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on the bed, moaning dreadfully. Several men stood around him. He had fallen on the hard pavement, and I am afraid he has broken a bone for he is crying terribly with pain.

"I feel so sorry, Mrs. Carroll," Dorothy said tenderly. "The poor man! Have you sent for a doctor?"

"Oh, yes. When I came home one of the men rushed down street for Dr. Mathers. He is upstairs now."

"Dr. Mathers?" Dorothy whispered to herself.

"It must be going, Mrs. Carroll," she continued. "Let me hope that your husband's fall will not lead to anything serious."

"Oh, Dorothy, do not leave me so quickly. You must see Mike. I am sure he'd never forgive me for not bringing you up to see him."

"But the doctor—" interrupted Dorothy.

"Never mind him. Sure, I knew him when he stayed with Mrs. Atherton."

"Mrs. Atherton? Ah, yes, that's the woman Dr. Mathers has been looking for all these years, is it not?"

"Yes, child. She was a second mother to him and she was always so kind to me and Mike."

"Did not the doctor ever find her?" asked Dorothy inquisitively.

"No. He gave up the search some months ago. He now thinks her dead."

"But what about that painting in an artist's studio the papers fussed about?"

"Ah, that only kindled new hopes for a short time. It was found that the woman in the picture was a different person altogether. But come along, Dorothy! Let's go upstairs to Mike, and then I'll introduce you to the doctor as well."

Presently Dorothy entered the quaint little bed-room. The poor, old man smiled as she entered.

"Mr. Carroll, I am sure, does not remember me," Dorothy began, nervously.

"Ah, yes, I do. To be sure—why it's Dorothy Fairfax, the great singer, come to see us," and he stretched out his trembling hands to greet her.

Just then Dr. Mathers' eyes wandered to the prima donna. He had recognized her face from the posters on the advertising boards.

"Dorothy, shake hands with Dr. Mathers!" said Mrs. Carroll, good-naturally.

Dr. Mathers stepped forward graciously and took her hand, saying pleasantly: "I am delighted to meet you, Miss Fairfax." And he really meant it for he could not remember when he had seen so handsome a woman.

"This is the great singer, doctor, who sings grand opera tonight—a girl born and bred right here in Billington. When she was a baby," Mrs. Carroll continued, "I held her in my arms many a time, and for years and years I loved her and saw her grow into womanhood."

A slight blush stole into Dorothy's cheeks. She cast a searching glance at the doctor. Their eyes met for a moment, and a pleasant smile came to his face.

"I am sure you are glad to be home again, Miss Fairfax," he said good-naturally, "and I know that a large audience will greet you this evening. I seldom go to the opera—time is precious you know, but I try never to miss an evening of grand opera. I think it is all so delightful—the gorgeous costumes and shining lights, the stirring choruses and artistic solos. I am passionately fond of Faust," to say the least. Good-nod has invested Goethe's words with charming melodies."

"I hope you will not be disappointed then this evening, doctor," Dorothy answered shyly. "I know it will be very trying for me to appear before a Billington audience."

"You know, Mike," interrupted Mrs. Carroll as she folded her hands in her gingham apron, "Dorothy has been good enough to bring us two tickets for the concert, but I'm afraid we will not be able to use them. You are sick in bed and I—I cannot leave you."

"You can go as far as I am concerned said the injured man.

"Are any bones broken?" Dorothy kindly asked the doctor.

"No," answered the surgeon. "I find it is only a bad sprain."

"Then it is nothing very serious," continued Dorothy.

"No, nothing alarming at all, only that the condition is quite painful," answered Dr. Mathers.

"Then, I am sure Mrs. Carroll at least will be able to attend the opera this evening. I shall send Bridget over to keep Mr. Carroll company."

"And Bridget will be first class company, Dorothy," chimed in old Carroll. "If a man was to die, her cheery voice would really keep him from falling into that long, eternal sleep. It is such a pleasure to listen to her tales and anecdotes, and then—the big jaw-breakers of words she uses! Why, I believe old Webster himself could have taken a few lessons from her. She uses words that are not to be found in his dictionary."

"Well, after all, that speaks volumes for trusty Bridget," Dorothy exclaimed as she passed through the door. "I shall run over to see Mr. Carroll again to-morrow," she said to Mrs. Carroll as she shook hands with her in parting.

"By the way, Dorothy, what do you think of the doctor?" Mrs. Carroll asked, smilingly.

