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DAPH AND THE CAPTAIN. Page 17.

THE
BABES IN THE BASKET;

OR,

DAPH AND HER CHARGE.



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THE BABES IN THE BASKET.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOONLIGHT VISITOR.

THE evening air stole gently into a quiet room in a West Indian island more than sixty years ago.

There were no casements in the wide windows; the heavy shutters were thrown back, and the moonlight poured, in long, unbroken streams, across the polished, uncarpeted floor.

Within the large, pleasant room two children were sleeping in their curtained beds, like birds in pretty cages.

Suddenly there was a cautious tread in the hall, and then a strange figure stood

silently in the moonlight. Without candle, or taper, might have been plainly seen the short, strongly-built woman, whose black face and gay turban formed a striking contrast to the fair children in their loose, white night-dresses.

Who was that dark intruder, and what was her secret errand in that quiet room?

It was Daph, black Daph; and when you have heard more about her, you can better judge whether she came as a friend or an enemy to the sleeping children of her master.

The large mirror, bright in the moonlight, seemed to have an irresistible attraction for the negro, and the sight of her black face fully reflected there made her show her white teeth in a grin of decided approval. The pleased expression, however, disappeared almost instantly, as she said impatiently, "Foolish cretur, spendin'

dese precious time looking at your own ugly face!"

At this whispered exclamation the children stirred uneasily. "If I mus, I mus!" said Daph resolutely, as she drew from her pocket a box containing two small pills. With the pills in her hand she approached the bedside of the little girl, who was now half sitting up, and looking at Daph with the bewildered expression of one suddenly aroused from sleep.

Daph put aside the mosquito bar, and said coaxingly, "Take dis, Miss Lou, quick as you can, and don't go for waking Mass Charlie, asleep dar in dat beauty bed of his."

Daph had slipped the pill into a juicy bit of pineapple, which she seemed to have ready for the purpose, and the child instantly swallowed it. With one trustful, pleasant glance from her large, blue eyes,

the fair-haired little girl sank back on her pillow, and was soon in the sweet sleep of innocence.

As soon as Daph saw the small, slender hands lie open and relaxed, she closed the gauze-like curtains, and stole to the cradle-bed of the little boy. She raised his head gently on her arm, and placed in his mouth a bit of the same juicy fruit she had given his sister, containing another of those hidden pills which she seemed so anxious to administer. The child did not wake, but the sweet morsel was pleasant to his taste, and no doubt mingled in his baby-dreams of the joys of the pleasant world in which he had passed little more than a twelve-month.

Daph now set to work busily to fill a huge basket, which she brought from some place of deposit near at hand. The drawers of the bureau and the contents of

the elegant dressing-case she thoroughly overhauled, making such selections as seemed to please her fancy, and being withal somewhat dainty in her choice. Children's clothing, of the finest and best, formed the lowest layer in the basket; then followed a sprinkling of rings and necklaces, interspersed with the choice furniture of the rich dressing-case. Over all was placed a large light shawl, with its many soft folds; and then Daph viewed the success of her packing with much satisfaction.

Quietly and stealthily she approached the bed, where the little girl was sleeping so soundly that she did not wake, even when Daph lifted her in her strong arms and laid her gently in the great basket—the choicest treasure of all. In another moment the plump, rosy boy was lying with his fairy-like sister in that strange

resting-place. Daph looked at them, as they lay side by side, and a tear rolled over her dark cheeks, and, as it fell, sparkled in the moonlight.

The negro had taken up a white cloth, and was in the act of throwing it over the basket, when a small book with golden clasps suddenly caught her eye; rolling it quickly in a soft, rich veil, she placed it between the children, and her task was done.

It was but the work of a moment to fasten on the cloth covering with a stout string; then, with one strong effort, Daph stooped, took the basket on her head, and went forth from the door with as stately a step as if she wore a crown.

CHAPTER II.

THE "MARTHA JANE."

THERE was the bustle of departure on board a Yankee schooner, which some hope of gain had brought to the southern island named in our last chapter. The fresh and favorable breeze hurried the preparations of the sailors, as they moved about full of glad thoughts of return to their distant home.

The boat, which had been sent ashore for some needful supplies, was fast approaching the vessel, and in it, among the rough tars, was Daph, her precious basket at her side, and her bright eyes passing from face to face, with an eager, wistful glance, that seemed trying to read the secrets of each heart.

“Here! go ahead, woman! I’ll hand up your chickens,” said one of the sailors, as they reached the anchored schooner.

“I keeps my chickens to myself,” said Daph, as she placed the basket on her head, and went up the side of the vessel as steadily and securely as the oldest tar of all.

As soon as she set her foot on deck, the sailors thronged around her, offering to take her chickens from her at her own price, and passing their rough jokes on her stout figure and shining black face. One young sailor, bolder than the rest, laid his hand on the basket, and had well-nigh torn away its cover. The joke might have proved a dangerous one for him. A blow from Daph’s strong arm sent him staggering backwards, and in another moment the negress had seized an oar, and was brandishing it round her head, threatening

with destruction any one who should dare to touch her property, and declaring that with the captain and with him alone would she treat for the chickens, about which so much had been said.

“Cap’in,” said she, as a tall, firmly-knit man drew near the scene of the disturbance — “Cap’in, it’s you, sah, I wants to speak wid, and jest you by yourself, away from these fellows, who don’t know how to treat a ’spectable person who belongs to the greatest gentleman in the island. Let me see you in your little cubby there, and if you have a heart in you, we’ll make a bargain.”

There was something so earnest in the woman’s manner, that Captain Jones at once consented to her odd request, smiling at himself as he did so.

A kind of temporary cabin had been put up on deck, for the protection of the cap-

tain from the hot rays of the southern sun. It was but a rude frame-work, covered with sail-cloth; and yet, when the canvas door was closed, it formed a pleasant and cool place of retirement for an afternoon nap, or for the transaction of private business.

To that spot Daph followed the captain, her basket on her head, and her firm step and consequential air seeming to say to the sailors, — “You see, your captain knows better than you do how to treat such a person as I am.”

