, and—and—take charge of your work. I hope," she was now faltering, while he was regarding her without understanding, from the expression he wore. And—oh! She saw it now. He was regarding her with disfavor. A frown played about his lips that appeared drawn and thin, while his eyes gradually changed until they were openly hostile—contempt almost could be read. She turned her eyes away.

This was her reward. She choked. Her brain became a whirl for a moment. She had tried to help him, and had succeeded. She had thought of it in that way; she now strangely realized that she had not expected any thanks—indeed, she had never thought of anything but to make the business a success. And, she was positive, that she had not expected any reward.

She was saying something. She was not fully aware what it was, and her head hung down, while her eyes sought the floor, instead of his face with the hostile expression.

"I hope you—won't—won't be angry!" With a great effort, during which she felt he was regarding her in the same critical manner, although she was careful not to glance into his face, she explained briefly what had transpired during his absence. "And so," she concluded, "here is everything drawn down to date," and with that, she suddenly caught up her light coat, drew her turban hat over her head, and went toward the door.

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As she did so, she was aware that he had turned and was looking after her. She paused when she reached the door, and thought of his illness. He might take sick again. She saw his eyes now for a brief moment, and they were upon her. She could not read them altogether, but it seemed as if the hostility was gone, and a look that bordered on appeal had taken its place. Her gaze lingered kindly, and then she said:

"You are ill—have been. Please be careful." And, in spite of the effort it cost her to say it, she added: "I will come again tomorrow," and was gone.

All that night she tossed and tumbled in her little bed in Tunis. And when morning came, she dropped off to sleep. Mrs. Jacques called her, and then came to the room and knocked at the door. Presently, she ventured to open it slightly. Mildred was snoring peacefully.

"She's tired, poor thing. Very tired." She looked at her again. Her face was upturned and her throat was exposed. A beautiful brown throat. She crossed the room easily to where she lay, gazed down at her for a moment, and became conscious again of that same feeling that had been haunting her since she knew her. She stopped presently,

and drew the lace night dress down a bit. The next moment she recoiled in fright.

"At last, oh God! At last I have found her! My sister!" The other stirred. Light shown brightly through the window, for it was seven-thirty, and the sun was climbing. But Mildred Latham was tired, and was snoring again in calm repose. The other bent over her. She kept from putting her arms about her with much effort, and then kissed her lips fondly.

She stood a few feet away, and regarded her with a heavenly feeling, and then, drawing the blind until the room was fully dark, she left her.

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CHAPTER TEN

Vellun Parish—Jefferson Bernard

Sidney Wyeth sat for a long time at his desk after he had looked through the statement before him. He could not for some time understand how it had all come about. He had been carried from the office unconscious ten weeks before, and during that time, or when he had come back into his senses after many weeks, he had concluded that his effort, which had not gone very far, was doomed to die, and had resigned himself to the inevitable. Now before him was a statement, which showed that more than a thousand dollars was finding its way to the office each week, in excess of the cost of the books. More than five thousand dollars was to his credit in a local bank. What miracle had been wrought to make such a profit in so short a time—or any time at all? It had taken him two years to reach a fourth edition of this book, while now the copies before him stated ninth edition. How had it all happened?

There was but one answer, and that was, Mildred Latham.

He lived over again the years of the past. He saw her as he had met her on that first day. He recalled her patience and appreciation, while he explained to her the contents of the book, and the order she had given. He remembered the dance and the kiss, with a strange pang of the heart. In all his days, no kiss had seemed like that. And the look in her eyes afterward. Was that love? Surely that was life. If God, our Creator, made that possible, then life was worth the effort. He became so absorbed in his reflections, that he started when he recalled his last visit.

After that it was different. But for that—but he had worried himself sick, and had succeeded in forgetting it and her until the day he took sick. He was too weak and torn by the illness to think about the matter, while he lay on his back in the hospital. But when convalescence had set in, he had thought of it almost constantly. Try as he would, he had been unable to understand how it all happened. He pondered over it until he entered the office an hour ago, and now it was all plain.

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"Who is this girl?" he asked himself. "What is she?" he demanded. "She has always puzzled me." But, at the end of it all, the old hag on the steps, with the words she had spoken, rose again before him, and he forgot—he felt he was compelled to forget, all the rest.

He got up, after a time, and walked about the office. He felt tired, and in view of her success, and of the circumstances surrounding it, he would go somewhere and rest, until he had thought it all out. But of one thing he was certain, and that was he must never see her again. He could love her; he could do anything within his power for her—he was only too glad to; but he felt he could never forget the few words he had heard a long time ago.

So he wrote a letter to the effect that he had gone away, but he did not state where.

"Oh, I have overslept myself dreadfully," cried Mildred, entering the kitchen where the other worked away in silence.

"I started to awaken you, and you were resting so quietly, that I desisted," Mrs. Jacques replied, regarding her with a fond glance that the other did not understand.

"I must hurry, for, of all mornings, this is the very one I would not have been late for anything," and she hurried through her breakfast and was turning to go, when the other came up, threw her arms about her impulsively, and kissed her long and lingeringly upon the lips. Mildred returned the embrace, but she did not understand the expression in the eyes of the other, as she took her leave.

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She arrived at the office, and was surprised to find only Katherine working away on the books.

"Has—ah, any one been here?" she inquired, after waiting to hear something from

the lips of the other.

"No, ma'am, no one," said the other, looking up in surprise for a moment.

"Very well," said Mildred, seating herself at her desk. As she did so, her eyes fell upon an envelope with her name written across it, and marked personal. She broke the seal nervously. Calming herself, she straightened out the folded sheet, and read it carefully.

Miss Mildred Latham,

My Dear Madam:

It is impossible to state how much you have done for the sale of the book during my illness. I do not hesitate to say, that in view of the fact that I have struggled over a period of two years, with only a small measure of success, as compared to that which has come about since you have looked after it, that it is beyond me. I cannot, however, conscientiously accept it in the way you have offered it according to your statement. So I have, therefore, made over to you the sum total that you placed in the bank to my credit.

I am leaving the city for parts unknown, and may not return for a long time—and possibly not at all.

Regretting that I cannot thank you more amply, but hoping you will accept what is no more than due you, I am,

Very sincerely yours,

SIDNEY WYETH.

She laid the letter down and gazed into space for a long time, not trying to understand anything. He had gone, and left her. He had given her all she had earned, and the privilege of earning more, but he had gone. Would he ever return?... She was sorry now that she didn't tell him all when it had been convenient; and still, in the next thought, she was glad she hadn't.

She was not excited, but went about the work without any outward sign that she had been the recipient of anything unusual; but all the day through, she was thinking of what had just passed. She could not recall what she had expected, or that she had expected anything; but of one thing she was more conscious than ever before, and that was that she loved him with all her soul.

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So she decided to allow matters to drift along and made no change.

Wyeth stood before the window of the city ticket office of a small railroad. He was attracted by a parish which appeared rather remote, but where a lake was advertised as a nice place to fish. He made up his mind to go there. It was a half day's journey by rail, and a train left in two hours. He returned to his room, and an hour later his trunk was at the depot. He passed near the building, and from where he paused, he caught a sight of her sitting at the desk where she had sat the night before.

He could go to her now, and say what had been on his lips more than a year before. He gazed at her for a long time, and was conscious of a longing. He had loved her—oh, so very much. Indeed, she was everything he had desired. Then he thought of the hag and what she had said, and went his way to the depot.

Vellun Parish is perhaps the most remote part of the state. It lies toward the southwest, and is bounded on one side by the Gulf of Mexico. Its land is all swamp, while no part of it is more than ten feet above the level of the sea. The most of it is under perhaps a foot of water. Upon the dry portion a few people live. They make no effort to raise crops further than a garden, but depend mostly upon fishing, and upon tourists for their living. One railroad pulls through the mighty swamps about it, and has a small station located on this dry spot. It is many miles to another station. Almost everybody leaves the place in summer, for mosquitoes hold sway, while sickness and swamp fever are prevalent.

It was high noon at this resort, and from down the track could be heard the whistle of a small locomotive—for the trestles would not hold up large, heavy ones. Presently, with a ringing of bells, it came to a stop before the station, and two people got off, other than members of the train crew. One from the rear, and the other from the front of the Jim Crow car.

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The latter was Sidney Wyeth, and in his hands he carried a fishing outfit and other matter, together with a suit case. Before the station loafed a few of the inhabitants, including an old man whose age was perhaps sixty. He regarded Wyeth strangely, but returned the nod courteously, when the other had spoken.