"Oh, I think he is just lovely—so perfectly calm and unassuming. He is the nicest man I ever met," continued Dorothy. "He is very handsome too and—"

"Handsome and just as good as he is handsome, Dorothy," interrupted Mrs. Carroll. "The people around fairly idolize him. He is very kind to the poor. There's a great chance for some lucky girl now, lassie. Goodness only knows, perhaps you will think a whole lot of him some day, my girl."

Dorothy's cheeks flushed crimson.

"Perhaps," she answered. The next minute the old iron gate closed with a bang that had some significance in it.

TO BE CONTINUED.

It's about as hard to keep a good man down as to help a poor one up.

In putting your best foot forward, be sure you don't overstep yourself.

**JOHN'S DAUGHTER.**

There was the usual morning bustle around the small station at Finley, nondescript teams of horses and mules coming and going, or backed up against the platform with loads of oranges and truck; idling negroes slouching contentedly about, bantering talk with anyone who would notice them, and jeering such of their number as had accepted a job and were hurrying through it with an exaggerated show of zeal and activity; grunting razzbacks and mangy cuts disputing favored positions under the platform, or moving listlessly across the hot open sand between the station and the isolated outlying stores.

On the platform itself were long lines of neatly packed crates and orange boxes, and among them the owners with stencils and paintpots, making sure that their markings were right, and waiting for their receipts.

Presently there was a perceptible hastening of movements and the longers in front of the store came leisurely across the open space and ranged themselves comfortably about the platform. There was a roar and quiver, and the great, gasping engine rushed by and came to a slow stop as the passenger cars glided opposite the platform.

Among those to alight was a young girl of seventeen or eighteen plainly but expensively dressed, and with a bright eager air of expectation. A quick glance about the platform brought a shade of disappointment to her face. After a moment's hesitation she approached a man with a broad, low-flapping hat, who was leaning against some orange boxes and had just finished marking.

"Can you direct me to Mr. John Austin's place?" she asked.

"Mr. John—Austin," he repeated reflectively; "why, no, I don't—oh, yes, of course; Booby John—He stopped abruptly, as he noticed the inquiring look on her face. "Yes, I reckon I know. Are you some of his kin?"

"I am his daughter," she replied, wondering a little at the startled whistle which came to his lips and which she noticed he choked back apologetically.

"I have been at boarding school ever since I was a little girl. This is my first visit to Florida."

"An' does your paw, Mr.—John—Austin, know you're comin'?" He spoke in evident perplexity, and with a look of consideration on his good-natured face.

"No; but I haven't heard from him in a year. Father doesn't like to write, but he never allowed my letters to go unanswered so long before, I feared something might be the matter with him or the boys, and he would not write. I just had to come. I am glad you know him." She hesitated, and then asked in a lower voice, as though she feared her question would be answered in the negative, "Is he—well?"

"Yes, fur as sickness goes. Your paw is one of the ruggedest and healthiest men I know. I love him and the boys never had a sickness in all their born days. They're perfectly well, all on 'em I know, for their place jines mine."

He spoke rapidly, as though glad to be able to say that much, but his eyes roved uneasily about the platform, and never by any chance met hers.

"Why, really?" Her face grew radiant. "Their nearest neighbor! And you know the boys and all about them? You see, when we left town, father sent me to the boarding school and then came south. That was twelve years ago, and I have been at the school ever since. Little Tommy is almost nine, and Fred—let me see—Fred is seven. Is the place far?" eagerly.

"About half a mile."

"And are you going out soon?"

"After the train leaves."

"Well, of course, I can go with you. I'll go and see about my baggage and be back directly. Won't they be surprised?" And, leaving him staring at a knot-hole in the platform, she hurried away to look after her trunk and valise.

Half a minute passed, then the man raised his head with a dismal, expressive whistle. It was echoed by another, equally expressive, from the other side of the orange boxes.

"Wall, you're in for it now, for a fact," said the owner of the second whistle sarcastically. "What are you goin' to do 'bout it?"

"Goodness only knows," groaned the man in reply. "Reckon mebbe I'll have to tell her."

"Reckon mebbe you will," drily. "You better have told her plumb straight in the first place."

"How could I?" indignantly; "an' she almost the same age as my Cindy. Lord save alive, man! d'you s'pose I was such a brute as to tell her that Mr. John Austin wasn't nobody but 'Booby John,' not fitten to be father to nobody, an' that he'd been sent to prison most a year ago for stealin' an' that the boys was in the poor-house, an' that the place wasn't worth the bringin' out of the auctioneer to see it? For goodness sake, Thompson, tell me what an I to do!" appealingly.