When they were once within the little enclosure Daph's manner changed. She put down her precious basket, and looking the captain directly in the eye, she said, solemnly, “Cap'in, would you see a man struggle for his life in de deep water, outside dar, and nebber lift your hand to save him? Would you see a house on fire, and sweet baby-children burning in it, and just

look on to see de awsome blaze, and nebber stir to save de dear babies? Cap'in, I'se brought you a good work to do. Dey say de great Lord blesses dem dat cares for little children, and gives dem a good seat in heaven. Swear by de great Lord you won't tell de dreadful secret I'se going to tell you! Swear: time is short!"

The kind-hearted captain was impressed by the earnest manner of the woman, and not a little curious to hear the secret that seemed to fill her with such strong feeling: "I swear," said he, simply; "go on!"

"De darkies in dis island," said Daph, slowly — "de darkies are crazy for de blood of deir masters. Poor, wicked fools! Dey means to have enough of it to-night! By to-morrow morning de white faces on dis coast will ebery one be white wid de death-whiteness! Old folks and little children — dey mean to kill dem all! Dey told

Daph deir secret, as if dey thought she was all black, inside and out. De Lord forgib Daph dat she did not strike dem down where dey stood showing deir teeth, at the thought of living in master's house, and he cold in de grave! Dear massa and missus are up in de country, and Daph couldn't get word to dem, but something in here said, 'You can save the sweet babies, Daph;' so I made as if I was ready to kill dose I loves de best, and set to work a-contriving how a poor, foolish cretur could save dose sweet lambs. Your men was always glad to take Daph's chickens, and so de way seemed open. I'se put my darlings in de basket, and here dey are for you to take care ob for de Lord, and he'll reckon wid you for it. It ain't likely dey'll have any friends to stand by 'em, and thank ye for it, 'cept one poor woman named Daph!"

In a twinkling Daph had 'torn off the

cover of the basket, and there lay the sleeping children, calm and still as if on their mother's bosom.

"Dey do breave, de sweet dears!" said Daph, as she bent tenderly over them.

Great tears fell from the eyes of honest Captain Jones. He was an old sailor, but to salt water in this form he had long been a stranger. He tried to speak, but the voice that had been heard above the tumult of many a storm was now choked and husky. In an instant he regained his self-command, and said, "You have found the right man, Daph! No harm shall come to them so long as my name is Jeremiah Jones! The *Martha Jane* can skim the water like a wild duck, and we'll be off towards a better country before ten minutes are over."

The words were hardly out of Captain Jones' mouth, before he left his tent-like

cabin, and in a moment he was heard giving orders for instant departure.

The energy that had borne Daph through her hour of trial seemed to desert her, now that her object was attained, and she sank down beside the little ones, sobbing like a child. She felt herself a poor, helpless, ignorant creature, going she knew not whither, and having assumed a charge she knew not how to fulfill.

“De great Lord, dat missus loves, can take care of us!” thought the humble negro; “he can give poor Daph sense to mind de babies!”

In her ignorance she knew not how to pray, but she leaned in simple faith upon the only source of strength, and found consolation.

In half an hour after the arrival of Daph on board the *Martha Jane*, the trim little

vessel was speeding on her homeward course.

Captain Jones walked the deck in deep meditation, while from their various positions his crew watched him with curious glances. The sailors well knew that Daph was still on board, but no one had dared to question the captain's orders for putting instantly out to sea.

Jeremiah Jones was a thorough republican when at home in good old Massachusetts, but once on board the *Martha Jane*, he ruled with the despotic power of the Emperor of all the Russias. His crew were accustomed to submission, and murmuring was never heard among them. They had, indeed, no cause for discontent, for Captain Jones was just, kind-hearted, and high-principled, and he wisely ruled his little realm.

The good captain had acted upon a sud-

den impulse, for promptness was required, but now came a time for sober reflection.

“If the darky has not told the truth,” so reasoned he, “what has Jeremiah Jones been doing? He has kidnapped a valuable servant and carried off two children, belonging to a man who has the power and wealth to make said Jeremiah suffer for his madness. The thing has been done publicly, and these fellows of mine may think it for their interest to deliver me up, as soon as I set foot in old Boston!”

These meditations did not seem to increase the peace of mind of the worthy New Englander. He walked the deck impatiently for a few minutes, and then drew near the objects of his anxious thought.

He put aside the canvas curtain, and stood for a moment in the clear moonlight watching the sleepers. Daph had thrown her arm protectingly around the basket,

and curled about it, as if conscious of her charge even in the deep slumber into which she had fallen. That long, earnest look set the perturbed mind of the captain at rest, and again the unwonted tears filled his large gray eyes.

A state of indecision could not last long in such a mind as that of Captain Jones, and his usual prompt, authoritative manner suddenly returned to him. He seized a trumpet, and gave a shout of "all hands on deck," which soon brought his eager crew about him.

In a few words he told Daph's fearful story, and then, throwing aside the awning, he exposed to view the sleeping forms of the negro and the little ones, as he said:—

"I have pledged myself to be a friend to those whom God has sent me to take care of, my men, but if there is one among you who doubts that faithful creature's

story, or who is afraid to lend a hand to save those sweet throats from the murdering knives of those black rascals on shore, let him stand out here and speak for himself. Let him take a boat and put out for the island while it is yet in sight. We don't want him here. He shall have his wages and bounty too, for the master he serves is likely to give him little comfort in the long run. Speak out, men,—will you stand by me, or will you go ashore?"

Every voice joined in the hearty cheer with which the captain's words were received. Rough hands were stretched out towards him, and he responded to their warm grasp with a hearty shake, as one by one the men came up to give him this token of their determination to help him in the good deed he had begun.

The cheer that was so welcome to the ear of Captain Jones had quite a different

effect upon poor Daph. She sprang to her feet in wild alarm, and placing herself in front of her darlings, stood ready to do battle in their behalf.

The men drew back, and Captain Jones hastened to explain to Daph the hearty expression of good-will towards her, which had risen spontaneously from the crew of the *Martha Jane*.

Daph's apprehensions were soon quieted, and, at the suggestion of the captain, she prepared to remove her darlings from their strange resting-place to one of the small state-rooms below.

The children did not wake while she laid them gently in their berth, and stretched herself beside them on the floor. Daph began to be troubled at the soundness of their long-continued sleep. She raised herself, and crouching near them, she watched them with ever-increasing uneasiness.

Captain Jones was on deck, giving a last look to see that all was right, before retiring for the night, when Daph came hastily up to him, and laying her hand beseechingly on his arm, she said, —

“Oh, Cap’in! I’s afeard I’s a just killed my pretty ones! dey do sleep so. Dem was such little pills, dey didn’t seem as if dey could be so mighty powersome!”