"Have any idea where I can find lodging about here?" he inquired. It was at the end of the winter season, and those who live the summer months through, had resigned themselves to the heat and mosquitoes. The old man surveyed Wyeth a moment critically before replying.

"Well, I dunno exactly," said he at last, and Wyeth was startled at his command of language, for in those parts few spoke English, and when they did it was bad. Creole was customary. The old man looked about a moment before continuing, but presently he said. "I live alone over beyond that clump of trees," and he pointed to a grove that Wyeth saw plainly, "and if you are alone, you might go along and look it over, and if satisfied, why we might make a deal."

"That's fair enough," agreed Wyeth. "I'm alone, and may be here a month, a week, or it may be three months, I can't say."

"Very well then, follow me."

He took part of the luggage, and they went across one of the few cleared spots of the parish. Finally they came to a neat log house behind a paling fence, before which a dog barked viciously. "Don, Don, hush the noise," the old man said. "He won't bite, but he is fond of barking." The dog now rolled on his back at Wyeth's feet, and they soon became friends. Sidney patted his head and then rolled him over, much to the dog's delight.

"Well, well, Governor!" cried Wyeth enthusiastically, when they were inside, "but you're all fixed here, I must say."

"Yes," said the other, slowly and modestly, "I guess it'll do for an old relic like me," and he laughed humorously. Wyeth regarded him a moment, and then, for the first time told him his name.

"And mine is Jefferson Bernard."

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"Well, Mr. Bernard, I have always taken pride in the fact that I am at home in the open," and he gazed out the window across the cleared spot, and into the forest that surrounded the house.

"Glad to hear that," cried the other. "I was under the impression that you were one of the fly butlers who come here with their people."

"No, I'm a sort of globe trotter, you might say. In fact, at the present I have no plans whatever for the future, so I might bunk with you here a few months. Depends on how my mind is at the end of each day."

"Restless, eh?"

"That's it. Have spent eleven years on the prairies of Dakota, and very often, the 'Call of the Wild' gets into my veins, and I want to get out where I cannot see any one, and sort of—well, forget the strenuous ways of life for a while."

Both laughed agreeably.

"Well," said Jefferson Bernard. "I bunk here alone and do my own cooking of course, and hunt and fish and read and sleep whenever I get ready."

Wyeth wondered at this man. About the wall everything was clean, while the clothes the other wore were a forest suit of brown cloth, with lace boots and a belt; his hat was a broad brimmed Stetson. They were all the best of material, and the man's appearance was anything else but the back-woods Negro. He started to inquire who he was, but something about the other did not invite familiarity, so he talked on other topics instead.

He had been there two weeks, and had been over all the part of the parish that was accessible, when one of the periodic rainy spells set in. For days they were unable to get outside without getting wet, and at times they told a great deal about themselves.

"And that reminds me," said Bernard, "that you spoke of Cincinnati and that you came south from there, a bit over a year ago. I, then, left there after you did."

"Indeed," said Wyeth in surprise.

"Yes, I have been down here a little over a year only. I was reared in this same parish many years ago, and, since then, I always had a longing to come back and stay again until I got tired of it." He made himself comfortable as he drew away on a long pipe; while Wyeth, observing him, waited for the story he had to tell.

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"Yes, I used to live in Cincinnati—in fact, I guess that is what I might call home, if not this."

"This is news to me," said Wyeth.

The other smiled languidly, and went on:

"I used to live on Walnut Hill, and was employed by Stephen Myer, a wealthy retired merchant, who not only was well-to-do in Cincinnati, but owned a number of interests in the south, in fact, he came to Cincinnati from the south not so long before, and never went back again, for he died.

"I was his valet for years. Got acquainted with him right here in this parish one winter, when he was staying at the hotel over there, and it was the second winter when he hired me and took me north with him.

"Stephen Myer was a good man at heart, but a sport until he died, and certainly believed in a good time with the women. He loved his family, but he would run around, which recalls his death whenever I think of it.

"He came back from the south about three years ago I think, and it was not long until I knew he was keeping a girl he had brought with him. I paid the matter no attention, because he always had somebody before; but strange to say, after that he had no other. It was kept very quiet and I knew nothing of it,—that is, from him, until the night he died. That took place while we were at a hotel in Detroit. His death was due to heart failure, but it didn't take him as it does most of its victims. He was conscious that he was going to die, although he was, to all appearances, well.

"It was then he told me the story.

"Calling me to his bedside, this is what he said. I do not think I shall ever forget it, because it was such an awful death. 'Jeff,' said he. 'I'm going to die.' I looked at him, saying: 'Oh, you're frightened;' but he shook his head in such a way that I became frightened, and waited. 'Yes, Jeff,' he resumed: 'I'm goin' to die, and Jeff, I'm going to hell.' I tried to soothe him, but he only frowned slightly, and went on. 'Yes, Jeff, I'm going to die and go to hell, because I deserve to go there. I deserve to go there, Jeff, because I have sinned. Yes, Jeff, I've committed an awful sin, and it's no more than my due to burn in hell in payment. I never believed much in such a place until not long ago, when I brought that girl to Cincinnati.' He breathed deeply and with some effort, and it was then I could see he wore a strange expression, and now, as I look back at it, I guess that meant death. He went on again, after a breathing spell:

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"Bring me that box over there Jeff, that one with the key in the lock. I want to leave that one whom I have wronged something before I'm done for.' I brought it to him, and he unlocked it, and took therefrom a lot of papers, and a certified check for twenty-five thousand dollars, all made out, and to be turned over to her through due recognition, as attested by his lawyers in Cincinnati. 'Hadn't I better wire for your family?' I inquired of him; but he waived it aside, and said he didn't want them to know until it was over.

"Now, Jeff,' he went on, 'you are to take this envelope to my attorney and see that you get their receipt of it, after which, when you get back to Cincinnati, you take this box as it is to her. I trust you, Jeff, and believe that you will attend to it. And, too, I've left you well cared for; but that is in the will, in due form. And now, if you'll just give me a drink of water, I'll tell you the story.

"My company had their southern office in Attalia, and we had quite a bit of business with the financial department of one of the big denominations of Negro churches. And that was how we came to become involved in this deal. The financial secretary of the church very often gave us his note in payment, and soon became well known to me, and I liked him. Pretty soon, however, it came to me that he aspired to be a bishop; although the office he held was a good graft, and we knew it, altho' the niggers didn't. But he became crazy to be a bishop and a real big Negro, proper.

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"About this time, it came to my attention that something crooked, something underhanded was going on in the affairs of the church. Well, one of the boys who worked as porter, was reading a Negro paper one day, and I observed that this financial secretary's picture covered the whole front page. I took the paper, and when I had read all the stuff he had written under another's name, I began to figure what it was costing him to become a bishop. Other extravagances came under my observation, and, since the business we had with them was becoming involved, I began an investigation regarding the preacher. It developed that he had been married twice—that is, the present wife was his second. The first one had died and left him two daughters. My investigation, which came through a Negro detective by the name of Dejoie, although he was known during the investigation as Edwards, developed that he was a despot. His youngest daughter by his first wife realized this, and she threw it into his face, and left when she was thirteen, going to a place in Michigan where she educated herself. The other was a girl with much sense, but somewhat subservient to the old man, regardless of the fact that she possessed a mind of her own. Apparently it had been the old man's practice to have them regard him as the great I am. She stayed with her father, who lived with his second wife, and to that union were born several children, I don't know how many.

"Edwards uncovered all this and some more. He revealed the fact that this preacher, who was so anxious to become a bishop, was not only seeking it by extravagant

methods, but had employed the church's funds to the amount of more than five thousand dollars. And still, all those pig headed niggers knew nothing of it. It's a great wonder they have anything, they seem to know so little. My company was up against it for what was due us; but that was not the end of it. On top of this, what did that sinner do but write my name on a note for five thousand dollars, and, through his standing with the bank, got the money and covered the shortage before those niggers ever knew there was any! Wasn't that the limit? He was elected bishop, and became the big nigger his great ambition had aspired to.

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"I was too put out to do anything at once, although the note came due before I was aware it had been given.

