

Titus, a Comrade of the Cross

A TALE OF THE CHRIST FOR THE CHRISTMAS-TIDE.

BY FLORENCE M. KINGSLEY.

CHAPTER XXV.—CONTINUED.

"Simon! Simon!" said the Lord warningly, "behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not. And when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren."

"But Peter answered Him yet again: 'Lord, I am ready to go with Thee both into prison and to death.'"

Then said Jesus sadly: "Verily I say unto thee, that this day—even in this night—before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny Me thrice."

"If I should die with Thee," cried Peter, vehemently, "I will not deny Thee in any way."

And all the others said the same. Then Jesus had compassion on them, as He thought of all that they must suffer in the future; and He said many sweet and comforting things to them, which they forgot in the terror and confusion that shortly followed.

John afterwards remembered and wrote of it all. And it hath come down to us, even to this day. Likewise He prayed with them. After that they sang a last hymn together, and went forth into the night.

Now when they were come to the Mount of Olives, they went into a garden there called Gethsemane, which is being interpreted, the oil-press; for many great olive trees grew therein; and there was also a stone trough, where, in the season, it was the custom to tread the oil from the ripe fruit.

It was a calm and peaceful spot, well beloved by the Master as a place of prayer and rest. Overhead the great Passover moon shed a flood of mellow light, which, sitting through the new leaves, lay in silvery patches on the ground beneath.

As they entered the garden, Jesus said to His disciples, "Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder."

Then taking Peter and James and John, He passed further on among the gnarled trunks of the olives.

"My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death," He said at length. His eyes dim with anguish. "Tarry ye here and watch." And they stopped, as they were hidden, throwing themselves down on the soft spring grass, to wait his pleasure.

And He went from them about a stone's cast, and kneeling down; and they heard Him praying: "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto Thee; if Thou wilt, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done."

And as they sat apart, and watched Him there, a confused drowsiness and heaviness of spirit fell upon them, so that they could no longer see nor hear distinctly. They fancied that they discerned dimly the radiant figure of an angel, stooping over that prostrate Form—or was it but the silvery light of the moonbeams falling unimpededly through the branches? Their spirits were drowsed in that strange slumber which held them fast, so that they could not move though they dimly knew his agony.

Was it only the sleep of tired men, or was it that Omnipotence deemed the scene too sacred for mortal eyes to look upon? Be that as it may, the man Jesus sorely longed for human sympathy, and when He came—His brow crimped with the anguish of His soul—and found them asleep He cried with bitter disappointment: "What, Simon! Could ye not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Then tenderly: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

Then He went away the second time and prayed, saying: "Oh, my Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done!" And He came and found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; neither could they, when He awoke them—in the dim confusion of their senses—make Him any answer.

Verily might He have said, in the words of David: "I will rebuke heaviness, I will break my bow; I am full of heaviness, I looked for some one to have pity on me, but there was no man; neither found I any to comfort me."

And He left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time saying the same words.

Afterward coming to His disciples, He found them still sleeping. Looking upon them compassionately, He said: "Sleep on now, and take your rest; behold, the hour hath drawn near, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners."

Then He raised Himself up, and listened intently. The hour was even now come; for He heard the sound of tramping feet, and caught the glimmer of torches through the darkness. Turning to the sleepers He cried aloud, "Rise! Let us be going! Behold, he is at hand that doth betray Me."

"How knowest thou that we shall find Him yonder?" queried Jochanan impatiently, as he stumbled along at the side of Judas through the half darkness.

The man looked up, and by the irregular flame of the torch which he carried, Jochanan caught the look on his face; and hardened as he was, he recoiled from it.

"He will be there. I know the place well. He goeth there—to pray."

"Thou knowest that we must lose no time," said Jochanan, half apologetically. He had an unaccountable horror of this Man.

"What thou doest, do quickly," they were his words to me," said Judas.

And again Jochanan felt that icy shiver. "Ugh! The wind is chill!" he said, wrapping his cloak closer about him.

"Judas laughed, long and loud, and muttered something to himself. "How shall we be seizing the right Man, if we be fortunate enough to find Him?" continued Jochanan.

The man laughed again, a mirthless sound and terrible to hear. "I shall kiss Him!" he answered.