“Pills!” said the captain, with a start; “what have you given them?”

“I just don’t know myself,” said Daph, desperately. “Daph had de ear-ache mighty bad last week, and missus, dear cretur, — she was always so kind, — she gibs me two little pills, and she says, ‘Here, Daph, you take dese when you goes to bed, and you will sleep so sound de pain will all go way.’ I says, ‘Tank’ee, missus,’ of course, and she goes up to de house quite satisfied. Daph nebber did take no doctor’s

stuff; so I puts de little pills in my pocket, and just roasts an orange soft, and ties it warm outside my ear, and goes to bed and sleeps like a lizard. Now, when I thinks of putting de children in de basket, something says to me, 'You gib dem dose little pills, Daph; dey'll make 'em sleep sound 'nough.' So I'se just did like a poor, foolish nigger." Here Daph began to cry piteously.

Captain Jones went immediately to the cabin. The natural color and healthy breathing of the little sleepers soon assured him that all was right.

"Courage, old girl!" said the captain, cheerily. "Turn in yourself, and I'll warrant you the youngsters will be none the worse for your doctoring!"

Thus consoled, Daph lay down again beside her charge, and the silence of deep sleep soon prevailed, not only in the little state-room, but throughout the *Martha*

Jane, save when the measured steps of the watch sounded out through the stillness of the night.

CHAPTER III.

THE WATER-LILY.

AT sunrise, the morning after she set sail, the *Martha Jane* was dancing over the waves, far out of sight of mainland or island.

Daph was an early riser, and in the gray dawn she bestirred herself with her usual waking thought — “This is a busy world, and Daph must be up and at work.” Her first glance around showed her that she was not in the southern kitchen, which had so long been her domain, and a merry sound near her reminded her of the new duties she had undertaken.

Charlie was sitting up in the berth, his bright black eyes sparkling with delight at the new scene in which he found himself.

“Pretty! pretty little bed!” were the first words that met Daph’s ear. The hearty hug with which she responded to this pleasant greeting, and the consequent laugh of the child, roused his fair sister.

Louise started up, and looked wildly around her. “Where are we, Daffy?” she asked, anxiously.

“We’s just on board a beauty ship, a-going to see pretty countries over the water,” said Daph, coaxingly.

“But why do we go?” urged the child, by no means satisfied.

“’Cause, ’cause,” said Daph, “’cause de great Lord tinks it best.”

The face of little Louise instantly took a sobered and submissive expression, and she said quietly, “Well, Daffy, Lou will try to be a good girl. Where’s Dinah?”

“I’se to be nurse now, Miss Lou,” answered Daph, promptly.

“Oh! how nice! No cross Dinah any more!” exclaimed the little girl, clapping her hands with very great delight.

Charlie thought proper to clap his hands too, and to cry out boisterously, “Caky! caky!”—a cry which Daph well understood, and for which she was amply prepared.

She drew from one of her huge pockets some cakes for the children, and then they all three began to chat as pleasantly as if they were at their favorite resort, under the old tree that grew in front of Daph’s southern kitchen.

Daph found it a difficult business to dress her young master and mistress; but Louise was a helpful little creature, and of great assistance in enabling the new nurse to select the suitable garments from the store that had been hastily thrust into the great basket.

It was an easy matter to comb Louise's soft, straight, golden hair off her fair forehead, but it was another thing to deal with Master Charlie's mop of short chestnut curls. The new bond between Daph and the sturdy boy had well-nigh been broken by the smart pulls she gave in the course of her unskillful efforts.

When Captain Jones came into the cabin after his usual round on deck in the morning, he was greeted by the sound of merry young voices, which struck strangely on his ear.

Daph gave one peep from the state-room, to be sure who was near at hand, and then, leading out the children, she bade them "go right to the very kindest gentleman that any body ever had for a friend."

Charlie put out his arms towards the honest captain, who took the little fellow warmly to his heart.

Louise held on to Daph's apron with one hand, and the other she put out timidly towards her new friend.

That small, soft, gentle hand was placed in the hard, dark palm of the captain quietly as a flower might fall on a wayside path. Captain Jones bent tenderly down to the fair, slender child, and kissed her smooth forehead. She loosened her hold of Daph and nestled at his side. Again those stranger-tears filled the captain's eyes, but he did not look the worse for them, or for the kindly smile that beamed from his frank, sunburnt face.

An odd-looking party sat round the breakfast table in the cabin that morning. Captain Jones was at the head, with Charlie on his knee; opposite him was perched the little Louise; while the weather-browned faces of the mates appeared at the sides.

Daph had claimed the privilege of milk-

ing Passenger, the cow, which Captain Jones had taken with him on many voyages, and on which he had lavished much of the surplus affection of his bachelor heart.

Passenger would have found out that she had powerful rivals, if she could have seen Charlie enjoying his cup of fresh milk on the captain's knee, and Louise looking at him with mild, trustful glances, that went right to his heart.

Daph saw all this, if Passenger did not, and, with her white teeth in full sight, she moved round the table, in the position of waiter, which she had assumed to keep her darlings in view, and to have a care that their new friends, in their abundant kindness, did not feed them too freely with sailors' fare.

That was a happy day to the children, that first day on board the *Martha Jane*, — and the captain prophesied that Charlie

would "stand the sea like an old salt," and Louise would be as much at home on it as the *Martha Jane* herself.

There had been a fresh breeze all day, but towards evening the winds grew stronger, and Daph would have found it hard to carry even a trifle on that head of hers, which had so steadily borne many a heavy burden. She began, also, to experience certain strange internal sensations for which she could not account; but the faithful creature bore up without a complaint, though she staggered to and fro in a way which made the rough sailors laugh merrily at her expense.

Poor Daph! Such sufferings as hers could not long be kept secret. Through the livelong night she lay in the anguish of sea-sickness, which can only be appreciated by those who have experienced its miseries. In her ignorance, she supposed

herself to have been seized by some fearful malady, which must soon take her life.

“Daph would be glad to die, she so awesome sick,” she said to herself, “but den who will mind de babies? No, no! Daph won’t die yet. De great Lord won’t let her; Daph knows he won’t!”

For two days the poor negro wrestled mightily against the horrors of sea-sickness, bearing up with the motive, “Daph must live for de babies!”

