

"O de good Lor'!" cried Aunt Sheba, springing to her feet. Then with a swiftness in which there was no sign of age, she went to the landing and called, "Mas'r Graham."

Grace was in the room before him. "What is it?" she asked breathlessly.

"Well, Missy Grace, don't be 'larmed, but I thinks Mas'r Graham 'ud better sen' for de doctor, jes' for caution like."

Again came the peculiar cough, terror-inspiring to all mothers.

"Alford, Alford, lose not a moment!" she cried. "It's the croup."

The soldier acted as if his camp were attacked at midnight. There were swift feet, the trampling of a horse; and soon the skill of science, the experience of age, and motherly tenderness confronted the black shadows, but they remained immovable.

The child gasped and struggled for life. Grace, half frantic, followed the doctor's directions with trembling hands, seeking to do everything for her idol herself as far as possible. Mrs. Mayburn, gray, grim, with face of ashen hue, hovered near and assisted. Aunt Sheba, praying often audibly, proved by her deft hands that the experience of her long-past motherhood was of service now. The servants gathered at the door, eager and impatient to do something for "de bressed chile." The poor old major thumped restlessly back and forth on his crutches in the hall below, half swearing, half praying. Dr. Markham, pale with anxiety, but cool and collected as a veteran general in battle, put forth his whole skill to baffle the destroyer. Graham, standing in the background with clenched hands, more excited, more desperate than he had ever been when sitting on his horse waiting for the bugle to sound the charge, watched his wife and child with eyes that burned in the intensity of his feeling.