"Just give it to her straight, that's what I'd do. You're too all-fired chicken-hearted, Williams. Folks has to bear such things, H'sh! here she comes now!"

At this moment the train began to move away from the station, and the girl watched it until it disappeared in the mass of palmettos and cabbage palms, then she walked eagerly toward her new acquaintance.

"Your landscapes are so quaint and beautiful," she said, with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes. "I know I shall like to live here. Well, I am all ready. Can you take my trunk and valise in your wagon?"

"Yes," gruffly. He was glad to get away from her, and made no work of transferring the baggage as long as possible. Somehow, he could not bring himself to tell her the whole brutal truth. If it had not been his money that had been stolen, and if he had not been the one who had complained of the worthless drunkard, it would have been less difficult. He had been sorry for his justifiable act ever since he had made the complaint, and now—well, he would take the girl home to his wife. She had more tact than he, and would know just what to do.

This mental throving of responsibility from his own shoulders brought back his

natural cheerfulness and buoyancy, and he smilingly motioned for the girl to climb into his wagon.

"Ever ride in such a wagon afore?" he asked, as he left the animal's head and climbed up on the seat beside her.

"No." Then her face grew wistful. Did you suppose father and the boys are at home to-day?"

His countenance fell, and he twitched the reins irritably. Why could she not ask about something else? he asked himself. His wife would explain all the disagreeable things after they reached home.

"I low they won't be there just now," he said exasperatedly. "You see, they didn't know you was comin' so they happened to be off for a spell. But you mustn't let it put you out any," she murmured. "I'll take you home, an' my wife 'I fix you up mighty comfortable till they get back."

"Thank you. But why can't I go right to the house and wait for them? It would be such a surprise."

"No, no!" he objected with sudden energy. "By no manner of means. Bachelor livin' ain't apt to keep a house fixed, and just now 'tain't no place for you. I know that. You must do just like I say, an' come to my house for a spell. You ain't used to Florida ways, and my wife can give you a heap of hints."

"Well, if you think best," she was silent for some time, watching the unfamiliar plants along the roadside and the curious, bright colored chameleons that flashed from the warm sand in front of the horse, and disappeared with marvelous rapidity among the palmettos and wire grass hummocks.

"Cur'us ain't they?" said Williams as he followed her glance; "jest like bits of rainbow, strung on lightning." But they're mazin' fine things for pets. Your brother, Freddy, used to have one that would scoot from under some queer hidin' place whenever he'd whistle. Great hand, Freddy, for pets."

At the mention of Freddy she lost interest in the plants and chameleons, and turned to him with a tender, tremulous smile on her lips.

"It will so pleasant to have one's own folks to live with," she said softly. "They were all nice to me at school, but none of them belonged to me. I used to get very lonesome when the girls went home vacations. It will be almost like—live heaven to live in the same house with father and the boys."

Williams reached out and struck his horse viciously, but she did not notice. She was looking straight ahead apparently at the house and father and brothers her imagination was picturing.

"I suppose everybody round here likes father; he is such a good man," she went on in a tone that was an assertion rather than a question. "I almost envied the boys having lived with him so long."

"He kept you to school pretty stiddy," ventured her companion. "I knew he had a gal up north, but had an idea she was stayin' 'mong her kin. Boozey—Mr. John Austin wa'nt much of a hand to talk 'bout himself."

"Father has done everything for me—everything," said the girl with a tender light in her gray eyes. "He was not rich, for he once wrote that I might have to wait a few days for my year's tuition, as money was hard to get. But it came the very next day, and he always sent me plenty for books and dresses and everything I wanted. He wrote for me never to stint myself in anything, and that after I graduated I was on my account to come home, but to keep on with my music and drawing and other studies until he could send me for a trip to Europe. Dear, dear, father! I hope I may be able to make it up to him some time."

