

Clock-Craft.

Charles Dorian.

SAY, cook, I wish yo' had sumfin' to cure dis heah toofache. A haid wif a bad toof in it an' de doctor allus twelve miles from home, am de mos' abstraculous white man's burden, but when a pore niggah gits it, why—dere's only de cook ebber has any symp'fy."

Bruce, the bookkeeper, was passing through the kitchen while Rastus Hooke thus appealed for aid.

"Now look here, Rastus," he said. "If you'd use that head a little more the teeth wouldn't get a chance to ache."

"Yo' am just like dem odder niggahs, mistah Bruce—doan seem to symp'fize wif no man' troubles."

Rastus rolled his eyes appealingly toward Polton, the cook. Polton rubbed the flour off his hands and looked the sufferer over.

"Want it pulled?" he asked, jocularly.

"Oh, lawdy, no, mistah Polton; I doan' want dat toof pulled. I want sumfin' t' drive dis pain away."

Polton's eyes twinkled.

"What do you expect I can do for it, Rastus?"

Rastus looked round to make sure that Bruce was gone.

"Mebbe you can cunjur it, mistah Polton."

Polton laughed.

"Why, man," he said, getting gradually serious. "You credit me with more of the gipsy than I knew I possessed. But I believe I can cure that toothache."

"That's jus' what I said when I see yo' do dem cunjur tricks at de social, toddler night."

Polton walked over to a shelf; took down a tin alarm clock and held it before Rastus. Pointing at the minute hand, he said:

"See that big hand?"

"I suttently does, assented Rastus.

"Well, in twenty minutes, when that hand gets round to here," indicating the numeral four, "your tooth will be better. You will feel no more pain." This he said very slowly. "Take this clock to your tent; watch the hand closely and come back in twenty minutes and tell me that the pain is all gone."

Rastus walked out holding the clock in front of him and staring at the hand as if nothing else in the world existed.

"Say, boss," he said at the end of the twenty minutes. "Yo am a wizahd! Dat blessed toof doan' ache no mo'. What yo' do to dat clock?"

"Oh, that is a very simple thing, Rastus. That is what is called a mind cure."

"I doan' undstan' 'bout dat 'mind' business, but dese heah niggahs in dis camp think dat's a won'erful clock. How much one ob dem clocks cost?"

"You could not buy a clock like that, Rastus."

Polton meant to be equivocal. That particular clock could have been bought in any department store that advertised for 99 cents. Polton, however, was secretly proud of his cure and naturally put a new value upon the clock.

With this wonderful instrument he soon became the wizard of Camp III. Marvelous cures were put down to his power and the news of them spread rapidly.

Polton's manner was of easy calmness. A high mark of dignity stamped him conqueror. But the levity common to every type in the "underworld" had made him appreciate his enforced vocation with grim humor. Curing a toothache by clockwork was surely an innovation to excite the merriment of a more staid nature than Polton's.

There was the inevitable obstacle in Polton's healing jurisdiction, however. The foreman of the various gangs work-