Jochanan wrapped his cloak still closer about him. "The man is a devil!" he muttered. "I wish I had compelled Isaccar to come. He is too dainty fine, though, for an errand like this."

Then he spoke no more, save to give a few sharp orders to the mob of temple police and Roman soldiers, which followed them.

"This is the place," said Judas at length, pausing before what dimly appeared to be a stone gateway. "Follow where I lead." And he strode away into the uncertain darkness of the garden.

"The fellow is mad!" said Jochanan impatiently to Malchus. "Twere impossible to capture the Man in a place like this. He hath a thousand chances to escape."

But even as he spoke, he caught at the arm of the high priest's servant. Who is that, yonder?"

Malchus looked, and saw in the half darkness the figure of a Man. Did he imagine it?—or was there a mysterious brightness—a dim shining? Hark! There was a voice!

Whom seek ye?" All were silent for a moment, save for the hiss of an awed whisper among the superstitious soldiers. Then Jochanan, gathering courage, said boldly: "We seek Jesus of Nazareth."

And the answer came calm and clear, "I am He."

Something in that voice struck terror to the cowardly hearts of the mob. Starting back with a common impulse, they stumbled confusedly over one another, with muttered imprecations, and cries of fear.

Again the voice and the question: "Whom seek ye?" And again they made answer: "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I have told you that I am He; if therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way." The saying might be fulfilled which He spoke: "Of them which thou gavest me have I lost none."

And Judas, peering sharply into the darkness, saw that the other disciples were there also, albeit shrinking fearfully in the background. Then all the old, long-smothered hate and envy burst forth within him. He started forward with a bound, like that of a wild animal, and grasping the arm of Jesus, cried aloud, "Hail, Rabbi!" and kissed Him.

The others looked to see him smitten to the earth; but the Master only said sorrowfully: "Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?"

At this Peter started forward impetuously. "Lord! shall we smite with the sword?" he cried. And without awaiting the answer, he drew his weapon, and with a force but badly aimed blow, struck off the ear of the high priest's servant, who was advancing to lay hold of Jesus.

"Peter, put up thy sword into the sheath," said the calm, authoritative voice of the Master. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it? Thinkest thou that I cannot pray to My Father, and He shall presently send me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"

Then turning to the soldiers, who had grasped Him tightly by the arms, He said: "Suffer ye thus far." And reaching forth His hand, He touched the wounded man, and healed him.

Jochanan and the officers of the temple, forgetting their fears, were now crowded about Him with insulting curiosity. To them He said: "Are ye come out, as against a thief, with swords and with staves for to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on Me. But this is your hour, and the power of darkness."

When the disciples heard these ill-omened words, they were panic-stricken, and fled hastily, leaving him at their Master and Lord, apparently helpless in the brutal grasp of the mob, they all forsook Him and fled.

Now it chanced that a friendless lad, weary after a long day of wandering, had sunk down in the shelter of the wall to sleep. He had removed his outer garment, using it as a coverlet from the cold night, and had rolled up his arms in his garments into a pillow for his head.

"Ab, there is a fire!" said Peter. "I am cold." And without waiting for the high priest, he walked rapidly toward the cheerful blaze, around which stood a number of persons.

He shivered as he spread his hands over the fire, and glanced furtively about him. He saw nothing of Jesus; and presently feeling more at his ease, he sat down, as did some of the others. They were all talking among themselves. "Hast thou seen Malchus?" said one.

"Yes, I have seen him."

"Didst thou know that one of the disciples of the Nazarene smote off his ear?"

"No! Is it so?" broke in another. "He smote it off with a single blow of his sword," continued the speaker. "And the Nazarene touched the wound and it was whole."

"What meant thou—the ear?"

"In truth, just as it was before the blow was struck."

"A marvel indeed! But not more wonderful than many other tales they tell of Him."

"Why do they seize the Man and bring Him hither? What hath He done amiss?"

"For one thing He hath spoken against the priesthood; in my own hearing, He called them no better than whitened sepulchres—fair without, but within full of pollution."

"Little wonder then that they are His enemies; He should have been more discreet."

Then turning to Judas: "Thou art indeed a shrewd fellow, and much to be commended for the discreet way in which thou hast managed this affair. The thirty pieces of silver are thine; and take them and begone. We have no further need of thy services."

