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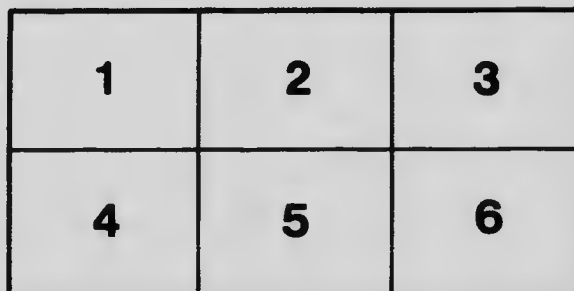
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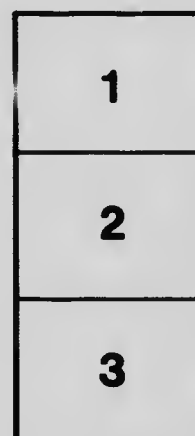
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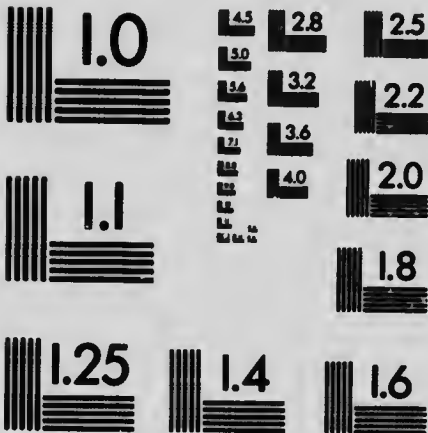
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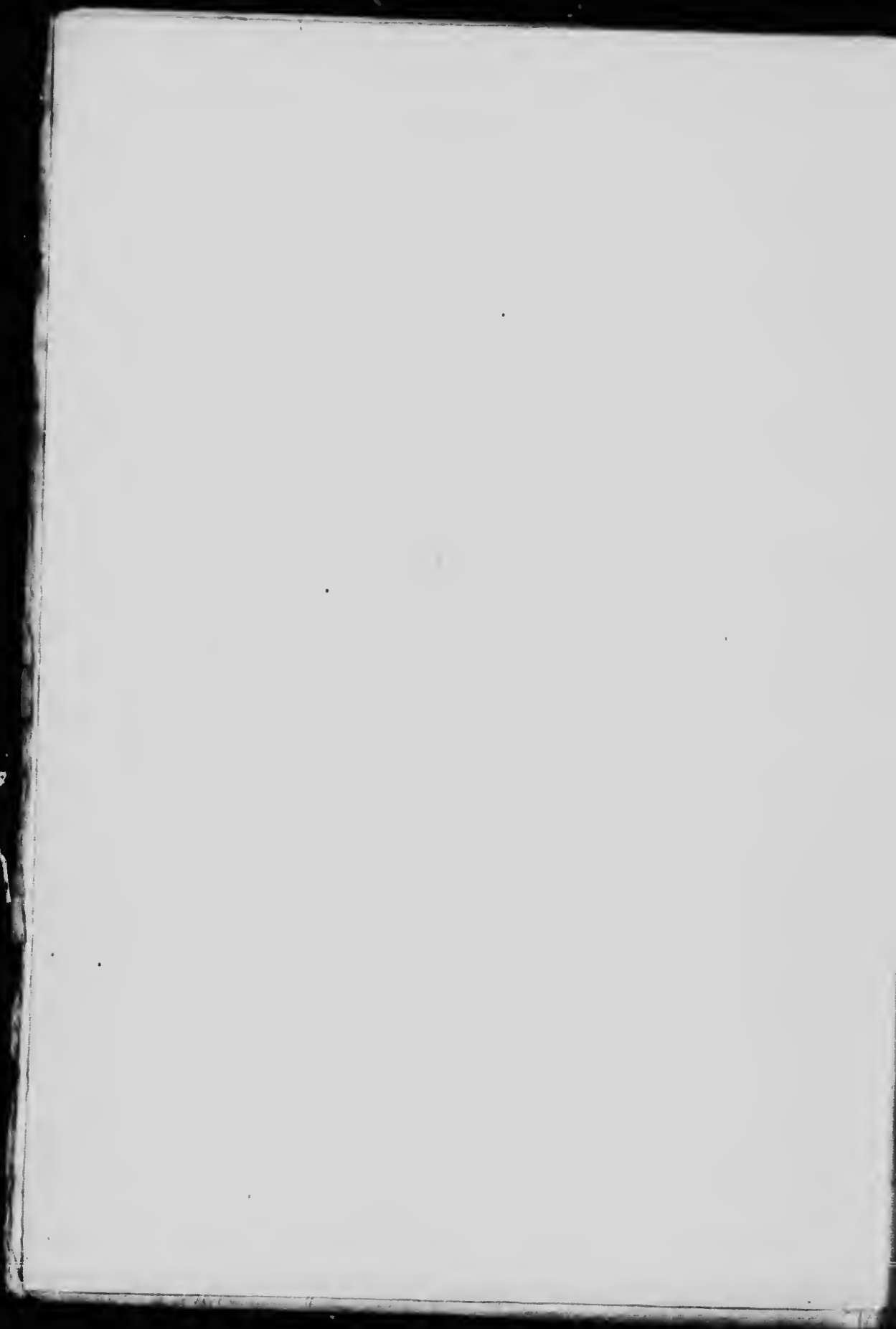
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CHAPTER I

MR. MURRAY'S SMALL TRUNK

IT is said that Sheriff Caseby insisted to the day of his death that there was crime about the matter, but I understand that he never had much hearing. He was sheriff only because he had lost one eye in the war, and not at all a man of influence. Dr. Nunley, on the other hand, who undertook to explain the whole sequence of events, to account for the mystery of the man in the lonely woods, and for my own disappearance and reappearance, was a man of such influence and aptitude as fitted him to undertake the general enlightenment. His article, which appeared in the *Flintville Trumpet* before the neighborhood had recovered from the first shock of amazement, was perhaps a little too scientific for the country readers; but in town it was received intelligently and, I believe, in all parts with great satisfaction. It was afterward reprinted in a prominent South-

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ern medical journal, in whose columns it found its appropriate place ; for the parallel cases of insanity, developed at the same moment and caused by the same shock in a nervous wreck like Mr. Murray, and in a young and vigorous girl like myself, were a subject for the scientists : How we both lost all sense of our own identity, how I wandered, a demented maiden, through the forests, and finally came to my right mind and was restored to my own ; and how he, more profoundly affected, remained mad to the end ; all this was carefully analyzed and ticketed with able theories. Mystery was vanquished by this illumination, fleeing for its last resting-place to the minds of the few unintelligent, among whom we must reckon the head-shaking, one-eyed old sheriff.

He, however, was right, and the physician was wrong. There was crime in the matter, both fraud and violence ; and incidentally some jokes of the grimmer sort and one of these on Sheriff Caseby himself. Had his suspicion but arisen a day earlier he could have had the glory of some of the most brilliant arrests ever made in southern Georgia. I myself saw the chief criminal walk and talk with the officer who should have arrested him on the court-house square of Flintville ; saw him offering cigars and

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delaying his departure with a brazen assurance of safety. But neither Mr. Caseby nor any of the bystanders was up to the situation, and thus it naturally fell under Dr. Nunley's control.

As for me, there were reasons which must appear why I was glad to pass unrecognized. It is not strange that I found this possible in Flintville, for I had been seen in the town but little. Once, it is true, I made an extended round of calls, when my mission was conciliation. My cousins, Ellen and Lois, used to ride astride and wore their formless felt hats of cardinal red and raced their tough little native ponies quite publicly on the country roads. Never had such things been seen in the neighborhood of Flintville till the mad Yankees built their log cabin camp five miles from the town, in the heart of the piney woods. Once they even went for the mail, Tom and Ellen and Lois and the tutor in a gay cavalcade through the quiet streets of the town; and it afterward appeared that their dress and mode of mount had shocked a number of good people. Then my aunt, herself an invalid, sent me to atone by making many calls. I had to dress, I had to be correct, I had to suffer the long, tedious drive along the level silent-cloth of pine straw and through deep screeching sand and over hard clay high road to the town. It

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seemed that to return all the accumulated debt of calls I had to enter every house in Flintville, and I have contended with pride that everywhere I made a good impression. My calls were short—in that country, if you wish a call to be short, you must make it yourself—and in that I may have been criticised; the native ideal is a whole afternoon affair. But I was most languidly proper, speaking of my aunt's ill-health, which did not permit her "to go into society," referring to my cousins as "the children"—though girls of fourteen and seventeen are considered grown in Flintville—"who ran rather wild," and listening to expressions of pity for myself in my lonely seclusion without showing the resentment I naturally felt. I talked about books, I obtained a recipe for cake, I expressed grave doubts on the propriety of a church member's dancing. I repeat that I made a favorable impression; and I knew enough not to disturb it by ever going again. Thus it came that I was well spoken of in the town and but little known.

Mr. Murray's reputation was still more vague, for he had never been seen in Flintville at all. He was a patient of Dr. Nunley's and had been brought all the way from somewhere in the physician's own buggy, too ill to make any acquaint-

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ances after he reached his boarding-place, at the Perrys'. All those who had never seen an Irishman and were eager to hear him talk would have come the five miles from town and from all the country round about to call on him. But the doctor's orders were strict. He had chosen the Perrys' rickety and draughty old house for his patient because the household was so small and the premises so quiet. It stood close to the public road, where the doctor passed daily in his professional journeys between Flintville and Potterstown. For all that it was isolated; we were the only neighbors for miles, and our camp was at least fifteen minutes' walk away.

The Perrys, it is understood, took the best care of the stranger, but he grew no better. A few weeks after he entered their house he was taken with a stroke of paralysis and was confined to his bed. To make matters worse he shortly afterward suffered a terrible fright, with effects that greatly concerned his physician. Mr. Murray alone, of all the household, was awake that night when burglars broke in, and his cries brought Mr. and Mrs. Perry to his room in great alarm. Before the terror-stricken man could make himself understood, the thieves got away with all Mr. Perry's cotton money. After that the family needed Mr. Murray's small but

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regular payments for board more than ever, and though the doctor advised it, the sick man would not leave them. He said he felt himself drawn nearer to his friends in their misfortune. He, too, was unfortunate, so homeless, so poor and ill. He would not leave the Perrys until they put him to the door.

The good people were touched and redoubled their kind attentions. For all this increase of good-will, the shock of that night's misfortune had left its mark for the worse upon the sick man. His nervousness seemed to increase, and he occupied his mind with pitiful precautions. A heavy bolt was put on his door; he could manage it from where he lay, as he had the free use of his arms. He kept a loaded revolver by his bedside, and he evinced a strong dislike of being left alone. All these things, being known to the Perrys' married daughter who lived in Flintville, were generally known and talked about. For our part we had such intimate relations with the invalid and his hosts that we learned them first-hand.

The Perrys were our nearest neighbors, though they lived a mile away. My aunt's sympathetic interest in the afflicted stranger first established our intercourse with them. She often sent him delicacies from her own invalid's fare, and I was

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usually her messenger and admitted to the sick man's room. The Perrys set a high value on this slight expression of neighborliness, kind people that they were, and seemed to feel themselves put under obligation. They stood ready to do us all manner of friendly services and became our recognized guides in the true ways of Southern living. From the management of our negro servants to the best manner of cutting a gourd, they were our authority.

In view of these friendly relations, Mr. Perry was certain that we would be glad to do him the favor he came to ask that night in January when my story begins. Etiquette, not hesitancy, kept him to other subjects as he bent his shabby figure over the fire on the hearth and warmed his bare, chilled hands. Outside, his mule stamped in the cold.

"You should have worn an overcoat to-night, Mr. Perry," said my aunt, in kindly anxiety.

"Well, ma'am, I did own one nine years ago, but it got stolen and I never have got me another," he drawled, without suspecting that we counted overcoats among the necessities of life. "It would be mighty comfortin' to have one," he added, thoughtfully, "but I don't reckon I could afford it."

Poverty is quite respectable and scarcely in-

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convenient in the country of the piney woods. The haste with which Ellen changed the subject indicated that she did not understand it.

"Mr. Perry, isn't Rex a thoroughbred setter?" she inquired, coaxingly. She had recently bought the dog, and Tom, in secret envy of her acquisition, had condemned him as "yellow."

"He's as good a bird-dog as you want, Miss Ellen, but I don't reckon he's pure," said Mr. Perry, gently. "I reckon you paid Moody a big price for him," he added, with a smile.

Our neighbors had done their best to dispel the popular belief that we were glad and willing to pay the natives twice the value of everything we bought. Mrs. Perry used to send negroes to us with eggs and chickens, threatening them with the loss of our patronage if they overcharged us. Unfortunately the lavish way in which the younger members of the family spent money for gourds, wildcat skins, snake's rattles, etc., quite neutralized the picture of poverty presented by our log cabins and their simple furnishings.

"I paid an awful price for him if he isn't a pure-blooded setter," said Ellen, mournfully. "And now I don't want him. I'm tired of having mongrels about;" this last a spiteful reference to Tom's "'possum dogs."

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"There's a good chance to sell him right now, Miss Ellen," suggested Mr. Perry. "There's a shooting-party of gentlemen from the No'th staying over near the river. I hear they're goin' all about the country hirin' and buyin' bird-dogs. They seem mighty hard to suit. Mr. Moody told me he reckoned they would be right glad to get Rex."

"Sportsmen?" exclaimed Ellen, with dancing eyes. "Are they nice?"

"They are probably a lot of pot-hunters, like that gang that were in Flintville," Tom put in. "They simply slaughtered the game and sent barrels of it North. Shot the birds on the ground half the time. They ought to have been arrested."

"These ain't that kind," said Mr. Perry, decidedly. "They're gentlemen, and mighty free with their money, too. They made it worth while for the Hendersons to move right out of that there big house of theirs and rent it to them furnished for as long as they wanted to stay."

"Then I can surely get my money back for Rex," said Ellen, mischievously. "Will you ride over there with me to-morrow morning, Kate?"

I discreetly refused the invitation.

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"Then I shall go alone, and *you* will have to go calling again to make our peace with the proper world of Flintville," she threatened in a whisper.

Mr. Perry had a tale to tell of how the hawk had swept down on the chickens that morning, and how several of the little creatures in their mad and scattering flight had fallen down the old well. "I had just carried the curb to the new well I'm diggin'," he explained, "and it's left a kind of dangerous place. No, they wan't hurt, Miss Lois. It ain't so very deep, for I've been dumpin' the dirt in there as fast as I draw it from the new well. That's the reason I ain't covered it up."

It is probable that Mr. Perry would not have covered the old well until he spent twice the time required for his work in rescuing his chickens, but he always had ready reasons for every shiftless neglect.

My aunt asked about Mrs. Perry, who had gone to Flintville for a week's visit to her daughter, while, to our amused surprise, her housekeeping took care of itself. In reporting her still away, Mr. Perry came finally to his errand. He, too, wished to go to town that night to attend a meeting of his lodge, and Mr. Murray had refused his consent to be left for so

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long a time with only the colored servant in the house.

"I thought one of you all would be willin' to stay with him a spell," he said.

My uncle looked at Tom; but I knew the boy had planned a glorious 'possum hunt that moonlight night, and I good-naturedly hastened to offer my services. They were gratefully accepted, and Mr. Perry promised my aunt to "carry me back" before eleven o'clock at the latest.

That was the last time I was ever to walk under the Georgia pines with a light heart. I remember I laug^h.ed merrily a good part of our way over Mr. Perry's stories of his mule's intelligence. I had declined to ride, so his master led this big, bony brute, and many a threatening "Come along yere, Bob," interrupted the gentle flow of praise. "I'd rather plough with him than with any hoss I know," he finished in climax. "A hoss is uncertain, but you can always rule a mule."

All about us the dark columnar trunks rose straight and stately, fifty feet or more, to where the first black, twisted limbs flung out their horizontal whirl of branches. The moonlight glistened on the long tasselled pine-leaves and gave them a new and shadowy green.

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"You all live mighty lonesome," observed Mr. Perry when we had walked a moment in silence. "Mrs. Perry, she can't hardly stand it where we stay, right on the Potterstown road. She talks a heap of movin' to town because we're so lonesome; and there's a heap of travel on that road, too."

That meant a half-dozen passers-by in the course of the day, except on Saturday, when the country people go to town, horse-back, mule-back, or on foot, in rattling buggies, in heavy wagons, or in the slow-creeping tiny ox-carts.

"But you all don't see nobody pass," concluded Mr. Perry. I protested. I had seen a wildcat pass that very morning, not a hundred yards from my window. Mr. Perry laughed so that the woods echoed.

"Well, it's a heap healthier livin' away from the clearin's," he admitted when I had eagerly defended our choice of situation. "Though seein' you all ain't here in summer, that don't matter so much. Lemme tell you what's so, Miss Kate: them pines sift the malaria clean out of the wind. I reckon Dr. Nunley picked out my house for Mr. Murray just because there's such a pretty stand of timber 'twixt us and Brandon swamp. I'm like you all—I like to have the pines close by."

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Mr. Perry's house appeared to be one-storied, but under the great roof were two good-sized rooms, their windows in the gable ends. It stood opposite Mr. Perry's plantation, some fifty feet back from the road, and unfenced from the adjoining woods. Only the small front yard was protected by pickets, the house forming one side of the square enclosure. The yard was thickly planted with roses, and great cape-jessamines stood higher than one's head. Except for this garden wealth, the Perry place looked sadly run down and neglected. The little outer kitchen, just behind the house, the meat-house of logs, the stable, corn-crib, and skeleton fowl-house, all gathered close about the larger building, were leaky and everywhere out of plumb. Cracks gaped wide; the dwelling itself I knew to be rickety in its joints, tumbled in as to its chimneys, and settled on its foundation piers to the extent that the floors within slanted slightly like the decks of a ship. For all its defects within and without, it looked a homely, lovable old place that night, beaming in the charitable moonlight.

As we neared it a red glow through the windows of the lower floor told us that Aunt Emeline was keeping bright the fire in the sitting-room. The rest of the house was dark. Mr.

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Murray's window of the upstairs room gave upon the woods on the farther side. The Irishman, a man of little refinement else, seemed to take pleasure in the sight of the dark green pine branches before his window. He chose the upper room for that view, he said, though the empty one below was equally at his service. Mrs. Perry, who had no great understanding for the beauty of the pines and who was moreover a little weary of much running up and down stairs, had confided to me her own views on the matter. She believed her lodger to be in mortal terror of being robbed, and that he had been so from the first, not only since the burglary by which the Perrys had lost so much. She believed the fear of thieves had influenced him in every arrangement he had made.

"He didn't like them low windows into the piazza, and that's the whole of it," she declared, emphatically. "He's got a little trunk up there that's so heavy I can't lift it—not that I ever had a good chance to try. He's so nervous about anybody's goin' a-nigh it, I leave it alone and let the dust stay behind it. If it ain't full of gold, he acts like it was."

I argued that no man in his senses would keep gold in such a way, and I urged her to consider that Mr. Murray declared himself to be poor.

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She laughingly agreed that her theory was a wild one, but again expressed her mystification as to the weight of the trunk and his evident wish that no one should touch it to move it.

"I had hold of the handle before he noticed it, and tried to pull it out to sweep; but if it had been nailed to the floor it wouldn't have stuck more immovable. That looks like gold now, don't it, Miss Kate?"

Then she had laughed again and then reproached herself for not minding her own business.

As we came up to the gate of the yard that night, Mr. Perry's whoop brought the colored woman, Aunt Emmeline, to the hall door. Mr. Perry was belated, and I begged he would not stop to go in with me.

"You can't get to go to the meetin' to-night, Emmeline," he cried as he mounted his mule.

"Here's Miss Kate, and I want you to take good care of her till I come back."

Then he bade me good-night, inquiring carefully whether I felt in the least afraid. I laughed him my reply, and he departed.

"Where is the meeting, Aunt Emmeline?" I inquired sympathetically, as I crossed the yard.

"Hit's right over yonder at de church," she answered, in doleful tones. "Br. Stuart's gwine

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t' preach dere t'night. It sho' is de bigges' meetin' of de season."

I felt sorry for the woman to whom revivals were dear, and bade her go for an hour or so.

"Lands! Miss Kate, ma'am, Mr. Perry'd kill me sho'," she wailed, but there was a ring of hope in her voice.

"He will never know it, if you come home earlier than he. Go on, I'm mistress here to-night."

"Fo' Jesus' sake, Miss Kate, youse de bestest white lady! Glory to God!" she exclaimed in incoherent exultation. "I'll be back soon, ef I lib. Dere ain't no one gwine touch you, no-how. De dogs is right yere under de house."

Like all houses of those parts this one stood some feet above the ground on its wooden piers. I looked under and saw the yellow gleaming eyes of Pete and Mount where they lay in warm retreat in the shelter of the piazza steps. There was always a fascination to me about that dog and chicken and children land, the dry, airy space under the south Georgia house. To-night it pleased me for a moment to note how strong the contrast of that shadowy interior and the white sand of the back yard that lay in the moonlight beyond. To the side of Mr. Murray's window no white sand was to be seen. There the

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dry gypsum weed stood rank and tall; but the outlook was otherwise complete and I thought it a good vantage ground for watch-dogs.

Aunt Emmeline came down into the moonlight, and I saw she was togged out in her best. Mr. Perry had evidently expected Tom to come and had given her permission to go out. Again assuring me of her undying gratitude in terms already glowing with revival fervor, she left the yard. In too great haste to go around by the gate and the road, she bent her lithe figure and crawled under the corner of the house beneath Mr. Murray's room. As she breasted her way through the waste of rank weeds, her joy broke forth in song.

"Oh! I wish I was one of de members, too!"

she wailed in a high sweet voice, repeating the words throughout the melody.

"Go, Gabriel, and strike de 'viding line!"

she began the second strophe as she disappeared among the stems of the nearest trees.

I remember that I spent a few moments by the sitting-room fire warming my hands before I lit a lamp to go upstairs. As no windows in the house could be fastened I deemed it not worth while to bolt either the front door or the back.

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That house, I felt, was safer from intrusion than any in the country. A South Georgia farmer's cotton money is very nearly all the cash he handles in the year, and Mr. Perry's cotton money being gone the thieves would never come back for more to that poor house. As for Mrs. Perry's hints of Mr. Murray's wealth, we had both come to laugh at the idea. The trunk undoubtedly contained some valuable personal effects, hence his nervous watch of it. An utterly helpless man might be forgiven for such a weakness. As to its weight, Mrs. Perry had only tested it in trying to pull it. It had probably stuck on a nail in the floor.

So thinking, I went up the narrow staircase that led up from the back of the large hall. Mr. Murray's door was just at the head, to the left. The Perrys' own bed-room was opposite.

"Well, now, is it the dear young lady herself that has taken pity on a lonesome old fellow?" exclaimed the sick man as he slid his bolt and let me enter. I thought, in spite of a certain whining effusiveness of tone, that he looked woefully disappointed. Besides the bright fire-light from the hearth he had a candle burning on the shelf beside his bed.

"Are you willing to place yourself under my protection for an hour or so, Mr. Murray?" I

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asked as I put down my lamp on the mantelshelf. I meant it to sound playful, but he took my question seriously.

"Protection, say ye?" he cried. "From what man or divil do I need protection save from the inimy that racks me poor body? Ah, Miss Katie, may ye ivir be as strong and active as ye are now!"

His dull blue eyes sought mine piteously, his furrowed forehead looked more careworn than of wont. There was something particularly depressing about him that night. A vague uneasiness crept over me and I found myself wishing I were at home. With a little effort I conquered the feeling and smiled at him.

"Shall I sing you a song to cheer you up a bit?" I asked, throwing off my cap and cape.

The offer reminded him of Aunt Emmeline's singing which he had heard below. He inquired as to her whereabouts, and I had to confess that I had let her go. When I saw how it disturbed him to think that we two were entirely alone in the house, I repented sorely, not only on his account but on my own. Nothing is more depressing than the society of timid people. I foresaw that I should have an unpleasant evening of it. But my duty to reassure him was plain, and I treated the matter with a high hand.

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"A thief is a rare thing in this country, Mr. Murray," I was saying, easily. "The one who entered here must have been singularly bold, and years will pass before we hear of such another robbery."

"Hark!" he interrupted me. I listened and heard the distant yelp of Tom's hounds as the hunt passed through the bottom behind the house. The sound gave me a renewed sense of security which I tried to impart to Mr. Murray.

"But will not these dogs they have downstairs run off to join them?" asked Mr. Murray, anxiously. His wits seemed sharpened to think of everything, for in this his fear was grounded. Pete and Mount were ardent 'possum dogs, and often went out with Tom. I thought it well to call them in and to shut them up in the hall.

As I opened the door to go downstairs we both distinctly heard a footstep in the hall below. I started back: but I was only really alarmed when I turned toward the bed. The sick man's face was like the pillow behind it.

"Some neighbor! Aunt Emmeline come back!" I tried to reassure him.

He shook his head violently and struggled to speak. At last the words came in a hoarse whisper and fairly horrified me.

"It's a killing me he'll be!"

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I looked at him aghast a moment and he got speech again.

"Take my revolver, Katie, and guard my door," said he, with distorted face. I seized the pistol and his candle, feeling for the moment the strongest desire to get his door between him and myself, ready then to face anything that might be below.

"Katie, swear ye'll defend my door! For the love of Mary, swear it! Else the curse of a helpless man will be on ye!"

"I'll defend your door," I answered, in a hard tone, and I went out, carrying the candle, which trembled in my hand. The miserable creature shot his heavy bolt behind me and so my retreat was cut off.

The light of my candle did not pierce the darkness below. I held it high so that I might be seen to be armed. A frightening stillness followed.

"Who is there?" I asked, rather faintly. Then came a man's voice from the very foot of the stair-case, low, distinct, and quiet.

"I trust I have not given you an unnecessary fright, Miss Perry. I have business with your lodger, Mr. Murray. I thought no member of the family was at home and I was trying to find my way to his room."

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It sounded very matter-of-fact and distinctly courteous; the man was not a Southerner.

"What is your business with Mr. Murray?" I asked, considerably reassured, lowering my candle and holding my pistol less conspicuously.

"I am not at liberty to explain the nature of it," he answered, as quietly as before. "Will you permit me to come upstairs?"

"No, sir; I am sorry that I cannot give you that permission," I answered, with decision but, I think, with due politeness. "The invalid can see no one without the doctor's permission. You may call to-morrow, if you like."

The man in the dark gave a little laugh—rather a fierce little laugh, I thought.

"My business is urgent and will be quickly despatched," he said, in a way that was meant to be urgently persuasive, but savored of impatience.

"You cannot come up," I answered, in a final tone, "and I must ask you please to leave the house at once. You are greatly disturbing Mr. Murray."

There was a pause and I listened for a sound in the room behind me. All was silent there, and I fancied my man cowering under his blankets. Then I was aware of a slight move-

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ment in the hall nearer the front door. Was there more than one intruder? I asked myself. Suddenly the stranger spoke again in a curiously vibrating voice.

"Miss Perry, I am sorry I cannot spare you a very startling discovery," he said. "Your so-called invalid is a fraud and a rascal. His paralysis is assumed for purposes of mischief and of cowardice. He would be off through the window already, had I not taken the precaution to guard it. I have come to relieve this house of him, and it is to your interest to let me come upstairs."

"Swear you'll defend my door," seemed to ring in my ears, though all was silent in the room.

"Do I understand that you are officers authorized to arrest him," I asked, gathering up my sinking courage. "Have you a warrant?"

There was another pause, only an instant, but enough to answer me. The stranger confirmed my suspicion.

"No, we are not authorized, we have no warrant," said he. "But here are five desperate men. It is quite useless to resist us."

His voice had taken on a threatening ring which roused in me every feeling of resistance.

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"Five!" I cried, indignantly. "Against an invalid—for I don't believe your accusation. Not one of you shall come up. Leave the house instantly."

There was some stirring at the other end of the hall, a shifting of feet as if the men were constrained and impatient. Then the leader spoke again in a voice as quiet and courteous as at first.

"We refuse to leave, if it were only for your own sake. Of course, you mistrust us; it could not be otherwise. I suggest that you withdraw to the other room, where you can feel secure with the defence of your revolver and at the same time be convinced of the truth about McGuire—or Murray, as I believe he calls himself here. In five minutes you will be rid of us all, and you will be a great deal safer than you were before we came."

"Leave the house," I cried again. I had but one clear idea, and that was my desperate duty to defend him whom I now feared more than the housebreakers.

A board creaked on the stair-case. Someone was stealing up upon me.

"Back! I'll shoot!" I cried warningly, raising my weapon. My candle shook violently.

Another creak! "He must be leaning on the

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bannister," flashed through my mind, and with that notion alone to guide my aim, I fired.

The report resounded through the house, a man fell heavily, groaning aloud, and a many voiced cry of horror arose from the hall.

"Great God! Harry!"

"Who's hit?"

"It's Ball!"

"Shoot her!"

"Silence all! Open the door."

The back door was flung open and the moonlight streamed in upon a group of men kneeling and bending about a prostrate body. Their voices were suddenly lowered almost to whispers. The man I had shot was moaning, he was at least alive; but the realization of my deed brought with it a sense of faintness. The candle fell to the floor, my unnerved arm, with the revolver, hung limp at my side, and I raised my hand to cover my eyes. At the same moment I was aware that one of the band came quickly and lightly up the stairs. My force was annulled, I could not again raise my weapon. In a moment he was upon me, had wrenched it from my hand and laid his own about my wrist with a grip as light and firm as steel.

"Come on up, Harry!" he called back. "The coast is clear."

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"Kelvin, how could you?" came the voice of the leader in a reproachful tone, and he started to come up the stairs. He turned to give an order in regard to the removal of the wounded man, but I caught no two consecutive words of it. Then he and another came storming up and crowded my captor and me to one side in the dark and narrow little hall while they strained at Murray's door.

"Put your shoulder to it. It will come," was the sharp command.

There was a mighty creaking, a tearing away of hinges, a crash and a burst of light. I listened for Murray's cry of terror as they entered;—not a sound from the invaded room!

"He's gone!"

It was a cry of rage and disappointment.

"Gone?" echoed my captor on the landing. "He can't be gone. Dan's at the window outside. Search the room."

And forthwith he dragged me in there and I saw for myself. My terror was swept away in my amazement. There was my lamp burning brightly on the mantel-shelf, the window curtains hung undisturbed—the bed was empty! The two men, tall, powerful fellows they were, searched frantically in every conceivable hiding-place the room afforded. The Irishman was gone.

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Then one opened the small trunk, the mysterious one that Mrs. Perry could not move, that Mr. Murray had watched with such jealous care. He opened it, though no man of the Irishman's bulk could have concealed himself therein—and the secret was out!

"A hole in the floor!"

There was swearing. The man jumped in the trunk and disappeared from view.

"A closet here!" he called up, with a ghostly effect. "It's locked. Pull me up again. Hold on! Here's his escape. Another hole! He's got out under the house. He's got away."

There was more swearing. The man who had held me fast until that moment now forgot all about me. He let me go, dashed from the room and rattled down the stairs. The other one was still standing bent over the trunk. I was free!

Lightly and swiftly I flew to the stairs and descended. The wounded man lay still groaning in the moonlight and his face horrified me, it looked so white and drawn.

"Steady there!" he commanded me as I attempted to run past him, and he made a clutch at my skirt. I shrunk back and stood a moment in trembling indecision. To the front I heard voices and was afraid to fly that way.

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"Colonel, Colonel!" called the wounded man hoarsely, and the man upstairs came out on the landing. "Here's this here girl about to light out. If McGuire's got away——"

I fled the length of the hall to the front:

"Stand! You won't be hurt," thundered the man on the stairs; and, "You'd better catch her, Colonel," cried the wounded man.

I opened the front door, crossed the veranda, and cleared the steps at a bound. Steps followed me closely, and now in a frenzy of fear I ran along the shadow of the house, reached the picket-fence, and tried to vault it. My skirts caught, tore, and I fell on the other side. Another man at that moment turned the corner of the house from behind, and as I sprang up and ran he joined in my pursuit, crashing through the weeds through which McGuire had presumably slipped away. With the inspiration of terror I made straight for Mr. Perry's uncurbed well. The nearer of my pursuers was close upon me as I swerved about the dark hole, saw it too late as I intended, and tumbled in with a cry. The other one paused long enough for me to gain the road. Then he was after me again, not calling any longer, and I realized that my race was hopeless. I ran as in a nightmare, body of lead, and voiceless. Suddenly the moonlight grew dark,

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my strength left me, I fell as he caught me, and hung limp in his arms.

"You have nothing to fear," sounded in my ears with droning clearness, and I came to my senses and started away from him.

"You are to be absolutely quiet," he commanded, with a fierce decision. "Not a word, not a sound, and you are perfectly safe!"

He retained a firm hold of my arm and hurried me back toward the house in hot haste. I was cowed into obedience and made no cry or resistance. A sense of dreaming terribly but not truly still possessed me.

Some hundred feet from the house another man came on the run to meet us. He stopped on seeing me as if thunderstruck.

"Harry Tarr! What the devil are you about?" he demanded.

"I'm following expert advice—Ball's," returned my captor, sharply and fiercely. "It's going to be a game for life and death this time, Geoffrey. We have had enough of light opera. Now you have followed me far enough; you've gone a good deal farther than you promised. Take Santa Fé and be off after Mickleson and Ball, and you three get away down to the Gulf as best you can."

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"I'll see you through," returned the other, quickly. "I don't care what it is."

"Geoffrey, I warn you once for all, there's nothing but danger and disgrace to be got with me," said the other, in a lowered and quieter voice.

"Incidentally, I guess we'll get McGuire," suggested the other, with a sort of laugh.

"That's my business. Off with you!"

The other swore emphatically and demanded whether he had anything to lose. "Tell me what there is to do, without taking all night about it," he snarled. "Do you want me to shoot this wild-cat?"

"No!" roared the leader, furiously. "Ride after that buggy and ship those men. Tell them if they don't disappear entirely they won't get paid. Bring the buggy back to the house and wait for me to join you there. Don't tell Mickleson anything except that his orders are to do his best for Ball; and tell Ball that the hunt goes on here, and that I don't need him till he's patched up again."

The other left us on the run and I was swept on toward the house. An idea of their reason for detaining me had taken shape in my mind and somewhat reassured me as to my own safety. It was not necessarily part of

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their plan to revenge themselves on me for the harm I had done them. I was willing to submit for the moment, but my fastest walk was not enough for my captor, who was in a frenzy of haste.

My unlucky pursuer had been saved from the well, and he and another met us at the gate of the yard.

"You aren't hurt, Kelvin?" inquired my captor.

"Not a bit of it," was the cheerful response. "Fine, soft bottom, not too far down."

He was a wiry little man, hatless and slightly bald. As we came closer I saw by the moonlight that his face was whimsically wrinkled; nor was there anything in his appearance to suggest the ruffian. He looked a harmless little gentleman in his neat shooting-costume.

"So you have recaptured my prisoner," he inquired in an amiable tone of congratulation as he stood before us. "I am pleased to observe that she retains her admirable coolness. Now allow me to ask you, Harry, what you mean to do with this lady?"