Meanwhile, Captain Jones had all the charge of his new pets. Passenger was quite forgotten, as the stout sailor walked the deck, with Charlie peeping out from under his rough overcoat, and Louise walking at his side, wrapped in the long soft shawl that Daph had stowed away in that wonderful basket.

They had strange talks together, — that strong man and those prattling children, —

and they learned much from each other. He told of the wonders of the sea—the great whales and the floating icebergs—and the petrel that the sailor never kills. Many long years Captain Jones had made the sea his home, and much he knew which books had never taught him, yet in little more than three short years Louise had learned a priceless secret, which he had never found in any land. He was familiar with the wonders of nature, but to her the great Creator, to whom he was a stranger, was as a familiar, trusted friend. The marvels which Captain Jones could tell of the ocean but increased her wonder at His power who “made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that in them is,” and in her simple way she would “praise the Lord for all his wonderful works.” Charlie little knew of the strong feelings which agitated the breast to which he was clasped, while

his little sister lisped of the lessons learned at her mother's knee.

Those days of Daph's sickness were precious days to Captain Jones, and he was almost sorry when the stout negro triumphed over her enemy, and came on deck to resume her charge.

The air grew chill as the *Martha Jane* sped on her northward course, and the white dresses of the children fluttered most unseasonably in the cool breeze. The ship's stores were ransacked for some material of which to make them more suitable though extempore clothing. A roll of red flannel was all that promised to answer the purpose. The captain took the place of master workman, and cut out what he called "a handsome suit for a pair of sea-birds;" and Daph, with her clumsy fingers, made the odd garments. She felt ready to cry as she put them on, to see her pets so dis-

figured ; but Captain Jones laughed at her dolorous face, and said the red frock only made his " lily " look the fairer, and turned Charlie into the sailor he should be.

The *Martha Jane* was nearing the familiar waters of her own northern home, when the captain called Daph into the cabin one evening to consult with her on matters of importance.

With the happy disposition of the negro, Daph seemed to have forgotten that she was not always to live on board the *Martha Jane*, and under the kind protection of her sailor friend ; she was, therefore, not a little startled when he addressed to her the blunt question, —

“ Where are you going, Daph ? ”

Now Daph had a most indistinct idea of the world at large, but, thus brought suddenly to a decision, she promptly named the only northern city of which she had

heard. "I'se goin to New York," she said ;
"Miss Elize, my dear missus, was born-dere,
and it seems de right sort of a place to be
takin' de-sweet babies to."

"Daph," said the honest captain, "we
shall put into New York to-morrow, for I
have freight to land there, but you had
better go on with me to old Boston. There
I can look after you a little, and put you
under charge of my good mother; and a
better woman never trod shoe-leather, for
all her son is none of the best. Shall it be
so, Daph?"

"Couldn't do it, Massa Cap'in: Boston!
dat mus be mighty far off. I nebber hear
tell of such a place. New York's de home
for my babies, just where missus was born.
Maybe some ob her grand cousins may be
turnin' up dar, to be friends to de pretty
dears. Nobody would eber find us 'way off
in Boston!"

It was in vain that the captain tried to change Daph's resolution,—to New York she would go; and he now attacked her at another point, asking, "What are you going to do when you get there, Daph? Have you got any money?"

"Not so bery much to begin wid," said Daph, producing a bit of a rag from her pocket, in which some small change, the result of her traffic in chickens, was stored. "Not much money, Massa Cap'in, as you see for yerself; but what do you tink ob dese?" Daph loosened her dress, and showed on her black neck several gold chains, hung with rings of great richness and value, and an old-fashioned necklace set with precious stones. "What do you tink ob dese, Massa Cap'in?" she repeated, as she displayed her treasures to his astonished sight.

Daph had put her valuables on for safe-

keeping, doubtless, yet not without a certain satisfaction in wearing articles which so gratified the love of finery common to the black race.

The captain looked at the jewelry with a sober, pitying expression, as he said, compassionately, "Poor Daph! If you should offer one of those rich chains for sale in New York, you might be hurried off to jail as a thief in a twinkling; then what would become of my pets?"

Daph betook herself to tears for a few moments, and then rallied and said stoutly, "Daph can work for de babies. She's a strong woman. Heard massa say many a time Daph would bring a big price. Daph will make heaps of money, and keep young massa and missus libbing like great folks, as dey should."

At this idea Daph's face regained all its usual cheerfulness, and she could not be

shaken by the further doubts and fears brought forward by Captain Jones.

“Keep what you have round your neck safely then, Daph,” said the honest sailor, “and never try to sell them unless you are ready to starve. Here’s a little purse of solid gold that I meant as a present for my mother; she, good soul, would rather you had it, I know. This will keep you till you can get a start, and then, maybe, you can work for the dear children, as you say. I have an acquaintance in New York, who may let you a room or two, and if she can take you in you may get along.”

“I knew de great Lord would look out for us. His name be praised!” said the poor negro, gratefully, as she kissed the hand of Captain Jones. “Ye won’t lose your reward, Massa Cap’in; He’ll reckon wid ye!” and she pointed reverently upwards.

“May he reckon with me in mercy, and not count up my sins!” the captain said, solemnly, and then bade Daph “good-night.”

CHAPTER IV.

THE RED HOUSE WITH THE BLUE SHUTTERS.

CAPTAIN JONES was a prompt and upright business man, faithful to his engagements at any sacrifice.

He was pledged to remain in New York the shortest possible space of time ; he therefore had not, after attending to necessary business, even an hour to devote to Daph and the little ones. It was a sad moment to him when he strained Charlie to his breast for the last time, and kissed his "Water-lily," as he loved to call Louise.

He had given Daph a letter to a sailor's widow, with whom he thought she would be able to secure a home, where she would escape the idle and vicious poor who congregated in less respectable parts of the

city. After having made Daph count on her fingers half-a-dozen times the number of streets she must cross before she came to "the small red house with blue shutters," where she was to stop, he piloted the little party into Broadway, and setting their faces in the right direction, he bade them an affectionate farewell.

As he shook Daph's black hand for the last time, she placed in his a small parcel, clumsily tied in brown paper, saying, "You puts that in your pocket, Massa Cap'in, and when you gets to sea you open it, and you will understand what Daph means."