"The night I discovered it, was one when I happened to be in my office alone. I decided forthwith to place it in the hands of the law. It was then that this daughter came to the office with a note from him, asking for an appointment. I have an idea he was only then aware that the note was due or past due. She caught me as mad as a hornet, and I told her the whole thing. I shall not soon forget the expression on her face when I had told her. She looked like she would die right there. It was then, too, I saw how beautiful she was and so well formed. Suddenly a proposal entered my head. I have always been impulsive, but I have never been known to back up. So I got up and stood before her, and said my say. She was terribly indignant and would have fled, but I stood between her and the door. I became mad to have that girl. She fought me, but I grew worse. I finally said to her: "Come with me to Cincinnati, and save your rotten, sinning preacher father from the chain gang. A home it is up there with plenty of everything, or fifteen years for your now bishop father on the worst chain gang in the world." She regarded me wildly, as the substance of it became clear to her. "Oh, I mean it," I cried. "I'm going to send that dad of yours to the chain gang tomorrow—and you know what that means." I think all the horror of it rose before her in that moment. All the Negroes, spiteful, envious creatures crying: "Aw, you're a big nigger, huh. Your daddy's a bishop!" And the next day: "Um-um! What do you think of it! A big bishop done fo'ged a note!" And she had seen the chain gang. All those stripes and chains frightened her. She looked up at me with an appeal in her eyes that frightened me—even then; but I was too wild to have her at that moment, to give heed. And then she begged me to have mercy. She cried and beseeched—she did everything, and then—in the end—well, I'll not soon forget those appeals. "I'm a nice girl. Can you not appreciate what that means? I will—to save my father and those little ones; but before God: Hear him, please, see him. I may be yours in body, but never in soul; while—oh, can't you see what you ask? Can you not see that you take everything I have lived for? Don't you see, that when you rob a woman of her purity you have destroyed her womanhood?" She fell on her face and sobbed until, as I see it now, I can't imagine how I could have acted so.

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"And that is why, Jeff, I'm going to hell. Yes, to hell!' He was going now, his eyes had a far away, an unearthly expression; but before he was gone, he said—and his voice seemed to come from another world as I held him. 'I'm going, Jeff, I'm going. Satan's waiting for me. And, say, Jeff,' his voice now came in gasps, and sounded as if from eternity: 'I don't mind it so much, no I don't, Jeff; but the only thing, and the last request of God, is to be sure to send that old preacher down to meet me sometime.' With that his muscles relaxed, a spasm contracted his form, and he lay dead."

The two were silent now. Outside a bird hopped about, and finally lit on the window sill, peering in as if to inquire the cause of the silence. After a long time, it seemed, Wyeth spoke.

"Strange. And did—you—ah—fulfill the request?"

"Yes," said the other slowly. "I did at once, and let me tell you, my friend, I will never forget that girl's face. Oh, I've seen many; but this girl's face told the story, and her story was that of a pure girl, a good girl, who had made a sublime sacrifice. Was that sacrifice worth the cost?" Again silence reigned supreme, each with his thoughts.

The birds outside made sweet music, as they flitted happily about. Sidney Wyeth was speaking again, and his voice was from a distance, as he said quietly:

"What became of her?"

"What became of her? Oh yes," cried the other, sitting up and shaking off his distraction, as though he had been awakened from sleep. "Why, she left soon after. Came south, and when I was on the way down here, I chanced to stop over in a town—I won't mention the name—because she was there. Was selling a book, so I understood, but was staying with the pastor of the Presbyterian church, and high in their favor. I was glad to see it and never let on; but there was a skunk aboard the same train from Cincinnati, and who stayed there. I've often thought about it since, and I hope that devil never knew her and made trouble. She was a good girl, and still may be saved if things go along right."

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"Life is full of mysteries," Wyeth commented.

"Sure is," his companion replied, and then became dreary, as his mind wandered

sadly, solemnly, back into the past. Suddenly he sat bolt upright, saying: "I trust you, and for that reason, since I have told it to you, I have a small picture that I found in the old man's effects, and considered it good policy to remove. So I have kept it, and I'm going to show it to you."

While the other fished away in an old trunk, a strange thought came to Sidney Wyeth, and he recalled singularly, the effort for the Y.M.C.A. in that town up the river, and how twenty-five thousand dollars from a source that no one could explain, was paid at almost the last minute.... He was doing some thinking and had forgotten all about the other, who had closed the trunk now, and came before him with a small picture. He sat up quickly when the other touched him, and held before his gaze the picture of Mildred Latham.

And in that moment there came a vision of a dark, dreary night, when he hurried through the streets of Cincinnati, and came to a place where an old woman sat, an evil hag; and who regarded him with malicious eyes—eyes that appeared to hate everyone—and the words in reply to his request, came back with a shock: "*Gwan! She's with her man!*"

Sidney continued to gaze at the picture. There was profound silence, for neither spoke. One was not in the mood to do so, the other could not. He raised his hand mechanically to his head, as though to rid his mind of some obstruction. He tried to think coherently, but his senses were confused.

He turned, staggered slightly, groping as if blindly, for support, and passed on out into the open, and under God's pure heavens—anywhere away from the stifling air inside, and its hideous secret.

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Sidney stood outside now, and the spring sun beat upon his bare head, as, with his trembling hand he shaded his eyes, and looked in the direction of the creole city. Back there he would go—he had to go! He couldn't say why—feel why—now. For, in the tangle of his confused thoughts, nothing seemed clear. But, he would go back. His hand sought his forehead again. Yes, he would go back.

Let us go back to a night when the heroine of our story got up from a drunken stupor, to find that the hour of fate—fate for the Y.M.C.A. was at hand. She had rushed breathlessly to the office of the Western Union, and had secured the money that had been transferred, at her request, from the Cincinnati bank some days before. She had known when Wilson Jacobs returned unsuccessful in his attempt, that some expedient was necessary.

When she realized a year before, that she was heiress to such a sum of money, she had worried as to what she would do with it. Her conscience would never let her touch a penny of it for personal use. It had been left on deposit, and, insofar as her daily life had been concerned, she had about forgotten it, until the climax of Wilson Jacobs' great effort had stood like a spectre before her.

For a time she had hesitated, feeling that such money should not be used for Christian purposes.... But, when she had awakened on that dreadful night, she came at once to appreciate how, through her and her alone, this effort should be realized.

So, she rushed pell mell through the streets that led to Wilson Jacobs' home. As she hurried along, visions of the great need passed fitfully through her mind. She recalled all the crime she had witnessed; thousands yearly herded on the gangs, torn mothers, prostituted sisters, homes broken up by that demon of liquor. She could see the condition which forced so many of her people to the belief that colored people could never be anything, regardless as to how much they might try.

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Race prejudice, that demon of American society, had succeeded in convincing so many of these weak people that there was no future; that the only resort was to get all the excitement out of life that was possible. How they conducted themselves to secure such a life, was the one great detriment to the race, to the city, to the state, and in the end, to the United States.

As she rushed along, she could hear these poor creatures, and the words they uttered, when approached with offers for their salvation; for, in addition to the discouragement caused by race prejudice, there was another feature that was worse still—class prejudice. The folly of it. The effect was more damnable, she knew, than all the other causes, for, through it these poor creatures were made to feel that they were actually bad; bad beyond redemption, which made them unfit for the civilized world. Under this they fretted. They grew likewise to hate, and in the end, to become not only a disgrace to the race, community and state, but even enemies to society.

She recalled once a man, a mulatto and obviously a pervert, who answered a street preacher. She could never seem to forget his words.

"You say," he had said, "that I should get religion. *and I say, what's the use?* I'm a

nigger, and that means I'm a vagabond, a cast-off, a thing to be hated, condemned and persecuted. You speak of brotherly love and the reward hereafter. I laugh when you make such assertions. *Heaven for a Negro?* Why, do you suppose that even Satan would care for him? As to brotherly love, why don't you go to the white man that keeps my sister? Why don't you tell that man what you preach about? I am illegitimate. My youngest sister, the white man's mistress, is too, and so are all the rest! Then you speak of heaven and reward in the hereafter for Negroes. The hereafter is the chain gang, where my illegitimate brother is serving twenty years for murder. As for me, I'm going to a blind tiger and get a drink. I'm going to get drunk. The idea that a Negro can be anything is a joke. There may be a heaven for white people, but for a Negro, oh, you fool!"

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As all this and other instances passed through her mind, Mildred became much excited. Then, as the reality dawned upon her, a picture of what that money could do became clear to her, and with Wilson Jacobs as its secretary, she presently came to feel that her sacrifice might be a blessing in disguise.

On and on she hurried, until at last she came to the house. She paused at the gate, and caught her breath. Her thoughts were busy for a moment, as she tried to formulate a plan to deliver the money without being caught. She struggled nervously, with first one plan and then another, and then at last she boldly entered the gate and walked up to the front door. As she reached to push the bell, she looked through the glass door. Wilson sat nodding in the study. His position, she saw, was such that he could see the clock, and watch the fatal moments pass. It was then past eleven. She could see the clock and realized what those moments meant. He had, as she observed him, fallen asleep from sheer fatigue. As she watched him, there came to her mind a bold idea, and she put it into effect at once. She tried the door, fearing it might be locked, but was relieved when it opened with a turn of the knob.