I waited breathlessly for the other's response, but he vouchsafed none. Instead he turned to the other man, a huge dark-bearded fellow, who, like the leader, had his hat pulled low over his face.

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"Dan, go into the house and pile all the firewood you find about the stairs, open all the windows and doors and find the kerosene," was the command.

The man was off without a word. It flashed upon me with horror what this order meant, and for the first time I cried aloud. Instantly this one they called Colonel clasped me and fairly swept me off my feet.

"Do you understand that I require you to be still?" he demanded, in a stern whisper, bending his face close to mine.

"Harry, you are mad!" cried the little man angrily, and I was released, faint with fright.

"You must not scream, of course," said my new protector, gently, "but I shall see that your breathing is not interfered with. If you make a noise, I shall smother you myself in a humane and orderly manner."

He had me by the wrist and I knew his light unyielding grasp; I had felt it before.

"You are fearfully primitive, Harry," he continued in a tone of gentle reproach to the other who stood motionless beside us. "You are little better than a roaring cave-man. You will wind up in an ethnological museum some day——"

The leader kicked the yard-gate open and

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strode through toward the house without reply.

"Harry, come back here instantly," cried the little man, indignantly. "Come back and leave me some directions. I object to your burning the house. I'm sure its against the law to burn houses. If it isn't, it ought to be. I object still more to detaining a lovely and accomplished young lady——"

The other came swiftly back and put his arms on the picket-fence. Confronting us so, his face was in total darkness.

"Kelvin," he said, in a low, stifled tone, "I'm going to get McGuire this time if it costs my life. He has made for Dr. Nunley's house in Potterstown, and I am going after him. Now this is my prisoner until my work is done. Hold her for me until I come back ; and after that you can either stand by me or go to the devil."

"Faith, there's little choice there," muttered Kelvin as the other was off again ; that he intended to comply with the other's request was plain. He took my other hand and drew me to where the shrubbery hid the house from my sight.

"Madam, you are about to disappear, if I rightly understand my friend, Colonel Tarr," he said in a gentle, explanatory way. "My friend

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is a man of great executive ability, and such people, as you must know, are usually of constructive imagination. Colonel Tarr seems to have hit upon a brilliant device for assuring his safety while he does his so-called work. You are a prisoner because you are dangerous. The thought should mitigate your fears."

I was trembling from head to foot, to be sure; but rather with excitement and rage now than from actual terror. Kelvin drew me on to the side of the house toward the woods, still distracting me with his fantastic flow of words, though I looked back to see with horror that the house was already alight with the blaze the incendiaries had started.

"You will disappear," he repeated, "and I trust you will bear it with the same grace and dignity that characterized my own late disappearance from the face of the earth. Even as I emerged unharmed, so will you."

And now we heard the roar of flames well started and the windows toward us glared and the front door shot flames. Kelvin stood still and looked back; and then he gave an unmistakable groan. He, at least, was not a ruffian, though he was certainly not sane.

"Let me go," I implored him, finding strength for an earnest and self-controlled appeal. "Don't

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take part in this wickedness. You can't mean to harm me."

"Why! now you flatter me," he returned, with a cold-blooded amiability. "You ignore any possibility of the baser passion of revenge within my soul. I know my aspect is, to say the least, benign; but toward one who has deliberately and with malice aforethought, pitched me down a well, don't you think I might harbor some resentment?"

He drew me on again, now much more rapidly, quite into the woods, and the house was out of sight.

"Colonel Tarr is of a nobler nature than mine and can be trusted to treat you generously—though his manners to-night, I confess, are somewhat against him," he continued in a soothing tone. "*He* will have nothing against you personally; you need never fear a word of reproach from *him*. To be sure you have cost him a year's work by your high-handed behavior this night, to say nothing of several cool thousand; but I am sure he will never bring up a claim against you in the courts. I know him well and can promise you so much in his name."

We had reached a lime-sink, thickly grown with shrubs; a blind wood-road ran past it. There, well hidden from the public road near

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by, stood a three-seated wagon, such as shooting-parties are wont to hire in Flintville, the two dark horses not hitched but standing motionless. A small white horse, saddled, was tied to the limb of a tree fretting at its bridle. Now Kelvin whipped a strap from his pocket and proceeded to tie my wrists together.

"Don't bind me, don't," I implored, desperately, and I sank to the ground before him.

"Courage, child, courage!" he urged, mildly, drawing me up. "What's in a strap? Don't think about it. Think about something else. To-morrow you will probably be the happy possessor of a warrant for our arrest. You may even see us lynched to-night. The future is bright before you."

There was a crashing through the shrubs and the dark-bearded man appeared, made loose the pony, mounted, and was off without a word. The hoofs of the little horse falling on the pine-straw of the road made scarcely a sound.

"Now I know that Colonel Tarr means business," muttered Kelvin as he knelt to secure my ankles with another strap. "This nervous haste in Dan! It is phenomenal."

The next minute Colonel Tarr rejoined us.

"Well, Harry, how do you like this sort of work, now that you have got your hand in?"

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inquired Kelvin by way of greeting. The other made no response by word or look. He hurried to the wagon and lifted out the two rear seats.

"Where are the carriage robes?" he inquired, sharply.

"I suppose Mickleson took them to make Ball's ride easy," suggested Kelvin.

Colonel Tarr took the cushions from the three seats and threw them into the wagon bottom; the next moment I was seized, swung up, helpless as I was, and laid upon them. I lay motionless with the indifference of despair. They flung something over me, presumably their own overcoats; and something was pushed under my head for a pillow.

"If we had been expecting to take a lady prisoner we should have been better provided," said Kelvin apologetically, as he lightly laid the hair from my face. "Now keep up your courage and be very still. It won't be thirty minutes."

Then the seats were hurriedly replaced and the next moment the wagon was in rapid motion.

Perhaps it was but thirty minutes; but placed as I was, and with such agonizing food for thought, chafed by my bonds, moreover, and jolted as we rolled over rain-washed and root-

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grown roads, that drive was a long ordeal. With fearful vividness I figured to myself what must presently be passing at the burning house. It would be, it was already, a ruin. I knew, and the incendiaries knew, how quickly such a house burns down. There was Tom coming up from the swamps toward the spreading glare, toward the pillar of black smoke in the moonlit sky, and oh! how fearfully he was choked with dread! There was my uncle, pale with apprehension, hurrying through the woods from our side—and negroes from far and near who were abroad that night, and all neighbors within miles who rightly placed the conflagration and interpreted the calamity of a home destroyed; all would presently meet to acknowledge with horror and grief that I—that the paralytic and I, had perished in the flames. How would they tell my aunt? How would the girls realize the horror of it?

They were already mourning me as dead; and meanwhile I was carried off to an unknown fate and no power would call them to my rescue.

The wagon stopped at last and my captors called for George loudly. A negro answered with a whoop and came running across hard ground. I heard a gate creak. We were evidently near a house.

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"George, you were asleep," said Colonel Tarr, and he jumped from the wagon.

"No, sah, I wan't t'sleep, not wid dat dyar big fire to look at ober yonder," returned the negro.

"Unhitch Nellie there and ride to town with some telegrams for me," commanded the leader.

"I'll have them ready in a minute."

"De Cunnel certainly am a great hand fo' telegrams," observed George, and I heard Colonel Tarr hurrying away.

"Has Mr. Thomas come back with the buggy yet?" inquired Kelvin, himself jumping to the ground.

"Naw, sah, I ain't seed him. Dey ain't none ob de gentlemen at home. I done kep' up de fires."

"I'll take care of Ned here, you unhitch Nellie, and be quic' about it, George," said Kelvin, now to the front of the wagon. "Colonel Tarr's in a big hurry about these telegrams. If the gentleman in Flintville seems surprised at the messages, you tell him that 'business is business,' and a New York broker never gets any rest. That will be impressive, George. Do you understand?"

"Yessah, I understands," returned the negro, with alacrity, and I heard Kelvin give an amused little laugh.

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"Didn't you-all git no 'possum?" inquired George, presently.

"We treed one," returned Kelvin; "but the old stump was hollow and seemed to have underground connections. He got away. We're going out again."

"I done tole Mr. Ball you-all wouldn't git no 'possum wid dese yere bird-dogs," said George, protestingly. "Ef you-all had let me bring my ole Alabama 'possum dog, Rider, *he'd* a-showed you-all some spo't. *Lordee!* Mr. Kelvin, dat sho am a big fire! Wonder if 'tis a house."

Then came the footfall of Colonel Tarr returning, and his sharp tone of command.

"Here's the paper, George. You understand that you are to ride fast. Off with you!"

Presently there was the sound of the departing horse's hoofs, then the seats were removed from over me. The sky was tinged with red. I groaned and closed my eyes.

"Courage! Your troubles are soon over," said Kelvin, as he quickly unbound me and raised me to a sitting posture. I saw a great, dark house surrounded by magnolia-trees. My head swam dizzily as they helped me out, my teeth chattered with cold of which I was scarcely conscious. I was hurried through a narrow gate across a white sandy yard where

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grew the hideous prickly pear, grotesque and threatening in that light. Then I looked up to see broad steps leading to a high veranda, and above them an open door yawned black. Here my last energy of resistance possessed me. I struggled fiercely against going in.

"This is just the way I felt about the well," said Kelvin in a tone of cordial sympathy while he clutched my arm like a steel band.

"You will have to bear it, Miss Perry," came the hard voice of Colonel Tarr from behind me. "No one ever had to do with McGuire without suffering."

His light touch on my arm revived all my terror of him. I fled before it, and was fairly driven through the dark hall into a room dimly lit by firelight.

"Now, Harry, you go and prepare a suitable dungeon for our prisoner while I revive her spirits with warmth and light," said Kelvin, briskly.

Colonel Tarr swung an armchair around in front of the fire, forced me into it with one word of command, took a lantern from the mantelpiece and left the room. Kelvin stood at the table beside me and deliberately lit a large lamp, adjusting the wick with care and absorbed attention while I eagerly scanned his face. It was a

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firmly set, dare-devil little face; he quite looked the man who had run up upon a loaded pistol in the hands of a wildly determined shot. Though he was somewhat bald, his quick and active little person, clad in knickerbockers and leather leggings, had a youthful, almost boyish look. His motions, like his glances, were swift, darting, full of purpose. My first vague theory that he was mildly mad soon vanished in view of his alertness.

The lamp burning brightly, he turned to the fire and was presently manipulating a saucepan on the coals. He began to speak, but a loud hammering in the adjoining room cut short his speech. I meanwhile looked about me and knew where I was.

"A shooting-party of gentlemen from the north," Mr. Perry had described the gang, and as such they evidently were paraded. Here, in the Hendersons' sparsely furnished dining-room the sham sportsmen had their shotguns and game-bags, hampers of provisions, piles of travelling-rugs, valises, newspapers and magazines, pipes and cigars. There was an air of comfort and luxury in the very disorder of the camp. The sight of it, the realization of what a tremendous fraud was here practised on the unsuspecting community, fairly staggered me. And when

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I added to this spectacle that other one of the opposite camp, that arrangement of trap-doors and sham helplessness, that cunning pitted against this desperate craft, all within reach of the blinded authority of the law, when I contemplated them both together, I lost myself in wonder. "A shooting party of gentlemen"; Mr. Perry had insisted they were gentlemen not to be suspected of pot-hunting. They were "mighty free with their money" and, of course, were regarded as an acquisition to the neighborhood, these house-breakers, incendiaries, kidnappers, murderers for all I knew. Fear for myself was for the time in abeyance. Ah, to expose this shameless fraud! My new indignation threw me into a sort of glow. I ceased to shiver and straightened myself in my chair.

"Say when," said Kelvin, standing before me, pouring something from a flask into a tumbler. I stared stupidly. "Whew! You take it strong. Well, I suppose you are pretty thoroughly chilled."

He put the glass in my hand. "Drink it hot!" he commanded. A vague sense of the ridiculous increased my bewilderment. The little man stood there with an expression of genial content as if he had done all there was

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to be done for me, as I would presently acknowledge. "Down with it. You are cold, you know."

I ventured to taste the fiery mixture.

"More sugar?" he asked when I tried to hand it back to him.

"More water," I gasped, finding voice at last.

"This new boarder of ours is going to be pretty troublesome, I see," said Kelvin, in a complaining voice to Colonel Tarr, who just then entered the room. "I don't think we ought to put up with it from a mere transient. First she tells me to mix her drink as stiff as I like, and then she calls for more hot water."

"Kelvin, is this a time for nonsense?" demanded the other in a tone of bitter impatience.

"Well, I really don't know how to take the situation seriously," muttered the little man.

"Kindle a fire in there, will you?" said Colonel Tarr, motioning toward the next room; "and lock the door into the hall."

Now that he was without his hat, and with the light on his face, I could get my first notion of what sort of man he was who had dared and accomplished so much that was wrong that night. If the general cast of his features was not exactly bad, his face was nevertheless far from reassuring. Its expression was fiercely set.

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He was still under a tremendous strain of excitement, as was plain from his high color and the blaze of his light gray eyes.

He came up and took the glass from my hand, scarcely looking at me as he did so. His hand was trembling slightly as he mechanically went about diluting Kelvin's mixture.

"You must try to drink this," he said with an evident effort to modulate his tone to one of courtesy. "I fear you have been greatly exposed."

The words were peculiarly apt to rouse my anger to some lively expression; but fear of the man was very strong upon me and I merely bent my head lower and refused the proffered glass with a gesture.

He set it on the mantelpiece with an impatient jerk, and as he turned away I followed his motions with my eyes again. He was hastily drawing on an overcoat and cramming a pipe and tobacco-pouch into his pocket, talking the while to Kelvin through the open door of the adjoining room.

"Geoffrey is here with the buggy and we are going to rejoin Dan, you understand. McGuire will either have got into hiding at Dr. Nunley's or he'll have taken to the swamps. In either case we may fail to get him to-night."

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"Yes, I think to-night's failure is pretty well assured," came Kelvin's cheery voice. "I thought so when I first realized Miss Perry's disapproval of our course."

"So you need not be anxious if none of us get in before morning," continued Colonel Tarr, without heeding the response. "But, of course, you will be ready to leave at a minute's notice. If I should get him I won't come back here at all. I'll send you a message to join us——"

"And in that case?"—Kelvin appeared in the doorway of the other room—"in that case, what am I to do with our prisoner?"

"I'll see to it, I'll attend to all that," returned the other with a sort of absent-minded impatience, looking about, apparently for his hat. "You know Dr. Nunley's house, Kelvin, in case I should send for you to come there?"

"Gray? Pear orchard, whitewashed fence, three big live-oaks, just this side Potterstown?"

"That's it."

"Look here, Harry, I don't want you to send for me if you are going to raid the doctor's house to-night," said Kelvin, in a complaining tone. "I've had fun enough for one night. My nerves won't stand it. I am not as young as you are and ——"

"Of course it wouldn't be safe to do that,"

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interrupted the other with irritation. "If McGuire has gone there, as I suppose, they will be expecting us. There's still a chance of our intercepting him as he approaches; —or that Dan has already done so, since he went straight there on horseback while McGuire had to slink along under cover and on foot. At any rate I can't lose another minute."

He was already at the door when he turned again.

"Of course, you won't leave this room, Kelvin, till you hear from me; but there's no reason why you shouldn't get some sleep on the sofa there," he said with a tinge of compunction in his voice.

"Sleep! While you are off on a round of dissipation, shooting, burning, kidnapping, to your heart's content? Not I! I shall probably keep Miss Perry awake by singing 'Where Is My Wandering Boy To-night?'" returned Kelvin, mournfully, and he followed the other to the door. There was a moment's consultation, inaudible to me, and then I was rather awed to see them clasp hands and stand quiet an instant, looking into each other's eyes.

The room into which Kelvin conducted me was the Hendersons' parlor and spare bed-room

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in one, as is the usual arrangement of that country. It looked comfortable enough, what with the bright wood-fire Kelvin had kindled, though somewhat dismal in its well-meant decorations.

"You, as a native, will doubtless appreciate the beauty of this apartment better than we can," said Kelvin, pleasantly as he withdrew. "Colonel Tarr was taken with a nervous chill when he saw the crewel-work—wonderfully appropriate name, that—and he is quite the boldest among us. We have all preferred to room upstairs. You will find sash and shutters very firmly nailed from the outside, so I beg you will lose no time but go to sleep at once. The more you sleep, the less you will mind this, you know. If you are not called to breakfast within twelve hours or so, you may infer that we have had occasion to leave the country. In that event, our camp outfit, which I assure you is as good as new, is yours by right of possession. Good-night. Please ring once for ice-water, twice for messenger, and so forth."

He was gone, the door closed; I heard him turn the key.

CHAPTER II

A SHAM MEMBER OF A SHAM SHOOTING PARTY

A GLEAM of daylight woke me. It came from the adjoining room whose door was opened just long enough and far enough for Kelvin to slip in. I recognized his figure against the light. Instantly I was aware of what had befallen me, and I lay still in an access of dismay.

He had only come to kindle a fire on my hearth, and before the flames were well started he stole softly out again. There was a sort of considerateness about this quiet proceeding that went far toward building up my courage. Moreover, as he failed to catch the lock in his effort to be noiseless, and the door swung slightly ajar, I could now hear what went on in the adjoining room. This was so interesting that my spirits rose. I seemed to have strength to face the situation. While I listened I rose, arranged my dress as I could, and smoothed my hair, preparatory to confronting my enemy with dignity and self-possession.

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"We must watch that light of his profession, Dr. Nunley," I heard Kelvin's voice. "Quite right, Harry, quite right. We ought to be able to learn from Dr. Nunley. He has had more practice in rascality than we have."

"We must watch him, yes. He is almost certain to get into communication with McGuire to-day, even if they did not make connections last night. Don't give me any more, Kelvin, I must be off," said Colonel Tarr, who seemed to be breakfasting.

"Nonsense, Harry, you won't get any lunch. You may be lynched before you get any lunch. Take a decent breakfast, do," protested the other. "And you can't dash right off again without conferring with me. You need my advice and guidance. Your idea is to satisfy yourself that Dr. Nunley is in communication with his patient and then——"?

"Buy the doctor."

"Suppose you can't do it."

"I take it that it is merely a question of money between him and McGuire."

"Of course I am not supposing that Dr. Nunley ran such a risk of reputation for the love he bore this rascal—" Kelvin spoke impatiently— "but he may be mean enough to sell his services, his medical *dicta* and so forth,

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without going to such a length as to sell his luckless patient. I trust he won't. I want to see McGuire hanged, but I don't want it to cost me my faith in human nature. As for you, Harry, you are now, as always, too ready to pitch in a lot of money. The conscientious use of money is one of the civic virtues, Harry. I must see that you don't neglect it."

There was a mock mildness and piety in his tone ; I caught a sound like a laugh. Then Colonel Tarr spoke seriously.

"I thought we had agreed, once for all, that this thing was worth while, whatever it cost."

"Oh, yes, we did," returned Kelvin, "I never objected to the stage properties. But now you have got to the point where you are nourishing half a dozen nuisances in your efforts to exterminate one. I don't speak of our own late career. It is plain that we were born to just such activities—now, Harry, don't get up. If you won't eat, you must smoke. Sit down there by the fire and listen till I've finished. As I was saying—I hate to see honest money go for corrupting officials, and hiring shady detectives and corrupting——"

"Corrupting respectable country physicians," broke in Colonel Tarr, impatiently. "Rest easy, Kelvin. Depend upon it, the bloom was

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brushed off Nunley long before he connived at the two holes in the floor of the Perry house."

"You are too hasty, as usual. We have no atom of proof that the doctor knew how McGuire spent his evenings."

"He must have brought him tools."

"Most likely not. The man had his two trunks, and very likely a complete burglar's kit. No, no, Harry, the worst you know of Nunley is that he provided a paying patient with exactly the disease he wanted—a thing quite in the line of the profession—and that he was probably aware that McGuire was in hiding."

"Of course he knew it. Of course he knew he was aiding and abetting a rascal, and exposing those poor people to outrage. Can you believe that there is one sound sentiment in that miserable fraud?"

"I should not wonder," said Kelvin, hopefully. "We are frauds, miserable frauds—you, at least, are distinctly miserable this morning—yet our sentiments do us honor. Dr. Nunley may be already contemplating a free confession that McGuire was no paralytic, and must have got away."

"He may be *contemplating* something like that, but shall I tell you what he is actually

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doing?" said Colonel Tarr, impatiently. "He is sitting on his front piazza, moralizing with a crowd of loafers as relays of news from the fire come in."

I heard him push back his chair violently, and start up to pace the floor.

"Stop that confounded noise, Harry," said Kelvin, angrily, and he must have motioned toward my door. "I fancy she hasn't had what I call a good night's rest."

Colonel Tarr stopped and muttered something I could not hear.

"Oh, did you? How convenient?" returned Kelvin, ironically. "Now if she could only be induced to forget all about *you*, she might lose that peculiar wide-eyed expression, which, I confess, really makes me nervous."

"I think you might spare me this sort of thing, Kelvin," said the other, indignantly. "Are we in a situation to consider her at all? She must soon see that she is safe—safer here than where we found her."

"Of course, it is only about herself that she need to worry," said Kelvin, in a tone of cheerful acquiescence. "Her parents, Mr. and Mrs. Perry, will doubtless console themselves with the consideration that funerals are both trying and expensive."

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"Her parents deserve no consideration," stormed the other, angrily.

The next instant I flung open the door and stood on the threshold.

For a moment I was dazzled: the room was flooded in morning sunlight, and tobacco-smoke clouded the air. Then I saw the two men, Kelvin rising from a seat by the fire, Colonel Tarr standing in the centre of the room, his right hand with his cigar slowly sinking at his side, his look one of utter consternation.

"Good-morning," said Kelvin, pleasantly, and the words of wrath died from my lips.

"You left the door ajar," I managed to say. "I heard what you said."

"Do you take exception to any of our remarks?" asked Kelvin, encouragingly.

"Yes, I do," I returned, with my excitement reviving, and I looked at Colonel Tarr. He seemed to have regained his self-possession very completely, meeting my eyes with a steady, cold look which intimidated me.

"I repeat what I have said, Miss Perry: you are safer with us than in the same house with that ruffian. I understand that he entered your home under false pretences, but I still insist that your parents are lightly punished for their criminal carelessness."

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"You catch the drift, Miss Perry?" inquired Kelvin, with what seemed to be his characteristic, a sort of mocking grandiloquence. "You are to look upon us with gratitude. We have presumably gone out of our way to rescue you, and are now kindly giving your parents an object-lesson on the care of young girls."

Whatever effect he aimed at producing upon his friend a change came over Colonel Tarr's face, a very slow deepening of color and an uncertain, rather disquieting look in his eyes. It seemed as if he had been brought to bay and were going to show fight.

"We will spare you any further explanations," he said, shortly. "Rest assured that you will be respectfully treated and held only for a few days, at longest."

I stared at him a moment, scarcely believing I had rightly heard him.

"Stay here? For days?" I gasped. "Why, I can't! You don't know what you are doing!"

"I know exactly what I am doing," he returned, still more curtly. "I am saving our cause and probably our lives at your expense. It is a gross injustice, a brutality, if you like; you will have to resign yourself. You are absolutely in our power—everyone believes you burned to death. The situation calls for an ex-

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traordinary output of courage and patience on your part. You have given us sufficient proof that you possess the former; we are spared all violent demonstration, and that is still more fortunate for you, Miss Perry, than it is for us."

That they had mistaken my identity had heretofore scarcely attracted my attention; but as he addressed me again some sign that it was a mistake must have been read in my face.

"Is it Miss Perry?" he inquired, as if he were a little taken aback.

I shook my head.

"It does not alter the case," he said, recovering his cooler tone, but looking at me with close attention for a moment. "Whoever are your friends, you can be assured we will safely return you to them as soon as our own safety permits."

I turned toward Kelvin with an appealing look.

"Just as I explained last night," he said, with a reassuring little nod. "As soon as we catch McGuire, you are free. Not only free, but possessed of considerable power to revenge yourself upon us for the fright and inconvenience we have caused you. The thought should be sustaining."

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I looked from one to the other in an anguish of doubt. Could such outlaws have any honor? At least Kelvin meant to be as kind as this business would permit; but the man with the face of flint.

"How can I trust you?" I demanded in a faint voice. "Last night you said repeatedly I had nothing to fear. Since then I have been roughly handled."

For the first time his eyes dropped to the floor.

"You see, Harry, your stately assurance that you are a gentleman, while it is impressive in its way, won't suffice for this occasion," put in Kelvin, in a gently remonstrating tone. "Under brighter circumstances it might be received on the evidence of the fit of your shooting-jacket, but you will admit, yourself, my dear fellow, that last night you scarcely lived up to your clothes."

For a moment Colonel Tarr looked black, then his face cleared with something like a flash of amusement.

"See here, Kelvin, suppose you take this matter in hand," he suggested, in a relieved tone, and he went to the fire and threw away his cigar.

"No, Harry, the days of my tutorship are over," returned the little man with a great show

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of firmness. "I can no longer stand between you and the difficulties of the world. You have now reached the age of manhood——"

"But your advice," said Colonel Tarr, looking at me swiftly as if to note how I looked upon such a display of nonsense.

"My advice would be to lay our motives bare before our prisoner. She is not in the least unnerved, but she has some natural anxieties that might be calmed with pure cold reason."

This seemed to give Colonel Tarr the clew. He confronted me again.

"Will you sit down?" he asked, doubtfully, laying his hand on the back of a chair.

I shook my head and he remained standing so, speaking gravely.

"You probably have not realized the full extent of our risk, Miss—ah—Madam. If we are found out—and you must see that we are liable to be found out before long, carefully as we have managed—the whole fury of public opinion and the whole rigor of the law will descend upon us. How could we prove, for example, that the paralytic was not burned to death by us, since he has disappeared? I assure you, your testimony alone could save us. Are we likely then to increase our danger by offering you the slightest—I should say, any further indignity? Could we

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be mad enough to incense you further? Is it not our policy to appease and conciliate you if that were even in the least degree possible? Then, also, how fearfully an offence toward you would increase the burden of our crimes! How intolerable the disgrace——”

“That is not your tack,” interrupted Kelvin, coolly.

“Quite right,” said Colonel Tarr, with a curious, evanescent smile. “As I was saying, Madam, our only hope of escaping with our lives is to treat you with all the consideration possible, to return you to your family as soon as may be, and then to get out of the country with all possible speed. Do I make myself plain?”

An unwilling admiration of the whole dare-devil enterprise colored my thoughts for an instant. What these men risked and resolved to carry through was really wonderful. Then, too, it was a strengthening thought that I stood for all that threatened them with their just punishment.

“I see that you have understood,” said Colonel Tarr. “We are not madmen, and therefore you are safe.”

“Besides all that, you must take into account,” put in Kelvin, “that we can’t by any possibility be as ruffianly as we appear.”

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"I thought we had dropped that line of argument," murmured Colonel Tarr.

"I myself am a prominent member of a society for the reform of miscreant minors," persisted Kelvin, soberly, "and Colonel Tarr here is not without the occasional stirrings of a higher nature. This morning he rode to town and took a look at the county jail. 'Theodore,' said he to me when he returned, 'this is positively my last appearance as the heavy villain upon any stage!'"

Once again a fleeting expression of amusement crossed Colonel Tarr's face.

"Whatever the state of our conscience, we can't afford to heed it now," said he. "You understand, then, that your complete disappearance for a few days is necessary to us—and you will resign yourself to it."

The whole monstrous injustice of sacrificing me to their private ends was borne in upon me and I flamed up in resistance.

"I will not resign myself," I said, hotly. "I will escape. It shall go hard with you."

He smiled slightly and I fairly quailed to meet his eyes.

"Thanks for the warning," he said, with a sudden quiet and softness of tone. "But we already know something of the difficulties we

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have to encounter, and we shall put forth the necessary strength to meet them. You will not escape."

"But you can try, you know," Kelvin said, in his chirping, encouraging way. "And that will keep you amused, you know."

"Of course all my promise of considerate treatment depends on your docility," said Colonel Tarr, resuming an air of sternness. "You will be expected to obey us implicitly."

"This is quite unnecessary, Harry," put in Kelvin. "Our prisoner showed us last night how accurately she can estimate the point where resistance should cease."

"We will test that at once," said Colonel Tarr, and then to me: "It is necessary to our concealing you that you disguise yourself—as a boy."

I turned to Kelvin for help in this new extremity.

"Why, that is a very good idea," said he, in a tone of cool approval. "That will make it possible to make you very comfortable. You know, we have to consider our servants and chance visitors: and if we should have to move you, it would be a pity to repeat the really brutal proceeding of last night."

I had expected his protection on this point and was much disheartened.

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"I refuse," I said, wearily. "It is useless for you to say anything more about it."

"You have no choice whatever——" began Colonel Tarr, impatiently; Kelvin cut him short.

"Nonsense, Harry, of course she has a choice," he said, sharply. "Everybody always has some sort of a choice," he continued to me in the mildest tone. "I will not pretend that I have no hope of gently influencing yours. You see how we are situated. We are trying to look like a sportsmen's camp. Your presence would distinctly mar the effect we are trying to produce. Refuse to disguise yourself and you see us forced to extreme measures, such as packing you up in the smallest possible space, gagged if necessary. Accept, on the other hand, the outward semblance of a member of our party, and you may retain the elegant and spacious apartment behind you and otherwise command the comforts and privileges of a prisoner of rank."

He poured all this out with eloquent gesticulation and I was very much impressed—"smallest possible space" was a discomfiting suggestion.

"You see there is no approach to disrespect in our request," said Colonel Tarr.

"You won't take the untenable attitude that

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your dignity lies in the flowing lines of this particular dark-blue gown," urged Kelvin, genially.

"And speaking of that gown," added Colonel Tarr, gravely, "are you aware that it is sadly torn? Should you have another picket-fence to vault, you might be glad to be free of these hampering skirts."

That appealed to me very strongly.

"Consider, moreover, how slight your chances of escape from the little, dark closet under the piazza roof," added Kelvin, quickly following the advantage. "You cannot stand up in it. Would you like to take a look at it before deciding?"

"No," I said, hastily. "I will do it."

I reflected that with a great show of meekness my case was not without hope, and then and there I registered a silent vow of vengeance for this oppression.

Colonel Tarr quickly took game-bag and shotgun to go out. His movements were hasty, and I judged that his calm and gravity were assumed with difficulty when he spoke.

"Leave George to me," he said to Kelvin, "and send him for the mail to both trains. Dan is to go to the negro settlement this side of Brandon swamp, and to follow any clew he can

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get. Tell him so when he comes in to breakfast."

Kelvin passed me, going into my room with a valise. Colonel Tarr stepped up to me.

"You must permit Kelvin to cut off your hair," he said, "I am—very sorry."

His regret seemed to me to be very much displaced; I made no answer, but quickly turned away.

"Is it at three o'clock we are to meet you in the Potterstown bar-room if we get no word before that time?" asked Kelvin from the other room.

"Yes, you or Thomas," and Colonel Tarr, to my vast relief, was gone.

"It will be Thomas, then," said Kelvin, coming out again and addressing me with a certain confidence, "for I shall have to stand guard over you. *He* has point blank refused the office of jailer. 'I'll shoot her,' he said when the subject came up, 'but I'll be hanged if I watch her.' 'Geoffrey,' said I to him, 'it's just the other way.' But, Lord! that boy hasn't got the humor of a good bird-dog. However, you will be glad to learn that there is one member of the company who takes a moral stand against your detention."

And then I was locked into my room, ex-

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pected to assume the disguise. I had agreed to it, and I lost no time nor permitted myself to reconsider the matter. My whole mind was set on escape, and this compliance was certainly the first step. I chose from Kelvin's valise what I needed, and donned it hastily. Knickerbockers and leggings, flannel shirt, and a corduroy coat fitted me well enough, and I was of a build to carry off the costume.

I turned a little faint when I complied with Kelvin's request to call him when I was ready to have him cut my hair; but he was so perfectly composed that I lost my self-consciousness. By the light of the fire he clipped my hair in a business-like manner with no inappropriate expression of regret as the mass of it slid to the floor.

"I've had practice in barber work," he remarked, cheerfully. "Used to trim the men's beards and fix them up for Sunday when I was in camp in California. They were wax in my hands, and I pleased myself with going in for variety. I'd give one a Van-Dyck and another an Australian Bushman effect, always attempting to harmonize the style with some soul-trait in my subject."

So he rattled on, half distracting me; and the strange relief from the weight of my hair contributed to a sense I had of lost identity.

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"Would you like to see yourself?" asked Kelvin in a tone of satisfied pride when he had finished. He took a burning faggot from the fire and handed it to me for a torch. Half-unwilling, I stepped to the mirror and viewed my strange reflection. They were right in supposing I could be easily disguised—I was a rather slim but right manly looking boy: the loose and picturesque effect of the costume was in my favor. But I was pale, and the spectacular yellow light from the pitch-pine torch made me fairly haggard; and Kelvin had left my hair too long; it stood out about my face so that I looked, I don't know whether like a church-window saint or a football player.

"You must cut my hair shorter," I said, decidedly. "It looks ridiculous!"

I flung my torch back into the fire, and took my seat again. Kelvin looked deeply offended.

"Ridiculous?" he echoed. "Now that only shows that you have never had a really fashionable hair-cut before. What do you back-country people know about style, anyway?"—he snapped his scissors toward me in wrathful derision. "Besides, I had to leave it long, or my cap won't fit you," he added, critically. "Your head is too small."

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I had no spirit or interest to insist upon my point, and he said he would see to my breakfast.

"If you will make a bundle of these skirts here, I will bury it," he said as he left the room.

"And put in that hair, too, will you? We can't have that sort of thing around for Aunt Leni to see when she comes to sweep the room."

He went out, and I obeyed. As I gathered up my hair I felt a pang of self-pity. It had been my one excuse for vanity. I thought of my loved ones, and drew out a long lock to keep for them. In the valise I found a handkerchief in which I wrapped my keep-sake, and thrust it into the pocket of my coat. When Kelvin called me I had the bundle ready for him.

"So now you are a sham member of a sham shooting party; a unique reality!" said he as he led me back into the other room. "Your disguise is perfect. We will act on the assumption that you would rather have it ignored and throw yourself into the rôle. Will you accept a boy's name?"

I assented, very indifferent as to that. It was not my intention to submit to anything very long; I expected to get away before they had fairly established their mode of taking care of me. As I sat down in the chair which Kelvin

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placed for me, I took a close and eager survey of the room, its various exits and the distance to each. I was not bold enough, however, to contemplate a dash for liberty with Kelvin over me. Serving my breakfast from the hearth where the dishes stood warm he often had his face averted; but his turning was always quick and unexpected. I sat very still.

"Now, Jack, if there is any comfort in good coffee, you shall have it," he said, with a certain bustling kindness, as he poured it out for me. "Help yourself to the sugar—and can you use condensed milk? I am sorry there is no meat; this is Flintville steak. I don't call it meat, but we have found it edible. Aunt Leni has been pounding it. Here are eggs. You see, we haven't had much time to kill any birds, but it is necessary to give the impression that we get plenty, so our servants eat the few we do bring in."

This cool reference to their outrageous deception provoked my wrath. I looked up at him and he read my thoughts.

