

THE WINSTALLS

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A TALE OF LOVE AND MONEY

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CHAPTER XIV.

THE COLORED CHILDREN AT DUKE STREET.

"Now yo see," he said, "dat both David and de bawds rose eahly in de mawnin—very eahly in de mawnin—to praise de Lor. But dere was one mawnin dat David was up befoh de Bawds. He could not lie in bed. And why, brudders and sistahs, couldn't David be in bed? Because dere was glory in his soul. You know he said he would rise at midnight to praise de Lor. No time was too eahly for David to praise de Lor. But dis tuckler mawnin David had to rise eahlier dan usual, dere was so much glory in his soul. And when David opened de window and looked out, de pe z'tree was silent! Ah, brudders and sis ahs, de peezaltree was silent!"

De bawds were all sleepin. They hadn't begun to sing. David was ahead of the peezaltree. But dere was glory in his soul, and he wanted to sing, and he wanted to play de hahp, and he wanted de bawds to sing along wid him; so he called out to the bawds in de pe z'tree, and he called loud, so dat dey might all heah—"Wak up, peezaltree, and hahp; I myself will awake eahly. And all de bawds in de peezaltree waked up at once, and dey all joined in praising de Lor. And de hahp waked up too; for David played on de hahp along wid de bawds; and dar was a glorious praisin of de Lor dat mawnin. It was like de praisin ob de angels. It was like de praisin ob our faders and mudders in glory. It was like de praisin ob our little chilren in glory. Oh, won't we all praise de Lor in glory? We may all shout den—Wake up, peezaltree and hahp. Oh, my friends, de wakin up ob de peezaltree heah will be nuffin, nuffin at all, to de wakin up ob de peezaltree dar. But let us all wake up now. All wake up and sing—

"Jerusalem, my happy home"

The lanky individual was now in a high state of exaltation. His original "expositation" was listened to eagerly. This was one of his profound deliveries. The people were proud of him. Even Miss Pearce and Grace were a little carried away. They were not in a critical mood, and they half believed the exposition to be the true one. It was not, it was at least original, and thus suited their present mood just as well. Certainly Miss Pearce had never heard such an exposition as that in Belfast.

But now the hymn is ended, and lo! who would step unto the platform but Methuselah! Strange to say, our two adventurers had hardly given a thought to Methuselah till this moment. They had come specially to see and hear Methuselah, but the excitement of the meeting had quite banished him from their minds: Yet here he was, ready it would seem to fill their cup of enjoyment to overflowing. So they set themselves intently to observe how their own black prodigy would play his part in this evening's rare entertainment.

Methuselah began by saying in slow, unctuous tones that he was going to speak ab 'ut their mission in Africa. It may be explained here that this church, besides assisting many religious schemes of their own

denomination at home, sustained a missionary of their own, together with three native helpers, in Africa. Of late they had been agitating the sending out of another missionary to open up a new district in that dark continent. The missionary was ready; he was a man of their own choice, and seemed well suited for the work; but the funds needed to send him out were not coming in very fast. It was to forward this movement, and stir up a spirit of greater liberality, that Methuselah now appeared.

The theme was a worthy one, and it suited Methuselah, for he believed in the mission, and contributed to it liberally for his means. From the slow and ponderous way in which he began, our friends began to fear they were going to have no more fun that night. "Just a chunk of black ebony, as papa said," Grace whispered to her friend.

In a short time, however, Methuselah began to speak rather louder; then rather quicker; then his eyes began to roll; then his arms suddenly got loose; then he began to stamp about the platform; the whole man was in motion. He whispered and shouted, and yelled, and thundered; he rolled his white eyes; he pounded the desk; he swung his arms; he clapped his hands; he jumped about the platform; he tore his hair; in fact he did everything that a black orator in a frenzy of enthusiasm could possibly do.