She entered the house on tip-toe, passed through the hall to the study, which was to one side, entered the room in which he sat, and, with breath held, nerves tense, she cautiously crossed to where he sat. She slowly drew her breath, when she saw he was sleeping peacefully. She placed the package containing the price of her virtue upon the table. She looked at him again, and caught her breath in fear, as he moved slightly, but did not fully awaken.

The next moment she stole her way to the door, like a thief in the night, and was outside. She turned, as she heard a sound, and saw Constance, weary, tired, and apparently nervally exhausted, come from the rear and enter the study. She dared stand and watch her, as she entered the study where her brother sat, now fully awake, but oblivious to the presence of the package. He was watching the clock that was ticking away.

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With a catch of her breath, she saw that Constance had discovered the package, and she saw them open it with curiosity. She noted the look of intense joy, as their eyes beheld the contents.

As she was leaving, these words floated out to her in the stillness of night, "*Go, brother, in God's name, go!*"

No one, so far as we know, guessed where the much needed money came from. But, strangely enough, the giving had relieved the giver. After she left the Jacobs' home, she felt as she had never felt before, and took life and what it brought very calmly. As she passed along, she looked with silent relief into the faces of those of her race, who were persecuted on one hand by fear of the superior white, and, on the other, by cast. At times she had regarded them as so many dogs, lurking, hungry dogs, who wait until darkness sets in, before lurking in the alleys and searching garbage cans, expecting to be kicked or be killed upon discovery, if, for no other reason, simply to give vent to a hatred. They felt, as she saw it, that it was the lot of the Negro to be hated. They got no kindness; they expected none; they even scoffed when it was offered, regarding it as some subtle means of inviting them to a worse fate, and this was what discrimination and prejudice had brought them to.

There still remained the dispensation. No person in all the world, she felt, was so fitted for the task as Wilson Jacobs. Care of the building, after its completion, would itself be a problem. Then there was that distrust to dispell. Too often, she knew, that arrogance on the part of the leaders of these institutions, had a tendency to keep away from their doors the very class whom they sought to attract. Unfortunately, the Negroes themselves realized that those conditions were true.

Wilson Jacobs was not such a character. She felt relieved as she realized this. When she thought again of her people, she appreciated what in time this genuine Christianity of his would mean to them, when they came to know him for the kind man he was. Her race was emotional, superstitious, but withal, patriotic and enthusiastic. Nothing, regardless of all she had seen, could make her think otherwise. And what could be the attitude of her race, her brothers, when they realized the efforts made in their behalf? Will they say:

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"You want to help me? You *really* want to be a brother, and take me into that place and help me to lead a good, clean life? And I doubted you! I scorned your offer and cursed you and all society. Oh, merciful God, but I knew not what I did! And you say, that I am not bad, that I never was bad? That I was merely weak—weak as other human beings were? Can all this be true? I can hardly realize it. I have *never* known kindness. I have always been told that life held no future for me, a Negro; that by the will of our Creator, I was born to be hated, hunted and abused, a creature of no destiny, a thing to be spat upon and made a slave of, a creature without morals. You say that all this was wrong, and that I can be not only a good person, but an example for the good of others? That I am, after all, only the victim of circumstances?"

Wilson Jacobs would convince them, and, when this was done, her reward would come.

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

"Mildred, I've Come Back"

It seemed a long way back to the city, as though he would never get there, and the train crept slowly along through the mighty swamps. But all the way, his mind was busy. Thought after thought came and went, but only one became fixed. "I love her," he cried, again and again. "I love her!" he exclaimed feverishly. "Nothing else matters—nothing else *can* matter, now!"

He was going to her, just as fast as the slow train would carry him, and when he arrived—beyond those conflicting moments, he got no further.

He lay back in his seat after a spell, and calmed himself to a degree that he could see it all clearly. He wanted to see her now; he wanted to look deep into the eyes that he was sure must be tired; he wanted to see behind those mirrors, and to do his share to relieve the turmoil within. After a time, his return to the office after his illness, recurred to him. He had found a letter from the publisher, and upon opening it, he had found it to contain a draft for a large sum of money. He didn't know then who had sold the book with so much success to him, and he had wondered. Strange, but it had not occurred to him then, that it was she. But now, it was all clear—everything.

"And it was Mildred all the while!" he exclaimed in a controlled voice, despite the excitement it gave him. "How could I have misunderstood so long!" And then the instance of the five thousand dollars came back to him, and the sale of his work as he had left it. True, he had given this all over to her; but the fact to be reckoned with was that she had succeeded where he had not.... She had done this without any thought of herself.... No girl with so much ability, with such constructive thoughts, would have done as she had for others, unless inspired by some divine sacrifice.

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It was all clear to him now. And then the other.... In all his life, virtue in women had been his highest regard. During the months he spent in the south, he had seen immorality of a nature that was revolting to his finer senses. It had been the custom since the landing of Negroes in this country, and was in evidence every where, in the many colors that made up his people; but, in spite of this, his high regard for the virtuous woman remained the same. So, when the words of the hag came back to him, amid all the good things he was thinking of her, for a time, all was swept from him in a wave of revolt.... How could he be blind henceforth to that?

He became weak and listless for a time. To pass on through the city; to catch one of the ocean goers that he was often interested in observing at the harbor, and go to Argentina, Brazil—anywhere and forget it all; and then there came to him the thought of his people. All that he had lived through when he saw the leaders with their selfishness, the neglect of their Christian duty; how he had written of that selfishness, fearlessly with jaws set and soul on fire; and of the reign of excitement that followed—it was impossible to further contemplate other plans.

And, amid all the chaos, there came to him thoughts of the success of the Christian forward movement in the town up the river. With success there, in the worst of two towns in the world, it was now an almost foregone conclusion, that shortly, the spirit would prevail successfully in other towns. Yes, it would have to. The public, for its own welfare, would soon come to appreciate what such a movement meant to two-fifths of its population. And how came this to be? Would the people of that town up the river, now have a beautiful building in course of construction, if it had been left to them to supply that fatal twenty-five thousand? "Great God!" he murmured, "how can I, *how can I!*"

And, as the train continued on its way over innumerable trestles with lagoons and marshes everywhere, it occurred to him, that the one who had made all this possible, and who, at the price of purity, which was a woman's all, was now, and for the sake of it, homeless and friendless.... Even that family, that bishop father, surrounded by

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thousands of hero worshippers, with his picture decorating the walls of thousands of homes, and pointed to by day, would scorn her. The thousands of young men, respectable, but poor, and who, for this girl's sacrifice, were given a great chance to conduct their future lives along Christian lines, even they would scorn her. All decent and respecting society would scorn her. *They would have to scorn her.* He himself *had already scorned her.*

He allowed his gaze to wander beyond the waters of a lagoon; until it rested upon a clump of trees that rose ragged in the background. He was too torn with anguish to think for a time. What price had been put upon virtue, for his people—and her people—was too great to estimate. But behind it all, was a homeless, friendless, loveless little girl, drifting about in the world. For Mildred Latham as he saw her again, was a mere girl, not yet twenty-two. She had a heart, but what kind of a heart must she have, after the suffering she had endured? Yet she was a human being, with a human desire after all.

What he had seen in her eyes in Cincinnati; that pain, and at times that wild, elfinlike, mad desire.... And, oh, that caress, that one kiss that seemed to have penetrated her very soul; the look she had given him; that weak protest, afterward united in its pathetic appeal for mercy.... She had been his dream; his mad desire. He had declared then, that he would help to dispell that worry; he had felt himself courageous enough to do so, too; but now before him was the test, and he was weakening under it.

Back in the *Rosebud Country*, he had lived alone for years, and during those long days, his greatest desire, his greatest hope, had been to love, to have that love returned by his ideal of womanhood. He dismissed what had followed. The other had not even courage enough to accept graciously what he had worked for. Any woman can, to a degree, mould the future of her husband. No man, he knew, could be oblivious to the condition of his household, and that which made it. That part of his life, however, had long since been a closed chapter. His great effort had been to forget it, and he had succeeded to such a degree, that he was able to concentrate his mind on other things; but now, it was different. Because, with the exception of the one thing, Mildred Latham was more than his picture, his ideal. But that one thing was the silent barrier.