"I am afraid I don't succeed in enlisting your sympathy," he said with a mockery of concern which went far to upset my gravity, indignant and miserable as I was.

"If you disapprove of our course in general,"

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he continued in an injured tone, as if the suspicion that I could disapprove hurt him exceedingly—"if you withhold us your moral support in our difficulties, you must at least appreciate the patience and ingenuity we display in the details of our enterprise. Busy as I am, I shall take time to-day to send off a heavy package by express, of the specific gravity of game, and marked accordingly."

I was still at my breakfast when there were heavy steps in the hall, and the dark-bearded man they called Dan, the one that had watched Murray's window and afterward ridden away on the white pony, came into the room. His boots were muddy as if he had been in the black muck of the swamps. He nodded silently in answer to Kelvin's greeting, came forward and gave me a stare.

"Breakfast, Mr. Kelvin?" he growled.

Then he sat down at the table opposite me and fell to eating heartily, using his knife to convey the great pieces of batter-bread to his mouth. I quickly overcame my first spasm of embarrassment. It was plain that the man did not recognize me.

"As soon as you have eaten, Dan, you are to go back to Potterstown," said Kelvin as he waited on him.

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Dan muttered that he had seen Colonel Tarr and got his orders.

"I understand you have made quite a night of it?" asked Kelvin, encouragingly.

"I ain't been travellin' around in a hack," he replied, sententiously.

"What is your opinion of the situation as things stand now?" asked Kelvin. "Are you as full of hope as Colonel Tarr?"

"I don't see how we can fail to nab him if we have the time," said Dan. "There ain't so many things he could have done. There's Nunley's house and there's the swamps and he's got to go to the settlements to get some-
thin' to eat. We're sure of him—if we have the time."

"Time is just what we have plenty of," observed Kelvin, coolly, and my blood fairly boiled with wrathful impatience.

"I guess that's right," said Dan.

Kelvin went to one of the windows and threw it open for the fresh, sweet morning air to stream into the room. At the same time Dan arose with his empty coffee-cup and moved to the hearth.

"I can wait on myself, Mr. Kelvin," he growled as the other came back. "You and him had better be gettin' under way," and he

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noded backward toward me. Then lowering his voice to an audible whisper—"I suppose this here kid is another detective?"

Kelvin grinned joyously.

"Of course," he returned. "Better look out for him, Dan; as you say yourself, detectives are risky. You never know whom they are after."

Dan muttered something, and when he came back to the table and sat down he met my eye.

His look was one of disapprobation.

"Look here, young feller, we ain't hirin' you to sit around any longer than it takes to eat your meals," he said, intolerantly.

"Mind your own business, Dan; we've got our orders," said Kelvin, with composure. "We've been told to keep camp."

His little joke, however, was to cost him dear.

"Oh, that's it," said Dan, in a tone of comprehension. "You two are to stay nigh the boat?"

"You mean to keep the ship," said Kelvin, quickly; and then, fearing to risk further disclosures, he came out with the truth: "This is no detective, Dan. This is our prisoner; the one we took last night."

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He dropped his knife and fork, gazed at me a moment with a wild dismay, then tumbled to his feet and made for the door with awkward haste.

"Sit down!" roared Kelvin; but the man's nerve was completely upset and he bolted out. A grim amusement possessed me to the exclusion of all other feelings. Kelvin's quickness about "the boat" had not saved their secret. I now knew their proposed route of retreat when their hunt should be over, and my knowledge of their arrangements was fairly complete. The Henderson house was but a short distance from the swift-flowing river. Through the lonely forests and silent swamps they expected to make a perfectly secret passage to the gulf. That was the route by which the wounded man had been conveyed away. It was their one way out of the country, and a very excellent way—had no one known it. But now I knew it, and as soon as I escaped I could make sure of their arrest and punishment.

Upon further musing I felt an inconsequent regret that the attack had failed, that I had frustrated the business. What a deal of time and money the preparations had cost! "Several cool thousands!" Kelvin had called it. What mutual devotion among the gang! They had

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acted on their leader's quick scheme of violence as one man. Apparently for friendship's sake they were dragged into danger and dishonor without hesitation or reproach. I knew without analysis that the cause was Colonel Tarr's, though they all seemed bound in a common hatred of the Irishman. What a blind fury!—but what consummate daring! And the accident of my presence in the house that night, and now the chance intelligence that I had gained about their boat, were to ruin them?

I sat lost in thought, my head in my hand, while Kelvin moved silently about, now to one side, now to the other of me, putting the room to rights. Once he went to the door and gave some orders to George in the hall, and I heard considerable movement about the house, particularly in the room above me. Thus it chanced that I had no warning of the coming of Thomas until he burst in upon us. Our meeting was decidedly unpleasant.

He was hot from 'his ride, and looked worn with impatience and weariness; a tall, graceful fellow of fair complexion, tawny mustache, and choleric blue eyes. I was startled to confront his glare of animosity. Then Kelvin stepped up and gently removed the hat he still kept on his head. Thomas flushed angrily.

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"I am ordered to treat you like a boy," he said to me in a rude and exasperated tone.

His address irritated me beyond any feeling of constraint.

"I understand that, sir," I answered, with spirit. "And I have agreed to it. Pray don't let my presence inconvenience you. Keep on your hat."

It stung, as I meant it should, and he turned away, still angry, but abashed. After that he gave me no further notice, unless the profound irritation of his every word and gesture was meant to convey that he thought me a great nuisance. I ought to have been glad of this attitude in one of my captors. A strong desire to see the camp cleared of me argued well for my future.

Thomas ate hastily and silently as Dan had done, giving Kelvin but curt and scanty replies to all his questions about the night's work. When he rose from the table I looked up and saw him take game-bag and shot-gun as Colonel Tarr had done that morning. Kelvin gave him some letters and directions to George for mailing them.

"I can't call him in here till Harry has bullied him a little," he explained, and I understood that it was a question as to how my presence

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was to be explained to the negro. "Harry left me without sufficient directions. I wish you would send him home."

"Send him home?" snarled Thomas; "he'll send me to——," and he left us.

"This life is beginning to tell on that boy's manners," said Kelvin, mournfully. He stood before the hearth and lit his pipe, then puffed the blue clouds about him in silence a few moments, while he eyed me dubiously.

"I want you to take a more hopeful view of your situation," he said at length, in a kindly tone. "At the rate they have been covering the ground there won't be a stone left unturned—or shall I say log, since there are no stones in this country?—before many hours."

I dropped my eyes again, and sat mute. After another long survey he asked me suddenly whether I knew Dr. Nunley.

"Slightly," I answered, looking up in surprise.

"I only know him slightly, myself. I wish I knew him better," said Kelvin, pleasantly. "I fancy the doctor and I should be congenial."

He looked at me keenly as if he meant to say more, but seemed to change his mind, and finished his pipe in contemplative silence. Then he resumed his brisk and energetic manner, and

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bade me follow him to another room where he had some writing to do. I obeyed with a stir of hope, but as we stepped into the hall he laid his claw-like hand on my arm, and I could only look longingly through the open hall door at the sunny yard, the open gate, and the straight lane beyond.

Kelvin stopped to unlock a door which led from the hall into my prison.

"Aunt Leni's intelligence will be put to the strain to discover why the 'gemman' has his windows nailed up," he observed, genially. "Fortunately she is primed for the unusual. The fact that none of us ever go to bed puzzled her a little, till I told her that in the 'No'th' it is too cold to sleep in winter, and we were all in the habit of moving about a good deal. She has experienced something of the kind in her own well-ventilated cabin, and the explanation satisfies her. What a land this is for the practice and perfection of fraud! I have yet to discover the extravagance that this class of Americans called Africans won't believe about the North."

I had already discovered that Kelvin usually had a definite meaning to convey; in this case he made it plainer.

"The negroes will be of no use to you," he continued easily, as we entered the room oppo-

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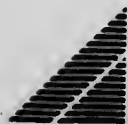
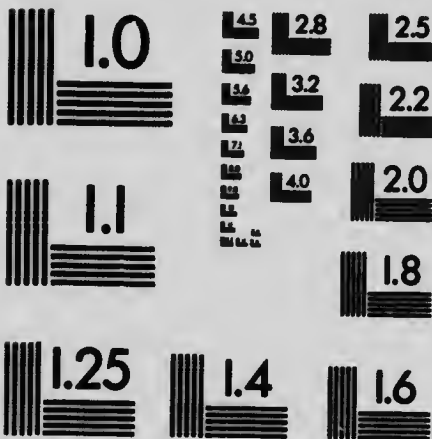
site the one we had left. "It is not to be supposed that they are of any use to us, except as stage-setting. Aunt Leni, you will not have the pleasure of meeting. She only appears for a few hours every day to draw her salary, and to partake of refreshment in the kitchen out yonder. We were recommended to her by the Hendersons as being honest and handy; I am sure she finds us handy. As for George, he is devoted to Colonel Tarr with that life-long devotion which a few days of high tips and abusive language will develop in one of his race. Both he and Aunt Leni are madly superstitious, and any attempt on your part to attract their attention would, upon our suggestion, prove you bewitched. I only mention these matters to save you trouble."

I had little hope of getting help from the negroes, none at all by the method of disclosing my identity. If I could pass with George as a member of the camp, it seemed as if I might get a chance to send him home with a message. To this end and to any other which promised escape it was necessary that I should appear entirely subdued, completely resigned to patient endurance. I bowed my head in acquiescence to what Kelvin said and took my seat in the chair he pointed out to me.



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This room was bare, and, to judge by the torn wall-paper and tumbled-in chimney, unused by the Hendersons. The strangers had brought in a few chairs and a table with writing materials. Newspapers, opened and unopened, strewed the floor.

Kelvin kindled a small fire, though the sunny room scarcely needed it, handed me some papers and a magazine, then sat down and began to write busily. I had no mind to read, but sat in dull misery, watching his hurrying pen. Upon each occasion of sealing, directing, and stamping his letters—all of which appeared to be short communications—he had some information for me, usually touched with nonsense.

"I have to write to one of our agents and accomplices in a good many different places," he said, showing me a handful of envelopes. "All these are to the same man. If he's not in one place this will strike him in another. We have to be thorough, and we can't afford to lose any time. I'm sure, if you had occasion to know our work better you would be brought to a sympathetic appreciation of our ingenuity and despatch."

"Have you many agents?" I asked, involuntarily. From their talk about detectives I had come to the conclusion that they hired men for

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their evil work who had no personal interest in Colonel Tarr's cause, whatever that might be; and it occurred to me that the man I had wounded, being such a one, might have died without disturbing these hard and reckless men. If he was dead, I had killed him. The apprehension turned me faint.

"We have several," Kelvin readily answered my question, "several agents, here and there on the railroads, charged with looking out for our friend. Yes, yes, we have been very thorough. When you appreciate how much we have done, you won't blame us for the inconvenience we have caused yourself. Your detention is a slight but essential link in the chain of our enterprise. The enterprise must move on; there is a good deal involved, you know," he nodded toward me with an air of confiding in me, "and you have put us back. I am sure you meant no harm, but you have really put us back."

It struck me that there was something horrible in the way in which the shedding of the human blood was passed over in all of this. A dread question rose to my lips and died there; and I looked at Kelvin with mute appeal.

He misunderstood my expression.

"You know that I am the tool and the slave of another," he hastened to say. "If you are

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going to plead, I must really refer you to Colonel Tarr. Not that I can encourage you to that measure," he added, with decision. "Colonel Tarr is not amenable to reasonable persuasion. I confess it with shame, for I was his tutor, and tried to bring him up in the way he should go."

Kelvin sighed, took up a clean sheet of paper, and dipped his pen in the ink.

"I think I had a right to expect far, far better results," he murmured half to himself, as he began to write.

His note was but a few words: as he folded it he resumed his subject.

"He left me to live in the tropics, where he first formed the pernicious habit of turning night into day," he explained to me as to one who was sure to sympathize in his regret. (If Kelvin had given deep study to the question as to how I could be reanimated and made to forget my troubles he could not have done better than with this extravagance.) "You must not judge him harshly," he said with a sigh. "Colonel Tarr has a mild, sweet nature; but he knows what he wants with great clearness, and he goes after it till he gets it—and you really must not get into his way."

Clear hot rage swept my gloom away. I felt a sort of exultation in the thought of how thor-

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oughly I had got in the way of this high-handed breaker of the law. Surely it was worth some suffering to bring such a man to justice! At the same time my heart warmed toward Kelvin: his satire of himself and his friend argued some soundness. Some of his jokes, I thought, had been pretty good. He stood by his friend's acts, but he exposed him mercilessly.

Lunch was spread in the other room when Kelvin took me back: evidently George had been there. In my own room I heard the sound of the broom. Kelvin gave me a seat at the table with my back toward my own door and I understood what he meant by it. When Aunt Leni suddenly flung the door open behind me I commanded myself not to turn around.

"Oh, Mr. Kelvin, please sah, kain't I git Br. George t' open dese yere windows? Dey's stuck so I kain't move 'em."

"That's all right, Aunt Leni," said Kelvin, easily. "Do your best by firelight. In the North we don't have windows to our bed-rooms. It's too cold, you know. So I just nailed these up to feel more at home. You see, don't you?"

"Oh, ye-es!" exclaimed the negress in a tone of mingled surprise and conviction, and she slammed the door to again. To me the event was somewhat discouraging. I felt no great ap-

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petite for lunch, and the hope of immediate escape that had upheld me all the morning began to weaken. With the alert Kelvin there would be no chance. I sat in moody silence awhile. Then I remembered that my other door was unlocked. Would Kelvin remember that? I rose and asked permission to go into my room. Kelvin granted it reluctantly.

"You won't be any more comfortable in that dark hole," he protested, but he took up a few pieces of firewood and carried them into the other room. While he placed them and kindled them I stood in an agony of hesitation as to whether to try the dash for liberty. It is well my spirit failed, for Kelvin would surely have caught me. He had not forgotten the unlocked door, alas! Before he left me he went quietly over and attended to it, slipping the key into his pocket.

I sank into a chair, ready to cry with disappointment.

"It is very gloomy in here; you had better come out again," said my jailer, with a sincere solicitude. "There is no use in making the worst of the situation. Sunlight and fresh air will help you keep your courage up."

I shook my head, and motioned him away; but after he had gone out and closed the door I

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came to realize how truly he had spoken. The semi-darkness of the room was really oppressive; and when I piled the fire high so as to have a cheerful light, it grew hot, and I began to feel feverish. Each window, with its solid blank shutters behind the small panes, was a dim mirror in which moved a strange and restless figure. The sense of lost identity grew and weighed me down. Dead to my own world, in a strange and hated disguise, locked in a hideous room with the one tormenting thought of how my loved ones were at that moment grieving—the situation appeared to me unbearable. Alternately, I paced the floor or threw myself moaning upon the bed; the hours crept slowly by, and I wore my passion out. Then, as I lay still and tired awhile, wondering whether I should die from the rigor of this confinement, I saw that the sun's rays were sifted slantingly through the cracks on the western side of my room. What, was it already evening? Was I to spend another night so? Was the man's word that I should be held till his wicked course was run actually to be fulfilled? I roused myself again to action, this time with a sense of desperate resolve. Kelvin should let me go—I would plead, I would implore him, I would kneel on the ground and pray; and if he remained ob-

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durate I would defy him, yes, I would even fight ! I would seize one of their shotguns——

The light had changed in the other room ; the late afternoon sun was on the outer world, and on the hearth the fire was dying.

Kelvin, who was at the table, had sprung up as I suddenly entered, and the look on his face was one of alarm. I thought for one triumphant moment that he was intimidated by my frenzy of resolution, but I was speedily undeceived.

"Why, what is the matter, Jack?" he demanded, stepping toward me. "Have you had a fright. That confounded dark hole!"

Before I could answer I was aware of another person in the room. Colonel Tarr turned slowly in the window where he stood, and though the light fell so that his face was obscured I could feel his look, and half involuntarily moved back to my door.

"Wait a moment," he commanded, and I stood still. "I have something to ask you."

"Not just now, Harry," said Kelvin, decidedly. "Jack is not feeling well. Open the window there, and get some fresh water."

It was a strange sensation to be the object of these people's solicitous attention. The window was flung open, I was put into an armchair,

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Kelvin took the glass of water from the other, and offered it to me with a kind word. I was taken aback, entirely subdued. The scene with the shotgun I had just rehearsed in my imagination appeared totally impracticable, not to say absurd.

"Are you all right now, Jack? You had a scary dream, hadn't you?" asked Kelvin, cheerfully. "I thought just now when you appeared that you had seen a ghost."

Thus was interpreted the pallor which had attended my dangerous mood. My case looked suddenly as pitiful as it seemed hopeless, and I closed my eyes with a sense of having beaten my wings to pieces against my bars, and all to no avail.

"Leave him alone a few minutes; he will be all right," said Kelvin, kindly. The two men turned their backs upon me, and stepped to the open window. What they said so startled and interested me that I was torn out of the contemplation of my woes.

"You think, Harry, that McGuire robbed the Perrys, and for that reason you are sure that he can't seek the protection of the law against us, even though he knows we burnt the house?"

"That is my idea of the situation."

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"But tell me about the robbery. How do you know?"

"The facts speak for themselves. Some months ago Mr. Perry was unaccountably and very cleverly robbed of a considerable sum of money. McGuire was in the house, in the full confidence of the family; he had succeeded, by Dr. Nunley's aid, in making everyone believe he was unable to leave his bed; he had presumably already completed his two trap-doors—or rather holes in the floor, as Thomas described them—which he, of course, had prepared for the event of our assault, but which he could use at any time to get about the house or out-of-doors unknown to the family. Do you doubt that he stole the money?"

"Oh, there's no doubt in the world about that," returned Kelvin. "He was no man to let slip so glorious an opportunity for mischief. I should have hated myself to have all the trouble of secret and silent work at night, and then have no occasion to use my pretty arrangement except for the remote event of having to give you the slip once more."

"He knew better than to regard my coming as a remote event," returned Colonel Tarr, with a fierce and ugly little laugh.

"Still, Harry, the whole business is a very

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creditable piece of imaginative construction," argued Kelvin, easily. "I must regret that his skill and cunning are to be lost to the world."

"The cunning may be largely the doctor's," said Colonel Tarr, thoughtfully. "I believe it is."

"I trust you are wrong, Harry, I trust you are wrong," said Kelvin, in a tone of disapproval. "I don't like the way in which you speak of Dr. Nunley. We know nothing against the doctor beyond the first piece of humbuggery."

"Don't we, indeed? Has Geoffrey told you that the hole in the lower floor from which he got out under the house was in a locked closet? Yes? I saw a servant of the house to-day. She says that closet was Mr. Murray's, that he had a number of his things there."

"The devil she did! A paralytic with his things in a closet on the lower floor!"

"That's the point, that's the whole point I am making. It proves Dr. Nunley an accomplice. He had the key to that closet, the woman said, and went there often to get things for his patient. There was no closet in the upper room, so Dr. Nunley had particularly asked for the use of this one. He always did some waiting on his patient when he made him a professional

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visit. He was certainly a party to that robbery—I think we have them both."

"Yes! If we could get hold of them, we should certainly have them both," Kelvin agreed, cheerfully.

"At any rate, it settles the question as to whether they can be driven far enough to show fight, and threaten us with exposure. They have too much to fear themselves at the hands of the law."

"I suppose so," said Kelvin, and he shook his head in wonder. "How he could have been such an ass! To rob the people on whose protection he absolutely depended! Well, I should not complain, for it makes it all very plain sailing for us."

Colonel Tarr turned and looked at me.

"Plain sailing," he assented, "and nothing to fear!"

Was this meant for my ears in particular? Were these men so certain they could successfully hide me till their lawless course was run? Involuntarily I rose and steadied myself to speak. It occurred to me that by this time he must know my name and connection; and I was going to begin my protest with a reference to my uncle, who was a man to be respected and not to be injured with impunity. He was be-

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fore me, addressing me with a question before I found my words.

"Can you tell me what sum of money McGuire took from your neighbor, Mr. Perry?" he asked.

"I am not inclined to help you," I answered, coldly.

"But I only ask you to save time, which is as much to your interest as to mine," said he.

"I am not dependent on you for information."

"That's well for you," I said stubbornly, and turned away.

"Isn't it rather inappropriate for you to withstand me on such a point, considering your situation?" he inquired, in a slightly threatening tone. That was the sort of thing that my friend Kelvin would not permit. He stepped up beside me.

"Will you begin with thumb-screws, Harry?" he inquired, sarcastically.

"I shall have to begin by pitching you out of the window," said Colonel Tarr, with a sudden softness of voice I had heard once before.

"I should suggest something of the kind, if only to let off your surplus energy," said the extutor composedly. "There is no need here of strong language or threats of any kind. Jack is

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perfectly reasonable when anything is explained. I explained fully the reason we detain him and you see him cheerful and resigned. Explain to him now why we need to know the sum of money with which McGuire is probably provided—let him see that it will aid us in estimating how far he might have got away, or how far he is dependent on Dr. Nunley, and you will get a pleasant and intelligent answer, I am sure."

There was something decidedly winning about Kelvin's way of putting things. For the moment I had a pleasing sense of community of interest with the gang. After all, why shouldn't they catch McGuire? The Irishman was certainly as bad as could well be.

"Perhaps he had money enough to buy a horse and do a little bribing on his own part," suggested Kelvin to me. "In that case he may have got out of the neighborhood even while we were occupying ourselves with your comfort for the drive."

I made a rapid calculation, for I had the data they wanted, and as the result looked promising I told them what they asked.

"Deducting what he has since paid back for board, that leaves him still enough," said Kelvin. "If he remains in the neighborhood it is

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a matter of sentiment rather than of necessity."

"You're wrong," said Colonel Tarr. "He had to divide that money he stole with the doctor."

"Harry, I am afraid that you do that gentleman a grave injustice," said Kelvin, reproachfully.

"Dr. Nunley has been in straits very lately, as I have ascertained," said Colonel Tarr, with a little weariness in his voice. "He has had several notes to meet this winter. I am certain that he met them with Mr. Perry's money. There is no doubt that he is an accomplished rascal. He's been about the ruins all day lamenting the loss of the Irishman with dignified moderation and that of Miss Harlowe with lofty sentiment. Not a word of doubt as to their fate, not a motion toward a search or an investigation!"

"You see, Jack, your friend, the doctor, is really not worthy to retain your respect," Kelvin argued, as if I had been warmly defending Dr. Nunley. "You might say for him that he believes you murdered, either by McGuire or by McGuire's enemies—and I suppose that is a sort of excuse for his letting the matter rest; but you must see that your return to life would

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mean his ruin. I don't want you to repose any trust in him."

Nevertheless, I believed in the doctor and in my ultimate rescue through him. He of all the world was the one who knew I might still be alive. Whether openly or in secret he would find me out. Perhaps at this very moment he was confessing his fraud for my sake; very likely he would tell my uncle only and they would come that night.

Colonel Tarr took his hat from the table.

"You haven't told me what news you got of the guests at the Flintville hotel," he said to Kelvin.

"I couldn't persuade Thomas or Dan to show themselves in town. They are so modest they hate to attract the least notice; but I sent George in and he brought a most honorable list. The only strangers are four respectable lumber merchants who came in a body on the midnight train last night and left again for Pensacola today. McGuire was not among them for Allan's man would have seen him at Clayton, the first station."

"Of course he couldn't have introduced himself in Flintville where the Perrys are and doubtless many others that know him," said Colonel Tarr, half to himself.

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I thought that for one who had gone so far as to ascertain the condition of Dr. Nunley's finances he was here taking too much for granted. Murray was not known in Flintville except to the Perrys; but these men were evidently sure of their ground, and I trusted them for being thorough even where it looked to me as if they were neglecting something.

All this while we stood together in the middle of the room, quite like comrades in consultation. I almost forgot I was a prisoner. Nevertheless I was rather surprised when Colonel Tarr asked me coolly whether I had been out of the house that day?

"We have been so busy," Kelvin explained, with an air of apology; "that is to say, I have been busy and, naturally, Jack didn't care to go for a walk alone."

"That is all right," said Colonel Tarr, quietly; "he can go with me now."

Kelvin murmured something inaudible. I think it was a warning to Colonel Tarr that my mind was bent on escape. He paid no heed to it, handed me a cap from a peg on the wall, and motioned me to precede him into the hall.

"You couldn't live if you were kept in all the time," he said, with a very just perception, I thought, of the misery of my situation. The

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breath of evening air in the open hall revived my hopes ; as we crossed the threshold to the piazza I made a vow never again to enter that house alive.

We were high enough to get a broad view over yellow broom-sedge and golden brown fields toward sunset. The air was spiced with the scent of the pines at evening, and it was warm as spring.

Two bird-dogs were tied to the piazza railing. They greeted us with yelps and whining complaints. Colonel Tarr paused on the steps, and looked at them thoughtfully.

"I am glad I don't understand what those dogs are saying about us," he murmured. "They really have a case against me. Every day we go out with guns, and we never fire a shot."

Here was another just perception ; I looked at the man with surprise, and the dawning of a new kind of interest. His was an expressive face, and at that moment when he met my eyes with a forced steadiness it seemed very easy to read, a sort of a reckless humor fraught with a certain shame and pain. Clearly he, like his friend, Kelvin, was clever enough to see his position in several lights. Then how dared he persist ? What gave him the resolution for his shameful course ? If his sense and taste and wit

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were set against it, what power prevailed in the man to keep him in that course? He was passionate, and his was an errand of revenge; he was obstinate, and he had deeply involved himself; he was arrogant, and had made laws for himself. Perhaps, with all of this, he had some profound cause for unhappiness which made him reckless of life and reputation. Often as his face was cleared, still its abiding expression was morose. This was the man that sooner or later I was to bring to justice! Should I not understand him first?

"George!" he called, as we descended the steps. The negro came hurrying around the corner of the house. "George, what have you tied those dogs up for? Let them run around."

"Cunnel, dey's gwine t' run home sho'," protested the negro. "I neber seen sich no 'count——"

He caught sight of me, his voice died away, he stood and stared in blank stupidity.

"What is the matter, George?" inquired Colonel Tarr, sternly. "Haven't you seen Mr. Ball since he was shaved?"

Ball! That was the name of the man I had wounded, and who had been so strangely hurried into oblivion. A detective! A horrid little detective who used bad English, and had a

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grievance against me, and I stood here representing him! I felt affronted, and I felt dismayed. It seemed to put me into an inextricable relation to the gang. But this was no occasion for a spoken protest, and I merely looked black and stood still. George meanwhile was making a gurgling sound in his throat, expressive of extreme embarrassment. He seemed to be trying to speak, but his words would not come at first. At last he could exclaim :

"I 'clar I didn't recognize 'twas Mr. Ball, his hyar done growed so."

Colonel Tarr frowned, and his frown was not a thing to be regarded lightly. George fairly cowered before the glare of his eyes.

"Are you sure?" he demanded, threateningly. "Are you sure that his hair is longer than it was yesterday?"

"No, sah," George responded, with alacrity and conviction. "No, sah, hit's jes' about de same. He doan 'pear to hab changed any no-how."

"Very good! Then don't let us hear any more about it or you will get into trouble, George. You know Mr. Ball won't stand any nonsense."

Nor would I have stood this comedy in any character whatsoever, except that there was

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something in Colonel Tarr's decision that impressed me with a sense of utter helplessness. I turned aside abruptly to hide a sudden rising of angry tears.

"We are going out together," Colonel Tarr continued to the man. "If anyone calls to see either of us, tell him to come again to-morrow."

This somewhat cheered me. Why should not somebody come to call on me, indeed? And in that case how absolute my oppressor's embarrassment, how assured his conviction, and my escape!

"And now untie these dogs, George, and if they run home, go after them and bring them back. You haven't enough to do to keep you busy."

It seemed a vast pity, in that case, that I could not send the negro upon an errand of my own. An opportunity for that might, perhaps, arise in spite of Kelvin's assurance to the contrary; but then I expected to get home myself before nightfall.

"Come on, Jack, I am ready," said Colonel Tarr to me, and with bent head and feverish thoughts I followed him to the gate of the yard.

"I am exceedingly sorry to expose you to this sort of thing," he said in a lowered tone as he opened the gate for me to pass through.

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"You do not have to do it," I answered, with a decided tremble in my voice, and as I still further lowered my head I think he mistook my mood, and thought I was on the brink of tears.

"I do have to," he returned, with a sort of helpless irritation. "Given the situation, there is no other way of handling the servants."

"Given the situation," indeed! In silence and wrath I set my teeth, and kept my eyes on the ground.

"Jack, I am speaking to you. I want you to look up," he commanded sharply, after waiting a moment for my reply.

"What do you want?" I demanded defiantly, raising my eyes to his, with an effort that required some bravery.

"I want you to see that there is no proportion in this show of displeasure," he said, more gently, and I found his look very easy to bear after all. "I have managed this scene about as awkwardly as well could be," he continued, with real chagrin. "I have absolutely no talent for detail. But if great things are scored against me, such a light offence should be forgiven."

"Nothing can be forgiven," I answered, passionately. "Nothing—great or small."

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A curious expression flashed over his face, and he fell into that soft and quiet tone of his which it was not easy to understand.

"We shall see as to that," he said; "it may not be a matter left for your decision. Forgiveness is usually—involuntary."

I was appalled at this piece of boldness; as for him, his face had greatly darkened, and he led off the walk with a quick stride which bespoke profound irritation. I kept up with him perforce, for—alas!—he had taken me by the arm without apology. My hope for escape sank low awhile; but as the fresh air and rapid motion revived me my spirits rose again, and I began to calculate somewhat upon Colonel Tarr's absent-mindedness. Without examining my grounds for believing it, I thought it would be just like him to forget me, and let me go; or to take me out on the public road where a dozen chances for my rescue might arise. What though my own people were to-day all shut up in a house of mourning, there would be passers-by who would serve me just as well. Dr. Nunley might be about, spying on his and McGuire's enemies, trying to ascertain if I were still alive.

We passed out of the long lane with the high rail-fence on either side — "horse-high, pig-tight, and bull-strong," as the law requires—

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into an open broom-sedge field of rising ground through which the sandy road wound upward to a thicket of oldfield pine. Beyond, I knew, ran the public highway. On both sides were woods, hardly near enough to tempt me to a run, though so thick as to promise some chance of escape if I could reach them. Vastly interested in all these features, I looked to the left and right and it was I who first saw Thomas approach us; and I did not welcome the sight. Colonel Tarr did not perceive him till he gave a whistling signal. Then we stopped and, to my great delight, his hand dropped from my arm. I dared not move away, but stood trembling with excitement, waiting till the two men should be engaged with each other.

Thomas was a most picturesque and unsuspecting figure as he came toward us with his gun under his arm and his dog at his heels. He scowled when he recognized me, but to my great surprise made a feint at raising his hat.

"All right?" asked Colonel Tarr, without greeting.

"All right!" returned the other briefly.

I guessed this to be a report concerning the boat, for Thomas came from the direction of the river.

Colonel Tarr gave some directions about the

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night's hunt in Brandon swamp, directions so curt and condensed that I did not well understand them. Thomas objected to something and spoke of Dr. Nunley.

"The doctor doesn't believe McGuire is alive," said Colonel Tarr, decidedly. "He is going peacefully about his business."

"It's his business now to lead us on a false scent," insisted Thomas. "He may have circulated that report of the man in the swamp himself. The negroes can't name anyone who is supposed to have seen him. And don't you see, Harry, if McGuire is in hiding there he wouldn't have had to show himself several times as yet, just to get food. Depend upon it, he would lie low and starve for twenty-four hours before he showed himself at any settlement. And now he is supposed to have been seen at three separate ones. There hasn't been time."

Colonel Tarr stood as one lost in thought, Thomas had his back almost turned toward me. Very, very lightly and softly I moved back from them. Neither observed me.

"Do you know that newly cut road east of the swamp, beyond the turpentine distillery?" inquired Colonel Tarr.

Thomas shook his head.

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"It runs—look here—here is the river——"

He dropped on one knee in the sandy road to sketch a map with his finger, and Thomas stooped to see. I was off in a flash and ran as I never ran in my life. They saw me, they called, and Thomas was after me. I got as far as the road, but on the whole long stretch of it not a wagon was in sight. Then I stopped, having no mind to repeat my experience of the night before. Thomas came up red and breathless and angry.

"What's this for?" he snarled. "Aren't you making us enough trouble without these extras?"

"I shouldn't have troubled you at all if there had been anyone on the road," I returned, panting.

He glanced rather apprehensively up and down it.

"Well, come along back," he commanded, rather nervously. I was in no hurry to obey him.

"You'll have to wait till I am rested," I said, still looking longingly for rescue.

"The devil I will," he said, hotly, and he seized me unceremoniously by the collar of my coat. "March!"

I fought him off in a frenzy of indignation,

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whereat he quite lost the remnant of his temper and shook me as if I were a truant schoolboy. Colonel Tarr came up then and thundered at him to let me go; and then we three confronted one another, one as angry as the other. Colonel Tarr cooled instantly, however.

"Geoffrey, you will get us all into more trouble than you can understand if you won't control your violent temper," he said, sternly. "You know we are in hourly, in momentary danger of being caught, and you ought to realize that any insult here would be fearfully avenged. You will apologize for your roughness."

"Hanged if I will," snarled Thomas. As I looked at his handsome, sullen face my anger suddenly gave way to an irresistible amusement. He was the naughty boy who had slapped a little girl, and here was the threatening master ordering penitence. Moreover, after the first shock of it was over, I approved of the rough and ready way in which I had been seized. At least it harmonized with my costume. As for the shaking, Colonel Tarr, who called it insult, had handled me much worse the night before when Kelvin had come to my rescue.

"I don't want any apology," I said to Thomas, steadying my voice against my desire

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to laugh. "I should have come when you told me. It was very foolish in me to resist, and I deserved to be shaken."

Colonel Tarr looked at me with astonishment.

"Here seems to be something that is forgiven!" he murmured.

"I won't be forgiven," said Thomas, angrily. "I did what I had to."

"You are forgiven," I said, disdainfully, "just because you are nothing but a tool."

"All right. Just remember that, will you?" he said, with an unexpected turn of gravity and quiet.

"I am to understand that the responsibility for this occurrence is laid to my door?" inquired Colonel Tarr.

"I guess you'll have to shoulder it," growled Thomas, and then he said to me very bluntly but very honestly:

"If I hurt you, I am sorry. That's all I can say," and then, as if his injured feelings must have a vent once more, he added quickly. "But you ought to try to make us as little trouble as possible."

At this Colonel Tarr openly smiled, and I—was I mad?—smiled, too, and our eyes met. The world darkened after that. I walked back to the camp between the two silent men in a

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daze of trouble. He was an incendiary and his implacable enemy, and yet we had had an instant's understanding. Like my "forgiveness," which he had so audaciously claimed for the future, it had been—involuntary.

CHAPTER III

REX TO THE RESCUE

THAT night I reviewed the hours of my captivity, and I saw a dozen opportunities for escape that I might have seized with a greater impulse of courage or a greater play of cunning. The second day, I thought, would surely offer me more chances if I made the most of my "membership" and stayed in the dining-room. If regular out-door exercise was among my privileges, and if there was any increase in the laxity with which I was guarded, the fault must lie in me if I did not manage to slip away, or else send a message home. Nothing could be done in my dark room; I had to go quietly out to my breakfast when Kelvin called me.

