

freedom, for nowhere would they do so well as by accepting the offer he made them. All who accepted the offer of a plot of land rent-free must understand that it was granted them upon the condition that they would labour upon the estate for at least three days a week, receiving a rate of pay similar to that earned by other freed negroes. Of course they would be at liberty to work four or five days a week if they chose, but at least they must work three days, and anyone failing to do this would forfeit his plot of land. "Three days' work," he said, "will be sufficient to provide all necessaries for yourselves and families, and the produce of your land you can sell and will so be able to lay by an ample sum to keep yourselves in old age. I have already plotted out the land, and you shall cast lots for choice of the plots. There will be a little delay before all your papers of freedom can be made out, but the arrangement will begin from to-day, and henceforth you will be paid for all labour done on the estate."

Scarcely a word was spoken when Vincent concluded. The news was too surprising to the negroes for them to be able to understand it all at once. Dan and Tony, to whom Vincent had already explained the matter, went among them, and they gradually took in the whole of Vincent's meaning. A few received the news with great joy, but many others were depressed rather than rejoiced at the responsibilities of their new positions. Hitherto they had been clothed and fed, the doctor attended them in sickness, their master would care for them in old age. They had been literally without a care for the morrow, and the thought that in future they would have to think of all these things for themselves almost frightened them. Several of the older men went up to Mrs. Wingfield and positively declined to accept their freedom. They were quite contented and happy, and wanted nothing more. They had worked on the plantation since they had been children, and freedom offered them no temptations whatever.