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It was springtime now, and back in the *Rosebud Country* all must be busy. He thought of the years, and how busy he was at this time. And hopeful; because, whether the season proved successful or not, springtime, when the crops were planted, was always a hopeful time; every farmer believed, as he planted his seed, that the season would be successful. And now he was not there to plant the crops. He had not been there the year before; but, as he continued to recall the past, he knew that it had never occurred to him that he would have been anywhere else but there. He wanted to be there; but financially, he couldn't afford to be there any more.

After an interminable spell of mental depression, something came to his mind. It entered slowly, but at last took shape. He whispered after a time: "Yes, yes, I could. With that amount I could start all over again.... And out there, no one would know, no one would need to know.... Just being there with the right to continue as I once was; but with a terrible experience to remind me of what it is all worth—it would not be the same now."

He saw her now differently. That other side was passing. It would come back—it would keep coming back; but it was his duty; it was his future—it was his very life to crush it as often as it came up; but that was not the half of it: Mildred Latham was homeless, and friendless as we know. After what she had done for so many others, was it not Christianlike to think of her?...

And now he had another thought. Yes, back in the *Rosebud Country* it would be possible for two people to be happy; people who had no other hope, no other ambition, but to follow the pursuit of happiness and labor....

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As it became clearer, he realized that he had never cared for conventionality. That other experience had thrust it upon him, and when he showed his dislike for it, he had been tortured. It would be different—now. Mildred Latham would not care for any thing but himself, and that which would make him happy.... And he, his experience had been too real and too bitter, not to appreciate what kindness, sincerity, and courage in one's convictions, means in future happiness.

The train stood in the station now, and all the other passengers had left the cars. He came out of his reverie with a start; and, hastily collecting his luggage, he rushed forth, and caught a car that took him within a block of his office. He deposited his grips in a cafe he knew, and, a few minutes later, he stood in the doorway.

It was late in the afternoon, and nearly everyone in the building had left for home; but she was there. Curiously, he had felt that she would be there. With the amount of business he had seen she had created, he was certain that he would find her, and he did.

She sat at the desk, as she had the afternoon he had returned from the hospital. She was working away, and he saw her before she noticed him. When she did, she gave a start, opened her mouth, and then, as if she thought of something, closed it slowly, fumbled her pen, but said nothing.

He paused briefly and observed her, and as he did so, took note of the fact that she had lowered her head. And he knew. It was in shame. Strangely now, since she knew that he was aware of at least a part of the past, she could not endure to have him look at her. But, in these moments, Sidney Wyeth was not observing her in scorn, as her colored cheeks gave evidence.

Mildred sat still and waited. She expected to be scorned; she had come to a place in life, where she expected anything. He might rebuke her, and she would say nothing; but intuitively, she had never felt *he* would rebuke her. As she sat with drooped head, he saw one tear drop unchecked upon her lap. No others followed; but he knew the time had come to go to this girl. She had endured a hard lot. Not one person in a thousand, would have gone through what she had, but human endurance, wrestling with all life's vicissitudes, has a limit. How much it cost, that one tear, he could not fully estimate; but, if he knew life, if some one didn't come to Mildred Latham's rescue soon, she might become anything. Not far from where she sat, a thousand or more women were burning their souls in hell. And all those women were there—not by preference; but because they were simply human beings and weak.

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He approached, and a moment later stood near her, while her finger toyed with the pen. She had, as he noticed now, grown stouter since he knew her in Cincinnati. Her hair covered her head, and was beautiful to his eyes, while her skin appeared somewhat darker. He paused as one at a loss how to begin, because he had so much he then wished to say. Presently he found his voice, and his excitement was controlled as he spoke her name:

"Mildred," said he. She heard him, but did not reply. So he repeated: "Mildred, I've come back." He paused again, and the room was silent. She did not answer him, and he did not expect her to. Presently he said it over again. "Yes, I've come back.... I was away. I was off in one of the parishes, one of the most remote, for, when I left, I wanted to be away, away from everybody.... But it happened out there, that I met a man, Mildred. I met a man ... and he told me a story, a long story.... What he told me, concerned something—something I will not tell, and somebody I will not mention, but what he told me, cleared the horizon.... And that's why I came back. On the way I faltered, I weakened for a time. I thought once of not stopping. I started to go on and on and on, maybe never stop. But when I thought again, and again, and kept on thinking, I couldn't. I couldn't, because, well, after all, I wanted to stop.

"So I stopped, Mildred, and then, I came here. Here—and to you.... I have come back, Mildred, and to you. Are you glad I've come back, Mildred?" He paused and listened, though he did not expect her to answer.

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She remained as she was, and silent.

"On the way back, I thought of you, of nothing else, no one else but you. My thoughts went back to our acquaintance in Cincinnati, and the day we danced and I—I—kissed you, Mildred." He paused again, and gazed out over the rows of buildings below. "And then I realized what has been wrong with me ever since, and all my life.... It was because I have been hungry. I have been starving to death these many years for love, Mildred, love and understanding.... I am still hungry, and thirsty; but at last a hope has come to me. A hope that it will not long continue as it has these many years. But withal, I have thought of something else too. And that is, I want to go home. I want to go home to stay. I don't like it here; I don't like it anywhere, but in the *Rosebud Country*."

"The *Rosebud Country*?" she echoed, sitting erect and turning slightly.

"Yes, Mildred, The *Rosebud Country*." He paused again, and the ticking of his watch was quite audible to both. "Yes," he said presently, and after a time, in which he seemed to be engaged in deep thought, he resumed, "and I was going to say that I have decided to go back." He moved and stood beside her. The sinking sun now played a last evening ray across her face, and in turning from it, she happened to look up and into his face. He saw her now as he had never seen her before. Something she saw caused her to catch her breath and venture another look. His eyes appeared to see something far away, and she continued to stare at him.

"Yes, Mildred," he started again, and now his voice became low and strange. She understood, and knew that he was living in the past, oblivious to her presence. She listened with a strange rapture. "I've decided to go back to that land beyond the Big Muddy. Back to that little reservation, the name of which I love. But Mildred, it depends." He halted and looked down into her face. Their eyes met now, and both seemed hypnotized for they continued to stare at each other, becoming more enraptured. "It depends," said he, very slowly, "*upon you*." She looked away, but he reached and caught her hand. He backed up until he reached the desk, upon which

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he seated himself. He looked at her now pleadingly. She gave one glance, and caught the same look she had seen but once before, more than a year before, and before he knew. He pulled her gently from the chair, and placed her beside him on the desk.

"It depends *upon you* Mildred!" And still she said nothing.

"Out there, Mildred, I longed for you. Yes, it was you, you! These many years I waited for you. At last I have found you. Oh, I have found you, the *one Woman*. And now," he said this in a strong voice, "I'm through. I'm through, and ready to go back, if you will go with me. Do you hear? I mean, that I love you Mildred. Love you with all the passion of a hungry heart." He paused again.

"And you have had a hard time, little girl, oh you've had a hard time. I *know*. But it's all over now, dear. Yes, it's all over now. There is no society that we are under obligation to; there are no pretentious persons to make us false to our convictions; there is nothing but impulse to direct us."

"Oh, Sidney," he heard her say with a slight tremble. His arm stole about her waist, and she did not remove it. She looked up into his eyes and saw him with trust. "And you'll go?" he said and waited.

"Do you mean it Sidney? Oh, Sidney, *do you mean it?*" Her voice now was low, strained, strangely wistful, and then, as if suddenly remembering something she had apparently forgotten, her eyes took on an expression of mute appeal, like that of a hunted animal. Her form became tense, while a spasm of agony contracted her features as she moaned:

"*No, No, No I can not. Oh, I will not!*" And before he could quite understand her sudden rebellion, she rushed from the room and into the hall, and soon her rapid footsteps died away in the distance.

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He stood as she had left him, not comprehending that she had gone. "Am I awake?" he whispered dreamily putting his hands together, and gazing at them stupidly, as if to assure himself they were his own, "She has gone? Gone, gone! Mildred—but—why?" He felt sadly weak, for the strain was beginning to tell upon him.

In a half stupor, he finally found a seat in the office chair, and mechanically let his gaze wander out over the city. After a time, it rested upon a street that led down to the wide thoroughfare. His eye soon caught sight of a figure hurrying along the walk. He leaned forward and observed it carefully, and when it reached another street, he made out that it was Mildred. He watched her as she crossed quickly to the center where a car was moving, and boarded it. In a moment it had disappeared down the street.