The room was as sunny and smoke-scented as the other morning. I surprised myself by thinking it was pleasant. My first hours, however, were not to be very comfortable. Friendly little Kelvin went off to join the others, and the scowling Thomas was left to be my jailer. He waited on me conscientiously while I ate, but his watchful glare was not calculated to fur-

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ther my enjoyment of the meal. In fact, he took his duty of guarding me so heavily that it was certain he could not long hold out at the post. His impatient nature would not stand the strain. Dan, the timid, slow man, would be put to the work and I could stand a chance. Meanwhile, I could make it hard for Thomas by behaving very restlessly. I rose from the table to move my chair out of the sun. Another time I went to the side-board to get myself some water; I asked to have more wood put on the fire, and I went from window to window to look out. His steely blue eyes followed my every motion, his lips were set in cold, hard resolution. If he had dared he would have kept me in my seat at the point of his shot-gun; but he did not dare. I was no more afraid of him than of Kelvin.

"Want anything more?" he asked, gruffly, when I had at last finished my protracted and interrupted breakfast. I shook my head and rose for the dozenth time to pace the room.

"Haven't you had any success yet?" I demanded of him impatiently. "How long does it take to search a swamp a few miles in diameter? I don't believe you know how to look."

"I wish you could have a little taste of the work," he said, with venom. "It's not so pleas-

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ant, and it's not so easy as to get into other people's way."

"It may not be so *pleasant*," I returned, with sarcastic emphasis on the word; "but I'm sure there is nothing hard about what you have to do. I should think you would clean your gun or something and not sit there like a policeman watching me. What harm can I do, going about like this?"

"I'll see that you don't do any," he returned grimly; but the suggestion about the gun seemed to strike him favorably and he brought it forth. I thought this showed a liberal turn of mind and I rewarded him for it by sitting still awhile. An hour must have crept away in our silence; then came a stirring interruption. George, in his cautious and deferential manner, stuck his head in at the door.

"Yere's a gemman say kin he see Mr. Ball?"

Eureka? Help had come!

"What? Where?" exclaimed Thomas, wholly losing his head for a moment.

"He's outside, sah. He say, kin Mr. Ball step out to his buggy?"

"In a minute! Go along and tell him to wait a minute," cried Thomas with joyful relief, and the man disappeared.

We had both sprung up and confronted each

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other. I retreated instinctively before the glare of his eyes. He slowly followed me and drew a strange and frightful looking object from his pocket and showed it to me with his grimed and blackened hands.

"That's a gag," he announced, roughly. "Now go in there;" and he pointed to the door of my room. Then the sight of my terror must have moved him to pity, for he grew red and excited.

"Do you suppose I am enjoying this?" he stormed. "Do you think I have this thing for fun? Give me your word you will keep quiet and of course I won't touch you. I'm not here for my own amusement."

"I will keep quiet," I gasped, really feeling quite faint with fright.

"I know I'm a fool to trust you," he said, in an angry voice, and he let me into my room and locked the door behind me. There I flew to the front windows and tried to listen through sash and shutters to what was said outside. I caught the sound of a vaguely familiar voice, but it was neither lowered in secret communication nor raised in threats. It was probably a caller on business; it could be no one from Dr. Nunley.

I have thought since that I could have been

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justified for breaking the promise that was wrung from me under such a fearful threat; but at the time I was not even tempted to do so. The man, with all his marked dislike of me, had trusted my word, and I kept it faithfully.

The visitor stayed long; when he had finally driven away Thomas came back and unlocked my door. I went out eagerly.

"That fellow knew you," said Thomas. "If you had called out, we should have been done for."

It was not easy to guess whether he spoke to show his appreciation of my faith or scorn for my simplicity. The latter was unnecessary, for I bitterly blamed myself for not setting up a loud cry the instant the visitor was announced. He would certainly have rushed in, and, though Thomas would probably have strangled me by that time, the gang would have been exposed. I never had the useful instinct of screaming. A fright always took my voice away.

"Who was it?" I asked, rather piteously.

"His name is Moody. He brought a setter to sell us. Nice dog. Wouldn't you like to see him?"

"I would," I answered, grateful for this first sign of kindness, and a minute later, led by a cord, in came a friend after all—Rex.

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He knew me at once—Ellen had had him at our camp several weeks—and he came straining toward me, wagging his tail. When Thomas let go his leash he came and laid his pretty brown, head on my knee and asked me questions with his eyes. If he was puzzled at finding me so, I was surprised to see him. Ellen certainly had not concerned herself with selling him or even in giving him back to Moody in these days of her mourning for me. It was more likely that he had been neglected in camp and had run to his old home—though it was not like them to neglect the animals in any sorrow—and Moody, with rather a cold-blooded dishonesty, had taken the first opportunity to sell him again. However that might be, it was a great comfort to have this living thing from home beside me. I sat bent over him, pulling his long, soft ears caressingly and struggling with my tears.

Rex soon grew tired of my monotonous stroking and curled up at my feet to sleep. I held the cord as if he were the one link connecting me with the outer world and fell to scheming as to how I might use him for a messenger. My lunch was served to me where I sat on the great sofa in the corner of the room, and I woke my new-found friend to share it with me. But Rex had a cause for excitement which scarcely

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let him eat. Thomas was preparing to go out with gun and game-bag once more, and the bird-dog whined and yelped with longing for the sport.

"Yes, you can go, old fellow," said Thomas, rather more pleasantly than he was wont to speak to human beings.

"No, he cannot," I exclaimed. "I like to keep him near me."

Thomas made no reply. He was engaged in putting up some sandwiches in a parcel, presumably for his own lunch, and he looked several times at his watch as if impatient to be off. When his relief came at last I was deeply disappointed to find it was Colonel Tarr. It was Dan I had expected; on Dan I had hoped to be able to practise a clever deception.

Colonel Tarr looked discouraged. He and Thomas exchanged a few words concerning the Tallepoochee road. Now that Thomas actually took his hat, Rex interrupted them with loud, excited barks.

"That's a new dog," Thomas explained, as Colonel Tarr turned with a look of annoyance. "I want to take him out with me; but this—ah—Jack wants to keep him."

"Understand, once for all, that Jack is to have what he wants," said Colonel Tarr, impa-

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tiently. "I suppose it makes no difference to you whether you have a dog or a calf along."

"Only for the looks!" returned Thomas, with a grin, and followed by poor Rex's dismal howls he left the room.

It was a long time before I could coax the dog upon the sofa beside me. He slept at last, but dreamed of the hunt denied, and now and then yelped plaintively under my stroking hand. Meanwhile Colonel Tarr stood at the mantel, hastily looking through a large number of letters and papers that had come by that morning's mail. He threw most of the matter into the fire when he had perused it. One envelope fluttered unperceived to the seat of a chair near the hearth. I looked at it longingly. There was a bit of paper and here was Rex, a messenger; if I could obtain a pencil by any means! But would the dog carry anything so small and thin as a note? He was trained to fetch and carry. At least I could try him.

"Have you had lunch, Jack?" asked Colonel Tarr, when he had finished with his letters. "Yes? So early? Would you like something to read?"

He looked over the papers he had unfolded and I saw the Flintville *Trumpet* among them.

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His courteous tone had its effect on me, and I ventured to ask to see that paper.

"You don't want it," he said, very decidedly and shortly. "Here is an illustrated weekly——"

His refusal made me feel very cross, and I declined the proffered sheet with a motion of my hand, averting my face and ignoring his several questions as to my material comfort. He stood quietly a few moments, drumming on the table in an absent-minded manner. George knocked at the door and asked whether he should bring in "de dinnah."

"Yes, come in, George; and hurry up about it, too," he said, with a revival of his hasty and energetic air, and the negro came in to lay the table. Colonel Tarr occupied himself with some writing, sitting near the fire with a book on his knee.

I had been more than irritated at being refused a sight of the newspaper. I had become convinced that there was something in it that it concerned me to know. As George went to and from the side-board it was easy for me to catch his eye; indeed he stole furtive looks at me of his own accord. Suddenly with a commanding gesture I pointed to the *Trumpet*, which still lay on the dining-table where Colo-

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nel Tarr had thrown it. The man obeyed me with a jump which bespoke fear, and as he handed me the paper Colonel Tarr glanced up.

"Bring some more wood in here, George," he commanded; and when the negro had left the room he spoke gravely:

"I meant what I said, Jack. You don't want to see the *Trumpet*. You don't want to see the editorial comments on the heroic death of Kate Harlowe."

I dropped the paper on the floor and the blood rushed to my face. Till that moment I had not realized my position of heroine in the supposed tragedy. Colonel Tarr was certainly right, the *Trumpet's* account of my presumable martyrdom would have been painful reading. It was unendurable to have been misunderstood on that point and I sprang up to take refuge in my own room, there to indulge in some angry tears. My movement set Rex free, and he joyfully bounded for the door. In hastily recapturing him, I forgot all about my embarrassment. Colonel Tarr laughed a little as he came and tied my prisoner to the leg of the sofa for me.

"You are quite right, Jack, not to wish to suffer alone," he said, good-humoredly. "That is the principle that governs my actions also."

Seeing him there on the floor with his back

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to the rest of the room I walked away to the hearth, snatched the empty envelope from the seat of the chair and thrust it deep into my pocket. I even had time to survey the mantelpiece hastily, looking for a pencil before Colonel Tarr turned around ; but even if I had seen one among the disorder of pipes, tobacco-pouches and cartridges, I should not have had time to take it. A moment later George reëntered with the firewood, and I was glad to retire to the corner of my sofa and calm myself after the quick succession of exciting events. I had a fine example of coolness in Colonel Tarr, who took his lunch in leisurely fashion, talking rather pleasantly with George the while. The man waited on him with a spring and grace which betokened devoted respect. At the same time he ventured humbly to criticise Colonel Tarr, as a sportsman.

"You-all ain't got no call t'go so far fo' de birds, and git all tired out," he protested, when the other mentioned he was going toward Potterstown that afternoon. "Dey's a heap o' birds in dese yere ole fields all about, close to de house."

"Haven't you seen the signs up about here, George? We can't shoot on this ground. It's prohibited—against the law."

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"Huh! De law ain't gwine t' tech you-all," said George, contemptuously.

"George, that's an immoral sentiment," said Colonel Tarr, sternly. "Don't let me hear the like from you again."

"Well, I ain't seed no signs," he returned in an injured tone.

"Learn to read, George, learn to read!" advised his employer. "This country is fairly strewn with signs and you don't notice them, simply because you can't read."

The levity of this easy behavior was certainly reprehensible; but I found myself studying Colonel Tarr's face with a growing wonder. Should I ever know what led him into violence and crime? Freely as they all had talked over in my presence the details of their hunt, I had heard never a word of how McGuire had earned their hatred. "I want to see McGuire hanged," Kelvin had put it plainly. "We are not authorized by law," Colonel Tarr had said; and yet as I looked at the quiet face of the man before me, I refused to believe he was bent on murder. Here were intelligence and self-control, and, if I could have admitted it, a certain nobility. I had seen him commit an ineffaceable outrage against the law. To serve his private ends he had burned another's house to the ground, to

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keep his desperate path he had sacrificed me, who stood in his way ; and yet, as I looked and thought, I involuntarily refused to judge him by what I knew.

Rex, unaccustomed to any restraint, was very restless. Colonel Tarr threw him bits of bread to keep him quiet, then rose to fill a dish of water for him. The action commended itself to me. Anyone will throw bread to a dog, but to give him water, argues a certain thoughtfulness.

"Now, Jack, will you go out with me?" he asked when George began to clear the table.

I shook my head. He waited till George had left the room, before he spoke again.

"Kelvin is coming from Potterstown to take the watch," he said. "I thought we could go to meet him and you could come back with him again. It would save a good deal of my time."

I made no reply to this. Certainly if Kelvin was coming, I must get my message off by Rex very soon. Nothing could be done unobserved under that little man's surveillance.

"It is a beautiful day," observed Colonel Tarr, stepping to the window and looking out. "Clear and warm ; and a sky to make one forget this earth and all its troubles."

I felt the exceeding weariness of my impris-

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onment and my eyes sought the outer world longingly.

"I am going to take a short cut across those woods over there," he continued, genially, "right up the branch through the evergreen laurel. It is a most enticing thicket. Anyone lost in that would be most difficult to find."

This was almost too transparent; but building on his evident impatience to be off, I ventured to suggest that he should lock me up in my room until Kelvin came.

"With George and Aunt Leni and I don't know how many stray darkies besides in the kitchen and visitors likely to come any minute?" he asked with a comprehensive smile. "No, I think I won't do that."

He flung himself into a chair opposite me with a resigned air and began to fill his pipe.

"We will sit it out," he murmured.

I looked at Rex hesitatingly and at my door.

"I should not permit you to retire," he said, quickly. "If I have to stay in camp on your account, you will have to keep me company."

I considered what might happen if I defied him. As far as his words were a command they were empty. He had no means of enforcing it. But if I once retired in this way it

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would be immeasurably difficult to come out of my close-barred room again on any pretext whatsoever. There was nothing for it but to ignore this piece of audacity and to sit still. With my face turned to the window, I reflected with bitterness upon this waste of my precious time. Kelvin would be coming presently; was Colonel Tarr going to sit facing me with nothing to do until then?

"I am curious to know why you won't go out, Jack," he persisted. "You would certainly be relieved and distracted by the walk. Besides that, you know that every minute I save is taken off your durance here. If this is malice on your part, it is very blind."

There was no answer to this, tormented as I was. I still ignored him.

"If you think I don't enjoy this, you are mightily mistaken," he said, easily, and he struck a match and deliberately lit his pipe. After a moment he resumed his theme. "It is largely for your sake that I have gone without quiet smokes of late. I thought I should not be justified in taking the time. But I, for my part, have plenty of time. Every hour my reputation for respectability is growing in this neighborhood. I have been asked out to dinner and invited to look at pine-lands that are for sale.

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I feel that I am getting popular—should get popular if I could be more social.”

This was really too impudent. I turned my head slowly to give him a withering look.

“Yes,” he said, coolly. “You will have much to do to prove me an undesirable settler in this country when you come to life—if you ever do come to life again. At this rate, it won’t be very soon. Well, I am glad you don’t intend to overwork me.”

“If I ever did come to life!” How the phrase reminded me of my desolation and helpless dependence on this man, who could find it in his heart to torment me. He must have had the same thought with an impulse of compunction, for he presently dropped his light tone.

“Tell me what you wanted of the paper,” he asked, gently. “You have a right to know anything you want to. Do you want news of Mrs. Harlowe’s health. The shock has not injured her, she——”

I motioned him imperatively to silence, feeling a deep indignation. How dared he speak of a member of my family in the quiet manner of an innocent stranger?

“I wanted to know about the Perrys,” I said, with the idea of punishing him so clear that I did not even wince at the telling of the false-

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hoods. "I wanted to know what will be done by the community for the poor homeless people."

This fairly roused him and I was a little frightened at seeing his face darken.

"They will not stand in need of public aid," he answered in a tone of which the anger was barely suppressed. "In fact, I have already more than reimbursed Mr. Perry."

"How did you manage to get in your conscience money so quickly?" I asked with a tone of affected indifference, which I intended to be galling in the extreme.

"It is hardly conscience money," he replied, already with a better control of his manner. "It is merely one of my precautions. If I should be caught, and were lucky enough to get a trial, it would serve me well to be able to prove that I had already taken steps to make good Mr. Perry's financial loss. It would help me with the jury."

"You are very frank with me," I said, warningly.

"I have no interest in concealing anything," he returned. "If it should come to your giving evidence against me, the more you can tell, the better for me. To answer your question: I sent Mr. Perry the money as coming from the

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late Murray's relatives. Kelvin arranged it. He made out——"

"I don't want to hear," I interrupted. "I don't know why I asked. I want to know nothing about any of you."

"It is too late for you to take that position," he said, firmly. "I have something to tell you, and you will listen—if only in the interest of justice."

"I will not," I cried, decidedly, suddenly possessed of I know not what dread of losing my stand-point. "Of course you have some sort of case——"

"Which I have certainly no intention of pleading," he said, coldly. "You are not qualified to judge me, your sympathies and experience are alike too narrow."

He rose and went to the fireplace to knock the ashes from his extinguished pipe and lay it away. Not much enjoyment in the quiet smoke of that day, after all! He remained before the hearth and continued to address me with a stony quiet.

"I suppose you are fair, as far as you know how," he said, "and I want to call your attention to a few facts. You have seen me as a leader in various criminal acts—house-breaking, arson, kidnapping. You are doubtless aware

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that I am looking for McGuire for the purpose of kidnapping him. I speak in the first person singular because I am the elected leader of my party. I make the plans and I am most active in carrying them out. All this you will have observed."

He glanced at me interrogatively and I nodded.

"It certainly looked the other night as if I were involving the others in a desperate venture without giving them a chance to withdraw. That is the impression you would naturally get. Thomas's excitement, Dan's natural slowness of comprehension, Kelvin's unselfish devotion to me, I took advantage of all of these, you think?"

I nodded again, really admiring the lucidity of his representation.

"And I am alone to blame? You think so? Of course! The court will incline to the same unfair opinion. Fortunately for me, my friends will be honorable enough to take their share of the blame. They won't, I trust, let me suffer alone for what we all did together as one man. Geoffrey will at least confess that I warned him to be off before I set fire to the house."

I could scarcely believe my ears. Was this the man in whom, an hour earlier, I had thought

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to read some traces of nobility? Yet why was I so surprised and confused? I knew him for an impostor toward the world, why not for a traitor in friendship? He continued to speak in rather a low, injured tone, looking at the floor.

"If through your prejudiced testimony I should appear responsible for these three other men going astray, it would go especially hard with me. Thomas is very young, Dan is my ser—my dependent. If these men appear rather as my victims than as my accomplices I should lose the sympathy of the public which otherwise would be mine."

Was such selfishness conceivable? I rose to my feet in my ardor to answer him with force.

"I won't tell you what I think of you," I began stormily.

"Pray don't," he exclaimed with something like alarm.

"But I assure you, Colonel Tarr, that as far as I have the power and influence, the whole consequence of your crimes and outrages shall fall on you alone."

"Do you call that just?" he demanded with great bitterness. "Wasn't Kelvin the first to lay hands on you? Didn't Thomas threaten to shoot you? But I am glad I know where

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you stand. This is exactly what I wished to find out—whether I could hope for fairness or must fear a perverted testimony on your part. Now I shall know how to defend myself. You will be obliged to give their names and then I shall feel free to give the bare facts."

"You mean that you will betray them," I cried, wrathfully. "But you can bear the full ignominy of such a course. I shall not even name them."

"What? Have you promised them that?" he demanded, sharply.

"No, but I promise *you* that now."

"Well," he said, with a sudden serenity. "As it is you, Jack, I don't want that promise in writing. Your word is as good as your bond."

And then I realized that I had been played upon; he had struck out exactly what he wanted. A feeling of utter confusion and guilt surged over me. He saw the change on my face and recognized it with one wicked smile. What an outrageous piece of play-acting it had been! Did such a blindly given promise bind me? I had certainly not realized what I was saying. I had no right to conceal the names of any of the men. It would be contempt of court. They would make me tell.

Back to the Rescue

I began to think very ill of Kelvin and Thomas and Dan as I considered their career. Was this friendship, to raise no voice of protest when they saw Colonel Tarr rushing into ruin? The man was mad, that was the whole story. He was not responsible. His unheard-of treatment of this matter of shielding his associates proved that.

"Jack, you had better change your mind and come out of doors," he said in his old tone of courteous kindness. "Here's this poor dog of yours wild for fresh air."

This brought me back to realities. Why should I trouble myself about anything but my escape. When that was accomplished there would be time enough to consider my responsibilities. Perhaps I had underestimated Colonel Tarr's ability to get away with speed and secrecy.

"You are indoors too long," he urged. "You are looking badly. Come, Jack, be reasonable."

There was genuine entreaty in his voice, and I felt impelled to answer him at last.

"I am tired, Colonel Tarr. I haven't slept. I could not walk." There was enough truth in that to let it pass, considering I was a prisoner bent on escape. I had really not slept soundly,

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I really felt fagged and languid. Nevertheless, had the opportunity presented itself, I could have run like the wind.

But Colonel Tarr wanted to know now just why I could not sleep. Did the noise of their coming and going disturb me? Were my fears still unallayed? Was I on a strain concerning the outcome of the hunt?

He was still at the mantel-piece looking toward me with a grave face now. Between his eyes was a pained look which bespoke compunction.

"If not for your own sake, then in bare justice to me, you should not suffer in anything that I can alleviate," he said, in rather a sombre tone. I then gathered up courage for a question I had heretofore dreaded to put, and said, in rather a fainting voice:

"I have an anxiety quite outside of my own troubles, Colonel Tarr. The man whom I wounded the other night——"

"Oh, he is all right," said Colonel Tarr, hastily. "I had a telegram to-day from Do—ah—that is, from the man who went with him." (Dome City is a town on the river, half-way to the Gulf, and Colonel Tarr had inadvertently all but mentioned the secret route.) "He is in the hands of a surgeon."

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I reflected that this news of the wounded man would possibly be the last I should ever hear—and that even this might not be true. Ball and Mickleson, at least, would get away, even if through my agency these others were caught and brought to justice. Alive or dead, Ball would disappear; and I should carry the weight of the uncertainty throughout my life.

"So that has troubled you?" Colonel Tarr asked slowly, bending his face toward the fire. "But you know, do you, that if you had killed any one or all of us, you would have done right—you would have done merely your duty."

"It could never be my duty to take a human life," I returned, and a cold chill crept over me at the thought.

"Indeed it could," he answered, quickly. "I was breaking into a house, you were defending it. In such a case the law bids you shoot me down. That's as it should be, Jack. The law isn't strong enough to prevent assaults, it must therefore stand ready to back up those who are strong and brave enough to punish their assailants. The law is on your side. Do you understand the principle of it clearly?"

He looked up at me attentively a moment; I shook my head.

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"It's horrible!" I declared. "Killing is killing; and none of it is a right or a duty."

"It can be a right and a duty," he repeated, with stern emphasis; "you speak without thinking. Consider a soldier's work in time of war. Consider the administration of justice in uncivilized communities, where a weak or corrupt government fails to punish criminals. And consider your own case, when you supposed yourself to be defending a helpless man."

He sank into a chair, still with bowed head, and for a few minutes seemed lost in gloomy thought. A strong surmise concerning him flitted through my mind as I watched his brooding face. Was not he himself bent on some such "administration of justice" as he had described? Could he have perhaps persuaded himself of his right and duty to kill? and did he—in this confessedly his first quiet hour since he began his mad defiance of the law—did he now consider himself and his quest with a profound misgiving? No! there was bitterness in his expression, indeed, but no longer any compunction. A passing pity for me had aroused it, but it was already dispelled. He had returned to his old line of thinking, or rather, of quenching all sober and collected thought.

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With some impatience at my own interest his darkening face, I looked away, I rose and went to the window and let my eyes roam over the brown fields and to the green pine woods in search of distraction.

"So the proper attitude of your mind, Jack," said Colonel Tarr, as if no pause had broken the thread of his discourse, "the reasonable attitude—is not to hope that the one man will recover, but rather to regret that you didn't bring down more."

"I do regret that I couldn't have disabled *you*, Colonel Tarr," I answered gravely, without turning my head.

"Oh, I think you might rest satisfied with what you have accomplished in that direction," he returned with a revival of his lighter tone; and then, with an unexpected outbreak of vehemence—"if you had put a bullet through me, it would have been the better for me."

For some reason, my imagination became extremely vivid. A random shot in the dark—and that quiet, vibrating voice that had come up to me out of the darkness had been silenced forever! that strong arm had been rendered limp and cold, that animated face grown white and still, those dangerous eyes been closed! And this strange change by my act, ignorant,

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unwilling as it was, guided by fear alone! Was success in such destruction to be crowned with sense of duty performed? Could I have gone through with such an experience and lived my life out sanely?

The window seemed to grow dim before me, the outdoor scene distorted. Then I discovered that the lower sash reached to where it was convenient for me to place my arms upon it and lay down my throbbing head—which I did, and forthwith fell to weeping.

Colonel Tarr sprang up, and his chair fell backward to the floor; he strode toward me, and stopped midway—so much I heard. My long-suppressed excitement had the upper hand: for a few moments I sobbed passionately. Then, when I had quieted, I was ashamed of the demonstration and would not turn around. Presently it struck me that the room behind me was very quiet, and I wheeled about.

I was alone!

The discovery came with such a shock of surprise, that I stood a minute in stupid inaction. Was this perhaps Colonel Tarr's expression of penitence, of renunciation of his cause, and was I free?

The door he had left ajar. I finally collected my wits and stole toward it noiselessly, opened

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it and slipped out into the hall. All was silent, the front door stood wide open. I could see the yard, the long quiet stretch of road beyond, and at the sight my thoughts flew homeward. The next instant I fairly came into collision with Kelvin, who entered the front door as I was rushing forth.

Ah! the bitterness of that recapture!

"Hello, hello! What's all this? Where are you going in such haste?" he demanded with cheery composure. "Come back here, Jack, and tell me all about it."

Very gently but very firmly, he took my arm and led me back into the dining-room.

"Why! where on earth—? He gazed about in utter astonishment, then his look fell on me with dark suspicion. "Jack, what have you done with your guard? Out with it? I won't be put off."

"Nothing," I returned sullenly, not in the least alive to the absurdity of the question.

"Who was it?" asked Kelvin, sternly.

"It was Colonel Tarr; and since he has let me go, it isn't your concern to keep me," I replied with a revival of spirit. "He is sorry for everything he's done and has given everything up and gone away. I think he has gone to your

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boat, Mr. Kelvin—and I think you had better hurry up and join him there."

"Oh, you think so, do you?" Kelvin repeated, dryly. "Perhaps Harry left a message for me, to that effect, with you?"

"No, because he didn't think I would stay to see you—" I answered boldly—"and I sha'n't stay another minute."

With that I made for the door only to be promptly recaptured by the arm.

"Don't hurry away without a word of explanation," he urged, gently, holding my wrist like a handcuff. "Tell me just what passed and perhaps I will agree with you that the hunt is over, and that you are at liberty."

"We were talking about the dreadful happenings of the other night," I began—

"You were, indeed!" exclaimed Kelvin, blankly. "Discussing it amicably, were you?"

"Of course not," I said with indignation,—
"we talked about killing, and I was very much excited—and while I wasn't looking Colonel Tarr went away. But I know that he was sorry by the way he spoke and I know he meant me to escape."

"You know too much, by half," said Kelvin, with the first touch of irritation I had yet seen in him. "I am ashamed of you, Jack, to show

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yourself unmanned to the point of tears. I assure you that Colonel Tarr went out because he—well, he doesn't always have his wits about him—he went out in a fit of absent-mindedness. He is very absent-minded, but he isn't insane; and to let you go home alone in this way, all that distance——”

“It's not more than two miles through the woods, and I know the way,” I interrupted impatiently. “Colonel Tarr isn't going to endanger his life to escort me—every minute is precious to you, as soon as I am free. I am going to rouse the country thoroughly, Mr. Kelvin—you had better make your escape. I am sure Colonel Tarr has gone to the boat.”

“And I am equally sure he hasn't,” returned Kelvin, looking at me with a curious expression. “And I am still more certain that when he sets you free it will be at your uncle's door, whatever his risk. He has bound himself to that; and it is very important for you to realize, Jack, that that is the only way for you to get safely and comfortably home. Put aside all idea of escape, once for all.”

“I won't,” I said, defiantly.

“Come, come!” he urged, kindly.

“I won't,” I repeated with heat.

“Jack, you are exceedingly difficult to get

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along with," he complained, in a mild voice, releasing me now that he felt assured I knew better than to make another dash for liberty. "You are quite incapable of logical persuasion. I don't wonder that Harry threw chairs at you"—he picked up the one Colonel Tarr had upset. "You are really provoking. One can't argue with you, one is really forced to use violence. I can't blame Harry in the least."

He went about the room setting things to rights in a perfunctory way, shaking his head over me like a grieved old grandmother. I was too thoroughly discouraged to retain any further hopes of my scheme with Rex. Nevertheless, I went to untie him so that I might take him into my room with me. Before I had fairly undone the knot, we heard Dan's step in the hall. Kelvin eagerly called him in.

"Here, Dan, you are on guard," he commanded, briefly. My heart leaped in expectation.

"That ain't my orders," said Dan, rebelliously. "Where's the Colonel?"

"That's what I am going to find out," answered Kelvin, already at the door. "Things are going irregularly. There doesn't seem to be any work going on this afternoon. Perhaps we have got to the end of our rope."

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There was a hopeful ring in his voice as he said the last words and the next minute he was out and had left the door open. We heard him run upstairs and walk about in the rooms up there. Then he came running down again and passed through the hall and out of the house to the back, calling George. It was evident that he was looking for Colonel Tarr.

Meanwhile I sat very still in the corner of my sofa, thinking hard and fast; and Dan, somewhat reassured as to the difficulty of his office, took a piece of harness to hand and sat down at the hearth to mend it. This was my time, and it might be very short. My notion was to prick a message on the envelope with a pin I had found in the crack of the floor; but when I put my hand in my pocket for the paper, I encountered the handkerchief in which I had wrapped the lock of my hair. With the inspiration of haste I fumbled it into the envelope and brought it stealthily out.

Dan was not looking.

The next step was to awaken the sleeping dog and to annoy him with caresses. The proceeding attracted my guard's momentary attention; but I was obviously only beguiling the weariness of my captivity. Rex did not respond with any great warmth. Three men had

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gone out, yet he had been detained. Was his cruel captor worthy of any attention?

"Go home, Rex," I said, loudly and distinctly, and gave him a part of his cord. He obediently, even eagerly strained away, whereat I drew him mercilessly back.

"Go home, Rex!" I commanded again. The poor dog whined and sat down to await my pleasure. Dan looked at me reproachfully. He thought just what I wished him to think—that I was plaguing the poor dog for my amusement. He went on with his work and I watched him breathlessly. Presently he turned around for another strap.

Instantly I unclasped his collar and thrust my little parcel into the dog's mouth.

"Dead, Rex, dead," I said in a low tone. To my joy he took it daintily between his teeth.

"Go home, Rex!"

He shot across the room and out of the door like an arrow.

"Catch my dog," I exclaimed with a great show of dismay. "He got away."

"No, you don't," said Dan, with a grim consciousness of his own astuteness. "I'm here to watch you, not to leave you to run after dogs. You're tricky, that's what you are."

I seized the newspaper that lay on the floor

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and opened it wide so that he might not see my joyous excitement. My success was too much for my self-control, I laughed rather hysterically behind its cover.

Alas! for my triumph! My eyes fell on words in the paper which fairly staggered me. "Professor Harlowe and his family," I read, "left their camp in the woods to-day, and took the morning train for Tallepoochee, where they will stay until the season permits Mrs. Harlowe to return to the North."

Tallepoochee! Only thirty miles away! but alas! how far to me! That, then, was what Kelvin meant, when he spoke of the distance I should have had to go? That was the reason I was not to see the paper! That was why I was assured again and again that I must trust Colonel Tarr to take me to my uncle's door! What if I had escaped, just now, and reached the deserted cabins in the woods. Could I have gathered strength for that long, wild journey through the forests, alone, without food? Or should I have gone to the Perrys—ah, no, they were in Flintville, their house was a ruin—should I have gone to the Moodys in this disguise and told them my strange story? To the Moodys!

And when I considered the inevitable sensation my appearance among such people would

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create, the frightful publicity my strange adventure would gain long before I could hope to hide and rest myself in my home, I was ready to weep with gratitude to Kelvin for chancing home in time to stop me.

And then a tormenting thought occurred to me and I rose hastily from my seat, and fled to the darkness of my room.

Rex would carry my parcel to the Moodys! What questions would be raised about this long lock of hair coming straight from the strangers' camp? Someone would know it for mine; someone would suspect I was alive and had sent it, since at this minute I was in everybody's thoughts. There would be a rescue party organized; every able-bodied man in the community would come. Ah, that I could be saved from my friends!—that I could be left thrown upon my enemies whose interest it was, like mine, that no one should know the whole of my adventure. Nothing was gained for my relatives in this mad haste of mine.

All my high desire that justice should be done to my captors was now lost in the dread of what I, myself, should have to undergo in the process. I pictured to myself how well the restoration to my family might have been managed. Quietly, secretly, by night, my captors would

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have taken me "to my uncle's door!" and then they would have vanished out of my life like folk in a troubled dream.

I passed the long afternoon in a torment of suspense, alternately listening for the horses of my rescue party—who, I conceived, would arrive in mounted hordes—and again, burying my head in the cool pillows so that I should hear nothing until it had all come to pass.

The hours dragged on; a crack in the shutter which I had learned to watch, told me that daylight was fading. It grew quite dark and after that came a stir in the dining-room. I went to the door and listened anxiously; evidently nothing unusual had taken place outside. I heard both Colonel Tarr and Kelvin's voices, and Dan seemed to be there still, for someone went to and fro with a heavy step. I went again to the front windows and listened there. No horses coming yet!

Presently Kelvin opened my door a little and asked me to come out to dinner. I refused in as quiet a voice as I could command, saying I was not in the least hungry.

"Then lock the door, Kelvin," I heard Colonel Tarr say—"and we won't have the trouble of watching it."

"I won't be locked in," I cried desperately,

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with a very vivid sense of what might happen in that case. "Don't you dare to lock me in."

"Come out then, Jack," Colonel Tarr commanded in a very decided tone. I smoothed my hair and bathed my eyes; they were to see no signs of excitement in me. My plan was fixed. Upon the arrival of the police, there would be alarm, disorder: I would fly. Better the hardships and dangers of the journey through the woods than the pains of such a notoriety as now threatened me; better to be counted insane than to submit to be questioned and pitied and revenged by strangers. My gang of criminals might go scot-free, for all I cared. My thirst for justice was quenched.

Dan was at the table well advanced with his dinner when I went out. Colonel Tarr and Kelvin stood before the fire, talking.

"I think we must make the move," Colonel Tarr was saying. "This ground is covered. There only remains the Red Bluff settlement to investigate and Thomas is nearly satisfied there is nothing there."

"Ah, here you are, Jack," Kelvin greeted me cheerily, turning away from the other. "I am sorry that I frightened you. I did not know you minded being locked in."

I stammered that it made me very nervous.

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"Jack wants the run of the ship," suggested Colonel Tarr, genially, without looking at me. "I'll warrant you can always bring him to his meals that way."

Kelvin placed a chair for me and we all sat down at the table, as to a pleasant, leisurely meal. With a helpless amazement at the situation I looked from one to the other of these men. All three were at their ease, each in his own way; Dan eating stolidly; Kelvin brightly and nimbly, seeing that everyone was helped, like the natural little host that he was; Colonel Tarr calm and thoughtful, even a trifle dreamy in expression, sitting for the most part with downcast eyes. These were my ruffians, the men I was presently to accuse and hand over to justice? Justice? Was it certain there would be no mob violence? There could hardly fail to be a fight for life and death on the part of Colonel Tarr. Blood would be shed!