And he tossed a small purse toward the man, he drew nearer the Prisoner, that he might fast his eyes on the welcome sight.

Judas stooped, and snatching the purse from the ground, skulked once into the darkness. He had not once looked at Jesus, but he felt those eyes upon him. They were following him like a living coal: "God!" he shrieked aloud. And again and again he shrieked, as he rushed madly on in the black night. His punishment had begun.

"Thou hast bound the Man most cruelly," said Annas at length, drawing back as he spoke.

He had intended to make a preliminary examination of the Prisoner; who he suddenly determined that it might be better to wait. He felt strangely shaken and faint. "I am an old man," he thought, "and over-weary; I must spare myself. Besides, there is to me something most unpleasant about the aspect of this Man, though he is quiet enough."

Then he made them secure, then remove Him to the house of Caiaphas. I myself will take some refreshment and be there at once."

"Is it thou, Peter?" said a voice. "This is no other. Hark! Have they gone? Where are the rest?"

"Nay, I know not," said John, sorrowfully. "I know not why I fled; 'smite the shepherd, and the sheep are scattered.'—I am going to seek Him; it may be that they will let Him go in the morning."

"They will not let Him go in the morning—nor at all," said Peter bitterly.

"But it may be that He will escape out of their hands. He hath the power," said John hopefully.

"He hath the power, but what if He hath no longer?" answered Peter. "He hath said many things of late, hard to be understood. Said He not, even as they bound Him, 'It is your hour and the power of darkness?'"

John was silent for a moment. Then he said in a firm voice: "I shall find Him; wilt thou go also?"

"Yes, I will go," answered Peter gloomily. "But what can we do alone? I heard them give the order, as they passed me in the darkness."

The two men were silent, as they strode rapidly on towards the city. It was no time for words and each was absorbed in his own unhappy thoughts.

"This is the place," said John, length. "We will go in"—knocking the portal ajar with a foot.

The door opened almost immediately. Peter shrank back into the darkness. "Go thou in," he whispered. "I will wait here; it may be that He is not there."

John passed in without replying; and soon Peter heard the portress greet him by name, as she closed the ponderous door.

He leaned back against the stone wall, and the moments dragged slowly by. He was growing weary and cold. He half wished that he had gone in with John. "I will go away," he thought. Then the words which he himself had spoken in a happier day, flashed back into his mind. "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Where indeed should he now go! All was gone—all lost.

This moment the door opened and John came out. Peter saw his face by the light which streamed from the open passageway; it was pale and grave.

"He is there," he said. "Even now they are questioning Him before the high priest. Wilt thou come in?"

"Yes," answered Peter. "I will go in."

John spoke briefly with the portress, and she admitted them both, looking curiously at Peter as he passed. "Go in yonder," she said, pointing with her finger.

"I am cold." And without waiting for John, he walked rapidly toward the cheerful blaze, around which stood a number of persons.

He shivered as he spread his hands over the fire, and glanced furtively about him. He saw nothing of Jesus; and presently feeling more at his ease, he sat down, as did some of the others. They were all talking among themselves. "Hast thou seen Malchus?" said one.

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"In truth, just as it was before the blow was struck."

"A marvel indeed! But not more wonderful than many other tales they tell of Him."

Peter shrank back a little from the light, and wished himself safely outside. Before anyone had a chance to answer the question, the portress sattered leisurely up to the fire. Her eye at once fell upon Peter; and she said loudly: "Art not thou also one of this Man Jesus' disciples?"

Every one turned hastily. Peter sprang to his feet, shaking with fear. "Woman!" he stammered out, "I know Him not; I know not what thou meanest!"

Then assuming an air of indifference, he sauntered leisurely out into the passage leading to the street, intending to slip away at the first good opportunity. As he sank down on one of the benches there, to try and collect his scattered thoughts, he heard the distant crowing of a cock.

"'Tis near morning," he thought to himself. Presently he was startled by a voice: "This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth. Martha told me that he came in with the other; and we know that he is a disciple."

Peter sprang up with a smothered oath. "What meanest thou, woman! I do not know the Man!"

Then he wandered uneasily back into the courtyard again, though he knew not why he lingered. "I may as well go back to Capernaum," he said to himself sullenly. "The dream is ended."

