

CHAPTER XX

Matilda had knocked at Enoch's door this crisp September morning and, getting no response, felt for his key under the mat, found it, and entered. To her surprise, not a chair or a book in the sitting-room was out of place. The fire she had built the day before was precisely as her black hands had left it.

"Fo' God!" she exclaimed, as she entered the small bedroom and saw the untouched counterpane and pillow. "He ain't been to bed."

Never had Enoch, upon the rare occasions when some public dinner had called him out of town for the night, gone without letting either she or Moses know. Indeed, he was most punctilious about this—invariably leaving with them his telegraphic address. For a brief instant, Matilda stood by the bed—her bosom heaving. Then she turned anxiously to the closet where he kept his clothes, got down on her knees, groped in its depths, and, seizing a valise which he always took with him, drew it out with a trembling hand.

"Ain't done—even took—his gripsack!" she faltered, her anxiety growing as she noted its emptiness.

Her fear told in her voice now as she summoned