"George tells me that the bird-dog from Moody escaped this afternoon," said Colonel Tarr, frowning slightly at Dan. "I wish you had been a little careful."

Dan muttered an incoherent protest.

"It was I who let him go, Colonel Tarr," I faltered uneasily, and I would have given much for courage to go on and confess the rest. If I

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could dare that, all might yet be averted. But would they not of necessity be forced to drag me to their hidden boat with them?

"That is all right then, Jack," Colonel Tarr responded, with quick courtesy. "I was only annoyed because I thought you had taken a fancy to the dog. I am sure there is little enough to make the long hours endurable to you."

He smiled sadly as if this were a matter to which he could scarcely resign himself.

"Why, that is certain, Jack is most horribly bored," said Kelvin, regretfully. "I have thought of bringing in one of Aunt Leni's babies tomorrow, just to liven up the camp a little. They are about as animated as little inkstands, and have the admirable quality of staying just where they are put down. That would be an excellent example to Jack. In conversation they maintain an unembarrassed gravity. I could only get one word out of the small man who toddled up here to-day—and that was 'irrup.' What can that mean?"

"Pickaninny for 'sheer off,'" suggested Colonel Tarr, gayly. "But tell me, Kelvin, when have you had time to cultivate this acquaintance?"

"While I was waiting for orders this after-

Rex to the Rescue

noon," returned Kelvin, promptly, and with just a touch of sharpness. "You haven't been around with your usual supply, Harry. There seems to be a hiatus in the course of the business. For a while I was almost inclined to credit Jack, who told me that you had decided to withdraw."

"Oh, no indeed, no indeed," said Colonel Tarr, easily, but with a sort of absent-minded air. "No, I had no thought of withdrawing; certainly not, at this stage of the game. There is a lull in our business, merely a lull. We shall have a hard night, Kelvin."

A hard night of it, indeed!

"The whole trouble with you, Jack," said Kelvin, abruptly turning back the subject, "is less a lack of amusement than lack of employment. A dinner made exclusively on chills and water after a lunch of tea and shudders argues an abnormal appetite. Here, George, go and get Mr. Ball his coffee.—If you had been set to helping Dan mend the harness, Jack——"

Dan was just rising from the table.

"Blamed if I'd trust him to sew it tight," he muttered with a look of dark suspicion.

I met Colonel Tarr's dancing eyes and felt utterly helpless. How could I break through this barrier of levity to reason and compromise?

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"I always hold by the principle of employing prisoners with honest and profitable employment," Kelvin continued the nonsense with his characteristic seriousness. "In the first place, it is only humane; and then, too, it is a very potent factor in reform." He now had me fairly distracted, we all listened to him as if he were speaking with wisdom and weight. "Show Jack here," he continued with a wave of his hand, "the practical, *moral* value of a piece of well-sewed harness, prove to him that our safety, our very lives may depend on the thoroughness of his work, and *then* you have something fundamental on which to base your ethical culture."

"I hope you and I get into different penitentiaries, Kelvin," said Colonel Tarr, entering into the other's vein. "I have none of your taste for basket-weaving and shoe-peg whittling. I prefer the old-fashioned dungeon where one pines away, with a little white flower growing up between the stones of the floor."

"Who is talking about penitentiaries?" demanded Kelvin, with a great show of wrath. "You show very poor taste, Harry, in referring to the subject thus flippantly."

Colonel Tarr laughed outright; Kelvin turned to me as if for judgment.

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"I have no prejudices, Jack," he said, with an aggrieved air. "I believe in penitentiaries myself, I am sure they do a great deal of good. But Colonel Tarr is aware that they have very painful associations in my mind and is graceless enough to ring changes upon them. It's a little thing, I know, of which I complain, but *why*—" his voice took on a deeply injured air —"*why* do they run the stripes on the uniform the wrong way? That sort of decoration will make any man look short."

I had been helplessly listening and now the conclusion startled me into a helpless laugh. Colonel Tarr was laughing, too, and Dan chuckled grimly at the door, where he presently went out. We might have been called a merry party. If my rescuers had burst in upon us at that moment, I should have had a time to prove that I was in bondage and distress. It occurred to me that I should in all likelihood be promptly handcuffed along with my oppressors.

Dinner was quickly over, since no one seemed to care to eat. I began to grow feverish in thinking it was high time that something should happen. Not a vestige of any sense of responsibility remained in my harrowed mind; nothing but shame dissuaded me from warning my enemies and making common

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cause with them in view of the common disaster.

"I am not going to rush off until I've had a smoke," said Colonel Tarr, when Kelvin rose from the table and looked at him expectantly. "Jack has shown me that a matter of ten or fifteen minutes makes no difference to him."

Kelvin gave him a sharp glance of surprise as he leisurely lit a cigar.

"No, I think nothing makes much difference to Jack just now," he agreed. "I think he is only semi-conscious. He has not spoken or moved for about half an hour."

I was still seated at the table whence the others had risen, my hands clenched on my chair. George stole looks of awed curiosity at me, as he removed the dishes. Every sound in the room tormented me. I thought I heard horses coming and was rigid with listening.

"Why, Jack, I believe you have a chill," exclaimed Kelvin with some anxiety. "Come to the fire."

I murmured that I was not cold; I had a headache; I wanted to be let alone. It seemed a physical impossibility to move from my chair. But I was trembling now from sheer excitement.

"It is a chill," insisted Kelvin. "You must come to the fire, Jack."

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Colonel Tarr stepped up, seized the back of my chair and easily swung me around before the blaze. At the same moment I was startled by a footfall on the piazza. Kelvin saw the change in my face, and misunderstood it.

"Did you understand that Jack wishes to be left alone?" he asked with a sharp reproof in his tone. "Ask permission before you do that sort of thing, Harry."

There came a knock—quick, light, decided,—at the front door in the hall. My heart seemed to stop beating.

"Kelvin, see who is out there," suggested Colonel Tarr, lazily throwing himself into a chair. Kelvin good-naturedly started for the door. I wanted to call out to him to stop, but my voice was lamed.

"If it is the Flintville police, I am not at home," Colonel Tarr called after Kelvin frivolously and the little man went out with a grim chuckle.

Colonel Tarr sat gazing into the fire with a peaceful far-away look, the while the smoke from his cigar curled about his head with beautiful effect in the glowing light.

The next moment he was to be hand-cuffed—A mad impulse possessed me.

"Colonel Tarr," I cried, warningly, half-rising

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to my feet. He looked at me and I recoiled before the triumphant gleam in his eyes. Then he tossed his cigar into the fire and leaned toward me.

"Jack," he demanded softly, "have you any more of that hair?"

I felt myself growing icy cold.

"Because I want it all," he murmured with a cruel smile.

I covered my face with my hands and sat still while the mingled flood of relief and mortification surged over me. From the hall came the voice of Kelvin, who was instructing a negro about some wood-chopping. I let the pause grow dangerously long, then broke it desperately.

"Did the dog—take it—to you?"

"I wish I had Kelvin's talent for lying," he said, regretfully. "Here is a delectable opportunity for making a good story."

I ventured to look at him and saw that his expression was decidedly wicked.

"No, Jack, honesty compels me to confess that by sheer good luck, I met the dog on the road. He was making a bee-line for his home. I saw that he carried something and tried to stop him, but he went by me like an express train." Here he caught my eye and held it.

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"You cannot blame him, Jack. The poor brute couldn't read, you know" (I quailed, but he was merciless), "and did not realize that the parcel was directed to me."

"How did you get it?" I demanded, growing fierce under this torture.

"I shot him."

Alas! poor Rex! I had plagued him all day and sent him to his death—for this!

"I paid the owner thirty dollars for him; just ten times what he was worth," said Colonel Tarr, lightly. For a moment I was diverted into making a mental note for Ellen's benefit, but was presently recalled by a glance of pure mischief.

"I think I got that lock of hair very cheaply," he said with a thoughtful air.

"I think you did, Colonel Tarr," I retorted, hotly. "Oh, but you have had a narrow escape!"

"I don't see that I have escaped," he returned, "but that is not to the point. I am amazed and grieved, Jack, at your apparent exultation in your wickedness."

He bent his brows and looked into the fire. "Don't you think that for real malice this act of yours is more to be condemned than the throwing of a few fire-brands into a tumble-

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down old house? The consequences are likely to prove far more serious." He looked at me deliberately. "For my own incendiary act I was willing to pay—" He stood up and rested his elbow on the mantel-piece. "Perhaps I do you an injustice," he suggested. "Perhaps you intend to make reparation?"

"What do you mean?" I demanded in bewilderment. "Since I failed to do you any harm, why do you talk of reparation? If you had been caught—" I faltered, then flung it out defiantly; "you know I was about to warn you, just now, when I thought the police were at the door. It was an unpardonable weakness; make the most of it."

"I shall, indeed," he assured me with an unaffected warmth.

"And it wasn't malice," I continued, inconsequently, with a blind sense that I was trapped. "How dare you call it malice? It was rash and foolish, but——"

"It was splendid," he interrupted me with appreciation, "a very stroke of genius! But as I said, I am appalled at this revelation of mischief in you. The idea of sending out a thing like that without knowing or caring whom it may strike! I tell you, I regard a long, curling lock of hair like that as exceedingly dangerous.

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For the sake of my unprotected friends here, I must really demand that you deliver over to me all you may have of that sort of incendiary material."

From his point of view the request seemed reasonable.

"I have no more," I assured him. "Kelvin buried the rest."

"That means I have all that there is above ground," he said, bending toward me. The thought made me vaguely uneasy. I looked up at him with puzzled pain, wondering at the smile in his eyes.

Suddenly Kelvin stood before us; strangely enough we had not heard him enter. His face had a blank look.

"Let me see, Harry," he said, deliberately, "you will be twenty-one the first of next April, won't you? Or is it only twenty? I seem to have forgotten, and I want to write about that passport, you know."

This was the climax to my bewilderment; Kelvin's malice had heretofore always appeared to have some point. Colonel Tarr did not seem to mind the ridicule in the least. His smile was full of sweetness.

"No, Kelvin, I am considerably older than that," he answered, gently. "In fact, my dear

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fellow, as you have said yourself, the days of your tutorship are over. I really don't need you to stand between me and the cold world." Here he laid his hand on Kelvin's shoulder with a caressing touch and his voice grew almost tender. "I can write for that passport myself and I will thank you to go to the——"

He broke off suddenly. It was then I realized that the two men were angry; though how, with their perfect composure, I knew it, I cannot say. With a sense of impatience at their continued play-acting I left them, and as I closed the door of my room I told myself that I should not leave it again until they called me to prepare for the journey to Tallepoochee.

CHAPTER IV

A CALLER AND A COUNCIL

I SLEPT profoundly after that resolution and awoke with a sense of indifference that was almost as sweet as peace. No coaxing on the part of Kelvin would induce me to leave my room that long, quiet day. After my long nervous strain there had come a relaxation of languor, almost a stupor. Not to have to scheme how to escape was almost to stop thinking. I considered the fact that in the wide world there was not a soul who was either worrying about me or expecting anything of me—unless, possibly, Dr. Nunley knew I was alive and was planning to come to my assistance—and I asked myself why I should be troubled. There was to be nothing in my treatment at the hands of my captors but what patience could endure. I would trust them and wait.

An old Methodist hymnal I found on a shelf helped me to while away the long hours. Lying on the hearth-rug, I soberly learned the

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first hymns by heart, with no light but the bright blaze of my fire. In the next room they were coming and going, sometimes hurriedly, sometimes with excited words. I resolutely closed my ears to it all, resolutely forgot their existence.

"We charge extra for meals served in rooms," Kelvin called out warningly when at noon he passed in my lunch on a tray. "Do come out of that den. Jack. You'll get as white as a sprout in a cellar."

"Don't trouble about me," I answered him, severely. "You had better help the others get through with their business. It is taking a disgracefully long time."

In which he agreed with me heartily. Indeed, when I reflected that this was the third day of a furious search in woods and swamps, and of constant espionage of Dr. Nunley, it seemed to me their case was about hopeless. Nothing but Colonel Tarr's blind obstinacy could have held out with such meagre hopes of success. McGuire must have left the region long ago.

I had a curious inability to think of the Irishman with any sense of his reality. He was a dark shadow, an evil spirit behind all the evil that had befallen; but the miserable, hounded *man*, who since I had guarded him a few min-

A Caller and a Council

utes the other night, had fled alone and unprotected from his relentless enemies—he was too far and too vague for me to occupy my waking thoughts with him. In my dreams I saw him constantly, now handing me the pistol with a face distorted by fear, now engaged in mortal combat with Colonel Tarr, and again I had a curiously vivid vision of him, cowered in the stern of a bateau which a great, ugly negro paddled stealthily among the cypress bells of a dreary waste of swamp. When I woke it was with a horror of having looked at that craven face again; and until this last day, I had been so absorbed in the events of the hour, that the subject of my dreams was dispelled from my mind.

The hymns did very well for a few hours' distraction, and for several more I slept again; but toward night I found myself growing nervous, and restlessly moved about my room. From his voice when he called George, I knew that Thomas was on guard without; if it had been Kelvin, I had almost changed my mind about staying in my room and sought his cheerful and encouraging society. In short, I was getting very weary and resentful once more, at the injustice of submitting me to this.

I was aroused toward night-fall by a particu-

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larly excited conversation outside. I recognized the voices of Thomas and Colonel Tarr. Then there were steps in the hall, and I heard Kelvin calling loudly for George. I listened eagerly now, for the three had not been in camp all together before. Was the hunt over? There was lively, but apparently pleasant conversation when the people in the hall entered the dining-room, and I distinguished a strange voice.

A visitor!

And they actually had the assurance to bring him in? Did they fancy I was under a vow not to leave my room?

Resolutions to remain passive were all very well, when there was nothing else to do, I thought; but if the new-comer were anyone I could trust, it was certainly my duty to make use of him for my deliverance. Softly I stole to my door and noiselessly opened it.

The dining-room was dim; it was already twilight and the fire had grown low. There, against the light of the window, about to sit down in the chair that Kelvin was offering him, was the stranger. The formality with which he was received, moreover, Colonel Tarr and Thomas standing until their guest was seated, made it plain that this was no accomplice.

The noise of the chairs as the men drew

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round the hearth covered my quiet entrance. I stood in the shadow, close against the wall, and listened in amazement to Kelvin's glib chatter.

"Yes, the doctor gave me a lift. There seems to be a kind of poetic justice in his bringing me home, after I had knocked about his place for hours without shooting a bird. He picked me up in his own lane."

I could scarcely believe my senses. Had Kelvin actually brought Dr. Nunley into camp? There was no doubt of it, when the fire blazed up a little and showed me his figure. His face was turned away from me.

Though Kelvin talked so easily, the other two sat at first in stony silence. It was plain that the visit had taken them by surprise and that they were in doubt as to its outcome. All the more chance that I should reap the benefit, I thought.

"The doctor is on his way to Flintville to get the latest newspaper accounts of this fire that occurred the other night," continued Kelvin. "It seems that they have made a good deal of it in the Savannah and even in the New York papers. I don't wonder—a shocking thing! Well, I told him we had more news about it right here among us than all Flintville put together"—the other two moved a little rest-

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lessly— "so I persuaded him to come around and talk it over with us," finished Kelvin with great coolness.

It was not necessary for me to see the doctor's face to be sure that he was entirely at his ease. He had settled himself back in his chair and was looking about the room.

"It is very kind of Mr. Kelvin to make me out such a good excuse for intruding on you-all in this way," he said, politely. "I will confess that I had a strong desire to make your acquaintance and to see your spo'tsmen's camp in which the whole neighborhood has been interested. I was only too happy to meet up with Mr. Kelvin this evenin'. In fact, I'm very fond of the spo't myself and have watched you gentlemen come and go with great interest."

"We have been about your place a good deal," said Colonel Tarr, looking at him steadily; "we haven't shot very much, either."

"Well, sir, you do not surprise me. We-all have mighty near cleaned off all the birds about our place there," responded Dr. Nunley, with polite regret. "There are a-plenty in the old fields of my plantation, a mile farther south, sir, and I should be glad to have you-all shoot there."

"Thank you," said Colonel Tarr. "Our hunt

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hasn't covered that ground yet. We are prepared to take your advice in this matter, and you will find us grateful " (he gave the slightest emphasis to the word) "for any help you may give us."

"Grateful, indeed," echoed Kelvin, cordially. "And it seems to me we have already cause for gratitude toward Dr. Nunley for not interfering with us so far."

But the visitor would not or could not understand the real import of what they said.

"Mr. Kelvin! The idea of such a thing!" he protested. "Even if I did post my land (which I have never thought worth while), I should mean to exclude only the negroes. You are free to hunt anywhere in the country, gentlemen, except, perhaps, on the land of your own countryman over yonder, Professor Harlowe. I believe he is the only land-owner about here who protects his game."

"Harlowe?" asked Kelvin; "isn't that the man whose daughter perished in the fire the other night?"

"It was his niece, sir;" returned the doctor, in a troubled voice. "A very terrible occurrence! No one reached the house before it fell into ruins. It is taken for granted she was lost in attemptin' to save the paralytic

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— but I forget; you gentlemen know all about it."

"I should rather think we did," returned Colonel Tarr, looking at him with blazing eyes. "No one knows more, unless it is yourself, Dr. Nunley."

For a moment they sat in silence, evidently expecting the man to show his hand. He addressed himself to Colonel Tarr with a mild surprise; he was either a finished actor or quite without suspicion.

"I do not understand you, Colonel Tarr. You all were not at the fire, I believe?"

"Nevertheless, no one knows more, as Colonel Tarr says," Kelvin came in promptly and easily, "because, I fancy, no one—excepting yourself again, Doctor,—is so deeply interested in the event as we are ourselves. I am sure we have every paper in the country that gives any account of it. As I said before, I shall be glad to let you have them."

"Thank you, that will save my goin' to town to-night, sir," said the doctor, still politely but without enthusiasm; then he suddenly changed the subject, asking something about game laws in the North.

I could not guess from the men's faces whether they were relieved at the discovery

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that they were not suspected or disappointed in that there seemed to be no way to approach their visitor on the matter of the fugitive McGuire's hiding-place. A moment later it was made clear that they did not, at least, greatly fear the doctor. Colonel Tarr, who had been glaring at him quite unrestrainedly, now aimed a reckless blow at his self-possession.

"Do you know, Dr. Nunley, it is hard for me to believe that this Murray really perished in the flames. Can you not suppose that he was not really so helpless as was generally believed; that, for example, he fired the house himself, and possibly—kidnapped the young girl."

The doctor shot up out of his chair as if he had been struck; "Colonel Tarr! You—you amaze me!" he gasped.

"Why, what is the matter?" demanded Colonel Tarr, coolly. He also had arisen and towered over the other with a threatening air. I at once gave up all hope of the doctor's aid toward me. Indeed, I expected nothing less than that he would presently be assaulted and bound. Nothing of the kind occurred. The slippery man had already recovered his self-possession and sank back into his chair.

"Pardon me, Colonel, but you are really

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amusin'," he cried, with a laugh which was a very fair imitation of nature. "You cannot realize, of course, how taken aback I was at your astoundin' proposition. You did not know that I was in professional attendance on Mr. Murray and that his disease was total paralysis of the legs."

"Is that really true, then?" inquired Kelvin, with calm interest. "We did not know, of course. One hears so many reports."

"Yes, I reckon one does," returned the doctor already quieted. "Now, as for this extravagant theory of yours, Colonel Tarr, I should really like to know how you came by it. Was it suggested to you?"

"No, it is I who suggest it to you," returned Colonel Tarr, coolly.

"Oh, I see. A fancy of your own, sir!"

The doctor's tone was one of such calmness as was, under the circumstances, fairly insolent. For a moment Colonel Tarr stood still, as if he were deliberating the final move in this matter; then, as if the conclusion were not easily reached, he abruptly left the room. The moment he had gone, Kelvin began smoothing the late occurrence over.

"As a physician, you will easily recognize Colonel Tarr's condition and pardon him any-

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thing and everything," he said, in tones confidentially lowered. "He is, as you see, a perfect nervous wreck—a wreck from overwork. It is on his account that we are here. His physician in New York advised it. 'Take him South for a fortnight's shooting with a jolly crowd,' he said to me, 'or it is my opinion,' he said, 'that he will have nervous prostration.' Well, sir, we drag him down here and do our best to keep down the flow of telegrams that naturally follow a business man wherever he goes. We are hardly established in this peaceful spot, when a shocking tragedy occurs in our immediate neighborhood—right under our eyes, as it were. We can't read a paper, we can't move out of the house without meeting with the awful details of the death of this invalid gentleman and the young lady in whose care he was left. It has completely upset Colonel Tarr. 'Kevin,' he said to me only yesterday, 'hang the Irishman! but that poor girl is on my mind, night and day,' he said. Those were his very words, weren't they, Geoffrey?"

"Hang the Irishman," repeated Thomas with a solemn relish. "His very words, Dr. Nunley."

"His feelings do him honor, gentlemen," said the visitor, and now he was entirely at his

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case again. "Indeed, I share his sentiments. The man's life was of little value compared with hers, middle-aged, stricken with disease as he was, whereas she, so young, so lovely, could ill be spared from her surroundings. I have myself suffered greatly over her loss. What a noble and unselfish end, however! A woman's courage"—he raised his voice to a slightly oratorical pitch—"sometimes rises to transcendent heights in time of great peril."

In spite of the theatrical tone, I made up my mind then and there that Dr. Nunley really believed me dead. He was evidently not in communication with McGuire or he would know and fear these men for what they were. He could never have been in the Irishman's confidence to the extent of knowing why he was in hiding and from whom. This assurance put the doctor in a far better light than that in which my captors had led me to regard him. I could surely rouse this man of sentiment into some chivalric action on my behalf. He was a Southerner, and they are bound by tradition and training to be chivalrous. Then, too, he was bound by interest to be on my side. He had certainly been criminally involved in the matter of McGuire's fraud on the Perrys; like Colonel Tarr, it was to his interest to conciliate me.

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Meanwhile Kelvin lied on with undeniable enjoyment, dexterously studding his narrative with crystal truth.

"Now, Colonel Tarr has naturally taken this affair more to heart than the rest of us, for he has the tender soul of a woman and the mere idea of suffering melts him completely." (Here Thomas ceased his nervous whittling of the seat of his chair and stared.) "He is so soft-hearted, he even hates to shoot the birds. 'Theodore,' he said to me this morning, 'we are brutes to kill these harmless little creatures that twit so blithely in their native haunts,' he said. And really, Dr. Nunley, you would be surprised to know how few birds we actually kill, with all our outfit. Geoffrey, you shot a few quail yesterday, I believe? Well, Doctor, those are all the whole party has bagged for two days."

Dr. Nunley expressed his sympathy in well-chosen words. Then Kelvin took up the first attack with more caution than Colonel Tarr had deemed necessary.

"Of course, my friend was talking nonsense about Murray. The fact is, we have been saturating him with blood-and-thunder novels of late, to get his mind off the Stock Exchange. At present he has kidnapping on the brain to

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the extent of its becoming a monomania. But I ask you, as a scientific man, Dr. Nunley"—Kelvin leaned his elbows on his knees and stared across at the other with eager and innocent inquiry—"wouldn't it be possible, now, that in a nervous disease like paralysis, a terrible fright might partially restore the use of the patient's limbs. Isn't it possible, in short, that Murray escaped with his life?"

The doctor waved his hand with a great air of professional superiority.

"If a nervous shock could cure paralysis, my dear sir, we would treat it accordin'ly. We are only sorry that even such desperate treatment would be hopelessly futile. But even suppose this scientifically impossible cure to have taken place—where would he have gone? He would have been found outside of the burn-in' house, not far away. Besides, you forget in your extravagant theorizin' all about the young lady. She was strong and active and could only have perished in her heroic effort to save the helpless man."

He laid a special stress on the last words and his voice had grown somewhat uneasy. Kelvin assented heartily with all that he said, and, for the moment, did not pursue the subject. An instant later Colonel Tarr reentered the room

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with a box of cigars in his hand. I felt sure that he saw me where I stood close to the wall, and it made me very uncomfortable to be seen in the undignified position of eavesdropping. He went to the fire without giving any sign of having noticed me.

"We have pipes here, Doctor, and cigars. What will you smoke?" he asked composedly, as if he had simply gone out to fetch them.

"I shall not have time to smoke with you-all to-night, gentlemen," said the doctor rising. They all protested with more warmth than cordiality required, and when Kelvin reminded him that he had been on his way to Flintville and now had been spared that journey, the doctor sat down again perforce.

"Well, I'll choose a cigar then, Colonel, and give myself the pleasure of your company a while longer," he said, settling back, but his politeness had a hollow sound. They immediately tried to put him at his ease again, even Thomas entering somewhat into the conversation when the clouds of smoke had grown sufficiently dense as in that light to obscure his darkened face altogether.

"You say the shooting is good down your way, Doctor?"

"I should say far better than here, Mr.

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Thomas. The town-boys get out as far as this, to say nothin' of frequent shooting parties like yourselves—or rather not like you-all because most of them kill a great deal of game."

"We are thinking of changing our quarters," put in Colonel Tarr. "We don't like this place at all."

Kelvin gave Dr. Nunley a significant nod and the doctor nodded slightly in return.

"I can offer you my plantation house to camp in, Colonel Tarr," he said, cordially. "It is unfurnished, but with what outfit you have and with what Mrs. Nunley would be delighted to lend you, you might make out right comfortably down there."

"You are very kind," said Colonel Tarr, somewhat taken aback.

"Not at all, sir. It would be a great pleasure to me to have you-all so near me as long as you could stay. Mrs. Nunley and my son would be equally pleased."

"We expect to rent houses for whatever they are worth—" began Colonel Tarr.

"Don't mention such a thing," exclaimed Dr. Nunley, with real warmth. "I should think it strange to accept money for anythin' like that. No, indeed! If you gentlemen will do me the honor of trying my old plantation house—

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which is as commodious as this—I shall have it cleaned and made ready for you soon in the mornin'."

He appeared really very well in his hospitality and it was plain that the men believed him to be sincere in it, for they were clearly embarrassed. Colonel Tarr's face, the only one I could see plainly, as he was not smoking, turned rather red in the fire-light.

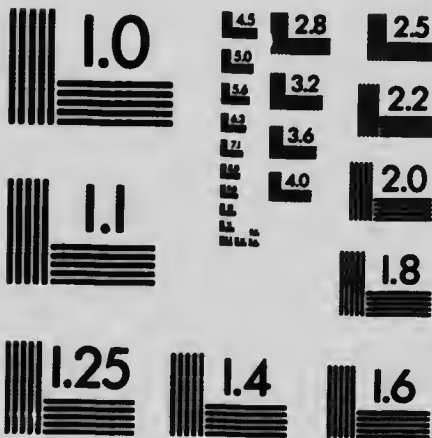
"You are exceedingly kind," he said, with the first courteousness he had shown their visitor. "We thoroughly appreciate your friendly offer. But if we move at all in your direction, it must be to Mr. Talbot's place—Riverside, is it not? I have already made a sort of arrangement with him. We may go down there to-morrow."

"Indeed, you will not," I whispered resolutely. At last it had come within my power to check them in their mad career, and I thought more of the satisfaction of doing that than of myself. For me, it was little matter whether Colonel Tarr or Dr. Nunley took me home, one was as reliable as the other, both would be interested in doing it quietly; but for Colonel Tarr, what a bitter but wholesome draught to be obliged to give up his plans this very night and take to his hidden boat! Clearly I *must* appeal to Dr. Nunley. I would await the last



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word and then step forward and make my terms with him. Mrs. Nunley would wait late that night for the doctor's return. He would drive thirty miles to Tallepoochee before he even dined. How my uncle might think best to compromise with him, to reward him for my return, I did not think it worth while to consider. It was certain that Dr. Nunley would at once seize upon this loop-hole of escape for himself which would appear at the same moment that he became aware of his danger.

And yet, to nerve one's self to appear to a man who believes one dead, who has every reason to hope one is dead, is no easy task. My heart beat so stormily that I felt scarcely strong enough to stand upright. Moreover, Colonel Tarr glanced up and toward me several times, adding greatly to my agitation.

"He is afraid of what I may do," I argued to quiet myself. "But he is powerless at last. I control the situation."

The doctor's unexpected show of hospitality had baffled his assailants only for the moment. Colonel Tarr presently opened fire with the question as to how long Mr. Murray had been in the country before he had had the stroke of paralysis.

"Now, Harry," remonstrated Kelvin, "you

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are not fit to talk on this subject, you ought to know you're not. Your nervous manner gives you dead away." Colonel Tarr stared. He could not know how Kelvin had explained his case during his absence. "Just keep quiet, Harry, and leave the doctor to me. I'll find out all he knows, you simply listen. It won't do for you to get excited so near your bedtime."

"So near my—*what?*"

"I'm sure it is not well for anyone of us to dwell on the painful subject," put in the doctor with a soothing, bed-side manner, "least of all you, Colonel, in your present condition."

"My present *what?*"

Then he seemed to understand, and accepted the rôle promptly. He rose with an impatient laugh and began to pace the room. I had a hope that he had not noticed me after all, but presently he came up and stood near me.

"What are you doing here, Jack?" he asked softly, but not in the least as if he were annoyed that I was present.

As it was plain enough what I was doing I made no reply but motioned him with my hand to go away. Instead of complying, he took his place beside me, squaring his shoulders back against the wall.

"Well, this is his last boldness," I reflected,

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and did not change my position in the shadow of the side-board where I was.

"It's like being in a private box," murmured Colonel Tarr, surveying the group by the fire. "Too bad you can't see the face of the principal actor."

"Dr. Nunley isn't acting," I returned in a warning whisper.

"Oh, I think he is," said Colonel Tarr, coolly. "Not that it's of much consequence."

Here was a great show of indifference on the verge of his exposure! Or did he entertain the notion that I would be afraid to speak?

Meanwhile Kelvin had pressed Dr. Nunley with questions, and apparently thinking it the safest position, Mr. Murray's physician had taken the lead in the conversation. He tried to leave the subject of his patient and to interest Kelvin and Thomas in the Harlowes. I found this something of an ordeal, as Colonel Tarr evidently guessed; he took the occasion to ask me, in a low voice, to go out onto the piazza. I refused with great decision; I had no notion of losing a word that might be of value to me in determining how I should address myself to the doctor, when the time came.

"It seems a very curious case of accidental firing," Kelvin interrupted a tirade on the beau-

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tiful charity of my aunt. "The house burned down so *very* quickly. Is there no suspicion of arson?"

"My dear sir, impossible!" exclaimed the doctor in a horrified tone. "The atrocity of the act forbids the thought. Consider it—a helpless and harmless invalid and a lovely young woman burned alive! What motive could exist for such a hideous crime? It was purely accidental and has been quite accounted for; the flues of the chimneys were defective and there were large fires burning in several rooms. You gentlemen from the North are hardly sufficiently familiar with the structure of our country houses to realize that they must burn like tar-barrels. There is neither lath nor plaster about them, and this one had not even paint. The walls were sealed with our inflammable pitch-pine, the floor-rafters were exposed. With a good wind, as there was that night, it is not surprisin' that the second floor fell in before anyone reached the place." Dr. Nunley had grown warm in his exposition, he stopped to wipe his forehead with his handkerchief. "Furthermore, you scarcely realize what a draught of air circulates under our houses here. They are built on piers, you observe, and there is always a space of several feet between the ground-floor and the earth."

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"Yes," said Kelvin, nodding thoughtfully, "yes, I may say that we have had our attention called to that architectural peculiarity. That must be a very sanitary way to build a house. I am sure it was healthier for Mr. Murray to live in such a house. Well, Doctor, the affair is naturally very painful to you," he continued with sympathy. "I suppose you would give up anything, say your professional practice here, if you could bring Murray back to life again."

And since the doctor did not wince at this audaciously broad hint, it was certain that he had not the faintest suspicion of what was the actual situation. He began a well-controlled, well-worded lament for his patient, the poor, friendless man who had sought health here and come to such a doom.

"Call him not friendless, Doctor," protested Kelvin in a feeling voice. "Say rather he had a friend in yourself who did for him with unparalleled unselfishness to the very end."

Kelvin had fallen into a kind of sing-song which suggested that he was getting tired and the pure nonsense and mischief would presently take the upper hand. Thomas was leaning well forward, as if he might be struggling with laughter.

"My connection with Mr. Murray, sir, was

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purely professional," returned the doctor, rather stiffly. "I took great interest in his case, but I never felt——"

At this moment George came in to light the lamps. It had not occurred to me that I might be forced into the scene before I was quite ready for it. For the moment my courage failed, I dared not trust myself to play my part with the necessary spirit—and if I did not word my speech exactly right, I knew I should not get exactly what I wanted. I needed to retreat in order to make ready; to retreat into my room would have been fatal, as Colonel Tarr could simply turn the key and I should miss the doctor altogether. This was the time to seek the piazza.

Before the room was alight, I had stolen across to the door and slipped out. A minute later I was in the end of the great piazza and alone, for Colonel Tarr followed me only far enough to keep me in view. He seated himself on the steps, quite as if my movements did not concern him.

The moon had not yet risen, the stars were bright. Their pale light glistened on the dark leaves of the great magnolia. Against the white sand yard the monstrous prickly pears stood out distinctly, all else was merged in

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shadow and dark foliage. Far across bare winter fields stretched the silent shadow line of pines. The air was very mild and sweet; after all that smoke and lying and suppressed excitement of the interior it was wonderfully sweet to taste the liberty of this quiet. In full enjoyment of it I dreamed away the minutes, standing there at the piazza railing. Colonel Tarr seemed also to give himself up to the moment of peace. Light enough from the open hall fell on him for me to note his indolent attitude, his hands clasped behind his head as he half reclined on the steps, staring out into the night.

I was sure that no one in the room had seen me go out; this was presently verified by Kelvin, who came out to the front door and summoned Colonel Tarr in an angry whisper.

"You're in the South here, Harry, and you've simply got to show some manners. Callers aren't treated in this way hereabout. I really don't know how to excuse you to the doctor."

"What, has the fountain of prevarication run dry?" mocked Colonel Tarr, instead of explaining in a word why it was necessary for him to stay out there. "Why don't you put me to bed with a chill? I thought I was delicate."

"Then he'll offer to attend you, he's getting so confoundedly friendly," groaned Kelvin. "I

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see that he is getting very fond of us, though Geoffrey looks like a thunder-cloud and you act like this. If it were not for me, we shouldn't have learned a thing about him."

"Don't overwork yourself, will you, Kelvin?" Colonel Tarr called softly after him as he retired. I thought it was treating his friend pretty ungratefully. Though I could not condone Kelvin's methods, I decidedly admired his devotion to the cause and ingenuity in serving it.

He must have again tormented the doctor shortly after this, for the drone of voices in the dining-room presently broke, we heard the chairs move and louder talking. I walked toward the hall door and Colonel Tarr rose to his feet.

"You can continue your walk on the back piazza," he said to me, quite as if he expected no resistance on my part. "If you stay here our visitor will see you when he comes out."

I stopped for a moment and nerved myself for the contention, then walked resolutely to the railing where the light of the hall fell upon me, and seated myself with the air of one who waits.

"I intend that he shall see me, Colonel Tarr."

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He came up and stood before me.