Williams gave a quick, sidelong glance at the earnest face, and then gazed steadfastly at the road ahead. He had known Booby John for eight years and could not remember a single redeeming feature about the man. He was erratic, shiftless and utterly irresponsible. His life was one long spree that reeled between absolute drunkenness and semi-intoxication. But he was a good lawyer and a fine scholar, and even in his partial stupor was able to pick up a good deal of money about the court and in other ways. People supposed that all his money went to the dramshops, and supposition made them regard the man with extreme disgust, for his home was a mere hovel and his boys were wholly neglected and uncared for. At the time of the complaint William had regarded his act as a benefaction to the neighborhood, but now, with his girl beside him and with the unexpected disclosures of a white spot in a character that was supposed to be utterly black, his feelings underwent a sudden change. The pitiful drunkard who had been too weak to look after himself and his boys, but whose better nature had planned and provided so lavishly for the girl and her future, even while striving to keep from her the knowledge of her father's degradation, suddenly became more of a man to him. He could not understand the sacrifices and hardships that Booby John must have gone through in order to provide for such an education. Even he with his orange grove and truck farm, had never been able to do half as much for Cindy.

When they reached the cheery cottage in front of his orange grove he carried in the trunk and valise, and presently called his wife aside and made a whispered explanation. Then he went to the barn to unharness his horse. But he made a much longer job of it than was necessary, and when it was finished he leaned upon his fence and gazed with no observant eyes at his fields of sweet potatoes and pineapples and bananas. His wife came to him there.

"Did you tell her?" he asked.

"Yes," in a low tone. He noticed that her lips trembled.

"Take it hard."

"She's highstrung, Jim, an' them kind don't make no fuss. She wouldn't believe me at first, an' when she did she jest turned white an' stared at nothin, till I—I burst out crying myself. Seemed like I never felt so sorry for anybody in all my life. See didn't cry a bit, only just asked would I please go out a while and leave her alone."

The two stood there nearly half an hour; then the girl left the house and passed down on the opposite side of the fence. Williams could scarcely recognize the white-faced shrinking figure as the enthusiastic girl who had sat beside him an hour before.

"She's goin' over to look at the house now," said Mrs. Williams, in a low voice. "I told her 'twain't fit to live in, but she said she'd live in it an' she could. And when I told her we loved on keepin' her a spell she jest thanked me an' shook her head."

When the girl came back they were on the piazza. She went directly to Williams.

"When does your father come home?" she asked.

"His time's out—er—that is, he'll come home in 'bout three months, I reckon."

"And how much does he owe you?"

"Oh, nothin'—nothin' at all," hastily.

"How much does he owe you?" the girl repeated, in a tone that he felt could not be disregarded.

"Wall, \$50. But you needn't bother 'bout payin' it."

"I cannot just at present; but everything must be straightened out before father comes home. There must not be," the girl repeated, in a tone that he felt, "a single thing to worry him. And now, 'can I go after my brothers? I shall fix up the house, and we will live there until father comes."

"It's quite a long drive," said Williams, reflectively. "I can go to-morrow."

"That will do," She stood gazing out at the vista of pines and palmettos afforded by an opening in the trees, her face white and stricken, but calm, with a strong, determined purpose.

"What kind of employment is there for girls?"

Williams looked dubious.

"I don't reckon there's any," he answered. "Stores generally git men clerks, an' there's ten applicants to the one job. Folks round here don't hire much help."

"No," agreed his wife; "house-keepers mostly do their own work—cookin' an' servin' an' everything. The only work that's plenty an' hard to git help for is washin'; but only negroes do that. Mebbe you'n git a job a school teachin' this Fall."

"I must have work now. Father must not find anything against him when he comes home. Do you think I can get washin'?"

Mrs. Williams looked at her blankly.

"It's negroes' work," she objected.

"It's work that I will do gladly if I can get it," a sudden passionate sob bringing the color back to her cheeks. "I will scrub floors—anything that will help father a little. He has been working and making sacrifices for years that I might remain at school, and I—I never suspected I ought to have been here, watching him, and caring for him and the boys."

It was nearly two months later before Williams again encountered Thompson on the station platform.

"Wall, how d'ye make out with Booby John's fine darter?" Thompson asked.

"That's just what she is," he said, "Booby John's fine darter. 'I've been round with her consider'ble lately, down to the prison twice to see her paw, an' took her to town several times in my wagon.' At first her paw was all broke up—never wanted her to know how low down he was, I s'pose. But she brought him around, an' now he can't keep his eyes off her when she's nigh. Soon he's out they're goin' over and take up a homestead in Germany county, twenty miles or more from town. I believe on account o' his fallin' an' I reckon she or the boys'll do all the tradin'. Booby John ain't much of a man, an' never can be; but I tell you, impressively, 'jest all the man there is in him that gal's goin' to bring out—mark my words on that!"

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