As he leaned against one of the pillars, thinking thus gloomily within himself, a man came up before him, and he held the light of a torch which he was holding full in his face.

"What art thou?" he asked curiously; then getting no answer to his question, he bethought himself that he had seen that face before, and lately. "Did I not see thee in the garden with the Nazarene?" he continued.

"Thou didst not!" answered Peter stoutly. "Surely thou art one of them!" insisted the man who was of kin to Malchus. "For thou art a Galilean; thy speech betrayed it."

Stung to frenzy by these words, and a horrible inward consciousness of his perjury, the wretched man burst into a torrent of oaths and curses. "I tell thee I know not this Man of Whom ye speak!" And the second time, he heard the crowing of the cock.

He looked wildly about him that he might escape by some back door, but he found himself bound, and he vowed to love and to follow, even to prison and to death!

And Jesus turned and looked upon him: that look sank deep into the soul of Peter. He remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said unto him: "Before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice." And he went out and wept bitterly.

TO BE CONTINUED.

THE LAST OF THE RAEUBURNS.

A ROMANCE OF VIRGINIA IN THE DAYS 'BEFORE' DE WA'.

"De po' Kurnel now!" said Uncle Peter, gloomily, shaking his woolly head. "De po' Kurnel now!"

Uncle Paul sent out a whiff of smoke, and waved his corn-cob pipe in air. "No one lak de Raeburns," he began, family pride swelling his tones. "No one lak dem. Young massa—oh, Lordy, Lordy, where we fin' anybody lak you, massa? Who gwine run dis hyah place now? Wha' Missy Cecile keer?"

"Paul Barnabas, yo' fool niggah, ah'm 'stunished at yo'! Sho Miss Cecile keer! She tell us she dun gwine do t'ings jos' lak young massa, didn' she? She say—"

"Umph, huh! She say, she say! I mimicked Uncle Paul. "Missy Cecile 's eighteen year's ole—member her b'nd, ho's same's 'twar lak week—suah ah, do! L'il' gal she is—how she gwine do de wak ob a man lak Kurnel Raeburn? Wha' she know 'bout de plantin' an' de craps, de buyin' an' de sellin', lak young massa?"

Uncle Peter turned on his companion, and there was grim conviction in his face.

"On' know," he said impressively, "ain't nobbah been no Raeburn yit 'bout de putty much de yak lak! Missy Cecile sho out an' Raeburn. She got de Raeburn face an' she got de Raeburn temper—"

"Whe-ew-ew!" whistled Uncle Paul. "She got de Raeburn temper orright —fo' sho' she got de Raeburn temper, Peter And'!"

"Mout' de ting!" cried Uncle Peter. "Raeburn temper bestest in de worl'. Lordy, Lordy!" he broke into the cackling laughter of a very old man, and swung himself to and fro on the low board fence. "It cern'y is a sight when Missy Cecile git her back up. She bust out lak a l'il' spitfire now, doan she?"

"She mook de fur fly," assented Uncle Paul. "Massa No'be's Spencer, he do cern'y lak to see her mad."

"Now he do," said Uncle Peter sagely. "But when dis Raeburn place all Spencer place, he won' lak to see her mad so much. Yo' t'ink, Paul Bar—"

The clanging of a bell, loud and insistent, startled both negroes. It pealed forth from the tower of the old-fashioned mansion that loomed up against the darkening western sky, and it was the summons that called the slaves of the plantation to the "great house." Again the bell sent out its brazen volume of sound, and yet again. Before the last notes died away it seemed as if the dusky figures that responded sprang suddenly up from earth, and so many were they, and so quickly they appeared; women with babies in their arms, and children clinging to their skirts, young men and old, all took the same path, turned their faces in the same direction. Uncle Peter and Uncle Paul went, too. Twin brothers, they had been born on the Raeburn plantation very nearly seventy years before, and given their names by the dead and gone Mistress Raeburn, mother of the "young massa" gathered to his fathers within the week. An ardent Catholic, a true-hearted Southern gentleman was Cecil Raeburn. Too young to die in that he had

been scarcely forty-five, tall and straight and even handsomer than when, in his young manhood, he carried off the fairest woman in all Virginia for his bride—Agatha, a Ashdale, of Ashdale Mere. There was one child—no little More. There were one kind enough to say that Cecil Raeburn was a fool not to marry again. For what right had a slip of a girl to all these broad acres?—there should be a boy in the Raeburn household. From time immemorial the oldest Raeburn had been a boy.