Captain Jones did, almost unconsciously, as Daph suggested, as, with a full heart, he turned away from the little ones who had become so dear to him.

Once more the only protector of her master's children, Daph's energy seemed to return to her. She wound the shawl more

closely about Louise, drew Charlie to her honest bosom, looked after the various bundles, and then set off at a regular marching pace.

The strange appearance of the little party soon attracted the attention of the knots of idle boys who even then infested the more populous parts of New York.

“Hallo, darky! where’s your hand-organ? What’ll ye take for your mon-keys?” shouted one of these young rascals, as he eyed the children in their odd-looking red flannel garments.

Louise clung closely to Daph, who strode steadily on, apparently unconscious of the little troop gathering in her rear. By degrees the young scamps drew nearer to her, and one of them, taking hold of the skirt of her dress, cried out, “Come, fellows, form a line! Follow the captain, and do as you see me do!”

A long string of boys arranged themselves behind Daph, each holding on to the other's tattered garments, and walking with mock solemnity, while the foremost shouted in Daph's ear the most provoking and impudent things his imagination and rascality could suggest.

Daph maintained her apparent unconsciousness until she came in front of a large door with a deep recess, which opened directly on the street, and but a step above the pavement.

With a sudden and unexpected jerk she freed herself from her tormentor; then, placing Charlie and Louise for a moment in the recess, she charged upon her assailants. Right and left she dealt hearty slaps with her open hand, which sent the little crew howling away, their cheeks smarting with pain and burning with rage. The whole thing was the work of a moment. Daph

took Charlie in her arms, clasped the trembling hand of Louise, and resumed her steady walk as calmly as if nothing had occurred.

There was much to attract the attention of the strangers in the new scenes about them, but Daph kept her head straight forward, and devoted all her attention to numbering the corners she passed, that she might know when to begin to look out for the house so carefully described by good Captain Jones.

Louise soon grew weary of keeping pace with Daph's long strides, and the faithful negro lifted the little girl in her arms, and went patiently on with her double burden.

A weary, weary walk it seemed even to the strong-limbed negro, before they passed the last corner, according to her reckoning, and stood in front of the very red house with blue shutters which she had been so

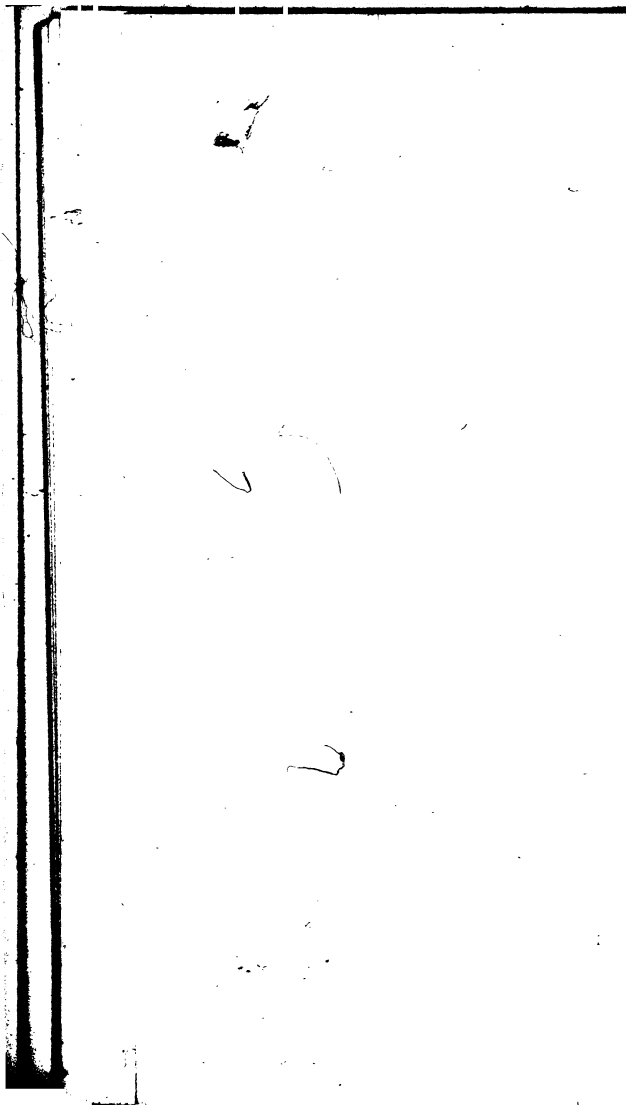
anxious to see. Much as she had longed to reach it, its appearance did not fill Daph's heart with joy. A sort of dread of the new people whom she was to meet stole over her ; but she resolved to put a bold face on the matter, and in this mood she gave a heavy knock at the blue door. Her imperative summons was promptly answered.

The door was opened by a little girl, of about ten years of age, who was covered, from her slender neck to her bare feet, with a long checked pinafore, above which appeared a closely-cropped brown head, and a small, demure-looking face. The child stood perfectly still, gazing in quiet wonder at the strangers, and waiting to hear their business.

Daph had to set the children down on the steps, and fumble in her bosom for the captain's precious note. She drew it at last from its hiding-place, and handed it triumph-



AT THE HOUSE WITH BLUE SHUTTERS.



antly to the young portress, saying, "Dis is what'll tell you who we are, and what we wants." The little girl looked at the note with a puzzled expression, and then calmly walked away down the narrow hall without saying a word. Daph sat down on the door-step, and took the children on her lap, with a kind of faith that all would go well, which made her feel quite easy. She was making the children laugh at a playful pig that was running up and down the street, when angry tones from within met her ear, and she caught the following words: —

"Take a negro for a lodger! I shall do no such thing! Who does Captain Jones think I am?"

"Mother," said a calm young voice, "you know we shall be behind with the rent; and then the children are white; one of them is the whitest child I ever saw."

“The rent, yes, that is a bad business. Well, I suppose I must come to it. What one does have to put up with in this world! Show the woman in.”

Daph, who had heard the whole conversation quite plainly, rose at the last words, and was ready to accept the invitation to walk into the back room, which she immediately received.

Daph made a polite curtsey to the sour-looking little woman, who seemed hardly strong enough to have spoken in the loud, harsh tones which had just been heard.

“So Captain Jones sent you here!” said the woman, somewhat tartly, as she eyed the odd-looking party.