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CHAPTER TWELVE

The Slave Market

Days passed and still he waited, still he watched, and still he listened, but in vain. And always he moved about distractedly. He had no plans, he had no hopes now, but was simply moving in a circle. At times he would utter stupidly, "Where is she? Where is Mildred?" And after that he would become silent; he would be thinking—yes, always thinking.

He ransacked the office; he made inquiries to ascertain where she stayed—but in vain. He knew not how to look for her; he knew not where to begin. But the work in the office—the result of her ability—continued to increase. Mail was brought four times a day, and in each, letters from far and near would contain money orders, express checks, cheerful letters, and still orders for more books. But they gave him no cheer, notwithstanding he mechanically went about the work, with the system he saw she had created.

And as the days went by, he grew more anxious, more worried in regard to her fate, and he grew determined to find her, if he could.

"Poor little girl. Poor little Mildred. Why has she done all this? And she is alone somewhere—always alone—and I know not where."

There came a day when he felt he could stand it no longer.

He took a walk; he knew not where it led to. Possibly it led nowhere. Yet he felt he must walk, not in the direction he was accustomed to go (to the river, where he had wandered many a night, and observed the mighty ocean liners, receiving and discharging their cargoes; or where, on the deck of packets, he listened to steam calliopes), but in a direction he had never gone before.

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It was in one of the creole city's narrow ways, where he presently found himself. Sidney strolled along, oblivious to all whereabouts, and found that this part of the

city was much unlike any part he had known.

He felt as one in a strange land, to be sure. On all sides he was greeted by little low houses, opening into the narrow streets. Peculiar people moved about and spoke in a tongue he could not understand, but he knew it was creole. They were quieter than those in the neighborhood he lived, and he understood. They were all Catholics, he had been told, and "obeyed" the priest. He was glad of it. He wished all his race would obey something other than their animal instincts.

He paused at last before a statue in a small square. Four rows of buildings faced it on that many sides. Only one side confronted him, however, and to this he finally went. He stopped before a large church, a cathedral, and read that it had been built almost two hundred years before. Next to the church, was the museum. Curious, and for a time forgetting his troubles, he wandered in. He went up a winding stairway to the second floor. As he passed upward, great oil paintings greeted him. All old, this he saw; for, under many were inscriptions, showing that many had been painted more than a hundred years ago. While he had never studied this art, he readily appreciated that many were wonderful. Elegant ladies gazed at him from the frames, their eyes following him strangely out of sight; for, no matter where he stood, whether in front or from either side, they seemed to scrutinize him.

He passed into the museum and began to examine, through the glass cases, relics of another day. That the city was old was shown by the age of papers and documents of numerous mention. Pictures of fond old mammies, gray and white-haired old uncles, grand dames (such as Dixie had seen), caught his attention everywhere.

An old, old man, scion of a decayed aristocracy, sat in a chair within this art room, and Sidney approached him. "Have you," said he, "any record of the sale of slaves, in this museum?" The other pointed to a room Wyeth had not observed, but spoke no word.

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Wyeth wandered into it, and his gaze immediately encountered what he was curious to see.

"Know all men by these presents:

"Being the last will and testament of Joan Becuare.

"To my wife and life companion, I do bequeath to thee, all I have after death. To-wit:

"One thousand acres of land in Caddo Parish, unencumbered.

"One hundred niggers, of various ages and the following description:

"One mammy, age eighty. A better wench never lived. Name: Diana.

"One 'uncle', eighty-seven, beloved servant of his master, and faithful ever. Name: Joe.

"One wench, twenty-two, robust, healthy, a good servant of the house. Name: Martha."

And so on the description ran, which seemed strange and unnecessary in a will; then he recalled the sentiment of the southerner.

In still another case, he read a sale bill, written in long hand with an artistic flourish:

"Having sold my plantation, I will hereby sell to the highest bidder, at public auction, the following named property, to-wit:

"One nigger wench, sixteen years, hail and hearty, promises to be a good breeder, and is now with child by Ditto, a young nigger, strong as a lion, healthy and a good worker. Not 'sassy'.

"One nigger wench, twenty-three, name, Mandy. This is the most attractive wench in Gretna Parish. She is expecting a third child soon."

Wyeth wondered why the father was not mentioned. And then he thought of something, and knew.... His own father was the son of a master.

He read other such documents, and then observed that almost all sales were recorded to be held at the "slave" market. After an hour or more, he passed out.

He went up a street, which was narrow—like all those in the old section of the city, and walked on, whither he had no idea. Not far away, he could see the river and many great vessels moving up and down. Just ahead of him, appeared an odd, long, two-story building. The first glance revealed that, once upon a time, it had been a grand affair. "Wonder what it was?" he muttered idly.

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And now he came up to it, and paused near one end. He viewed it many minutes curiously from across the street, but he could not make out what it had been. As he saw it now, it was evident that it had been empty for many, many years.

Presently, he crossed to where a door greeted him, only to find, when he had come to it, that it was bolted from the inside, while the heavy iron knob was rusted until it was hardly recognizable. He glanced up, and, straining his eyes, he read an inscription over the door:

ST. LOUIS—ROYAL HOTEL

SLAVE MARKET

"So this is the place," he whispered, observing everything before him now with a new interest. "Herein were sold, in the days of old, hundreds—aye, thousands of *my* people." He passed to the street upon which the hotel faced for a block, and walked down this, observing the decaying structure with greater curiosity. The entire building was, apparently, empty. A porch, supported by massive iron pillars, reached over the walk, the entire length of the building. The large windows of the second story were without glass, and gaped darkly, seeming to tell a story which he would like to have known. The lower floor had evidently been given over to business purposes, judging from the wide windows that now were boarded over with two-inch planks. All this was decorated with stage announcements.

When he reached the other end, there was an opening; the door was to one side, and, more curious now than ever, he paused, and gazed into the dark interior. Soon he passed within. The place seemed almost as dark as a dungeon at first, and he stood for a minute, until he had become accustomed to it. He passed into the interior, and finally came into a room that was perfectly round. "An arch chamber, or what?" he conjectured. Out of the gloom a block arose. Something about it attracted him, and he crossed to where it was fitted into the wall. At one side he now read, "Sheriff's desk." On the other side he read, "Clerk." And now he looked at the block, and knew that it was on this *his* people had been sold—at auction. He closed his eyes for a time, and allowed his thoughts—his imagination—to go back into the past, when rich planters, grand ladies, and harsh overseers once held sway. And before him rose a picture.

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"Hear me," the auctioneer, "I now offer the best nigger that ever held a plow. A good, strong rascal, that is worth:—How much am I offered to start him? How much am I offered to start him? Five hundred! Who is insane, or jokes? Five hundred for a nigger like this? Nonsense! Now, here, come forward, and feel this nigger's muscles, examine his teeth, strike his breast." And, to emphasize his good, robust property, he struck the slave a resounding lick across the breast, that would have knocked over half the people before him. Wyeth could seem to see the man, the black man, merely smile at all the faces about him.

"And now I am going to offer you something that will arouse you. Bring forward the wench, the pretty young wench."

A young mulatto Negress now stood before the crowd. A stirring, a collecting near the front, a crowding about the block; some almost getting upon it, in their excitement. A murmur went the rounds, and words could be heard. "I'd like to own her!" There was a consulting of bank books, a figuring of credit, and then the auctioneer's voice was heard again.

"Look at 'er, look at 'er! Ha! A fine one, eh? Yes, a fine one.... Look at her form.... Look at her face! Here, bright eyes, hold up, hold up, and let the boys see what I have got.... What am I bid?"

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"\$1000."

"Say! The man that made that bid ought to be hung! A thousand dollars for a wench like this? Why, by all the pious gods, she is worth that for a year...."

"\$1500."

"\$2000."

"\$2500."

"\$3000."

"Ah, sir," said someone, and Wyeth came back to the present, to look down upon and old, white-haired woman, who was standing, observing him from the doorway. He bowed apologetically, got down, and went toward her.

"I have charge of the building," said she, speaking in a little strained voice. "Would you not like to view the interior?"

"I should like to, I am sure," he replied.

He followed her back to the door through which he had entered, and up a flight of winding, iron stairs to the next floor. Even these, he saw, had once been most magnificent. His guide offered no comment, but caught her breath in gasps as she ascended. When the landing had been reached, both paused for breath, while

Wyeth's attention was immediately caught by the decaying grandeur, that was evident all about him. "Wonderful," he said at last, in a low, respectful voice, and as though he feared to disturb some of those grand persons that once had frequented it.

"Wonderful, you say?" echoed the woman, and regarded him out of small, sharp eyes.

"Magnificent."