Miss Pearce and Grace were absolutely bewildered. They could scarcely believe their eyes and ears. Was this their own quiet self contained, ponderous Methuselah? Or was it not some other Methuselah into whom their own Methuselah had been transformed? Or had Methuselah another kind of Methuselah inside of him who dominated—eclipsed—annihilated the outside one on certain occasions? This last hypothesis seemed the most probable one; but explain, or try to explain it as they might, our young friends were dumfounded. They certainly had more entertainment than they had anticipated.

As to the matter of Methuselah's oration, the words came so fast that they would have defied the quickest reporter. He spoke of their own privileges at home and contrasted their position with that of the heathen. He drew vivid pictures of the smoke and fire and brimstone into which their own brethren in Africa were dropping every moment. He told his audience just about how many had met that doom since the meeting had begun.

Then he scatched the people at home for their meanness in not bringing in the money to send out the missionary. And he drew a picture of the judgment, and told what would happen to those who hoarded up their money instead of putting it into this glorious cause.

His line of thought was not so original as that of the lanky individual, but it was far richer in newly coined words. His torrent of speech was so fast and furious that he simply had to coin words to meet the emergency. But there was really no emergency. Methuselah could coin words faster than even he could utter them. When Miss Pearce perceived this strange feature of Methuselah's oratory she drew out her note book to re-

cord some of his new words. She was so transfixed, however, by the man's manner that she could not compose hers. If to write, and therefore collected but a few of the gems that were flung out lavishly. She was anxious to bring home some of these for Mr. Winstall's edification.

Methuselah's oration over, a stirring appeal was made for a collection to send out the new missionary, and plates were taken round. Miss Pearce and Grace surreptitiously drew out their purses at the same moment, for each wished to contribute something unknown to the other, neither wishing to expose her own weakness. Miss Pearce's sharp eyes, however, detected Grace's movement.

"Do you intend to give anything?" whispered Miss Pearce. "I have not much," said Grace, "but I will give all I have."

"I intend to do the same," said Miss Pearce.

A moment later she noticed that Grace had taken off her bracelet and was fumbling with it nervously.

"You don't intend to give that, surely?" queried Miss Pearce.

"I think I would like to give it," said Grace, "I have so little money."

"I wouldn't do that," said Miss Pearce.

"They would have to sell it far below its value. It we liked we could hand something to Methuselah privately to-morrow."

This seemed more prudent, and it was so agreed.

When the plate went round it was evident that Methuselah's appeal had not been in vain. They were heaped with all sort of coins, besides bills and envelopes, and slips of paper, and several pieces of jewelry of uncertain value. Our two friends added their contribution. When the plates were returned to the platform the sight of them brought the lanky individual to his feet who warmly thanked the friends for their liberal offering. Methuselah added a few words, but not in his late red-hot style. He had cooled down now into the normal Methuselah of the Winstalls. His words, however, were wise and weighty, and served to clinch the sonorous periods of his late oration. Then a hymn was sung, a brief prayer was offered, and the meeting was dismissed.

In the crush that followed, as the congregation poured into the street, our two adventurers got separated. Peculiar and striking as they had deemed their appearance to be, it afforded but a slight clue to identification in such a motley throng. After a vain attempt on the part of each to find the other, they both gave it up at the same moment, in ending to take the first car home, with the hope of meeting outside the Winstall mansion. It so happened that they took the same car, but the car being crowded, and Miss Pearce being near the front, while Grace was at the rear, they did not see each other. Alighting two blocks from their destination in a quiet street, they started to walk home. Grace at once noticed a lady walking a few yards ahead of her, and thinking she had seen that costume before, called out—

"Is that you Miss Snowball?" Miss Snowball turned round quickly, and replied—"Yes, Miss Sunflower, this is just myself. I hope you are quite well this evening."

Then the two friends burst into a peal of laughter that made the quiet street ring again.

"Oh, but we have had a great time," said Miss Pearce. "It beats everything. I shall remember this night till I die."

"So shall I," said Grace. "But oh, wasn't Methuselah great? I am afraid I cannot