Daph had taken off the shawl from Louise, and set Charlie on his feet, that the children might appear to the best advantage; she stood proudly between them, as she said, “I wants to hire a room for my

missus' childen. We's been 'bliged to come north this summer, and will have to look out a bit for ourselves, as massa couldn't come wid us."

"Daphne," said the woman, sweetening a little, "Captain Jones says that is your name, and that you are an honest, industrious woman. Do you think you will be able to pay the rent regularly?"

"I has a right to my name," said Daph, straightening up her stout figure. "I isn't particler about having all of it tho'; most folks calls me Daph. Is I honest? Look me in de eye, and answer dat yerself. Is I industrious? Look at dat arm, and desc ere fingers; do dey look like if I was lazy?"

The clear eye, muscular arm, and hard, work-worn hand were indeed the best assurances the doubtful questioner could have received.

“As to de rent,” added Daph, “my mis-sus’ childen isn’t widout money.” As she spoke she gave her pocket a hearty shake, which produced a significant chinking that seemed quite satisfactory.

“You are a queer one!” said the woman; “but you may as well look at the room. It’s right there in front; you passed it as you came in.”

Daph stepped to the door of the front room, pushed it open, and looked around her, with her head thrown a little on one side, as if that position were favorable to forming a correct judgment as to its merits.

“Well, it do be radder small,” she said, after a few moments’ dignified consideration; “but den it be proper clean, and two winder to de street for de childen. Haven’t ye got any thing to put in it; no chair, nor table, nor such like?”

“You will have to furnish for yourself,”

said the woman ; “ but you shall have the room on reasonable terms.”

The bargain was soon made, but whether on reasonable terms or not Daph had but little idea, though she prudently concealed her ignorance.

Once in her own domain, Daph sat down on the floor, and giving each of the children a huge sea-biscuit, she took them in her arms, and began to wave to and fro, singing one of the wild negro melodies which spring up wherever the African race take root.

The weary children were soon in a sound sleep, and then Daph laid them carefully down on the clean floor, covered them with the shawls she had found so useful, and then sat stock-still beside them, for a few moments, lost in deep thought. After a while she took from her pocket the purse the captain had given her, and her own store of small change wrapped in its bit of

rag. The latter she laid aside, saying, "That must do for eat. Dat Daph's own. Now dis Daph jus borry from de cap'in. Massa's children don't have to come to livin' on other people when Daph's on her feet. Cap'in Jones got he's money's worth in that beautiful gold chain I puts in his hand, and he not know it."

Here Daph gave a real negro chuckle at the thought of the artifice, which had made her feel at liberty to use the money so kindly given her without accepting charity, from which she revolted, as well for herself as for her master's children.

"Now Daph must be gettin' dis place in order quick, or de children will be wakin' up," said Daph, as she rose hastily with the air of one prepared for action. She carefully closed the shutters, locked the door behind her, and, putting the key in her pocket, set off to make her purchases.

CHAPTER V.

DAPH'S SHOPPING.

DAPH had observed a small cabinet-maker's shop not far from her new home, and to it she easily made her way. The sight of two little wooden chairs, painted with the usual variety of wonderfully bright colors, attracted her attention, and suggested her plan of operations.

"It's for de children I'se buying," she said, "and what's de use ob paying a big price for grown-up things? I jus wants two chairs and a few things to match for de dears." While Daph was thus soliloquizing the shopman came forward, and she promptly addressed him as follows: "I'se jus come, sar, to buy de fixin' ob a leetle room for my massa's children, General Louis La Tourette."

Daph mentioned her master's name with a pompous air, and with great distinctness, which had their effect on the humble cabinet-maker. He moved about briskly, and Daph soon had displayed before her all the small articles of furniture he had on hand.

The bright yellow chairs, adorned with the wonderful roses and tulips, were first set aside; then followed a little table, painted in the same fanciful manner, and, lastly, a good-sized trundle-bed, of a somewhat less gaudy appearance.

"I'se in a most pertickler hurry, jus now," said Daph; "would you jus hab de kindness to get for de bed jus what will make it look neat and comfable, not too nice for children to play on, while I steps out for a few notions as I'se 'bliged to git?"

The shopkeeper kindly complied, while Daph went on her way, delighted at being thus able to have what the children would

need for comfort — a matter about which she felt herself quite ignorant in this new climate.

Daph's next stop was at a tinman's. Two wash-basins, such as she had seen on board ship, three shining tin cups, three pewter plates and spoons, one strong knife, and a capacious saucepan, completed the purchases which she promptly made. Drawing a gold piece from the captain's purse, she laid it calmly down on the counter, then gathered up the various articles selected. The tinker eyed her a little suspiciously, but there was no look of shame or guilt in her frank and honest face. He concluded she was a servant, sent out by her mistress, and carefully gave her the right change, which seemed in Daph's eyes to double her possessions. When she returned to the cabinet-maker's she found the trundle-bed neatly fitted out, while a

lad with a wheelbarrow was ready to take home the furniture. She added to her purchases a plain wooden bench, and then said composedly, "I don't know de valer ob such like tings, but General Louis La Tourette, my massa, does, and you must deal right and honest." As she spoke, she laid down two of her precious gold pieces, then gathered up the small change returned to her, not without some misgivings as to the accuracy of the shopman.

When Daph reached home, she found the children still sleeping soundly, and she was able to get the little room in order to her satisfaction before they were fairly awake.

She turned up the trundle-bed on end, and threw over it as a curtain the pure white cover the shopman had provided. The deep recess on one side of the chimney thus shut in Daph intended to consider as her private resort, and in the small cup-

board in the wall she laid out the children's clothes with scrupulous care. This done, she set out the little table with the new cups and plates, and drew the chairs near it, while the remaining tin treasures were ranged along the wash-bench in the most attractive manner.

It was well for Louise and Charlie that they had been much accustomed to being away from their mother, or they might have been poorly prepared for their present life.

General La Tourette had married a young American girl who was then living on an island near that on which his plantation was situated. Shortly after this marriage, the husband received a dangerous wound in his side, which unfitted him for active duty, and he resolved to settle down on his own plantation, which had for a long time been under the care of a most injudicious overseer.

Daph accompanied her mistress to her new home, and tried her utmost skill in cookery to tempt her master's now delicate appetite. Even her powers were at last at fault, and General La Tourette could not taste the tempting morsels which the faithful creature loved always to prepare for him.

