

nirth do you mean?" asked Judy, forgetting the eggs in her surprise.

At the mention of "Marster William," who was looked upon as a great man, but a dead one, the little negroes gathered round, and one of them, our friend Bobaway, said, "Oh, Laddy, I hope 'tis Marster William, for Marster Josh'll be so tickled that he won't keer if we don't do nothin' for a week; and I needn't milk the little red heifer nuther! Oh, good, good!"

"You go along you Bob," said Aunt Judy, seizing a lock of his wool between her thumb and finger, "let me catch you not milkin' the heifer, and I'll crack you."

Again there was the sound of laughter, and this time Judy dropped her dish-cloth, while Katy sprang up saying, "'Tis, I know 'tis, any ways I'll walk round thar as if for a little airin', and I can see for myself."

Accordingly old Katy appeared round the corner of the door or his color. The moment Mr. Stafford's eye rested on his old nurse, he knew her. Twenty years had not changed her as much as it had him. Starting up he exclaimed, "Katy, dear old mammy Katy," while she uttered a wild, exultant cry of joy, and springing forward threw her thin, shrivelled arms round his neck, exclaiming, "My darling boy, my sweet Marster William. I knowed 'twas you. I knowed your voice. You are alive, I've seen you, and now old Katy's ready to die."

White as ashes grew the face of Uncle Joshua. The truth had flashed upon him, and almost rendered him powerless. Pale and motionless he sat, until William freeing himself from Aunt Katy, came forward and said, "Joshua, I am William, your brother; don't you know me?"

Then the floodgates of Uncle Joshua's heart seemed unlocked, and the long, fervent embrace, which followed between the rough old man and his newly found brother, made more than one of the lookers-on turn away his face, lest his companions should detect the moisture in his eyes, which seriously threatened to assume the form of tears.

When the first joy and surprise of the unexpected meeting was over, Mr. Joshua Middleton said, as if apologizing for his emotion, "I'm dumbless afeared, Bill, that I acted mighty baby like, but hang me if I could help it. Such a day as this I never expected to see, and yet I have lain awake o'nights thinkin mebbly you'd come back. But such ideas didn't last long, and I soon gave you up as a goner."

"That jest what I never did," said Aunt Katy, who still stood near.

In the excitement of the moment, she had forgotten that she had long thought of "Marster William" as dead; she continued, "A heap of prars I said for him, and its chiefly owin' to them prars, I reckon, that he's done fished up out o' the sea."

"I've never been in the sea yet, Aunt Katy," said Mr. Middleton, desirous of removing from Aunt Katy's mind the fancy that any special miracle had been wrought in his behalf.

"Whar in fury have you been, and what's the reason you hain't write these dozen years? Come, give us the history of your carrin's on," said Mr. Joshua Middleton.

"Not now," answered his brother. "Let us wait until evening, and then you shall hear my adventures; now let me pay my respects to your wife."

While he was introducing himself to Mrs. Middleton, Katy went back to the kitchen, whither the news had preceded her, causing Bob in his joy to turn several summersets. In the last of these, he was very unfortunate for his heels, in their descent, chanced to hit and overturn a churn full of buttermilk! When Aunt Katy entered, she found Bob bemoaning the back ache, which his mother had unsparingly given him! Aunt Judy herself, having cleared away the buttermilk, by sweeping it out of doors, was waiting eagerly to know, "if Marster William done axed arter her."

"Why, no, Judy," said Katy, somewhat elated because she had been first to recognize and welcome the stranger. "Why, no, I can't say he did, and 'tain't nateral like that he should sot so much store by you as by me. Ain't I got twenty years the start on you, and didn't I nuss him, and arter his mother died, didn't I larn him all his manners?"

Aunt Judy was on the point of crying, when who should come in but "Marster William" himself. "I am told," said he, "that Judy is here, Judy, that I used to play with."

"Lor bless you, Marster William," exclaimed Judy, at the same time covering his hand with tears and kisses, "I's Judy, I is, I know'd you hadn't done forgot me."

"Oh, no, Judy," said he, "I have not forgotten one of you, but I did not know whether you were living or not, so I did not bring you presents, but I'll get you something in a few days. Meantime take this," said he, slipping a silver dollar into the hands of Aunt Katy and Aunt Judy, each of whom showered upon him so many blessings and "thankies" that he was glad to leave the kitchen and return to his companions, who were talking to Uncle Joshua without getting any definite answer.

His brother's sudden return had operated strangely upon him, and for a time he seemed to be in a kind of trance. He would draw his chair up closely to William, and, after gazing intently at him for a time, would pass his large rough hand over his hair, muttering to himself, "Yes it is Bill, and no mistake, but who'd a thought it!"

At last rousing himself, he turned to his other guests, and said, "You mustn't think hard on me, if I ain't as peart and talkin' like for a spell; Bill's comin' home has kinder overset the old man, and I'm thinkin' of the past when we was little boys and lived at home on pap's old plantation afore any of us was dead."

The young gentlemen readily excused the old man's silence, and when the slanting beams of the setting sun betokened the approach of night, they all with the exception of Ashton, began to speak of returning home. Mr. Middleton urged them to stay, saying, "What's the use of goin'?" Nancy's got beds enough, I reckon, and will be right glad of a chance to show her new calico kiverlids, and besides we are goin' to have some briled hen in the morning, so stay."

But as the next day was the Sabbath, the gentlemen declined the invitation, and bidding their host "good-bye," they were soon on their way