Yet a second marriage would have borne sacrilegious to Cecil Raeburn, seemed sacrilegious to women as rarely loving in that her death but made his love intenser with the hope of future meeting. His little Cecile, motherless in her third year, was fragile and delicate. The pity he felt for her seemed to mellow and sanctify the great affection a father feels for his only child. She grew strong and active under his tender care, and though, to his infinite regret, there was no trace of her mother in her face, she had all the Raeburn beauty—and that meant to be richly dowered indeed. Love for love she gave him; they were more than father and daughter; they were friends, comrades, chums.

The lawyer was waiting now in the great, wide hall, and Dr. Dayton, Cecile's nearest neighbor. Of feminine relatives the young heiress had none. Norbert Spencer was present also. The candlelight fell on his handsome face—his proud, somewhat haughty lines softened into pity and tenderness as he stood beside his sweetheart's chair, his hand resting lightly on its broad back.

The little mistress of Raeburn looked from one familiar dard in the room to the other as he filled up. They were demonstrative in their joy, these were the affectionate children. Some were sobbing, while tears were in the eyes of all. She drew her breath sharply and pressed her lips together. Norbert Spencer made a sign to the lawyer, but he had already unfolded the crackling parchment sheet, and he cleared his throat once or twice before reading to them the few and simple words that made them the property of Cecil Raeburn and her heirs forever.

It was a scene worthy of a masterpiece—the many candles flickering in their sconces, sending long, irregular shadows on the floors and walls; lighting up the intent dark faces; throwing into bold relief the shrewd features of the lawyer, the doctor's kindly face, frost-crowned; casting the distorted countenances upon the panelings, and leaving in kindly darkness the slim figure in the big chair—a little blur of blackness save for the white hand, absurdly small, resting on her lap, and the surly of shining, gleaming golden hair.

Groans and sighs were heard as the reading progressed. The indulgent master of Raeburn—indeed there were those who said Colonel Raeburn spoiled his slaves—proved his kindness even at death. Cecile's little hands clonched together at the first sound of grief. Aunt Nance, who had cared for the girl since she was left motherless, hovered in the background, her shiny face puckered with the anxiety she could not conceal.

"Send them away," said Norbert Spencer, gently, when Lawyer Marsden finished, but their young mistress lifted her head bravely. They were waiting for her word, she knew, eager to hear her voice at such an important moment as this, and she had no inclination to disappoint them. Besides she had that to say to them that would not wait. In determination she was the Colonel's own daughter, no matter how painful the task she set herself to perform. Her lips moved and the words came—slowly at first, but distinctly.

"Some time before my father—died," she began, though her tones faltered a little when she reached the last monosyllable, "we were speaking of this, and of what I should do when—"

She paused, not able to go further, and waited a moment to recover herself. "I shall try to be a good mistress to you—as good a mistress as Colonel Raeburn was master, if such a thing be possible."

Her voice gained strength now, and she looked steadily down the long lines of eyes fixed unflinchingly on her face. "But I shall expect you to behave as though my father were indeed here. Because I am only Miss Cecile,"—a sudden hardness sharpened the girlish features—"there shall be no difference. You are mine, every one of you, and while you may think to escape work or duty by the thought that you have only Miss Cecile to see to things, you will discover that I can be cruel, if needs be, as well as kind. That is all. You may go."

The bitterness in her voice, and the flash of her blue eyes, caused the negroes to exchange significant glances. It was very evident that one idle gossip of the quarters had been carried to her. Uncle Peter, remembering the conversation on the fence, looked reproachfully at his gray-headed brother. He did not file out with the rest. He came and stood before his mistress. Seeing this, Uncle Paul came, too, shutting behind him.

"Miss Cecile," began Uncle Peter. "Ah been a good man to ole miss, ah been a good man to young massa. An' Missy Cecile, since yo' were on'y l'il' baby, ah've been good man to yo'." Don' go fo' to say sich t'ings to me an' Uncle Paul. Me an' Uncle Paul ud die fo' yo', Miss Cecile, me an' Uncle Paul ud.