"May I ask what you intend to do?" he inquired with an affectation of respectful interest.

"I am going to break up your camp, Colonel Tarr, and induce you to take a journey," I answered, beginning to quiver with excitement.

"Ah! That is the programme? And what, may I ask, is to become of you, my prisoner?"

"I am going home with Dr. Nunley."

"The deuce you are," he exclaimed, hotly, quite changing his tone and at the same time he made as if to seize my arm.

"Don't you dare," I cried angrily, warding him off. "I won't be touched; and I won't be spoken to in that way."

He cooled down instantly and fell back into an amiable tone.

"You know perfectly well, Jack, that if I thought it would make the requisite impression I should not hesitate to swear at you quite horribly, nor yet to pick you up and throw you into the river if you prove a little nuisance on land. I am sure you did not mean to use the word *dare* in speaking to me."

I laughed a little hysterically.

"I don't see how you can laugh," he said, with a touch of Kelvin's manner of injured

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pride. "You don't seem in the least afraid of me. What have I ever done that you should trust me?"

At the same moment the dining-room door within opened and we heard Dr. Nunley's profuse regrets that he could not stay to supper. I sprang to my feet and Colonel Tarr stepped aside, making no effort to detain me. The next moment, in the full light of the swinging lamp of the hall, Dr. Nunley and I stood face to face.

Kelvin and Thomas were both considerably startled at my appearance. They had thought me safely locked in my own room. Kelvin was, as usual, equal to the occasion.

"Ah, here you are, Jack? I thought you were asleep. Dr. Nunley, I make you acquainted with the youngest member of our camp, Mr. Ball."

"Pleased to meet you, sir," said the doctor affably extending his hand. There was no quiver of surprise on his face, not a sign of recognition. I stood in a sort of a daze for a minute; to have actually been passed off for one of the party seemed to make me dizzy.

"You came in tired from hunting, I suppose," the doctor broke the awkward pause; rather amiably considering that I had obliged him to

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withdraw his hand stretched out in salutation. When I made no reply, he turned upon the three grave and silent men in astonishment.

"Dr. Nunley, don't you know me?" I cried almost sobbing. "I am Kate Harlowe."

He staggered back against the wall.

"Gentlemen, I beg that you will not amuse yourself at my expense," he stammered ; but he looked at me now with veritable fear and I saw that he recognized me.

"I have been kidnapped and imprisoned and disguised, and the whole world thinks that I am dead," I cried, now in my turn holding out my hand appealingly. "Help me! Take me home!"

He looked wildly about at Colonel Tarr and Kelvin.

"They can't do anything," I urged. "They are incriminated and must fly the country. Everything is in your hands."

"I can't believe—" began Dr. Nunley, weakly.

"Can't you believe your eyes, Doctor?" asked Colonel Tarr, coolly, advancing to my side. He looked very quiet but certainly more dangerous than I had yet seen him. "But I fancy this matter is entirely without interest to you, unless you really want to recall to life the *only* witness to your patient's curious escape

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through the two holes in the floors of Mr. Perry's house."

The next instant Kelvin had swept me into the dining-room and shut me in.

I was surprised and indignant beyond expression, and tried with all my strength to open the door again; the handle was held firmly from the outside. Then I gave in and listened, rather alarmed to find my chosen champion so quiet. It was Colonel Tarr who was talking in a low and even voice and there came only short, low answers from the doctor. Presently there was a louder outburst from Thomas which sounded very much like swearing, then rapid steps of people leaving the hall—and then Kelvin came in to me. His face was so grave that the torrent of reproaches I had ready for him died on my lips. All was silent in the hall.

"What has happened?" I demanded, uneasily.
"Where is Dr. Nunley?"

"He has gone," returned Kelvin, gently.
"Nothing is the matter. I congratulate you upon not having gone with him."

"He can't have deserted me!" I cried.

"That is exactly what he has done," Kelvin returned, with a look of sincere pity. But I wanted no sympathy—I was in a fury of indignation.

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"Doesn't he know I can ruin him?" I demanded in my wrath.

"He did not understand that clearly," returned Kelvin in soothing tones. "In fact, Colonel Tarr conveyed to him, in his own reassuring way, that you would never be dangerous to Dr. Nunley and he accepted it with a faith that touched us all—especially our young friend, Thomas. I may say *he* was deeply moved."

"What? You made Dr. Nunley believe that you were going to kill me?" I asked, amazedly.

"Don't try to fathom the darkness of that man's thoughts, Jack," Kelvin returned in a mournful tone. "I am sorry, myself, to think ill of him, for I have found him congenial. But it certainly looks as if he had preferred leaving you to an unknown fate to antagonizing Colonel Tarr. Perhaps his high ideals of courtesy have influenced him. Perhaps he was afraid of hurting our feelings if he refused a little present we offered him."

"You bought him?"

"He gave us some useful suggestions as to where we might hope to find his former patient—and took a fee for this semi-professional advice. I hated to see him do it, and so did Thomas. We had both thought better of the

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doctor. But everyone degenerates in coming in contact with Harry."

Of all my experiences this cruel desertion seemed the most terrible. I shuddered as I thought over my desolate state. Kelvin was really distressed. "Poor child," he said, gently, and taking me by the hand he led me to the fire. I began to sob.

"Here, this won't do," he urged, kindly. "Cheer up! the worst is yet to come."

"I feel as if I had been murdered, Mr. Kelvin," I said, piteously.

"Well, suppose you were," he returned, briskly; "I never heard of anyone's crying over that."

This proposition puzzled me so that it dried my tears. The next minute Thomas came in, excited and out of temper, as usual.

"Harry wouldn't let me get at him," he said, to Kelvin indignantly. "I'd like to know whose business it is when I go to thrash a man. I don't care, I'll take it out of him some day. I'm only afraid I'll never see him again. You and Harry may take the fellow's insult if you like it, but I——"

"There, there, don't worry!" interrupted Kelvin, soothingly. "You may feel almost certain you will meet Dr. Nunley in court some

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day, where you will have an opportunity for explanations."

Thomas subsided somewhat, only kicking the fire viciously so that the sparks flew in swarms up the chimney. I had thrown myself into an armchair and was holding my hands to my throbbing head, about as near desperation at that moment as I had been since my troubles began. What had it all meant?

Thomas turned and saw me, suddenly swung a light chair around in front of me, and with one knee on the seat and his arms on the back, addressed me soberly.

"You have no reason to think very well of me—," he began.

"Quite the contrary," I interrupted promptly, starting up. The tone and manner were so new in Thomas that I was somewhat alarmed. Kelvin, moreover, had left the room.

"But see here, you know," he expostulated, and there was actually an appeal in his voice. "Sit still a minute, won't you, and hear what I've got to say?"

I sank back bewildered and eyed him dubiously.

"I only want to tell you that I am thoroughly ashamed of my share in this business," said the youth of the gag, frankly and soberly. "I

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never realized until to-night how awfully we are treating you. This business has shown it up, you know. It's deucedly inappropriate to talk this way, when I have bound myself to see the thing through—but I want to say plainly that I'm sorry. Of course you have got to try to get me arrested, and of course you can't be expected to know me, if we should ever happen to meet anywhere—though I know lots of people who know the Harlowes and it may be horribly awkward—but for all that you might tell me now that you don't bear me a personal grudge."

"I suppose I don't," I returned rather faintly, while a long dim line of "terribly awkward" meetings flashed upon my imagination. "I accept your apology, Mr. Thomas, for as far as it goes. It does not go far. But I am in a desolate position and must be grateful for a slight courtesy though I need so much more."

I had risen as I spoke and he now stood before me in an attitude of dejection, impatiently rocking the little chair.

"If I were not bound—" he muttered.

"Oh, stay faithful to Colonel Tarr, by all means," I exclaimed, between bitterness and a certain fervor. "My case is not so miserable as

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his. He must need all that friendship can do to help him bear his disgrace."

I walked quickly to the door of my room, for my tears were rising again and I felt I must now conceal my weakness at any cost. To my dismay, I found my door was locked.

"That's so, you were supposed to be locked in," said Thomas, diverted from our subject to a wonder. "I saw Kelvin turn the key when Dr. Nunley got up to go. How in the world did you get out."

"Get me the key," I commanded, impatiently; but when he complied at once, leaving me alone in the room, I was surprised indeed. This time I wasted not a moment in consideration, but rushed to the window. The sash stuck hopelessly, I pushed it up in vain. Then I made for the other window; and as I passed the fireplace the gleam of a small pistol on the mantel-piece caught my eye and with an instantaneous vision of the dangers of my road, I seized it and slipped it into the pocket of my coat.

The second window opened at my touch—and at the same moment the door from the hall opened and Colonel Tarr entered the room. My being at the open window did not seem to suggest to him that I was bent on escape, whether

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because he was too preoccupied to consider me at all or whether because he gave me credit for too much sense for such an undertaking by night. He went straight to the mantel and I thought my heart would stop beating, for it seemed certain he wanted the pistol. He only took up a small pair of spurs, however, and seemed to miss nothing. I had not the presence of mind to turn my affrighted and anxious gaze from him, and as he turned he noted it. Fortunately, he misunderstood my expression and slowly flushed as he spoke.

"It never occurred to me that you would be frightened at what I said out there," he said, rather unsteadily. "I could have tried some other bluff, I suppose, but I am not good at invention and on the spur of the moment——"

He broke off at my exclamation of amazement.

"Are you actually reassuring me that you don't mean to murder me?" I asked with an involuntary little sigh.

He made no reply in words, but his face was suddenly transfigured with glad relief and I got a look and a smile that were distinctly dangerous to the cause of law and order. I was the more of the mind that I must re-enforce my animosity to Colonel Tarr by some quiet medi-

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tation; and I complained to him that my door was locked.

"You are being pretty badly treated to-night," he said with a frown, and he went to the door and called Kelvin. "He will be here in a minute, Jack. You will excuse me if I get ready, I am in something of a hurry."

He sat down to fasten on his spurs, and with his head bent down so that I might not see his face he continued, in an off-hand way:

"There will be a change for you to-morrow, in all probability; at least a slight break in the monotony of your martyrdom. We shall move you to Riverside."

I was considerably dismayed at the news. Did this not mean that my captivity would be indefinitely prolonged? They had been four days in covering this neighborhood. How long would they take in the next?

"I saw that you had been reading the paper the other day, so I suppose you know your family are in Tallepoochee," he said, rising and taking his hat. "So you will be seven miles nearer them at Riverside. At the very longest it will take me only about twenty-four hours to exhaust the possibilities which Dr. Nunley has pointed out down there. So your hard days are nearly over—and mine begin."

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He smiled across at me rather sadly. It was distinctly an effort for me to feel stern.

"If he could only be stopped to-night," I thought with inward despair. "Now, that Thomas is disaffected, and Kelvin weary and he himself softened to some show of human feeling!"

"Harry, where are you going?" demanded Kelvin sharply from the door.

"Out."

"What for?"

"To enjoy the moonlight, to be sure. I wish you felt like going with me, Theodore. It's a lovely night. At least send Dan to Riverside after me as soon as he comes in. I want company."

The irony did not amuse Kelvin in the least. He set down the tray on which my dinner was served and motioned me to take a seat by the table, still looking at his friend with a grave face.

"I think the fact that we have a new and rather untried accomplice in Dr. Nunley warrants a consultation before we do much more thrashing about the underbrush to-night," he said, dryly.

"It certainly gives us less time," returned Colonel Tarr, impatiently. "But I think Dr.

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Nunley will take a few hours before he decides to betray us, and these few hours are very promising. His suggestion that McGuire may be——"

"His next suggestion will be that McGuire is at Dome City," Kelvin broke in. "And then still farther on down. He is trying to remove us from the region in the most courteous manner possible — by hypnotic suggestion."

"It's all a matter of where his interest lies," returned Colonel Tarr. "My notion of it is that he would be mightily relieved to know McGuire dead."

I had withdrawn to my door and when Kelvin's eyes followed me I motioned him to unlock it.

"You must have your dinner first, Jack," he said, with a curiously attentive look at my face. "And while you eat it you can listen to a very important council. You may even have a vote after your elders have spoken. If Colonel Tarr insists upon departing before our consultations, Thomas and you and I may decide on the next steps without him."

This was pretty plain; Kelvin was on my side openly at last! Perhaps Colonel Tarr could be stopped. With a fluttering heart I

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returned to the table and stood beside it, looking at Kelvin eagerly.

"Jack," said Colonel Tarr, in a tone of sharp command, "sit down instantly and eat your dinner. Don't raise your eyes from your plate until I order you to do so—except," he added when I wheeled upon him defiantly—"except to look at me. Understand that I am still in command, though there are signs of rebellion in the ranks."

He smiled daringly at Kelvin as he spoke and the little man was very much put out. He walked to the door and called Thomas.

"Geoffrey, come in here to general orders, and learn how the thing shouldn't be done."

"Orders be hanged," said Thomas, from without. "We haven't time to stop a minute, as I understand it."

He appeared in the door with his hat on, a light saddle on his arm.

"That is the way I understand it also, Geoffrey," said Colonel Tarr. "But Kelvin seems to understand it differently—Kelvin and Jack. We are to spend a few minutes in council. Come in."

The young man looked from one to the other of us doubtfully, then entered quickly, dropping his hat and saddle on the floor.

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"Is Jack to have a vote?" he demanded with significance. "Well, then, I suppose——"

"What do you suppose?" asked Colonel Tarr, steadily eying him.

"I suppose he will be the majority," returned Thomas with a flashing smile. "I move that his vote be made unanimous."

"Second the motion," said Kelvin, quickly.

"And now that remarks are in order," said Colonel Tarr, with a bitter calmness, "I will remark that the business here does not in the least concern me and I will withdraw. This is my busy night; in fact, if I am to continue my work alone, I haven't a moment to spare. Jack, I promised to return you to Tallepoochee myself. I can't do it, I am desperately engaged to-night. Kelvin will——"

"I hold you to your promise, Colonel Tarr," I interrupted, with a sudden sense of control. "I shall not go home with Mr. Kelvin. He does not seem to be very reliable. I am afraid he might desert me halfway on the road. You will take me home yourself."

This speech was as effective as my heart could wish. Kelvin gave a low exclamation of delight and rubbed his hands; Thomas brought down his fist on the table with a triumphant "There!" and Colonel Tarr regarded me with a baffled

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look which was almost amusing. It was only for a moment.

"You are quite in your right," he said, coolly, and he consulted his watch. "We will go at once. You will have to ride fast, Jack, I must keep some hours before daylight for my own affairs. It is now a few minutes past seven. We will leave as soon as the horses are saddled."

"No, I won't," I said, quickly. "I've no idea of taking a hard ride, nor of frightening my family, nor arriving at midnight. I will eat now, and then sleep, and to-morrow morning early I will go home."

"That's a sensible programme," put in Kelvin. "I move it be adopted for the whole party."

"You are in your right again," said Colonel Tarr, with a dangerous smile. "But you can't play with me, Jack. If you refuse to go home when I offer to take you—you haven't much of a case against me."

"Look here, Harry, you had better be careful," exclaimed Thomas, angrily.

"Geoffrey, in any matter that remotely concerns you, I am always happy to consult you," returned the other with a certain sweetness which was not altogether reassuring; then to

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me, briefly, coldly: "Answer me, Jack, yes or no, will you ride with me to-night?"

"Yes," I returned in a great fright, as I realized my case.

"Are you ready now?"

"Yes."

"Kelvin," he continued in his usual business-like tone of command, "you and Geoffrey will take the carriage horses, and leave me and Dan the boat. Wait here till he comes in and tell him to take it down to Riverside, and tie it just below the old wharf. He can wait for me at the house, I'll probably get there between two or three in the morning. Good-by, both of you; I suppose we'll meet on deck of the Paloma in the course of a few days. You can see by the papers whether it is worth while waiting for us. Come on, Jack."

"Now I know you are insane," cried Kelvin, with exasperation. "You will first kill this poor child with your mad ride and then come back to face the devil—is that the idea?"

"I really have hopes that Jack will be so very tired when he gets home as to forget to interfere with me for a few hours," he returned, lightly. "As for what I have to face when I return, that no longer concerns you."

"Harry, this is an awful misunderstanding,"

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said Thomas, in a low troubled voice. "You ought to know that I wouldn't go back on you at this point. I really thought we were going to give it all up for the present—on Jack's account. That's the way I understood it when I came in just now. If you are going on, I'm going on, of course. I'll be at Riverside with Dan."

"All right, Geoffrey; I'll expect you," he said, shortly. His look was dark and resolute, as on the first night of this adventure; but how differently I regarded that face on which I had since seen the play of such varied feeling, the expression of so much that was sensitive! It seemed hard that this chance for influencing him should be swept away in his vigorous action, here where he stood confronted with the two friends that loved him and one enemy that sincerely pitied him. We were all of the same mind—that he should be stopped.

"Speak, Jack, speak for the advancement of civilization," Kelvin urged me, mournfully. "Common-sense from me, his ancient tutor, has taken on the garb of reason."

"Aren't you too late with your common-sense?" I asked him, sternly. "I don't wonder you want me to speak. You and Mr. Thomas can have nothing whatever to say."

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"You're right," said Thomas, quickly; "but before you decide that we are the sneaks we seem to be, please remember that it's on your account that we want to break up this camp."

"On my account!" I repeated, scornfully. "Would a few hours more or less hurt or help my case, after all I have had to suffer? Don't you see that I am about to be exposed to a fearful hardship because, if I resist, I surrender my last standing-ground? If it's on my account you have all but forsaken Colonel Tarr, I wish you would turn back. I was better off when there was no champion to my cause."

And having thus pretty effectually crushed Kelvin and Thomas, I turned to their leader again, who regarded me with a look of undisguised suffering. We were still all about the dining-table, I with my hands upon it for support, for though I felt my head was cool and level, I was nevertheless faint in body from sheer excitement.

"Will you listen to me a minute?" I asked, appealingly, and he bowed his head in silent assent. "I assume, Colonel Tarr, that you have repented of burning the house."

"That's assuming a good deal," he said, with wilful density. "How else could I have succeeded in detaining you?"

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"You have lucid intervals when you repent of the whole thing," I insisted ; "but you think that you have already done all the harm that you can do ; that there is no undoing it by turning back now and that you might as well have your satisfaction. That is the way you reason, isn't it ?"

"That is the way—only I don't do it so well," he said, with a touch of amusement.

"But you are wrong, Colonel Tarr, because the worst offence against society is not committed—until you succeed."

"Now, what do you know——?" he began, hotly.

"Of why you hunt McGuire? I don't know. I never want to know."

His face hardened at once, that expressive face, where every feeling played in turn—and I knew I must go gently.

"I am not speaking of any more violence, Colonel Tarr. I will believe that you are disgusted with that yourself. I will assume that you sincerely believe that your cause is just ; that you have persuaded yourself that it is more important that this particular scoundrel should be punished than that the law should be respected. Don't you think that is a view that will appeal very strongly to a great many young

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boys? You know how every detail of your dare-devil enterprise will be published—and by what a class you will be—admired?”

This notion was clearly as new as it was unpleasant. A deep, angry red rose into his face and he lowered his eyes. Meanwhile Kelvin and Thomas had stepped a little back, silently attentive. I caught sight of Dan's heavy figure, leaning in the half-open door, but gave him no further thought.

“The greatest wrong you have done me is to weaken the laws which were made to protect me,” I continued. “It is very terrible for me to think of conditions that make it unsafe for me to stay alone for a few hours in a house on the public road. It is dreadful to think that my personal safety requires that I should know how to handle a pistol and be willing to use it.”

Here Thomas marched to the fire and relieved himself, as usual, by kicking the burning logs. Kelvin noiselessly followed him and I faced Colonel Tarr alone.

“So if you succeed, and if you get safely away, you leave this state just so much weaker by your lawlessness, just so much less capable of protecting the persons and property of helpless, innocent people. So, you see, you haven't done the worst till you succeed; you can never atone

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unless you turn back now. You can't escape the admiration, the following, the imitators, unless you accept failure. As you know, Colonel Tarr, a few acts done in the spirit of yours would soon depopulate this region. How can good women live where laws can be safely defied?"

He met my eyes with a look of dreary despair. I thought he was wavering, and my tone grew warmer and lower.

"You said I was quite unfit to judge you, because my sympathies were too narrow, but in this case I am only too much in sympathy with you. I saw the face of the man you hate unmasked by terror; and it now seems the worst of all that has happened to me that I should have been in the room with him." (That went home; Colonel Tarr's eyes blazed up fiercely.) "I can believe him capable of great wickedness, I can see what a temptation you must be under. It would be a bitter sacrifice to give up now, but in my eyes, at least, it would be—atone-ment."

And straightway, to my wonder and delight, I saw that I had won; the spirit of black obstinacy was exorcised, the man had yielded. He spoke no word, it was all said by the light that passed into his face, by the relaxation of

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his clinched hand on the table, by the outward turn of the wrist.

Then Dan stepped forward.

"Now, see here," he said, slowly, "I reckon it's my turn to make a speech."

My heart sank when I saw his face; there was quiet, dogged, unreflective strength of purpose, something very different from the passionate determination I had combated in Colonel Tarr.

"I ain't much for argument," he said, addressing himself to Colonel Tarr. "I come on this expedition to kidnap a certain Irishman that I'd made up my mind about before I started—and I don't see the drift of this here young lady's remarks. That may be because I ain't educated to them, and then again it *may* be because they don't apply to our case. I don't think, Colonel Tarr, anything could be said to fit the case better than them few words you and me had the night after the siege. I don't know nothing about all this here undermining of the law. It's the law of which we're complaining, that ain't strong enough to bring McGuire to justice till we bring him to Carlos. If we've weakened the law in doing it, it's because the law ain't worth much. As for the helpless and innocent, they're safer the fewer McGuires there is, we all

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agreed to that. If there was no one worse than us, we wouldn't need no criminal law."

"Lord, what logic!" groaned Kelvin. "Harry, does this pounding hurt?"

Dan turned on him quietly. "I ain't pretending to brains, Mr. Kelvin, I'm merely stating that I ain't willing to give up what we have begun. It's cost too much already."

"We are acquiring McGuire on the instalment plan, like a sewing-machine," mocked Kelvin. "If we don't make the last payment, we lose the whole thing."

"*Exactly!*" Dan agreed, imperturbably. "You couldn't put it no better than that. We've all paid out considerable, I ain't no exception, though I didn't put in much money or any great amount of social position. I gave up my girl, for one thing. I seed how we was going to run some risks to our respectability and I advised her to marry somebody else—which she did," he finished, coolly, "for she had excellent good sense."

He looked around from one to the other of us and then fixed his eyes on Colonel Tarr's white face.

"I ain't willing to pay a big price and get nothing for it, Colonel Tarr."

They eyed each other steadily a moment,

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then Colonel Tarr smiled as one smiles at a pain.

"Neither am I, Dan," he answered, quietly. "We are one."

I dropped into a chair close beside me and leaned my head wearily in my hands, wondering why I should care so much. Dimly I heard and understood that Kelvin and Thomas were assuring Colonel Tarr that they were with him to the end, wherever he led them; dimly I realized, and with great indifference, that I was still to be a prisoner and that to-morrow I should be moved to Riverside. They talked eagerly a few moments, withdrawing to the hearth, making their plans for the night. Then Colonel Tarr came to the back of my chair and spoke to me.

"It is only for a day or so at longest, Jack," he said, in a low voice, appealingly. "Don't grieve. What are a few more hours to you? You'll never miss them—and they seem all I have left of my life."

"I'm sorry," I answered, coldly, without turning my head; "or rather, I don't care about it in the least. I was not trying to talk myself free, as you very well know. Minutes or hours or days don't matter in that dark room. I am dead, Colonel Tarr, dead and forgotten in the

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world, and nothing more than a shadow here with you. And what I say hasn't the weight of wind."

"Then what a miserable thing I am, crushed by the breath of a shadow!" he exclaimed. "Jack, is it any satisfaction to you to know that I am in torment?"

"It is at least nothing new to me," I answered, wearily. "Leave me alone now, Colonel Tarr. I am tired of you and of your affairs. I want to go to my room."

He bade Kelvin unlock my door and immediately left the dining-room, Dan following him.

"Jack, you'll get your reward in heaven for your pluck and patience to-night," said Kelvin, as he found the right key on his bunch, "and I think you deserve an extra jewel in your crown of glory, for the way you have abused me. You really did me good. But couldn't you have managed to take down our friend Dan a little, for his confounded melodrama? It's a popular delusion that men of his stamp are not cunning. He coldly calculated the effect of bringing in his girl at that moment, or I'm no judge of art. I don't believe the lady exists—I think she was invented to-night for Harry's special benefit."

Whereat Thomas burst into a laugh; but I retired more weary and discouraged than before.

CHAPTER V

THE BETTER HORSE

"If I have heard it once, I have heard it a dozen times, there is no money in one boarder," declared Kelvin, as he wrenched out the nails that had secured the shutters of my room. "If Mrs. Henderson notices these holes and sends in a bill for damages, Jack, I've a good mind to forward it to you."

He and I were alone, as usual. At dawn that morning, Dan and Thomas had come in, "dead tired," and had gone up-stairs to sleep after ordering Kelvin to make ready for the move to Riverside. They were to start, they said, as soon as Colonel Tarr returned, but when that would be they could not say. Kelvin grumbled a good deal at not having a more definite message, but went to work with a will. I had to admire the ability with which he packed their effects, set the house in order, superintended George and Aunt Leni in their work, and guarded me closely all the time. I was willing to make it as easy as possible for him, coming

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and going promptly at his request. Now I was installed in the piazza, watching him languidly as he worked. A sleepless night had followed the trying scenes of the evening before; Dr. Nunley, Colonel Tarr, and Dan had occupied my feverish thoughts, one after another. Over and over again I analyzed these men, over and over I searched my mind for the appeal which should have gone home to each. To-day I was exhausted, and had sullenly resolved to banish the thought of them altogether.

Kelvin, too, was in a state of ill-concealed depression, and when the morning wore away without bringing Colonel Tarr's return and he had nothing further with which to occupy himself, he grew decidedly nervous. He gave me my lunch on the piazza, saying he thought it best for me to stay in the open air; but it was easy to see that he himself wanted to be where he could watch the long stretch of road for the coming of Colonel Tarr.

"What makes you so anxious about him?" I asked impatiently at last, for his anxiety was beginning to wear on me.

"Well, you see, the chances for finding McGuire down there are pretty good, according to all we have been able to learn, and I don't want

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Harry to find him—that is, I don't want him to find him when he is alone."

A vague horror began to creep over me.

"He rode away in a mad mood last night," Kelvin continued, apparently finding relief in talk. "He hasn't eaten or slept or stopped to think since Dan treated us to his little scene last night—and to be perfectly frank, I'm worried."

I did not let him see how strongly his words affected me, but I watched the road myself after this with miserable apprehension. My imagination busied itself with possible scenes in the great, lonely swamp, always seeing the Irishman with his ghastly face of fright begging his life of Colonel Tarr. It was in vain that I reminded myself that they had said they were going to kidnap the fugitive in order to take him to where the law could reach him. "It's a killin' me he'll be," Murray had groaned when he heard his enemy's step in the hall. The words rang in my ears and I gave myself up to a torment of terrifying thoughts.

I hid my face in the back of the armchair and Kelvin thought I was asleep. He hushed Dan and Thomas when they came downstairs for lunch. Later I heard their lowered voices in the hall and noted with surprise that neither of

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the two appeared to share Kelvin's anxiety over Colonel Tarr. Thomas, to be sure, was rather impatient and wanted to hasten the move, proposing that Dan should take the boat down the river without waiting for Colonel Tarr's return; but Dan vetoed that himself, saying "orders is orders," and he, for his part, was not going to stir till he heard further.

"Let's turn in and sleep some more," he suggested, calmly. "It'll get took out of us again to-night," and I heard him tramp slowly upstairs again.

"It isn't likely that Harry has run across the sheriff's posse led by Dr. Nunley down there in those swamps where Dr. Nunley sent him, I suppose," I heard Kelvin suggest, and I felt myself growing cold.

"If he has, I'm sorry for them," returned Thomas, composedly. Then he offered, good-naturedly, to take the watch, so that Kelvin might rest.

"No, go along, if you can sleep," said the little man, peevishly, and I heard Thomas go upstairs. A long, torturing silence of several hours settled down on the camp.

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"There he is!"

Kelvin's exclamation was positively joyous.

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As for me, when I saw Colonel Tarr riding up the lane at a leisurely pace, I was ready to cry with relief. If he had found his enemy and stained his hands with blood, he would not be returning so. A minute later he stood before me, calm and smiling, and my dark thoughts flew to the winds.

"You look tired, Jack. Has Kelvin been putting his theories on prison labor into practice?"

"Jack rose at nine and has slept three hours to-day, so I think he will pull through," said poor Kelvin, rather wearily. "What's the news, Harry?"

"There is no news," answered Colonel Tarr, with a quiet in which I could read no discouragement, and my fears returned in a very flood. Kelvin, on the contrary, brightened visibly. He went to the hall-door and shouted loudly to the men upstairs:

"Hello, there, boys! Wake up! Harry is here, not much the worse for wear, and he hasn't had any luck, thank the Lord!"

Colonel Tarr laughed out at this; nevertheless a somewhat dreary expression settled on his face.

"The outlook isn't quite so rosy as you seem to hope, Kelvin," he said. "I have a clew—and there'll be something done to-night."

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The words were sinister in their very lightness. The madman in Colonel Tarr was rising into power again. Soon, that face, those eyes, were to be once more the seat of pitiless wrath. At present, he was still his cooler self—if possible, a more hopeless subject for reasonable persuasion than he could be in the heat of action. I dared not even look my woe and kept my eyes down and my face set in indifference.

"Let George give me something to eat," Colonel Tarr commanded, "and then he can saddle Transfer and Santa Fé. You are to ride with me, Jack," he addressed me unceremoniously; "be ready in ten minutes, please."

"There is plenty of room in the wagon, for Jack," suggested Kelvin.

"Is it necessary to explain why he can't go by the public road? We can avoid the settlements only by riding across country."

"Well, then, let me go with him. You must be tired, Harry."

"Thank you, Kelvin, but I don't feel that I can trust you with my prisoner. If he should make a dash for liberty, I am afraid that you would be more inclined to piously thank the Lord than to give pursuit."

For once Kelvin had no retaliating malice. He only looked a little troubled and when

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Colonel Tarr had gone into the house, said to me :

"You don't want to ride, do you?"

"Certainly not to Riverside," I answered, moodily.

"But since you must go there, don't you want to promise to sit perfectly quiet in the wagon and not call——"

"And not call my own uncle, I suppose, if he should pass me on the road," I interrupted, indignantly. "No, Mr. Kelvin, I make no more promises, not even under threat of being gagged."

"Gagged?" he exclaimed in a scandalized tone. "Who ever thought of such a thing?" from which I concluded that Thomas had not had occasion to report the incident of Mr. Moody's visit.

If I had seriously contemplated any such attempt to escape again as Colonel Tarr pretended to fear, I should have been grievously disappointed in my mount. Santa Fé, a small native scrub, could never have entered on a race with the fine Kentucky bay, Transfer, and at present she was even stiff from recent hard usage. As we rode away through the open piney woods, I held one last disheartening review of my chances to free myself, and once more tried to let go the hope that I could interfere

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with that dreadful "something" which Colonel Tarr had declared should be done that night. For the rest, he would not let me brood, being disposed to talk himself. Though he appeared to demand no response, he very soon distracted me. He made remarks on the things we saw in the woods about us, and as, concerning these, I knew a great deal more than he, I was presently drawn into half-reluctant conversation. The habits of the water-moccasin appeared to interest him greatly. He knew about snakes in every quarter of the globe, but about this one he knew nothing. He was even dense in his ignorance, refusing to believe, for example, that it swims with its head held high above the surface of the water. "You are thinking of sea-serpents," he suggested—but he accepted my statement promptly when I gave the first sign of irritation. We spoke of land-turtles, and now he was hard to convince that the "gopher" was not a small, rat-like animal. Once I caught an expression in his eyes which raised the suspicion that he cared less for the truths of natural history than for the triumph of having made me talk to him. I froze instantly; but presently his manner convinced me that I had been mistaken and after that the turpentine industry soberly engaged our attention.

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We came upon a little deserted negro-cabin which presented the curious but familiar sight of four balls of clay set on the four corners of the chimney top, each stuck with several wisps of straw. Colonel Tarr pointed them out and asked their significance.

"They are to keep off the witches, I think." He looked incredulous. "Yes, they are fearfully afraid of being bewitched," I insisted.

"A very reasonable dread, I am sure," said he. "But what protection has the man without a chimney?"

"You can carry different things in your pocket against rheumatism and bad luck of all kinds, but I don't know exactly what. The negroes won't tell us much about it, because they know we laugh at them."

He seemed so much interested that I continued and told him of a quarrel two of our servants had had, when one had threatened so to conjure the other that "he cain't tell 'is own house f'om a gopher hole."

"And how was he going to execute that terrible threat," asked Colonel Tarr, laughing.

"Well, first he gets a lock of his enemy's—" I broke off in dismay at the sudden gleam of mischief in his eyes.

"Go on," he urged. "What does one do

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next;" his smile was unmerciful. I sternly vowed I would not look up or speak again.

"Well, never mind; I think I can work out the thing for myself," said he.

I rode on in profound gloom, my face bent to the ground. The most sensible people are susceptible to suggestion, I suppose, and I felt an unreasonable uneasiness at the thought that Colonel Tarr might still have the parcel I had "directed to him," as he had been impudent enough to put it. The superstition that it is dangerous to let your enemy get possession of any article of your personal belonging or of a lock of your hair is not confined to the African race. My own New England great-grandmother was frightened as a child when she had lost her doll, believing that if the village hag had stolen it she would stick pins into it to the torture of her small owner.

"I wonder if I've been conjured," I asked myself with a sigh; "this man, whom I should hate relentlessly, will dominate my thought!" I thought with a sort of horror of my long life to come through which I might have to carry this tormenting interest in one of whom I should not—could not ever hear again.

While this new trouble assailed me I gave Santa Fé her head. The erratic little beast

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wandered out of her course to the right and left at considerable inconvenience to my escort. When she was finally bold enough to stop and begin to nibble the wire-grass he tried to arouse me.

"You don't seem to be a very good rider," he remarked, with intent to annoy.

"You don't seem to have very good horses," I retorted promptly, and was immediately amused to observe how it nettled him. He was obviously of the many who would rather be accused of arson than of ignorance on the points of a good horse.

"Well, the country doesn't afford much choice," he said, rather contemptuously.

"The native horses are very good. One must know how to select one," I said, resentfully, whereupon he laughed. After that my silence was not very impressive. He continued to talk, telling me first where and why he had bought Santa Fé, and what was the matter with her; then, with apologies for criticising me, why I failed to manage her easily and so on to the points of military riding in general. I was a little startled when he made unreserved references to his past life, as if it had all been perfectly respectable and he had nothing to conceal. It had not occurred to me before that

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he had any independent past or future; he had seemed a bad dream of my own.

Thus riding slowly we came down into a magnolia "hammock," where a large branch wound cross our path, its quiet waters in a deep and sharp-cut bed.