Frequent change of air was now prescribed for the invalid, and the fond mother was almost constantly separated from the children she so tenderly loved; yet her sweet, devoted, Christian character had already made its impression on the little Louise.

Thus situated, the children had learned to be happy for the present hour with any one who happened to have the charge of them. General La Tourette, though a native of France, spoke English in his family, and to that language his little ones

were accustomed. They took no fancy to the cross French nurse who had latterly had the charge of them, and much preferred Daph, whose broken English was pleasant to their ears. They loved to linger at the door of her southern kitchen, or play under the wide-spreading tree that waved over its roof.

Daph returned their affection with all the strength of her warm heart, and Mrs. La Tourette felt sure that in her absence Daph would watch over both children and nurse with an eagle eye.

With more of the dove than the eagle in her expression, Daph now sat beside the little ones in their new home, so far from the land of their birth.

Not long after her preparations were completed, Daph had the satisfaction of seeing the children awake, refreshed by their long sleep, and full of eager delight

at the wonders achieved by their new nurse. She listened with hearty satisfaction to their exclamations of surprise and pleasure at the shining tin and gaily-painted chairs.

Daph was just wondering what was to fill plates and cups that looked so attractive, when a bell was rung imperatively in the street before the house. From all sides women and girls gathered round the bell-ringer's cart, and from his great cans he filled their vessels with milk, which was at this moment most refreshing to the eyes of Dalph. She seized her new saucepan, and sallying out, presented it to the milkman and received her supply. She watched carefully the bits of money given by other applicants, and was fortunate enough to select, from the change she had that day received, the right payment for the milk.

In a few moments the children were seated at the little table, and enjoying their

nice supper of bread and milk in a way that made Daph's eyes sparkle with delight.

"Daffy eat, too!" said Charlie, motioning to her to put the spoon in her mouth instead of his own. "Yes, Daffy," said Louise, "do take some supper."

Daph had hardly thought once of herself during the whole of this busy afternoon, but when the children had finished their meal, she filled her cup with the fare they had enjoyed, and ate it with no less satisfaction.

"Daph knew de great Lord would take care of us!" she murmured, as she looked round on the room that seemed to her so comfortable: and true, fervent gratitude, undisturbed by one fear for the future, filled the heart of the faithful negro.

CHAPTER VI.

CLOUDS.

ALAS for Daph! She was soon to find life was not all sunshine in her northern home. The lovely May weather, which had been like a pleasant welcome to the strangers, suddenly vanished, and was succeeded by dark clouds, pouring rain; and keen easterly winds. Daph was glad to keep the children wrapped in the bed-clothes, while she racked her ingenuity to find means of amusing them. Charlie took a wash-basin for a drum, and the pewter spoon with which he beat it was a constant and patient sufferer. Louise was not so easily pleased; she began to miss her mother sorely, and tried poor Daph by pleading piteously to see her "own dear mamma."

• Daph had tried to banish from her mind all thoughts of her master and mistress, for the bare imagination of what they might have suffered made her wild with distress. She said to herself, "What for Daph go to tink about tings jus as likely nebber was at all? Daph makes out de great Lord couldn't save massa and Miss Elize all hisself, widout Daph to help him! Foolish darky! She better cheer up, and take care ob de childen, 'stead 'o jus whimper, whimper, like a sick monkey."

Daph had to go through a course of consolation, similar to the above, very frequently, to enable her to maintain her cheerfulness; but the piteous questionings of the little Louise well-nigh overcame all the poor negro's philosophy.

"I'se tell you what it is, Miss Lou," poor Daph said desperately at last, — "I'se jus tell you what it is: de great Lord is a-takin'

care ob your mamma, and if you's a good girl you'll jus see her some day, and if you is not, de great Lord will nebber, nebber bring you together!"

Daph's manner, as well as her words, had some effect upon Louise, and she tried to content herself with watching the rain streaming down the window-panes, and was soon in a sufficiently cheerful mood to march up and down the room to the sound of Charlie's music, greatly to his satisfaction.

The dreary weather without was not all that Daph had to contend with; she found she had an enemy within the house, whose attacks it was far more difficult to meet.

The little woman, whose angry voice had attracted Daph's attention at first, kept her humble lodger familiar with its harsh tones. Daph's appearance was the signal for a volley of complaints as to the noise made by

the children, the marks left on the floor by Daph's feet as she returned from the well, the unpleasantness of "seeing other folks so much at home in one's own house," &c.

Daph never had a chance to get any further than "Deed, Miss Ray!" in her attempts at self-justification, for the opening of her mouth was sure to produce another tirade on the "impudence of certain people that nobody knew any thing about."

The demure-looking little girl was generally a silent spectator of these attacks, but now and then she was forced to cry out, "Oh, mother, don't!" which protest was generally met by a sharp box of the ear, and a "Take that, Mary, and learn to be quiet!" If Mary Ray had learned any lesson, it certainly was to be quiet. She rarely spoke, and her footsteps were almost as noiseless as the fall of the winter snow.

Daph soon found out that Mrs. Ray con-

sidered Mary especially guilty in having presumed to live, when her brother, a fine, healthy boy, had been snatched away by sudden disease.

The loss of her husband, and consequent poverty, had somewhat soured Mrs. Ray's temper, but her last bereavement seemed to have made her all acidity. She constantly reproached Mary for being a useless girl, always in her mother's sight, when the dear boy, on whom she had hoped to lean, had been taken from her.

Daph's keen sympathies were soon warmly enlisted for little Mary, who had really begun to believe she was quite in fault for continuing to cumber the earth, when nobody wanted her here.

Daph never passed Mary without a cheerful word, and she contrived to show the child many trifling acts of kindness, which went directly to her heart.

At one time, Daph, with her strong arm, lifted Mary's heavy pail of water; at another, she took her pitcher to the milkman in a pouring rain; and one day, when she could think of no other way of showing her interest, she secretly bestowed on the little girl one of the few oranges which still remained of the store brought from the ship.

Mary's sorrowful face, Mrs. Ray's harsh voice, the penetrating chill in the air, and the monotonous life she led in the single room, made it hard for Daph to bear up cheerfully; and but for the children she would have withdrawn to a corner and moped all the time. She managed to keep up her spirits during the day; but when the little ones were asleep, she had her own sad, wakeful hours. More than a week had passed in this dreary way. Daph saw her treasured store of money fast diminishing under the necessary expenditure for sup-

plying the simple wants of her little establishment; and she already saw, too plainly, that the whole party must soon have a new outfit of clothing, or they would be disgraced by their rags and uncleanness.