"And, be you a stranger in the city?" she now asked.

"Yes."

"And from where do you come?"

"The great northwest. Dakota."

"Ah, Dakota—m-m. That is far, far away?"

"Yes; far, far away."

"I have never been there. I have never been anywhere, but have always lived here in Bienville Parish. I was born here, a creole."

They now walked down the wide hall, and where he gazed into the deserted rooms on either side, all of which revealed a once great splendor.

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"Here," she said, "is a room that once played a conspicuous part in the old south." She led him then into a large room, much larger than any other in the building. It was a round room, and he could see that it had been made to be used for convention purposes. She was explaining.

"It was once used as a temporary capitol, and later as a rendezvous for secessionists. And still later, after the war, Sheridan made a raid, and arrested many conspirators."

"I suppose," said Sidney, "that this place has seen many grand occasions?"

"Ah, indeed it has. All the aristocrats of the southland always stopped here, as well as counts and dukes and lords and great ladies, and still from South America and Mexico the best people stopped here."

They passed out of the room, across the hallway, and entered another room that was furnished. "I live here," said the woman, to his surprise.

"Here—alone?"

She nodded. "Yes, alone for many years."

He understood now, and, running his hands into his pockets, he pulled forth a half dollar, and handed it to her. She accepted it with many thanks, and gave him then, some pictures and relics.

"I suppose you have many visitors—tourists?" he inquired, starting toward the door.

"Well, no, I do not," she said, somewhat regretfully. "The people do not seem to wander down into this section. They do not appear curious for relics, as they used to be."

"That's too bad—for you," he said kindly.

"It is, since I am old, and have no other way of getting my living," and she sighed.

"How old are you?"

"Eighty-nine."

"And you have no—no children?" he asked now, with curious interest.

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"None. And that—and that, perhaps, is why I'm like I am today...."

Wyeth listened kindly, patiently. The other appeared sad and reminiscent.

"No, I shall never seem to get over it, either. I am the last of a family that came here from France, many, many years ago—two hundred, to be exact. For many years, we were the richest family in Bienville Parish, and perhaps almost as rich as any other in the state. We owned land, and slaves, until we could hardly count them. Of course, the war meant—you can understand what we lost with the freedom of the blacks. But after that, we were still immensely rich. But, somehow, a curse seemed to come over the family. No boy babies were born to any. The girls became subject to consumption, until all had died but myself. Then I married. My husband was Spanish and French, very affectionate, and was good to me, and we were hopeful and happy—until I bore him no offspring. He grew crabbed, nervous and impatient.

"Before long, I came to see that he was intimate elsewhere. He began to drink, to gamble, and to carouse. He stayed out until all hours of the night, and then he got so he would not come home at all. For days I would not see him, and then for weeks."

She paused long enough now to wipe a tear. "I began to fear for him, for, I recalled that his ancestors had come to abrupt ends, and I worried. Because I could bear him no children, I gave him freely of the fortune that was left to me. He ran through with his, and then with mine." She was weeping quietly now, and he felt inclined to comfort her, but did not know how.

After a time she was calm again. She took a seat by the window, and gazed with a tired expression out into the street, while he waited. "Well," she resumed, "they brought him home one day, dead, and I have been alone since."

"Too bad," said Wyeth, and shifted about, listening for more, for, carefully observant, he saw that she was not through.

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"One day, there came a woman, an attractive colored woman, with large eyes and the most beautiful hair and skin and form I had ever, I think, seen. She led a little boy by the hand, and when he looked up at me, I screamed. I knew then, and didn't have to be told, that he was my husband's son.

"Strangely, I was happy. To know that my good husband—for he had been good in the beginning—had left his name, somewhat cheered me, and we agreed to educate and give him a chance.

"We placed him later, at my expense, in a good school, and he grew to be a handsome, bright-eyed young man. I watched him, however, with a slight fear—for I remembered. But he made a man of himself, a successful man, and with the last few thousands I could gather, I helped to start him in business, and in due time he had made a name that was an envy. He became the owner of much of the best property in the city, land in the northern part of the state, and, in the end, married one of the wealthiest and most attractive girls in the town." She paused again, and Wyeth listened without a word. Something remained yet to be told....

The woman was speaking again.

"Yes, he grew to success and happiness—and then, well, something happened."

"Something happened?" Wyeth echoed.

"Yes. Something happened." She was silent now, and gazed again out of the window.

"Heredity."

"Heredity?" And still he did not understand. He could not be patient longer. "Who was this man—that is, ah—what was his name. I don't think I ever heard of him—a colored man?"

She looked straight at him now, without a change of expression, and answered: "He was not colored!"

"Not colored?"

"I should have said," she corrected, "that he didn't go as colored.... He *passed* for white."

"Oh...."

"But that was not it—heredity."

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Wyeth said nothing.

"He ran around. He took up drink—and then he wanted—colored women."

After this, both were silent for a long time; but Wyeth was thinking. He was hearing over again what he had heard before—many times. "*Colored women!*" In Dixie, he felt that if he could keep his ears deaf to hearing of white men—and those who "passed" for white—wanting—and having—colored women, he could, he possibly might like the country; but everywhere he had heard this. The woman broke the silence.

"This city is possessed with that desire. Have you observed it—everywhere you might chance to look, you will see it?"

He sighed. She looked at him again, and then became silent.

Across the way, a large, municipal building rose far above St. Louis—Royal Hotel—Slave Market. Through the window from where they sat, busy clerks worked away over books. When their eyes glanced to the street, it was broken with automobiles, and busy people hurrying to and fro.

"I have a visitor," he heard the woman say. "She is a sweet, kind, but sad sort of girl. She has been to see me several times of late, and I have been talking religion with her. In all my days, no human being has interested me as she has. I love her. And while I can't object, I regret to feel in some way that she is going to enter the convent, and become a sister."

"Are you a Catholic?"

"All French are Catholic," she answered.

"Then you perforce sanction this intention of your girl friend?"

"Yes, I do; but, oh, how much I shall miss her!"

"Will she enter soon?"

"Very soon!"

"Have you known her long?"

"A few months; but it seems I have known her all my life."

"Is she—what is she, colored or white?" he asked.

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"Colored."

"Indeed. Her name?"

"I have it; but I forget. I call her always Little Sister. I have her picture and will let you see it. She had it taken a few days ago, out there on that grass plot," and she pointed to the yard of the municipal building. She was a few minutes finding the picture, and then Wyeth was overcome by a strange feeling, with regard to what he had heard. A girl ... sad ... going to enter a convent.... Who was this girl? Who, who, who?

"Here is her picture," said the woman.

He took it, and saw Mildred smiling up at him.

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

"Restitution"

"I had to," cried Mildred bewilderingly, as she hurried, hatless, breathless, along the walk, when she left her lover so abruptly. She was distracted; she was not fully aware of what she said. All she knew was, that at the most supreme moment of her existence, she had broken away from the one she loved, and for whom she would have been willing to die; but to marry him at last, she felt she could not conscientiously do. "Oh, but it was manly, kindly—sublime, his offer, and how I love him for it!" she whispered. "I know he will forgive me; he will remember me kindly; he will never forget me, and my love for him—but to go to him and make him suffer with the thought of the past—never!"

She slowed down, as she neared the wide street, that crossed just ahead of her. She crossed the walk to the center of the street, where a car was coming, and caught it. Once inside and seated, she lay back, and became, for a time, dully listless. Presently, she saw the river just ahead, and when the car slowed down, she left it, crossed to the ferry, and went aboard. A half hour later, she was in her room.

Her sister greeted her pleasantly from the garden, which aroused her emotion to such a degree, that she choked slightly, in order to hold back words she had long wished to say.

When alone at last in her room, she lay across the bed, and gave up to the feeling of inertia, that had taken possession of her.

All that day she remained so. She could scarcely collect her wits. Again and again, the events connected with his return, flew through her dull, sluggish mind, and, at last, to relieve it, she dressed in a cool, thin dress, and went for a walk down by the river front.

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She passed many docks, where not so many steamers lay at anchor as she had once noticed. She wondered why, since she had observed the falling off of traffic. Then she thought about the bloodshed that was going on each day across the water. She soon came abreast of a wharf where more than a score of great ocean goers were anchored. No smoke came from their funnels; no men worked away on their decks; in fact, they were as silent as the grave, their dark hulls casting a dull shadow above the water. She wandered down the board platform, and studied them idly. Then she read, painted on their sterns, names with Bremen and Hamburg as their port.... Her thoughts again reverted to the carnage across the waters.