"Where can we cross?" Colonel Tarr asked me, as we drew rein on the edge of the stream. I knew the locality well and could tell him of two fords within half a mile.

"The upper one lets you into cotton-fields and then there are fences in the way," I said, so that he might not choose that route.

"And the lower one, if I have a correct impression of where we are, takes you to the public road," he said, with a look of inquiry.

"Yes, it does," I admitted rather reluctantly, for I should have liked to reach the road. "But it is a good deal more direct."

"That settles it," he said, quietly, and turned his horse's head upstream. "The longest way is the best to-day."

As I followed him I brushed under a low gum-tree that seemed to afford some excellent switches, and it occurred to me that I should have one to urge on Santa Fé. Instinctively I put my hand in my pocket for a knife and felt—the pistol I had taken the night before. I

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drew the thing out with a sort of horror of it, and was going to fling it from me; but I had been trained to prudence with firearms and started to unload it first. Then Colonel Tarr turned and I was afraid he would hear it fall, so I slipped it back into my pocket.

"What is the matter, Jack?" he demanded, with surprise. I felt that my face flamed with my excitement at being so nearly caught in the covert act.

"I hope you did not misunderstand what I said, just now," he said, with an uncertain look. "It would be inconvenient to arrive at Riverside before Kelvin; and so I want to make the ride as long as possible."

Now my face burned from a more profound confusion. What I seemed to understand in his half-veiled explanation fairly lamed me. The next instant I regained that coolness which one can sometimes command in a great fright. There was something imperatively to be done, to be done at any cost. I must get away, out of sight, out of hearing of Colonel Tarr, at once and forever. In this supreme moment of decision the method came to me with the simplicity of a child's thinking. Since I could not ride away from Transfer on Santa Fé, I must exchange horses with Colonel Tarr and ride away

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on Transfer. This could be accomplished—I saw how it could be accomplished—for had I not a pistol?

My head was in a whirl, I could pay no more attention to what he said in trying to resume our conversation, although now I had a purpose in appearing tranquil and resigned. A gate just beyond the ford let us into the extensive plantations of a Potterstown farmer who was "in the push of plough-time," as they say, and Colonel Tarr chose a roundabout route to the southward along the strips of forest land that separated the cleared fields, so that nowhere I came within calling distance of the ploughmen. When he was about to take the extra precaution of laying his hand on Santa Fé's bridle, I assured him impatiently that it was not necessary.

"I could not ride twenty yards ahead of you on this horse, and I have no intention of trying," I told him candidly.

"I thought you were asleep," he explained with a courteous air, "and that Santa Fé might stumble; you haven't looked up or spoken in so long."

There was obvious vexation under his politeness. Alas! had I really given him the right to expect me to talk? My heart beat more uneasily, my resolution flamed stronger. Again

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and again I made sure of the deadly little weapon in my pocket; but now it was necessary, also, to act a part of being at ease, and I faced him when he spoke and made shift to answer intelligently.

We were able to travel several miles within the enclosed plantation, finding gates that Colonel Tarr could open, like the first, without dismounting. When we reached the farthest boundary line, marked by a "snake-fence," I knew we were not more than a quarter of a mile from Riverside. The rather lonely public road ran just beyond the fence, and for that short distance, Colonel Tarr seemed to have no objection to taking it.

"I believe it is the fashion in this country to take down a fence, rather than to look for a gate," he said, much to my satisfaction, for I expected to be obliged to make the suggestion myself.

"It is also considered polite to lay it up again, after you pass through," I suggested, in a pleasant way.

"No one shall complain of a breach of etiquette on my part," he rejoined in the same tone, and dismounted. "I must trouble you to get down, Jack."

I obeyed promptly. No one could have

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guessed from my docile manner how near I was to desperate action. Colonel Tarr unsuspectingly turned his back upon me, and quickly flung down to the right and left the rails of the fence. Softly I drew my pistol, cocked it, and slipped it back into my pocket. I felt quite equal to what I had to do.

"Step through here, Transfer," commanded Colonel Tarr, when he had finished, and snapped his fingers to his horse. The well-trained animal obeyed, stepping over the two or three rails that remained up, without his master's touching the bridle. Colonel Tarr motioned to me to follow with my horse. I dropped Santa Fé's bridle, and crossed the gap myself.

"Step through here, Santa Fé," I commanded, with impudent affectation of Colonel Tarr's manner. The horse stood still. Colonel Tarr laughed down at me.

"Snap your finger," he suggested, encouragingly, and I made a frantic effort to do so.

"Step through here, you little saw-horse," I screamed at the horse, as if I were in a high passion, and I flourished my hand in her eyes. Of course she shied off, as I desired, and Colonel Tarr sprang to catch her. At the same moment I flew to Transfer's bridle. Colonel Tarr wheeled about at once, and recoiled with

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horrified surprise before the muzzle of my pistol. Before he could recover his senses, I had scrambled into the saddle and pulled back to a safe distance. He looked absolutely dazed.

"Do you think you could lend me your horse, for this afternoon, Colonel Tarr?" I asked, in calm exultation, still aiming deliberately.

He recovered himself then, and a flash of amusement actually crossed his face.

"Allow me to make you a present of him, Miss Harlowe," he said, with engaging courtesy.

"Oh, I couldn't think of accepting that," I protested politely, inwardly enraged that he should think fit to give me my title at this moment. "I'll return him with the pistol, which I think belongs to Mr. Thomas."

"You had better keep them both, as our address is likely to be uncertain for some time to come," he urged, and this brought me to my subject.

"I am glad you know what to expect," I said, sternly.

"But I don't," he answered, calmly. "With a pistol pointing at my head, the future looks somewhat vague."

I laughed, and tossed the weapon to his feet. "It's not loaded," I cried. He grew crimson

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for a moment, and set his teeth in his lower lip. In some inconsequent way, I immediately regretted having placed him in that position. "You should have known I couldn't have shot you," I said, impulsively.

"Should I have known it?" he repeated, with a faint smile. "Well, I suppose I deserve to lose you. But now be merciful, and grant me a moment's hearing."

"I know what you want," I said, readily. "You want a little time. I won't give it to you, Colonel Tarr. You will go instantly to Riverside, collect your party and make haste to leave this country. You shall not hunt another hour!"

"And you?" he asked.

"I am going home, of course—unless you make it necessary for me to ride into Flintville to see Sheriff Caseby."

"I should hate to trouble you to that extent," he said, affably. "But allow me to ask you, do you know the way to Tallepoochee? Do you know at what house your uncle's family are staying? Do you realize that you will arrive there, if at all, some time after midnight? I want to call your attention to the fact that it is nearly sunset."

I thought a moment; there was my need of

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getting away from him; but there was the real danger of being lost. Could I not parry the subtler danger a few hours longer? I quickly made up my mind.

"Colonel Tarr," I said, "don't you owe me an escort to Tallepoochee?"

"I owe you even more than that," he answered, quickly.

"But I want only so much!"

"Will you trust me?"

"Not at all. I will bind you in promise to a very definite agreement first. I won't imperil my hardly earned freedom."

"Hardly earned?" he repeated the words with a laugh. "It was the easiest thing you ever did. It was too easy for me to think you capable of it. Well, what must I swear."

"That you will take me straight home and give up your wicked enterprise—and leave the country before to-morrow."

"Do you insist on that last point?" he asked, coolly. "Suppose I were moved to give myself up to you."

I let an ejaculation of dismay escape me, and jerked my horse still farther back, regarding Colonel Tarr with more real terror than I had felt since the first night of our acquaintance. He stood there in the splendor of sunset, lean-

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ing on the fence with an easy languor, strength and finish in his bearing, and in his look nothing less than control. I fancied myself with him as a willing prisoner.

"The idea does not seem to strike you with favor?" he observed with a triumphant smile. "Or don't I understand you, Miss Harlowe? Do you really refuse to do your duty by the state and deliver me up to justice?"

"No, I don't refuse," I stammered, miserably unhappy.

"But you would rather I should escape?" he asked, mercilessly. "Well then, you see, it is my place to make the bargain, about this going to Tallepoochee, and not yours at all."

He had been laughing as he teased me. Now he suddenly grew serious and advanced a step or two.

"If you will grant me one favor I will take you to Tallepoochee to-night, give up my hunt and immediately disappear so completely that all prosecution of me will be out of the question. This will leave the publicity of the matter entirely to your uncle's discretion. That is what you want, isn't it?"

I gave assent, though my conscience cried aloud against it.

"And for this you must promise me," he con-

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tinued in a voice singularly softened for one who was decreeing the terms in a bargain—in a voice that vibrated with pleading—"promise me that some time, somewhere—you will see me again."

For a moment I could only look bewildered.

"Can't you understand what I have no right to say?" he pleaded. "I must have a chance—a chance to offer you my love."

I now was spell-bound, and if he had approached I could not have moved.

"See how little I ask," he said, desperately in earnest now; "not for one word of hope. I only want the promise of a chance. Put it off for years, if you must, but tell me that some day I can appear before you, that you will recognize me. You know the worst that is in me; you won't cut off the sole object I can have for making a man of myself again."

"You must do that," I said, fervently. "You must redeem yourself, even without one thought of me."

"No, only by the thought of you! The promise, Jac—no, Miss Harlowe, give me that little promise," he pleaded still more earnestly. "You are brave and full of charity—won't you face the danger of it, if it seems to be a danger,

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for my sake; won't you pity me, in your charity?"

"The danger," I repeated with a trembling voice; "yes, there would be a danger, and I am not brave enough to face it, Colonel Tarr."

"But I am not going to be publicly disgraced, I am not even going to be tried for my crimes," he exclaimed. "I swear I'll appear as a respectable member of society, the world shall pronounce me a correct and desirable acquaintance."

"And I don't care for that," I returned, hotly. "If you came to me straight out of state's prison if I were sure of—two things—I would see you."

"Two things?" he asked, eagerly.

"If I were sure you loved me—and that you didn't hate McGuire any more."

At that name the glow faded from his face, he grew fairly pale.

"You don't know what you are saying," he answered in a low voice—"to put those two things together——"

"They go together," I said, resolutely. "I won't hear of your love, not now and not at any time to come, until you get rid of your wicked passion, your desire for revenge on that pitiful hunted creature. If you offer me anything you

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must offer me your whole heart, quite clean of hate."

"Kate, if you knew, you would hate him too," he groaned. He stepped to Transfer's side and took my hand in both of his. "Banish the dark thoughts, think of me only and of my misery," he urged, gently; but his eyes had begun to dance triumphantly again, he looked not in the least miserable, and sternly I drew my hand away. "Promise, Kate, promise," he begged, and "You must promise first," said I.

Then came a clatter of hoofs on the road to the south of us; Kelvin and Thomas were bearing down upon us, mounted on the carriage horses, coming from Riverside. Thomas had missed his pistol as they unpacked, Kelvin had decided that I had it, both were riding to the rescue of Colonel Tarr.

I wheeled my horse about and gave him the rein and unheeding of Colonel Tarr's frantic appeal, I was off at a furious gallop. My excitement possessed the horse: he went of his own accord at a breakneck speed. Trees, cabins, open fields flashed by, now a stretch of fence, cabins, and the woods again. Now the road sunk and we splashed the branch-water high, now it rose at a gentle slope to heights and I rode with never a let-up in speed. For two

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miles or more I made no attempt to quiet the horse; then he slowed up of his own accord and I ventured to look back. No one appeared in pursuit on the long straight road behind me.

"They haven't another horse as good as you, my Transfer," I said aloud, gratefully patting his moist shoulder.

The sun was setting by this time and for the short twilight the western sky shone fiery red through the forest behind me, so that it looked as though I had escaped from the burning woods. Before me heavy clouds hung like a curtain to the horizon.

I came to a little settlement of cabins. A negro woman stood in the door of the nearest and I hailed her, reining up my horse.

"Will you tell me how far it is to Flintville?"

She came down to the fence to answer me and I looked at her with peculiar pleasure. She was the first woman I had seen in four days. Her faded calico looked white in the evening light and hung about her slender stately figure like classic drapery. A white cloth, wound about her head, was loosened and hung into her neck with admirable effect.

"Hit's about fo' miles t' town, sah," she told me, pleasantly; "yo' kain't make it fo' da'k."

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"How can I get onto the Tallepoochee road?" I asked.

"Yo'se on it right now, Boss. All yo'se got to do is t' tu'n round and go back whar yo' come f'om," she replied with a gurgling laugh. "Yo' ain't got no tobacco in yo' pocket, is yo', Boss?"

I was rather pleased at the imputation, taking it as a credit to my disguise.

"I'll have some the next time I come past here, Auntie," I promised her.

"G'long," she said sceptically, but still with good-humor. I bade her good-night and perforce rode on—for I dared not ride back. To ride all night through a sleeping country, where I could not ask my way would be bad enough; but to ride in the fear of being sought and overtaken by Colonel Tarr, to run the least risk of seeing him, hearing his voice again, this surely I could not dare. In Flintville only I should be safe from him, and from Flintville I could take the train for Tallepoochee and speedily get home.

But since the man would not be getting out of the country as he should, but would be looking for me on the lonely, straight road; and since my appearance in Flintville would necessitate an account of my adventure and raise the

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powers of the law against him—how could I nerve myself for the outcome? Clearly, I could not. If I went to Flintville, it must be to pass through unrecognized. I must spend the night in the hotel as a stranger, raise money on my horse in the morning and take the train, the one daily train, for Talleepoochee.

The Oak House is built of bricks and stands alone for dreary ugliness. The oaks themselves, for which it is named and with which the other sides of the court-house square are well set, seem to mean to avoid its neighborhood. But few of its upper windows were lighted, the whole house appeared quiet. I rode up with high-strung nerves. As I dismounted in the light of the piazza windows, a colored boy sprang forward:

"Hole yo' hoss, Boss?"

"Take him to the stable and see that they give him a good rubbing," I commanded with a great air of knowing what I was about.

"I reckon you want dese yere saddle-bags," he suggested.

"Of course," I returned, with some sharpness, irritated at my own stupidity at not having noticed them. "You can unstrap them and fetch them into the office."

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And then I boldly entered, having first pulled my cap so as to shade my face a little, like the house-burners a few nights ago.

To my satisfaction, the office was but dimly lit. The clerk was behind his box-like desk. Some three or four men lounged about it, in languid and comfortable conversation.

"Good-evening, gentlemen," I made bold to say, when they failed to notice my entrance, and they all turned and stared, for it was not train-time and no strangers were expected. They all answered my greeting with such courtesy, however, that my courage and calm grew greater.

"Can I get a room for the night?" I asked the clerk, and he assented and pushed over the open book for me to register.

"J. Brown, Smithville, Conn.," I scrawled, hoping there was no such town in that State.

"Have you got any baggage?" asked the clerk, and I was very glad to be able to point at the saddle-bags that the boy at that moment brought in.

"I reckon you come from Thomasville," suggested the clerk.

"No, I've come all the way from Wilson," I returned, at random. "Mighty pretty road!"

"The prettiest road in this country," said one who was smoking with his chair tipped

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back under the flaring gas-jet—"the prettiest road for you-all tourists to see is the road to Tallepoochee."

"I'm going on to Tallepoochee myself, tomorrow," I returned, with a tone of interest. "But I'm thinking of selling my horse, if I can, and taking the train."

Now they were all interested in me and my affairs. It was very embarrassing to be closely questioned about an animal I had so recently and so doubtfully acquired. It occurred to me with considerable force that I might be suspected of having stolen Transfer. Hastily I made my excuses, declaring I was very hungry, and the clerk himself led me to the supper-room, where the meal was nearly over.

"I'll introduce you to those young ladies over yon," he proposed, affably, and evidently disapproved of me for desiring rather a table to myself.

The dining-room was distressingly light, and I attracted enough attention from the guests that were present to feel very much distressed at first. Presently the fear of discovery wore off, and as I was really hungry I fell to eating with the indifference of a real boy. There were certainly no acquaintances of mine in the room.

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"Any Northern visitors here?" I inquired of my waiter, to make perfectly sure.

"Yessah! Gemman f'om Michigan, sah, buy-in' lumber. He's on 'is way to Pensacola, and got took sick yere; but he's right smart better to-day, and I reckon he' gwine on de train in de mornin'."

"What time is the Tallepoochee train?" I asked, and he told me that it was the same as the Pensacola train, and that it left at eleven.

CHAPTER VI

BREAKFAST FOR THREE

THE part so easily assumed the night before looked difficult enough by daylight; yet there was no withdrawing. I fortified myself before leaving my room by a critical study of my image in the glass; and though I was far from pleased at my appearance, I had to admit with relief that as disguise it left nothing to be desired. The scrawny boy with the shock of yellow hair could not be taken for Kate Harlowe's most distant kinsman.

My bedroom opened upon the broad upper veranda; I drew the curtain from the glass door, opened it and peered out cautiously; all was quiet. I stepped out then and pacing up and down awhile, gathered up my courage and rehearsed my part.

The morning was frosty and clear. It was Saturday, country people's day, and already a stir had begun on the business block across the square. This looked promising for the forced sale of Transfer, and I had a sense that Fate

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meant to be kind to me henceforth and help me to the speedy end of my adventure. I was still alone, still struggling with my strange difficulties, while those who should help me believed me dead; but the kind sun was ready to cheer me, the fresh morning air braced me and raised my spirits—and had not the men downstairs interested themselves in me and the horse I had to sell?

Only, the old court-house among its oaks looked terribly severe, and roused a feeling of defiance in me.

"You want Harry Tarr, don't you?" I asked it, nodding toward it, and its windows gleamed a menace in the morning sun. "Well, you can wait. I have my own affairs to look to."

With a bold heart and quiet manner I went downstairs and entered the office. There sat the clerk again and now he was alone. He nodded to me familiarly.

"Mornin', Mr. Brown. Sleep?"

There was an off-hand friendliness about the young man which emboldened me to venture at once upon my important business—the selling of my horse.

"I'm hard up for cash," I explained, as if it were a matter that could not worry me long, "and I'm ready to lose something for the sake of

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making an immediate sale. It's a very good horse."

"I reckon what you want is some first-class, expert advice," the clerk responded with intelligence and sympathy; and without awaiting my reply, he went to the open door leading to the front veranda and called out: "O, Colonel Greene, sir! Step here a minute please, sir."

A chair was moved outside and then a tall, handsome, gray-haired gentleman appeared in the doorway. His coat was very shabby, his bearing very fine.

"Colonel Greene, sir, allow me to make you acquainted with Mr. Brown, from the No'th, sir," said the clerk in formal introduction.

At first I was frightened at having to make a new acquaintance, but that presently abated. Colonel Greene shook me warmly by the hand and when the clerk shortly and sufficiently had explained my case to him he cordially expressed his readiness to put his experience in horse dealing at my disposal.

"You are very kind," I exclaimed gratefully, for his face at once inspired me with trust.

"Not at all, sir! It is my pleasure as well as my duty as a citizen of Flintville to do what I can for visitors," he replied, pleasantly. "I am expecting that my case will be called in court

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this morning, but until that time I shall be glad to help further your business. Suppose we step down to the stable right now and take a look at your horse. There are always gentlemen there on Saturday morning who are interested in the sales."

I hesitated in a miserable access of dread.

"But you will want to breakfast first; I beg your pardon!" said he.

I assured him that my breakfast could wait, set my teeth in resolution and went with him.

"You are in for a horse trade, you are in for a very difficult matter," I told myself, with inward groans. "If you don't act exactly right, they will think that you stole the beast. Was ever a poor, friendless girl in such a danger before?"

But being in for it, it was plain that I ought to do my best, that I ought to respond to my companion's remarks and explain myself and my appearance in some fashion. Thus I remarked on the excellent shooting I had found about Wilson and even went so far as to refer to "my party" from whom I had separated. To my grateful surprise, the Flintville gentleman was not curious. He wanted chiefly to know how I was impressed by the town. Here was a welcome subject, for I knew well enough what

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strangers were expected to admire—the breadth of the streets, the grandeur of the oaks, the remarkable dryness of the air. He, on his part, dwelt with pleasure on the attraction the town had for Northern visitors, and he had begun to tell me about the Harlowes when we reached the livery stable.

A group of men lounged under the shed ; to my dismay I was introduced to everyone and everyone warmly shook hands with me. There was Mr. Townsend, the owner of the stable, and Mr. Caseby, the county sheriff, and half a dozen more. The sheriff especially appalled me ; he had but one eye and that was cocked knowingly. Though he spoke pleasantly, my associations with his office made his presence like a spell upon me.

Colonel Greene soon had my horse trade in hand and a stable-boy had Transfer out and was putting him through his paces in the open street. As everyone's attention was concentrated upon the horse and not at all on me, my spirits rose considerably. Mr. Townsend was evidently pleased and willing to buy ; but he only offered \$40. To my dismay and disappointment, Colonel Greene point-blank refused this offer in my name, without so much as consulting me. He was there to see that I made

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a good sale, it appeared, not to see that I made a sale at any cost.

"We can do a great deal better than \$40," he assured me when I ventured to falter that I would consider Mr. Townsend's offer, and added, with a firmness that completely discouraged me: "We shall take the time to do this business thoroughly."

I was assured by others that I could get more than \$40; but though all about me were admiring my horse, no one talked of buying. The group grew larger, every man that joined it was interested in the business. And the number of introductions and hand-shakings I went through!—I seemed to be holding a reception.

A tall countryman in homespun sidled up to me and sought to speak to me apart. "I'd like mightily to trade you out o' that there hoss, Mr. Brown," he said, confidentially. "Now I've got a young mare with a colt——"

I declared roundly and aloud that I would not trade. The crowd in general disapproved of that; but Colonel Greene supported me.

"Business takes Mr. Brown to Tallepoochee to-day," he said, in his stately way. "We must not talk of trading, but try to expedite a sale."

A young man with black hair and gleaming white teeth had joined the group and was lis-

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tening with evident enjoyment. He had a foreign look in spite of his sombrero hat and long riding-boots. When he spoke it was with a funny mixture of French and southern accent.

"Expedite!" he echoed Colonel Greene's word. "Dat's de bery ting! All pizness in Flintville is done in dose lines"—and he laughed in a jolly way, as if bent solely on his own amusement. All turned toward him with recognition and several hailed him.

"Here, Lepage, you want a horse, don't you? You're always wanting a horse. Here's just the thing for you."

Again I was introduced; he stepped forward to shake hands with me.

"Glad t' meet you—I come fum de Nort' myself," he said, pleasantly. "But I don't want any hosses any mo'. On my place everyting but de mules has cheels and fievre."

They all laughed with the spontaneity that cheers the popular wit.

"But I tell you how you can best expedite your *affaire*," he continued, with open mischief; "you sell dis horse fo' good price to anyone here and take yo' pay in cotton to be delivered in de fall. Dat's de one sure way of gettin' yo'r money soon."

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To my dismay, instead of laughing again, the chorus of my advisers took kindly to this suggestion. I was immediately offered so many bales of "Upland" here, so many of "Sea Island" there; Colonel Greene could not or would not cut them short.

"You do not see de beauty of dis *système*?" Mr. Lepage asked me, teasingly. "Now look! You gets so much cotton in de autumn, which is so much credit now. De oder fellow gets de hoss now and has a sure price fo' his cotton in de autumn—if he makes his crop. Not a cent of money in de whole transaction! Why, it is peautiful!"

"And if his crop fails?" I asked.

Mr. Lepage shrugged his shoulders and threw out his arms sideways with an expressive gesture.

"*Tiens!* Then comes de litigation, de most amusing part of all; and you stand a good chance of gettin' back yo' hoss."

Now I grew rather reckless on the point of arousing their suspicion and I openly declared that I was in need of ready money.

"I would take \$40 for him," I told Mr. Townsend in defiance of my friend, the kind colonel. Alas! Mr. Townsend himself was not a cash buyer.

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"If it was only a mule," observed Sheriff Caseby, "you can most always get spot cash for a mule. Them timber-men buy mules for cash."

"Now, I tell yo' what yo' do," cried the gay Lepage. "Swop yo' hoss for a mule and sell de mule for cash. Dat's de nex' bes' way to de cotton trade I have recommended."

Again the nonsensical suggestion was taken up with favor by my would-be advisers.

"I am no judge of mules," I protested.

"We'll help you," came the chorus.

"Them gypsies over yon' has got some fust-class mules for swap and sale both," said the sheriff with enthusiasm. "Let's we-all go over and take a look at them."

"Come on, Monsieur Brown, yo'se in fo' it, sho'," said Lepage, laughing heartlessly. "De nex' time yo'se in a hurry yo' won't call on de citizens of Flintville to expedite yo' *affaire*."

He put his hand on my shoulder and marched me along after my friends, who indeed, paid very little attention to me since my business began to absorb them. I felt utterly helpless now and was inclined to drift blindly on, trusting to Colonel Greene; but the comfort of his support was presently denied me. A messenger came to tell him his case was called in court.

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He excused himself to me with real regret, and left my interests formally in the hands of Sheriff Caseby. He even gave me a warm invitation to dine with him, in case I missed my train.

"I will not say good-by," he said, warmly. "I expect to see a good deal of you while you remain in town, Mr. Brown."

And thus with sinking heart I saw him go while the sentiment of the many hurried me, most unwillingly, into the mule-trade.

The gypsy chief—a dirty, hard-faced little wretch—surveyed Transfer with glistening eyes.

"I'll trade you that there mule for him," he said, shortly, indicating an ugly brute close by.

"How much to boot?" asked the sheriff, briskly. I was evidently not expected to speak.

"Nothin'," returned the chief, with decision. I was shocked at the impudence of the offer. My beautiful Transfer for that creature!

My friends were divided. "That's a good trade, the hoss is old," said one.

"So's the mule," said another; "he'll vote next election."

"He's got a lot of sense, that mule has, you can tell that by lookin' at his head."

"He's had time to get a heap of experience in his life. I reckon he saw the Surrender."

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"I've been holdin' him at a hundred dollars," declared the gypsy.

"Dat's very likely," cried Lepage, "and dat's a sure way to hold him for some time t' come."

The crowd laughed, the trader looked sullen, and presently he indicated another mule. This one found decided favor with my agent, the sheriff.

"Gentlemen, is it certain I can sell the mule at once?" I asked, appealingly. "You know, what I want is ready money."

"And that's the reason I want to have a talk with you," exclaimed the man in homespun, his face lighting up. "I've got a little colt that's growin' right up into money, and her mother is the purtiest little saddle-hoss you ever saw. Lemme tell you what's so——"

I edged away from him, and was accosted on the other side.

"Look yere, Mr. Brown, I know a man down in Possum Hollow that'd buy that hoss as soon as he looked at him. You know him, Sheriff; it's old man Seeman. He's lookin' fo' jes this kind of a hoss."

"Here's yo' chance," said Lepage, showing all his teeth. "Mr. Seeman's sure to come to town some Sat'day dis mont'. Now yo' can go

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back to de hotel and sit comf'tably on de piazza and wait till ole man Seeman comes to town."

I resolved that I would stand no more of this. I would look up the Perrys, and throw myself on their protection, let come what would.

"Bless me, if this isn't Jack!" came a voice behind me.

I wheeled in fright and confronted Colonel Tarr, who stood there in all his matchless audacity. The crowd divided to make room and he stepped forward, hand outstretched, and a beaming smile of recognition on his face.

"Why, my dear boy, I am so glad to see you," he exclaimed, cordially.

I was thunderstruck, and had only just sense enough to realize that I must accept the situation.

"Why, I never expected to see you here," I managed to say, as he shook my hand. His eyes danced with reckless fun. "Didn't you, really?" he asked, softly.

"Where is the rest of your party?" I demanded.

"All gone down into Florida, Jack, in search of a more wholesome climate," he returned, coolly.

There was a murmured protest from the

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Georgians about us; the ring had closed; but I was no longer afraid of the men of Flintville.

"I really wonder you did not go with them," I said, earnestly, to Colonel Tarr.

"I may join them later," he returned, in a light tone; "but with my usual bad luck, I've had a horse stolen, and I came over here to see if I couldn't buy another."

Joy! he had come to help me out of my scrape! But what a mad risk to run—and how dared he rely on my sparing him?

"I believe I have exactly the horse you ought to buy," I said, with conviction, and it was plain that my manner raised me in the estimation of the by-standers.

"*Tiens!* It takes another Yankee to bring out the Yankee in our friend," observed Le-page.

The sale was a pretty farce. Poor Transfer, who recognized his master, underwent an humiliating examination and criticism. Just to carry the game through with a high hand, just to show me, perhaps, how safe he felt with Sheriff Caseby, Colonel Tarr pretended to be loath to buy. The horse was old, his eyes had a peculiar look, he was dish-faced——

"He looks to me as if he hadn't a grain of sense, Jack," said Transfer's master, shaking his

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head over the animal; "he looks to me as if he would run away just as soon as not."

"You don't want a sensible horse," I returned, growing a little spiteful; "what you want is style—something showy—something that will make a dashing appearance. Mount him, Colonel Tarr, and ride about a little, just to see how it looks."

He gave me a threatening glance.

"I don't want him for myself," he returned, "I want him for a lady—and I'm afraid she can't control him, if he takes it into his head to run."

The worst of it was that Colonel Tarr immediately had the sympathy of the crowd, and even some of those pledged to my interest began to help him run down the horse. As for Sheriff Caseby, he was so impressed with my unexpected ability at trade that he formally withdrew assistance.

"You don't need me, Mr. Brown. You've got the hang of the business first-rate," said he.

"Indeed, I hope you are not going, Sheriff Caseby," I said, pointedly, "for I may need you very much."

"Yes, Sheriff, help us settle the price, it's rather in your line," put in Colonel Tarr, brazenly. "Seventy-five dollars for this broken-down

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old hack is not legitimate trading—it's robbery. Come Jack, I'll give you fifty."

"I've been offered two bales of Sea Island cotton for him to-day," I returned, disdainfully. "It's only because you are a friend that I let you have him for seventy-five. He cost me more than that."

"He cost your grandfather more than that," muttered Colonel Tarr; then apologetically to the by-standers—"I haven't time to look farther. I'll take him, Jack."

Everyone was delighted. "Mark dat, Sheriff," exclaimed Lepage, clapping Mr. Caseby on the shoulder; "dat's de way *we Yankees* do pizness!"

Colonel Tarr now sought out Mr. Townsend.

"My horse is tied at the telegraph office," he said, and then described Nellie, the brown carriage horse that Kelvin had ridden from Riverbank the night before. "Just send for her, will you, and get me up a team, with this one; I want a light wagon. Send it up to the hotel."

He paid for it on the spot, then joined my friends and me and quite a group of us went back up to the hotel.

"Where are you going, Colonel Tarr?" I asked him so that all might hear.

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"I'm going to Tallepoochee. You'll drive down with me, won't you, Jack?"

"No, I am going by train," I answered, decidedly. "It's faster."

"You can't be in such a hurry," he protested, easily.

They all began to tell me what a pleasant drive it was. Colonel Tarr entered into an animated conversation with them in regard to roads and fords and scenery. Would he be wicked enough to withhold the money until I missed my train?

"I have an hour yet. I can bring some pressure to bear," I thought, resolutely.

In the piazza everyone assumed lounging attitudes, Colonel Tarr offered cigars all around and they began to talk politics. He pleased them, one and all; I began to see why he was not more afraid of a jury trial. I stood by a few minutes, fuming inwardly, then spoke to him.

"I must trouble you to settle with me now, Colonel Tarr."

"Why certainly, Jack, any time you like," he returned, readily; "shall we step into the office here a minute?"

The room was empty, but he maintained his business-like demeanor as he counted out the bills. I felt glad enough to get them safely into my pocket, fortified now against any emergency.

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I had noticed that fraud required a strong financial backing; and the best part of the transaction was that this sudden drain on his purse would very likely lame some of Colonel Tarr's dear enterprises.

"Talk about needing the sheriff very much," he muttered with an air of wrath. "If *this* isn't robbery!"

"Where's your sense of humor?" I asked, sweetly.

"But this is such an old joke," he objected, with dancing eyes; "to steal a man's horse and then to sell it back to him."

"You ought to pay my hotel bill and my railroad fare," I reminded him.

"Well, will this cover your expenses, do you think?" he inquired, ironically; "or did you play poker last night, with the gilded youth of Flintville? As for your fare"—his tone changed to one of authority—"we'll save that. You are going with me."

I shook my head.

"Jack, you won't refuse me these few hours," he pleaded. "You will be home before sunset."

"I had better go by train," I faltered.

"Are you afraid of thirty miles of special pleading?" he asked, softly. "I'll swear to say

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no single word for myself the whole way. It's just to put off the parting, Kate, this cruel parting."

"It won't make it any easier," I answered, faintly.

"But it is so cruelly unnecessary now," he urged. "To-night I can bear it, but not now. Think how much better for you that I should see your people first, prepare them for the shock of joy. No one in Tallepoochee need see you. It will be long after dark—that is, it will be twilight—before sunset, Kate."

I laughed a little hysterically.

"You would trust me, I suppose, to take you the shortest way," he said with an injured look.

"Oh, yes, but——"

"Are you afraid you would commit yourself in granting this one favor? Kate, I promise you, I'll go out of your life and never trouble you again—if you ask it."

"If I ask it now?"

"Oh, no"—he spoke quickly—"if you ask it after the drive."

That showed plainly enough what he expected of the next few hours; and he saw by my expression that I understood him.

"I don't care," he said, recklessly. "You are mine anyway. I won't ask——"

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"Colonel Tarr, speak lower!" I whispered, panic-stricken. "They'll hear you on the piazza."

"Let them hear me!" but he subsided as the clerk at that moment entered. I turned to him with what composure I could command and told him of my sale.

"I will leave my saddle-bags in my friend's charge," I said, indicating Colonel Tarr. "Please have them put into his wagon there at the door at once, as he must go. And I will pay my bill. It is about train-time, isn't it?"

"You have plenty of time to take breakfast first, sir," said the clerk. "That gentleman in the dining-room goes on the same train."

I stepped into the open door of the dining-room, as much to escape Colonel Tarr's look as from any interest in my fellow-traveller. He was a well-dressed, heavily built man, sitting with his face hid behind a wide-spread newspaper, which was fluttering curiously as he read. On a chair beside him was his hat, a satchel, and an overcoat—and these were very new. What attracted my notice and wonder, however, was a hole punched through the paper at the level of his eye—like a spy-hole. Then, in a flash, I recognized those large, white, shaking hands that held the paper. It was Murray, the Irishman—McGuire himself!

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I turned to look at Colonel Tarr; I suppose my face had paled.

"What is it, Love?" he whispered in alarm, coming to my side. I tried to speak and my voice failed me; he misunderstood my agitation.

"You see, it is not so easy to say good-by," he exclaimed, softly, his eyes lighting up in triumph. "Kate, you can't inflict a useless pain on both of us! You will come with me."

For a moment I battled with a strong temptation. How sweet and how easy to trust myself now to Colonel Tarr, to escape from the unknown, to leave his wickedness unsounded! But Fate made me firm to hold to my point of the day before.

"Can you stop hating McGuire and wishing for revenge?" I asked in a faint voice.

"No!" he returned, hotly. "What has that to do with you—with this decision?"

"Everything, Colonel Tarr. Suppose I went with you, and suppose you met him on the road. You would have to choose between me and him."

