

gracious! Miss Simmons, what ef you should up an' give Black Cæsar half your cabbages jest 'cause he gin you half o' his early corn last year when your crop gin out?"

There was a momentary twinkle in Uncle Israel's eye as he made this remark, and Mrs. Simmons winced; but she recovered herself with great presence of mind.

"Mebbe t'wouldn't be so bad in a minister's family."

"Ministers is men," dryly rejoined the old man. To which undeniable fact Mrs. Simmons assented by silence.

"Then Desire is first-rate with children."

"She'd considerable better be fust-rate at hard work," retorted the good woman.

Uncle Israel knew when he had said enough, so he lifted his pail and walked away. But the idea took root in Mrs. Simmons' mind and flourished. Poor, pale Mrs. Styles would have welcomed into her house a gorilla that could wash and iron, so in a week Desire Flint was set over the parsonage kitchen.

She did not look like a gorilla in the least. A patient, over-driven look characterized her face at the first glance. It was pale, and the cheek-bones high; the mouth full and sweet, half-closing over prominent teeth, a pair of large, sad gray eyes, and a high, smooth forehead completing a visage that, after the tired look passed away, as it did when she spoke or smiled, was utterly simple; not like a child's, which has a sense of humour, of coquetry, of perception even, in its round, soft, lineaments; but more like the face of a baby, that receives all things as they seem to be, that accepts but does not impart, except passively.

No doubt there was something odd about Desire. She was an orphan. Her father died before her birth, and her mother, a weak, amiable girl, left poor and helpless, died when her baby came, for pure want of "grit," the doctor said; so baby went to the poor-house, a silent, unsmiling, but healthy child, who made no trouble and grew up in ways of the most direct obedience—her great fault being a certain simple credulity that in its excess was so near utter folly that she passed for half-witted.

Nothing ever made Desire lie. Nobody could lie to her, even in the absurdest way, and not be believed. She was teased and tormented at school till all the boys and most of the girls found it too easy of doing to be an amusement, and acquired a dull sort of respect for a girl who was too simple to comprehend unkindness or evil. The only book that fell into her way at the poor-house was her father's old Bible, that had been carefully laid aside for her; and over this she pored Sundays and sometimes of a rainy day, till she almost knew it by heart, and received it with absolute and unquestioning faith. It produced a curious effect upon a character so direct as hers. All things were brought to its pages and tried as by the only standard; and all things were to her either right or wrong. Her logic was stringent, her obedience instant; but it was a great nuisance to have her about among common folks!