

Supper finished, talk began. "How far from the river are we?"

"Ef you 'll tell 'Rasmus, sah, 'Rasmus 'll tell you! En rights hit oughter be two miles, but I's got er kind ob notion dat de ribber's done crope nigher."

Edward listened to the wind and rain. "What's to hinder it from coming nigher yet?"

"Nothin', sah."

The young man got up, somewhat unsteadily, from the pallet, and with his hand against the wall moved to the door, opened it, and looked out. He shivered, then laughed. "Noah must have seen something like it when he looked out of the Ark!" He closed the door with difficulty.

Behind him, the negro continued to speak. "Leastways, dar's only de Cape Jessamine levee."

"Cape Jessamine?"

"De Gaillard place, sah."

With a stick he drew lines in the ashes. "Bayou heah. Ribber heah. De Cun'l in between — only right now he way from home fightin' de Yankees — he en' Marse Louis. De Gaillard place — Cape Jessamine. Hope dat levee won't break!"

Edward came back to the fire. "Do you belong to the place?"

"No, sah, I'se free. Ol' marster freed me. But I goes dar mos' every day en' takes advice en' draws my rations. No, sah, I don' 'zactly belong, but dey're my white folks. De Gaillards's de finest kind dar is. Dar ain't no finer."

Old man and young man, dark-skinned and light, African and Aryan, the two rested by the fire. The negro sat, half doubled, his hands between his knees, his eyes upon the floor by the door. Now he was silent, now he muttered and murmured. The glare from the pine knots beat upon his grey pate, upon his shirt, open over his chest, and upon his gnarled and knotted hands. Over against him half reclined the other, very torn and muddy, unshaven, gaunt, and hollow-eyed, yet, indescribably, carrying his rags as though they were purple, showing through fatigue, deprivation, and injury something tireless, uninjured, and undeprived. He kept now a somewhat languid silence, idle in the warmth, his thoughts away from the Mississippi and the night of storm. With the first light he would quit the cabin and press on after his company. He thought