He looked at her with anxious eyes. Uncle Paul, too, shame-faced in the background, felt as if his mistress's words had been leveled directly at him, so he stood there with downcast eyes while his brother spoke.

"Indeed, I did not mean it for either of you," said Cecile. "I know you both too well." Her voice died out then and her lips quivered. These quiet characters had been her father's favorites, and the sight of their wrinkled, affectionate faces was too much for her overwrought nerves. Weariness claimed her for its own; she had exhausted her strength.

Without further words the two old men bowed themselves out. Dr. Dayton and Lawyer Marsden followed.

Only Norbert Spencer remained, and Aunt Nance. "I thought they would never, never go," said the girl, faintly. "Oh, Norbert, I am so tired—"

She pulled her hand from his protecting, comforting clasp, and covered her face. With a murmur of soothing speech Norbert beat over her, putting one arm about her tenderly. But she was too proud to show her emotion even before him.

"The only Raeburn of Raeburn," she said, raising herself with a pitiful sigh. "The only one—and a girl at that!"

"Poor little child!" whispered her lover, with a tenderness that surprised himself. "Poor little Cecile! Dear heart, he is not beyond your reach. You can pray for him!"

"Pray for him!" she returned, sobbing now. "Oh, I do, I do, Norbert. But my prayers seem so few and so miserable when—when I think of him—my poor father. He trusted me, Norbert—he knew I should try to do right always—"

"And with God's help, dear, you will."

"With God's help," she echoed sobbingly.

It had been the cherished dream of both heads of the Spencer and Raeburn households that Cecile Raeburn and Norbert Spencer should marry. Not alone because the plantations joined, but because they were one in faith, of the two oldest Catholic families in Virginia. Lately the subject had not been dwelt on, though one day shortly before the Colonel's death, he hinted at it in a wistful manner, perhaps with a premonition of the blow that was so soon to fall on his little girl's head. But Father Vincent, who was present, having ridden over on his way from a sick-call, was looking at Cecile with his bright eyes, his pleasant face lit up by a roguish smile, and the girl, blushing, turned away without a word. Little did the good priest dream that his next sick-call would be to the genial master of Raeburn, whose loyal friend he was. At the funeral, however, Lawyer Marsden spoke of the marriage to Norbert Spencer as the Colonel's wish, and Dr. Dayton made smiling allusion to the joining of the two big plantations. It had been so long a settled thing that, until the evening on which the will was read, the young Southerner had never felt the necessity of showing his affection. He and Cecile had grown up together, and he had not affection which closely linked between her and him until he saw her suffering, and realized that, save for him, she had no ties in the world.

Cecile's own thoughts were in confusion. She had never known the lack of love. Her father's tenderness had enshrouded her as if it were a garment. He had been all in all to her. She, too, felt with the other young people, to Norbert Spencer had been his foremost wish, but she could not think of supplanting that dear, familiar face in her heart. Singularly, almost morbidly sensitive in the first tumult of grief, when all the world of love she had known crumbled to pieces before her, and away from her, the very thought of a single endeavoring word from Norbert Spencer's lips seemed a breach of that faithful friendship which had existed between her father and herself—she felt untrue to his memory. She was upset and worried—restless and dissatisfied. She missed him at every turn—more and more as the days progressed, and the duties of her new position weighed her down. The gossip of the quarters did indeed come to her in many shapes. She knew that every negro on the plantation awaited her marriage with a certain amount of pleasure in the thought, for Norbert Spencer was a great favorite. A rigid stickler for caste, severe on the surface despite his youth, he might be, but his justice and his kindness endeared him to every one of his dependents. This speculation on a new master, almost before the old one was laid away, hurt Cecile bitterly. It appeared as if she and no one—as good a mistress as Colonel Raeburn was master, if such a thing be possible."

Her voice gained strength now, and she looked steadily down the long lines of eyes fixed unflinchingly on her face. "But I shall expect you to behave as though my father were indeed here. Because I am only Miss Cecile,"—a sudden hardness sharpened the girlish features—"there shall be no difference. You are mine, every one of you, and while you may think to escape work or duty by the thought that you have only Miss Cecile to see to things, you will discover that I can be cruel, if needs be, as well as kind. That is all. You may go."

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