

Again, during the arduous hours of her twice-weekly washing seances she invariably slipped the ring from her finger and placed it in the top drawer of her bureau: a drawer the lock of which had long ceased to be of any save ornamental value. Her husband had scolded her about it — chided her so frequently and earnestly that his criticism had degenerated into mere nagging. According to his views the treasure should, on wash days, be carefully locked in her trunk: a trunk being to the negro what a steel deposit vault is to his more Caucasian brother.

And Elzevir meant to do it. She always meant to do the right thing. But the bureau drawer was handy and she was regularly a half-hour late in starting . . . and the ring was inevitably dropped carelessly into the bureau drawer.

Urias's fears for its safety were well grounded. The ring was famed in coloured social circles and he realized that the neighbours must know that when washing for the white folks, Elzevir was without it. He knew, too, that while she was washing clothes in the back yard any larcenous individual could enter the front door, conduct a thorough search, find the ring and extract it from its hiding place and vamoose undetected.

"Jes' like'n to a woman," he soliloquized bitterly. "She ain't never gwine re'lize what that ring is ontill it's stold fmm her."

He left the house in high dudgeon and traced his steps downtown. Near the L. & N. crossing which divides the north and south sides of the city he almost collided with a young overalled negro who pulled up short, grinned with delight and clutched