"What nightmare is troubling you, Kate?" he demanded in an angry whisper. "I tell you that part of my life is over—I can't find the man."

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"But if you did," I insisted, "would you give up your revenge for my sake?"

He looked at me, pain and resentment written in his face.

"I don't know," he answered, moodily. "What is the use of arguing and speculating. I don't understand you, Kate. This seems to be a kind of perverted jealousy. Why can't you love me simply, for better or for worse——"

"That's a poor phrase," I returned, with an access of anger on my part—"since the worse may be so much worse than I could have strength to bear."

"What do you imagine?" he demanded, vehemently.

"Speak lower," I implored him.

"I won't speak any more at all. Once for all, Kate, will you let this unreal spectre separate us? Yes or no?"

"Unreal," he said; but I resolved to test it for myself whether it was real or no.

He had already repented of his vehemence and exclaimed in distress that I was faint and weary and he had annoyed me.

"Yes, I am a little faint," I answered, gently, smiling in return for his solicitude. "I will go to breakfast now and we can talk it over more quietly. Come with me, Colonel Tarr."

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As we stepped on the threshold, McGuire's paper fluttered violently, which sign of fear doubled my apprehension.

The dining-room was empty except for the one guest. Colonel Tarr stopped at a near table, but I motioned him to follow me and led on to where the Irishman sat. Colonel Tarr was looking only at me with vexation and bewilderment as he, obeying my gesture, sat down opposite the fluttering paper. I took my seat on the third side of the square table; then McGuire dropped his screen.

For an instant Colonel Tarr seemed to turn to stone. He stared at the man opposite as at an untimely apparition, but as I looked I could see a quick revulsion of feeling expressed in his face. Wrath blazed out—and a triumph, as if this were the supreme satisfaction of his life.

As for McGuire, his look of deadly terror sickened me; and so the three of us sat in silence a moment, our faces white as the tablecloth.

The waiter stood beside us with his cheery sing-song: "Beefsteak, ham and chicken broiled or fried, bacon, eggs, hominy, rice, waffles, biscuits——" I checked him and ordered a breakfast. Meanwhile the other two should have commanded their excitement; but no, as soon

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as the waiter was out of earshot, Colonel Tarr began with : " You infernal dog—" and McGuire interrupted him with a curse. I started up.

" Jack, stay ! " Colonel Tarr implored. " If you leave me now, I'm not accountable for what I do."

I sat down again. McGuire now for the first time turned his dull eyes on me. He gave no sign of recognition.

" Boy ! " he whispered, appealingly, " ye've a good face. Will ye see a man hunted down and murdered ? "

" You won't be murdered," said Colonel Tarr, softly. " You will be fairly tried and hanged. I'll merely hand you over to the authorities whose business it is to hang you."

" Authorities ! " groaned McGuire. " And it's just a military despotism ye've set up now, and no man's safe that held with the losing side. Ye've no authority ; but ye'd hang me, I know, and it's for that I've run away. I'm called a deserter, faith, because I changed my moind and left the rebels. I'm to be dragged back down there and hanged for a deserter."

" Hanged for a murderer," corrected Colonel Tarr, calmly. I put out my hand toward him appealingly. " It's true, Jack," he continued, gravely, " the man's an assassin. Our govern-

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ment down there doesn't care which side the coward was on—nor how many times he changed sides. There were hundreds of deserters, and of course he was one of them. But his case was one of sheer necessity."

"I changed my mind," exclaimed the Irishman in a sort of wail. "It was a question of principle."

"All right!" said Colonel Tarr, shortly and fiercely. "Put it as you please—but come along with me. Your tricks can't help you any longer, nor your lies. You are caught, McGuire, caught and taken prisoner. Now you will march quietly out to my wagon without a word or look to the right or left of you."

McGuire seemed to collapse; he settled back and gazed about the empty room with an expression of dull despair.

"Get up," commanded Colonel Tarr, sharply, himself rising to his feet.

"Sit down, Colonel Tarr," I said, softly. He turned on me with a look between surprise and dismay.

"What do you want, Jack?" he demanded, in a vibrating voice.

"I want the whole story," I answered, firmly.

He was almost maddened by this delay and

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struggle to command himself; meanwhile the Irishman, who really thought he was trapped and taken, who had no notion of the desperate daring of Colonel Tarr's position, cowered more and more. I could only glance at him from time to time with dread, for the suffering in his face was enough to lame the heart with pity and disgust.

"You want the whole story?" Colonel Tarr repeated, looking at me with baffled expression, and I nodded gravely.

"Why, this is as good a place as any, then," he said with a very fair affectation of ease; "since McGuire has walked right into my trap, we have plenty of time;" and he sat down again.

"If we're to go, let's be off," pleaded the Irishman. Colonel Tarr paid no attention to him.

"You must know that my brother and I were serving in one of the revolutionary armies of Central America a few years ago—Filibusters, I suppose we should be called"—he began, turning to me as if he were so sure of the Irishman that he did not even need to watch him. "We were besieging an earth-work and my brother was engineer in charge of the approaches. Do you understand sapping, Jack?"

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He took up a fork and began marking on the table-cloth. His voice had grown very calm, but his hand trembled.

"Look, here is the enemy's fort, here our camp, and here, half-way between, the first parallel. The work we had in hand one night was to advance these zig-zag trenches into a small wood, here—a very hot-bed of the enemy's pickets. It was undoubtedly nasty work—no place for cowards; as there was some rather critical digging, Captain Tarr selected Irishmen to do it, and gave Sergeant McGuire superintendence of the work.

"Well, it was my tour off duty and I was in the rear and happened to hear two of our men talking in their tent. One was telling how McGuire had trembled and paled when ordered to the front to report to Captain Tarr, and remarked that there never was such a coward under fire before. The other replied that McGuire had been whining to the boys that the captain intended to expose him—wanted to get rid of him. The fellows spoke with a sort of languid disgust of the matter. One told the other he should have reported the sergeant and the other replied that it was none of his business—and that McGuire was not a good enemy—that you could not tell in the dark trenches

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which directions the bullets came from—and more hints to the same purpose.

"I knew that the service my brother required of McGuire was important and somewhat uneasy at what I had overheard, I went to the front to find and warn him.

"The trenches were under a furious fire. The enemy knew we were only waiting for the moon to set before beginning the next flying sap. They were making it as hot for us as possible. I don't know how I got out to the first parallel—here, where I lay this knife. You see, Jack, all this space here is exposed, and the shells seem bursting over every square yard of it. Naturally, I didn't make very good time, dodging across there.

"I found some of our sappers hard at work repairing the parapet. Captain Tarr was at the extreme front, they said, instructing the officer of the night-detail. The corporal volunteered the further information that they had been there a long time—my brother, his orderly, and Sergeant McGuire. I hurried on, now really full of apprehension. On my way I passed the infantry guard of the trenches, safe under a splinter-proof. Clearly my brother had ordered them back during the heavy firing—and so he was alone with McGuire."

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Colonel Tarr paused suddenly, deeply moved by the recollection of his agony. For an instant he laid his hand on his eyes; then he spoke calmly:

"It was scarcely a shock when I found him lying dead in the advanced trench—so fearfully had my imagination prepared me."

McGuire broke in excitedly: "And the enemy's pickets were within twenty feet, and the moonlight bright as day—and him as reckless as a school-boy!"

Colonel Tarr turned on him with a contained ferocity.

"You infernal scoundrel," he said, in a low voice, "do you suppose such talk will help you when you come to face Captain Tarr's orderly?"

McGuire sank back again, his face going gray.

"And have you been thinking all this time that you killed them both?" asked Colonel Tarr. "You only wounded Dan Jenkins—and he was witnessing against you before you were fairly within the enemy's lines. You and he will have a meeting to-night—if I let you live until to-night."

There they were, those words that I dreaded, flung out passionately. To look at him now was to believe him capable of any violence.

I commanded their attention.

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"You are both in my power," I whispered, warningly. "The sheriff is within call. A word from me, and you are both arrested."

They stared at me in speechless amazement.

"McGuire, I believe you are guilty," I said to the Irishman. "You will be punished—but not now, and not by Colonel Tarr. Go now! You are free."

Colonel Tarr groaned and bowed his head. The other looked first as if he could not credit his senses, then a light of comprehension broke on him and a grin of triumph disfigured his face.

"I'll not thank you for this," he said to me as he arose, and I could see that the man was shaking from head to foot under the stress of his excitement. "It's not in mercy for me ye've interposed—it's fear for him."

"De 'bus is at de do', gentlemen," announced the waiter.

Mechanically I rose and followed McGuire and paid my bill at the desk. When I looked back into the dining-room, Colonel Tarr had not moved. He sat in sullen despair, his head bent low.

CHAPTER VII

CAPITULATION

HEART-SICK and cold I went out to the stage. McGuire was already in it, and because his nearness seemed a pestilence I could scarcely bring myself to enter the vehicle. He was in the back so I climbed up beside the driver after shaking hands with such of my new friends as were still on the piazza. LePage rallied me on preferring for speed the Talleepoochee train to Colonel Tarr's horses.

"Come again," he cried in friendly fashion as we drove away, and clerk and sheriff echoed: "Come again!"

"Never any more, while I live," I ejaculated to myself. Indeed, I was hurrying out of Flintville with a guilty conscience, having set an old and hardened malefactor loose upon the world in order to serve my own ends. Who might be McGuire's next victim? Who might be suffering while I lived safe at home among my own people?

And what had been my own ends? Certainly, first and foremost, I had wished to protect

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Colonel Tarr from the play of his own passion. "If I don't kill you first!" had been his words, and they were surely plain enough to arouse once more the anxiety which Kelvin's doubts had caused me when we waited for Colonel Tarr's return from Riverside. Then, too, it had influenced me, though I did not feel conscious of it at the time, the fact that I had been put last, that I was about to be left behind. A minute before Colonel Tarr had been pleading to be my escort. At sight of his enemy he had changed his mind.

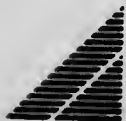
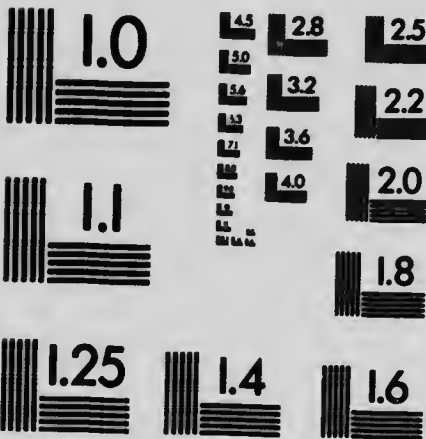
Doubtless I was still beloved, doubtless he intended to beg me to remain until he could secure his prisoner. But suppose, when he had the Irishman alone, his passion mastered him and he should shoot him! That would be murder before the law, that would separate us forever. At least I had been right in preventing that, and right in leaving him now. The parting without good-by, however, without a word of trust between us—it almost broke my heart.

At the station I had long to wait before I could enter the train already made up, for I was bent on not travelling in the same car with the hateful Irishman. I saw him talking to someone, half hidden behind some cotton bales on



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the warehouse platform. It seemed almost certain he was again plotting mischief and I was very uneasy at the thought. There was nothing for me to do, however. In restricting Colonel Tarr's action I had bound my own hands. I longed to get home, to confess all to my uncle, whose wisdom I trusted to set right whatever I had done amiss.

At last the train's departure was called and McGuire came swiftly out from his shelter. I watched closely and presently saw that it was two negroes to whom he had been talking, one with a gun. They sidled after him and I guessed he had engaged them to follow him. As he went to the smoker, next to the engine, I chose the rear car, which was empty. McGuire, I noted, looked apprehensively about before he boarded the train. Did he still dread Colonel Tarr's pursuit, and were those negroes a body-guard? At last he must understand, thanks to me, that the struggle between him and his enemy was outside of the law—that brute force might help him, since Colonel Tarr had to fear exposure.

But had he money to take this gang of his far enough to the borders of the country? Could he arm them, mount them, if necessary, manage them at all?

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I had small respect for the man's ability to take care of himself or to think out a practical plan of action. And yet he had shown himself sly and bold at once in having lain in hiding at the hotel, passing himself off as an arrival on the midnight train, after waiting at the dark and quiet station till it came. A party of Northern lumbermen came in that night and he passed at the hotel as one of them. When they left "in a body" the next day, as had been reported to Kelvin, he had simply remained behind "on account of illness," as my waiter had told me the night before. How surprised those lumbermen would have been to know that there was a member of their party left behind!

It seemed impossible that this time McGuire had even trusted Dr. Nunley. The doctor would have told him that Colonel Tarr was still in the country and McGuire would either not have ventured forth at all or would have been better prepared for a sight of his pursuer. As it was, the meeting face to face had so utterly taken him by surprise, so utterly unnerved him that he had no thought in the world but to submit. He was virtually taken because of his cowardice—and I had set him free.

No, it was certain that Dr. Nunley had not

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been called in to attend this traveller from the North. Instead of sending for his physician, the Irishman had depended on the papers for the news. These had only told him that the house was burned, that Kate Harlowe was dead, that the world was assured that he himself was dead—in short, that he had nothing to fear on the score of trapdoors revealed, midnight robberies explained, his imposition exposed. Of the shooting party he had certainly read nothing or he would never have ventured down-stairs. As it was, the sight of Colonel Tarr had taken him more by surprise than the raid by night in the Perry's house. Here was no retreat made ready for an emergency, no plan of action like the flight to the station. By his cowardice alone he was taken—if I had permitted it.

A strange man! A strange mixture of boldness and craven fear, of trickery and brute stupidity! The question arose in my mind as to whether he could be quite sane. How long had he been lashed by conscience and convulsed by the fear of retribution? Perhaps the man was near his end in mind and body.

I tried to think so, I devoutly hoped so—for though I could not endure the thought that Harry Tarr should have his own lawless way in punishing the Irishman's crime, I was yet hor.

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ror stricken when I considered the power for evil I had let loose.

"Home, home!" I exclaimed to myself fervently—"and everything will be well. McGuire shall be taken again, this time through me."

My car was empty. Broken and weary I sank into my seat, lay back and closed my eyes. My adventure was over, I was carrying my tired self toward rest and shelter. Away, away, out of that weary land of pines, out of these lonely forests that flashed by monotonously as the train rushed on! I wished it might not stop again till I was safe in Tallepoochee.

But there were many stops at small stations on that road. "Sparta," I read on the little station-house at the first of these. There was absolute quiet there, no other buildings—only the pines and a white stretch of sandy road.

I had closed my eyes again, hating Sparta for the minute's delay, when a negro's voice rang loudly through the car from the rear platform:

"Sparta Junction! Chyange cyars for Tallepoochee and all points south!"

I sprang up with a cry of dismay, for the train had already begun to move again, ran to the rear and out upon the platform. There was no one there, the man had presumably gone forward; but his call had been perfectly plain and

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so I jumped. Of course I fell full length, for the train already had considerable motion, and lay for a moment stunned beside the track.

Before I could recover I was suddenly smothered in a heavy woollen texture, seized by rough hands, borne up and carried away on a run. I could make no sound, only struggle madly. It seemed to be my death that had thus frightfully overtaken me. Indeed, I was all but suffocated before the thing was removed and I was lowered to the ground where I lay gasping convulsively. Two negroes stood over me, one with a gun slung across his shoulders. It seemed an eternity before I could gain enough breath to scream. Instantly a great cold hand was clapped upon my mouth.

"Whist!" said McGuire.

He now bent over me himself with an ugly grin on his face.

"Well, Katie, it was neatly fooled ye were," he said, malignantly, and while he spoke the negroes bound me with cords. "That's a great fashion for getting a body off a train. It's been done before, but it's never been done easier. And did ye think then that this morning I didn't recognize the swate preserver of my life?"

And immediately the negroes had me up again and now that I was bound I could not

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even struggle enough to hinder them in their running walk. Then the numbness of terror fell over me and I could only pray silently for the quick release of death.

High above me the sunlight danced on glossy pine-leaves and bronzed the great dark branches. The day was warm and the negroes panted and sweated with the rapid exercise. As for McGuire, he ran beside me, ready with his muffling hand, gasping for breath; the speed was a terrible strain on the heavy man. Presently he fell behind, saying I could call as much as I liked now, we were far out of earshot of any human habitation.

My numbness grew, I was near swooning. The cords no longer cut, I no longer felt the men's hands. I thought I was dying and prayed more fervently. The trees and cloud began to swim and melt together and white faces looked down on me. The sunlight on my face burned and burned—I seemed dissolving under it.

Then the trees passed away and only blue sky and white clouds hung above me. The sunlight grew more intense. We were passing through tall broomsedge. It brushed against my hands that were fastened under my back as if to detain me.

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"You can't hold me," I suddenly cried aloud, "I am almost dead!"

"Faith, I'd be sorry for that," came the hated voice of McGuire in reply. "And we've just now reached our destination."

It was an old gray gin-house that loomed before me, standing in the midst of the abandoned cotton-field. My consciousness had returned in a flash. I heard McGuire kick open a door and then I was carried into the semi-darkness of the lint-room where the sunbeams through the cracks streaked McGuire's face and dark clothing hideously.

I was quite clear-headed now. They tied me to an upright timber and I steadily stood on my feet.

I had noticed that McGuire could not look me in the face.

He went out hastily, his hirelings following him. Then I screamed piercingly; but the sound only further terrified myself. I had the strange fancy that it did not penetrate the light board wall of the lint-room, that the ruffians outside even did not hear me.

So then I was still and listened.

McGuire was sending one negro off on an errand, a message to someone it seemed. Was it to Dr. Nunley? The other was ordered to

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stay in the shed and watch every approach to the gin-house.

"And you wait tiil I give ye the letter," said McGuire to the first, and he came in again and robbed me of the pocket-book which contained the price of Transfer. He took out a few of the bills and put them into an envelope he had. After that he turned his back to me, stooped and wrote something, the paper rustling on his knee. His missive seemed to be rather long and to require some consideration, for several times he stopped and rubbed his head. At last he sealed and addressed his letter and went out again. His movements were characterized by a trembling haste; he seemed in a sort of frenzy.

The quiet had restored my wits and now I clearly saw the suicidal nature of the man's actions. When he came in again and stood before me, I was almost calm.

"You lost fool!" I exclaimed in a threatening voice. "You had one chance to escape with your life—and you have thrown it away for the short pleasure of tormenting me."

"I've not thrown it away, I've made assurance doubly sure," he returned, grinning,—still his eyes were averted. "I'm no fool either, Katie. It's the wise man that takes precau-

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tions. What is me life worth, with Tarr on me tracks again as soon as he collects his senses? Indade, I'll hide me no more. I'll make me terms with him. I'll have his promise to lave me alone, I will."

His face had grown blood-red, his voice broke with excitement as he spoke.

"And you think you can get such a promise through me?" I demanded with a fierce contempt.

"Divil a doubt of it," he returned with a poisonous grimace. "Am I blind? Didn't I see how matters stood between you and him? 'Jack,' says he, with a foine look, 'if ye lave me now,' says he, 'I'm not answerable for what I do,' says he. Weren't those his words, Katie? And d'ye think I don't know what it manes? It manes this thin, me jewell! It manes that if I send him worrud in a safe indirect way, mind ye, that I have ye fast, and that I won't give him back his run-away bride till I have his signature to my terms—he'll sign me paper, and he'll sign his soul away with it."

A sick horror came over me then, his figure danced and swayed before my eyes and swelled and filled the room. I screamed and fell fainting forward. When I came to, I was lying on the floor at the foot of the post to which my

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ankles were still bound. The dust swirled in sunbeams over my head, my whole body shook with a deadly cold.

McGuire was tying my wrists again with the pieces of cord.

"Now who would have expected ye to faint like that?" he said, when I opened my eyes. "Where's the accustomed courage of ye? A girl that'll put on boy's clothing to run away with a divil like Tarr—for that's what ye were about, I take it—she ought to be nerved for any adventure."

He spoke with unmistakable malevolence. It was clear that I was now an object of hatred to him. Very roughly and cruelly he drew tight the bonds of my wrists. Even in that moment of agony I thought with a sort of pity how terrible this madman would some day pay for this outrage.

"McGuire," I gasped, my teeth chattering as I spoke, "I have twice saved your life. The lowest brute knows its friends from its enemies. You are destroying yourself." As I spoke my own words inspired me with calm and I repeated, impressively—"you are mad; you are destroying yourself."

He stared at me with some surprise at my altered tone, then turned his face away from my

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steady look and answered, with a sort of a whine:

"Faith I know your bravery saved me twice, Katie! And until I knew ye held with Tarr, I was properly grateful. But I've a chance here to get the upper hand of him, and if I don't do it, he'll kill me yet, in spite of you and of all the saints in heaven."

To have reached the point of argument seemed to me a tremendous gain. My courage flamed up and warmed me through and through. I could speak gravely and steadily now.

"The only reason Colonel Tarr wanted to kill you is because he could get no one else to do it. Now he can come with a band of lynchers and let them do his work."

His face changed.

"Ye've a long tongue," he muttered. "I doubt ye think ye can talk yourself out o' this."

"I could, if you were sane," I returned. "But I think you are little better than a madman. You don't think; you act in a fever. Your long strain has done its work. Have you never feared for your reason in the long nights of listening for your enemy; for his voice at the foot of the stairs?"

He put his two hands to his head with a groan.

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"If you had a spark of reason left to which I could appeal I could talk myself free," I repeated. "But you are trusting to your own muddled head again, as you did when you schemed to hide at the Perrys'. You thought Colonel Tarr's detectives couldn't track you there and you think the furious band of lynchers won't track you here."

"How will they know?" he demanded.

At the moment the call of a wild-turkey fell upon my ears; a pleasant forest sound in the midst of the terror and desolation of that room. From where I lay on the floor I could see through a wide fissure in the planks into the shed and observe the negro who was stationed there. He was standing in a listening attitude, gun in hand.

"How will they know? Your assault was seen from the train, in the first place. Someone was coming into my car when I ran out at the other end. The track was straight—do you think the man did not look after the boy who jumped from the moving train? It takes some time to stop the train and organize the rescue party; but they won't be long in tracking you through the forest now—three heavy men as you are! Besides at Sparta they will meet Colonel Tarr——"

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I was talking with an enthusiastic assurance now for the craven man was utterly unstrung and listened breathlessly.

Again the turkey-call! I saw the negro look back cautiously toward the lint-room, then steal off a few steps, and stop again to listen. The call sounded once more, a little farther off, and the excited hunter disappeared from view. The temptation had been too strong for the savage nature. He had deserted.

"And why would Tarr be at Sparta?" demanded the Irishman, hoarsely.

"Do you think he is the kind to sit idle in Flintville? He was at the station soon after our train moved out, depend upon it, to telegraph to all way stations to see where you were going. Our conductor must have missed you after Sparta, and me—he had seen my ticket for Tallepoochee — and — well, you can imagine that the news has spread like wild-fire that you have assaulted me."

Here was a desperate game of intimidation, and I was winning it. I had bravely lied about the person who was entering my car, and I was not in the least assured that Colonel Tarr would move, after this last discouragement. But McGuire was quite incapable of weighing my words.

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"And do you know that in your great peril your faithless negro has deserted you?" I continued, speaking louder and more quickly. "*He* has the interest of self-preservation which you have lost. *He* has thought out the dangers of this situation and made his escape. Look out after him! He is gone."

He looked out through a crack and his face turned fiery red. He swore furiously.

"I hear horses," I cried. "Unbind me quickly before they get here?"

He rushed toward the door, stood, shook with terror—and then in his cowardice he actually called upon me.

"Save me, Katie! Save me once more! Sure I haven't hurt ye, sure I niver meant to harm ye. Save me!"

"If you will obey me I will save your life," I cried. "I can do it. I will promise."

He came to my side, drew out his knife and sinking on his trembling knees, he cut the cords that he had so lately bound me with. I sprang to my feet while he still cowered on the floor.

"Now you are beginning to act sanely," I said, briskly. "Are you armed?"

"I've a pocket-pistol—but what good will it do me?"

"It will do you no good, but harm. You're

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better unarmed if you want to appear innocent. Give it to me."

He handed it over with a groan.

"I'm trustin' you, Katie," he said, plaintively.

"Because you know you can trust me, don't you?" I said, encouragingly. "You remember I took your revolver before—and you're in greater danger now. Now give me back the money you robbed me of just now—all that's left. It won't do to run the risk of being found with that."

He obeyed.

"Now don't you see you are already in a safer situation?" I inquired, cheerfully. "Here is visible proof that you meant no harm. You haven't robbed me and you are unarmed while I have a pistol. Moreover, I'm on your side now. I'll stand your friend. You won't be lynched because I won't allow it."

"Yes, but Tarr—!" said he.

"There's a good safe place where he can never reach you," I answered, reassuringly, "the county jail."

"Ah, but will they let me in?" he wailed.

"Never fear for that, if I take you there. I know the sheriff personally."

"Well, but listen, Katie! They'll keep me there for—" he halted.

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"For robbing Mr. Perry? Of course they will. You may be kept for months and no harm can befall you. Meanwhile Colonel Tarr will have to get out of the country altogether."

He looked more mystified.

"If the jail's the safe place for me, why didn't I go there myself?" he inquired with the air of having floored me in an argument.

"Because you've no head, McGuire," I replied, promptly. "You need somebody to take care of you."

"Ah, Katie—it's you that will do it!" he exclaimed, pleadingly. "For even in prison my life isn't safe if ye tell what I did to ye this mornin'."

"I won't tell a word, as long as you live," I reassured him, gravely. Our relations were suddenly turned back and we stood as we had stood five nights ago, he pitiful and I his protector. Now as then, my pity struggled with my horror of the man; but, now that I knew the worst of him, my pity was strongest.

"Put your hands behind your back and let me bind you," I commanded.

"No, you don't," he exclaimed with alarm and suspicion, backing off from me.

"Don't be a fool, McGuire," I said, impa-

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tiently. "You've no time to waste. Suppose we walked away through the woods together. The first man who saw us and recognized us would shoot at you. But if you walk ahead with your hands tied behind you and I walk behind you with a pistol pointed at your back, don't you see that if they shot at either of us it would be at me?"

"Yes, but your pistol might go off," he objected, wavering.

"Well, then, if you'd rather trust to your own stupid head than to me, take your pistol back and go," I returned with a show of temper. "Get into the swamps and take care of yourself. I'm going."

"No, no, kape it, for the love of Mary!" he begged, waving back the weapon I handed him. "I'm trusting to ye, Katie. Here, tie me up, if ye will."

So with the self-same cords with which he had bound me I tied his wrists together behind his back. "I wish Kelvin were here," I thought exultantly, "he would appreciate this."

Then I picked his hat off the floor knocked the dust out of it and put it on his head. "Now, then, we're ready! Forward, march!" I commanded, pointing to the door, and proudly I walked out after my prisoner.

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"See how plain your tracks are in the broom-sedge," I said, as we came out into the blessed sunshine.

"Which way is it, Katie?" he asked apprehensively, looking all around the quiet premises.

"North," said I—"to Potterstown. We'll find Dr. Nunley first. He's bound to help me take care of you."

"It's him I've written to make my terms with Tarr," said McGuire confidently over his shoulder as we hastened away.

"And there was another chance for your destruction," said I. "You know the doctor can be bought; and you know Colonel Tarr has more money than you. Which one of you, think you, the doctor will serve?"

"I was a—fool," he muttered morosely and lumbered on in silence.

Presently I caught sight of the negro with the gun. He had evidently not found his turkey and was hastening back toward his post of duty. I called to him and he stopped and came slowly nearer.

"Things is changed, lad," McGuire addressed him sadly when he was close. "I'm the prisoner now. Ye'd better be off, or they'll lynch ye."

The man seemed scarcely to understand the

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situation. He looked from one to the other of us with surprise and fear.

"Go home," I said, sternly, "and if you want to live your natural life out, never say a word of what happened to-day to any human soul."

Then he turned and crashed away through the forest in rapid flight.

"Katie, you're a great one," exclaimed McGuire, with admiration. "If the Lord had made ye a man, I doubt not ye'd have been a general."

"Or a sheriff," I added with some pride. "March on, McGuire."

For an hour or so we kept northwest by the sun which stood about noon when we started. Our way took us down through a hard-wood hammock-growth at first. I drank at the stream we crossed and gave him to drink out of his felt hat.

"Ye're kind, Katie," he said with a gratitude that touched me. "And yet ye hold with Tarr."

"That is the reason I don't want him to be a murderer," I answered, gravely. "I see how an evil conscience turns a man into a thing like you."

He heaved a groan and we pressed on again. Now our way led us up through sparse young pine, where the sun fell hot between the trees.

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The wire-grass was slippery to walk on, there were many logs across our way. Twice my prisoner stumbled and fell heavily and I had to help him to his feet again.

"Och, I'm fagged, I'm sore fagged," he muttered now and then.

I myself was almost faint with weariness and I made our pace slow. According to programme, I kept McGuire's pistol in my hand most of the time and I looked to the right and the left through the open woods to see whatever might approach. My prisoner was quite incapable of keeping the direction. I had to pay strict attention to keep him going north. My plan was thus to intersect the road that must run between Potterstown and Sparta.

The woods, so monotonous, level, open, roadless, seemed interminable. My head was light with hunger by this time and the high spirits with which I had led my prisoner forth were beginning to ebb.

At last McGuire sat down on a log, panting.

"I must needs rest a bit," he said, brokenly.

"You may, if you are tired," I said, graciously, and I sat down upon the other end of it.

"Katie, could ye not loosen me hands?" he inquired. "It frets me sore to be bound. I'd fain lie down to sleep a bit."

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"No, no, you can't sleep," I said, firmly. "There will be time enough for that when you are safely in jail."

"But I'm thinking I have the sunstroke," he said, piteously. "There's something ails me head."

"Nonsense. It's not hot enough to-day for sunstroke. Sit still a minute, and it will pass off."

He relapsed into silence, breathing heavily, and for once, with his head bowed low. I kept to my look-out. We were here in a stretch of virgin forest of the great long-leaf pine that stand together without undergrowth like the giant pillars of some immeasurably vast cathedral, or like the masts of a myriad ships. One can look miles away between them to where in the distance they seem to stand close together, the boles forming a purple screen.

Among these tree-stems in the middle distance I was suddenly aware of a two-horse wagon moving rapidly. I knew at once by the speed it was travelling that it was on a road unseen by me.

"McGuire, our walk is over," I told my prisoner gently. "Over there are some people. I'll signal them—and we'll drive the rest of the way."

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"Where? Where?" he asked, wildly.

"On the road yonder. Don't be afraid. I won't tell them anything except that I am arresting you for Sheriff Caseby, and that you are too fagged to walk. They'll turn then and take us back to Potterstown."

So saying I fired off the pistol for a signal. As I expected, the wagon stopped. I fired again and gave a long call. There came an answering shout and then the persons—two men it appeared—drove in among the trees.

"Now I'll strap your ankles so that they'll see you are really helpless," I said briskly and pulled off my belt for the purpose. McGuire moaned a protest.

"I'd like to be able to run," he said, piteously.

"Nonsense! That would be the worst thing you could do for yourself. I should think you would know that by this time," I answered, sternly, and I knelt down and strapped his ankles tight.

Meanwhile, horses and wagon came crashing through the woods. Suddenly McGuire gave a veritable howl of rage and terror.

"My God," he cried—"it's Tarr!"

With that he fell backwards over the log and rolled down behind it, while I sprang up and looked.

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Colonel Tarr and Kelvin! I could have wept for joy at first—but not when I saw the agony depicted on their faces.

"Never fear, McGuire. You have my promise. They shall not touch you," I said to the man on the ground, and I stood upright before the log where he lay. He answered me with never a word.

"Kate—are you safe?" cried Colonel Tarr in a vibrating voice as he leaped from the wagon.

"I am safe," I cried, as he hurried toward me—"but *stand!*"

He paused, transfixed by my unmistakable gesture, his eyes however blazing with suppressed passion.

"I have a prisoner here on the ground behind me," I said, gravely, "bound with cords and in my power for life or death. And I have promised him life."

"And I have sworn him death," he answered, in a terrible voice. "Stand aside, Kate!"

"Understand that in hurting him you are hurting me," I cried, warningly. "I gave him my word of honor that you would not touch him. I trusted my honor to you."

"Kate, did he not lay hands on you this morning?—and shall I not kill him for that?" he asked in a breaking voice.

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"How did you know?" I asked.

"His negro—Dr. Nunley—we were on our way to Sparta——"

"Do you hear that, McGuire?" I asked the Irishman over my shoulder. "Didn't I tell you what would happen? Aren't you glad now you trusted me. If they had found us in the lint-room you would have been killed—but now you are perfectly safe."

Never a word of reply did he make.

Meanwhile Kelvin had sprung from the wagon and approached. His face, so pale and deathly a moment before, was now bright with a cheerful smile. He came up and swept me a fine bow.

"Jack," said he, "I am proud of you. I find you in command of the situation."

I stretched out both my hands toward him and he caught them in his own.

"Oh, Mr. Kelvin, I am so glad you came. *You* will help, *you* will stand by me," I exclaimed, and my tears ran down my face. "I promised this man his life and he trusted me and let me bind him."

"And his life he shall have if I have to put Harry in handcuffs myself," said Kelvin, warmly.

Colonel Tarr still stood like a statue where I

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had arrested him. Now I went to him and held out my hand.

"Your promise," I said, firmly.

"Tell me—are you not hurt?" he asked, passionately, taking my hand between his.

"I am not hurt—and I want your word that you will nevermore hunt or hurt McGuire. Here, in his presence, I want you to swear it."

"Be reasonable," he pleaded. "Poisonous reptiles are exterminated."

"I have made him harmless," I replied. "He is going to jail for stealing. Promise me, Harry, promise me."

"I really think, Harry, you might promise it," called Kelvin. He was kneeling by McGuire's side, bending over him. "When you consider that we were looking for Jack tied up hand and foot in a deserted gin-house and that we find him triumphantly trotting a prisoner toward Flintville jail—I think there's a warrant for the conclusion that Jack knows what he is about."

At the words Colonel Tarr's face relaxed.

"How did you do it, Sweetheart?" he whispered, drawing me toward him. "How did you take McGuire?"

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"Just as you did this morning," I explained, "by bullying him."

He laughed again. "I promise you everything—anything you ask of me—under the sun and moon"—he murmured; and I thanked him with a kiss.

Then Kelvin came up to us with a grave face.

"Listen, children," he said, taking us each by the hand: "Things have turned out rather differently than you think. The man is dead, stone-dead—and whether you fight over him or kiss is a matter of indifference to him. He probably breathed his last when he rolled off the log at seeing Harry. Heart failure, I suppose! It might have been expected. Between the two of you, you have scared him to death—and they say you might as well kill a man. Now you had better both get into that wagon and drive to Tallepoochee. That's my advice. I will remove Jack's cords from the body here and then go find Dr. Nunley and the negro. They will reach that gin-house before long, I suppose. I think we can safely leave the finding of Mr. Murray's body to his physician. After that I'll follow Thomas and Dan down the river. They were loath to part with me this morning and only let me go on the promise that I would bring them

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news of you both. So good-by, Jack. Take care of yourself. Good-by, Harry! Let Jack take care of you."

And he shook us each heartily by the hand.

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