

THE CASE OF MARY ELLEN

tion to come, and once again because you're glad. You used to fight so shy of me when you lived among us that I was afraid I wouldn't get on wi' you; but I'm sorter offish myself."

"Colonel," said I, "did you ever know Mary Ellen Tatum?"

He rubbed his face and forehead with his hand, and regarded me with a slight frown, and a smile that seemed to mean anything except pleasure.

"Will you allow me to ask you why you put such a question to me?"

"Why, certainly, Colonel; read that." I placed the clipping from the *Transcript* in his hand. He held it off at arm's length and tried to decipher it, but the print was too fine. Placing it on his knee, he searched in his pockets until he found his spectacles, and then he read the article through carefully—not once, but twice.

Then smoothing the clipping out on his knee, he looked at me inquiringly.

"Do you know Mary Ellen?" he asked. I did not, and said so. "Did you ever hear of her before?"

"Why, yes," I replied. "Aunt Minervy Ann told me some very interesting things about her, and I wanted to ask you if they were true."