She found the street again, and wandered aimlessly along the sidewalk. Suddenly she halted and strained her ears, as a sound came to her from some distance. She listened, and then looked up and across the river, where the creole city stretched, apparently endless, before her. She observed in doing so, for the first time, that the

river curved in such a manner as to form a perfect crescent at this point, and, although her thoughts were confused, she did not fail to appreciate the beauty of it.

Her gaze had found the place from whence came the sound that had halted her. It was the bell of a church vibrating through the still evening air. The steeple in which it was mounted, raised far into the air above the buildings about it, and she watched it with growing reverence. As she continued to stare at it, it seemed to outline a mighty sepulchre, and she fell to speculating about it. She was familiar with it, in a measure, and recalled, as she found herself wandering vaguely along a few moments later, that she used to pass it each day. It was when *he* lay ill at the hospital, that it was near. It was called St. Catherine. She had happily observed that many little colored children went to it each day, and Sunday. Their training, she had observed, was very different from the denominations with which she was acquainted. She had stopped before its steeple the first time, one day toward the close of Sidney's recovery. The next day she had entered it, and wandered down its carpeted aisles. She had gone up to the front, before she realized that any one was in the church. And then a sister came from an alcove, or from some place, but she could not imagine where.

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She had halted embarrassed, but the other smiled upon her so pleasantly, that her confidence was won in a moment.

Mildred recalled it—the meeting—strangely today. She wondered what the life of a sister was like. She had guessed what it meant.... She had almost forgotten the sister, until she went her way this day, when the lot of those patient souls came to her mind again.

She reached a street presently, where two wide walkways intersected, and when she reached the center of the intersection, something gripped her and she stopped quickly, catching her breath. She continued to stand thus, but with eyes widening, nerves tense, and then she uttered beneath her breath: "Why not? Yes, why not? Why, why, why?" Then, completely absorbed in the idea, which had suddenly come to her, offering, as she felt it now, a solution of her life, she turned on her heel, and retraced her steps homeward.

And all the way she kept saying to herself: "Why not, why, why?"

She hesitated at the gate, and again there came to her ears from across the river the chime of the bell on St. Catherine. It echoed softly, and vibrating, it touched her soul to its depths. She stood at last transformed. As it continued to float across to her, she seemed to translate: "Come unto me, all ye that are heavy laden, and I will give thee rest."

When she entered the house, her head hung, with eyes cast down. She had decided to become a sister.

There came a day, bright, clear, and slightly breezy; but withal, invigorating, and she went to visit the old woman who lived alone in the deserted St. Louis—Royal Hotel. She had no tremors, because it had been the place where once her people were sold by thousands. She had met the old woman on one of her frequent pilgrimages alone in the creole city, and had become strangely fond of her. Mildred had, on more than one occasion, felt constrained to tell her the story.... So today, she came quietly upon the old soul sitting by the window, with the light streaming in upon her faded hair and features.

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"You come today, Little Sister. I am always so glad to see you."

Mildred returned the greeting kindly and pleasantly, and sank into the proffered chair. She had told the other of her intentions, but offered no reason for her decision. She asked today that the other bless her, which was done. They sat afterward in mutual silence. Presently, however, the other broke it.

"A young man was here yesterday, a strange, kind, forgiving sort of fellow. He aroused me in a way; he brought back, by his presence, memories, and I don't know why; but I told him my story.... He listened so patiently, so kindly, and with such sympathy, I do declare, that I wept."

"A young man? A—"

"A young colored man from away off in the great northwest."

"Sidney, oh, Sidney," Mildred breathed, unheard.

"And do you know, dear Little Sister, I thought of you almost all the time he listened, and was near me.... I don't know why. I cannot imagine predestination in a large sense; but in some way I felt he suffered." She paused, and Mildred swallowed. After a time she said, in a small voice:

"I guess I'll go now."

The other did not detain her, though she wished she would never leave, but followed her out of the silent old place down to the street, and watched her out of sight.

She passed through one of the narrow streets to the banking section of the city, entered the one where Sidney's money was deposited, which he had given back to her, and she had it made into a draft. This was mailed forthwith to him. Then she recrossed the river, and when in her room, packed all her belongings securely, and then wrote a long letter to her sister. In this, she told of her life from the day she had left home on the mission ... omitting why she had done this ... up to the day. She wrote that she loved a young man, loved him, so that she could not bear to become his, and feel that she was guilty—unworthy. She closed it, asking her sister to accept all she left—which was everything, but what she wore.

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She retired, for night had come, and slept so peacefully the night through, that she was surprised. She dressed before the others arose, and slipped into the street.

In due time, she stood at the gates of St. Catherine. It was still early, and the people were not much astir, when again the chimes came to her ears, a hundred and more feet above her. She listened, and as they continued to ring, she gradually became transformed. No one came, so she entered the gate, went around to the side, and took a seat.

Her mind became reflective and reverted to the past, and she found herself living it over, again and again. But, as she reviewed it, she seemed to have no regrets; she did not foster the kind of hopes she once had, and then she arose and found her way again to the front. She approached the door, and when she tried the knob, found that it was open. The priest was just leaving through a side door as she entered, and did not hear her footfall, as she passed lightly down the carpeted aisle.

She stood before the altar, when she had come to the other end, and getting down upon her knees, offered a silent little prayer. She remained there until the flood of emotion—for she found herself peculiarly emotional today—had passed, and then arose. She gazed at the emblem of the Christ before her for a moment, and then, turning, she walked into Sidney Wyeth, who had come upon her, and was waiting while she was in prayer.

"Mildred," he said, and his voice came low, even, and respectful. "I know...." This was all he said; but the hungry look in his eyes told all else....

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She halted before him without any undue excitement in her manner, but her eyes were downcast. She recalled even now, that she had never been able to return his piercing gaze. She kept her head bent, with her small hands folded before her, but listened with something akin to a heavenly rapture. He was speaking again.

"I am not going to infringe upon your liberty by asking you to give up what is your intention. I've come, Mildred, just to see—to look into your eyes once more, before you go your way.... That is all I ask. You will grant me that, won't you, Mildred?" They stood facing each other, only a few feet apart. He held his hat crushed in his hand, while she did not release her grip on the cross she held. He watched her, as she slowly raised her head, as her eyebrows came slowly into view, and then at last her eyes.... They looked into his now. His looked into hers. Slowly, they spoke—both pairs of eyes. No words passed their lips, but each could seem to hear a soul within crying: "*Restitution! Restitution!*"

How long they stood thus, they did not know. But, after a time, something seemed to break the spell. Perhaps it was the departed souls. They knew not, were not even aware of what was passing. Still, the eyes of each, hypnotic, struggling with the fire of incarnation, slowly drew them nearer. They were at last near each other. Their breaths came in strange, tender gasps. Their eyes continued to see and regard each other in that heavenly rapture. And still no word was spoken.

His hands seemed to find hers and the cross. They gathered them and held them fast, while out of her ethereal eyes he saw a divine glory never to be forgotten. Then his left arm rose. It slowly encircled her form. They heard now, each others heart. And then something else seemed to guide him. His head went down, while his eyes still looked into Mildred's with that peculiar enchantment. He placed his cheek against hers, with gentleness and reverence.

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When the good father came again into the church, he paused as he watched a couple pass slowly down the aisle. They were a man and a woman. His arm rested about the slender shoulders of his companion, with great tenderness.

So together, they went to that land in the west.

THE END

FOOTNOTES:

[A] Author's Note: The usual term applied to juries is, "Twelve good men and true."

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE:

On page 259 of this original, 1915 publication of *The Forged Note*, there is a line of missing text, which appears as a blank line on the page. In the 1916 reprint (which is available for viewing online at hathitrust.org) this missing line reads: "... [the subject, and which would serve to substantiate her](#)...." For the convenience of the reader, the missing line, as printed in the 1916 edition, has been inserted into this text.

Obvious typos and printer errors have been corrected without comment.

In addition to obvious errors, the following changes were made:

1. Page 165: "wan" was changed to "wane" in the phrase: "...he felt the interest wane...."
2. Page 255: "here" was changed to "hear" in the phrase "...and go, dy'e hear...."

With the above exceptions, inconsistencies in the author's spelling, punctuation, and use of hyphens are retained as in the original publication.

Unconventional spelling has been retained in words such as (but not limited to) the following:

- Page 243: bisquits
- Page 344: surpressed
- Page 362: philanthrophist
- Page 389: wrapped (instead of rapped)
- Page 395: preceeded

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE FORGED NOTE: A ROMANCE OF THE DARKER RACES ***

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