The children were quietly slumbering near her; she had extinguished the candle, that it might not waste its feeble light; and, with her head on her hand, she began to consider seriously the situation in which she found herself. The present was dark enough, but what was she to think of the gloomy future?

Where should she look for the work she would so willingly do? How could she leave her little charge, even if that work were found?

A sense of utter helplessness came over the poor negro, and hot tears poured down her cheeks.

A sudden thought struck her; there was

One all-powerful, and to him she would go. She fell on her knees, and uttered her simple prayer: "Will de great Lord gib poor Daph something for do?"

Overpowered by the effort she had made, and fearful there was something presuming in a poor creature like herself daring to speak to the Being she so revered, Daph sank down on the floor in a position of silent humility. A conviction that she had been heard and forgiven for the boldness of her prayer stole over her, and she stretched herself as usual on the bare floor, and was soon in a sound sleep.

CHAPTER VII.

A NEW PATH.

DAPH rose the following morning at her usual early hour, and went to perform her customary ablutions beside the well, keeping, however, a sharp look-out for Mrs. Ray, to be ready to beat a retreat as soon as that formidable person should make herself heard. No Mrs. Ray appeared, and Daph's curiosity tempted her to take a peep into the room which served as kitchen, parlor, and general abiding-place for Mrs. Ray and Mary, though they slept in the loft above.

Mary was diligently ironing at this early hour, giving from time to time dolorous glances at a great basketful of damp clothes, which seemed to diminish but slowly under her efforts.

"Where's your mother?" said Daph, as she thrust her head fairly in at the door, regardless of consequences.

"Mother's very sick this morning," said Mary, sorrowfully; "she can't even turn herself in bed, and all these clothes must go home to-night; we have had to keep them too long now, it has been so wet."

"Nebber fret 'bout de close," said Daph, cheerily; "I'se held a flat fore dis! Do Daph good to work a little; she mighty tired sittin' up all day like a lady. S'pose I jus steps up to look at your mother. Maybe I might do somewhat for her, to make her feel some better."

"Oh, don't!" exclaimed Mary, hastily; "she might not like it."

"Nebber you mind dat!" said Daph; "you jus show me de way."

Mary pointed to the door that led to the

narrow staircase, and Daph needed no further guidance.

“Ye’s mighty sick, isn’t ye, Miss Ray?” said Daph compassionately, as she stepped to the bedside of the sufferer.

Mrs. Ray turned her head to the wall and groaned, but Daph was not to be easily disconcerted.

“S’pose I jus makes you a little warm drink, and kinder helps you frow off dis ere sickness?” said Daph, insinuatingly.

“Oh, my back! my bones! they ache so!” said the poor woman.

“It’s jus bein’ out in dis wet wedder, jus a’comin’ from dat awful hot fire iinto de swash down rain,” said Daph. “White folks isn’t used to such hard work. You jus can’t bear it, dat’s it.”

Daph had struck the right chord, and Mrs. Ray answered, “No; I ain’t used to it—that’s true enough; but who have I got to

help me, but just that slip of a girl? Oh, if my boy had only lived!"

Daph did not wait to hear more of the complaints which were the burden of Mrs. Ray's daily talk. She hastened to the kitchen, and, with Mary's help, she soon prepared a steaming bowl of herb-tea, which Mrs. Ray took from her hand without a word. She would have resisted when Daph proceeded to bathe her feet in warm water, but the kind-hearted negro went steadily on, regardless of opposition, saying, "You's so very sick, we mus jus take care of you, same as if you were a bit of a baby. There, now, let me jus put de cubber over you," she said, as she released the restive feet. "Now if you could jus git a little sleep, while I go dress the babies, I'se do believe you would feel mighty better."

Mrs. Ray did fall into a quiet sleep, the more sound from the night of wakefulness

and pain she had just passed. When she awoke, she heard unusual sounds in the kitchen below, and if she could have peeped down the stairway a pleasant scene would have met her eyes. A cheerful fire roared up the wide chimney. Daph, revived by the welcome heat, was ironing away at the great table with real heartiness, while little Mary, at her side, tried to move her slender arms in the same energetic manner. Charlie was seated on the table, a happy spectator of these proceedings, while Louise stood by him, sprinkling and folding a bit of rag again and again, not doubting that she was amazingly useful.

“Mary! Mary!” said a voice from above, feebler, and a little less sharp than usual, “who’s down there with you?”

“It’s jus me and de childen, Miss Ray,” said Daph, putting her head fearlessly up the stairway. “Dat big basket o’ clothes

wants 'tention, and I'se jus thought I'se better be ironin' a bit, to git de tings out de way."

Mrs. Ray made no answer, and Daph, after satisfying herself that the patient was a little better, stepped quietly back into the kitchen.

Daph really enjoyed her busy day, and it was followed by sound natural sleep, instead of hours of wakefulness and anxious thought.

It was more than a week before Mrs. Ray recovered from the violent cold which had so suddenly removed her from the scene of operations. Meanwhile Daph and Mary had become excellent friends. The little girl exchanged her hard work for the pleasant care of the children, and Daph's strong arms had the exercise they needed. Daph's busy brain had not, meanwhile, been idle; the sight of the great oven in the wide

chimney-corner had suggested to her a plan which she was impatient to carry out.

When Mrs. Ray first appeared in the kitchen, she gave an anxious look about her, as if she expected to see nothing but disorder and dirt; but the well-scoured floor and shining plates on the dresser had another tale to tell. Of Daph's skill in cookery she had tasted several striking specimens, since her appetite had in a measure returned, and she looked on somewhat curiously as Daph busied herself about the fire, preparing what she called "jus a bit relish, to strengthen up Miss Ray, now she's on her two feet again."

Mary was with the children, and Mrs. Ray took the opportunity to say, "You have been very good to me, Daph, and I am sure you had no reason;" and tears of shame actually came into the poor woman's eyes.

"Now don't, Miss Ray!" said Daph. "I hasn't been and done any thing at all. Come, take a little breakfast, and ye'll feel better, I'm sure."

"What can I do for you, Daph?" continued Mrs. Ray, who had been really touched by the persevering kindness of the honest negro.

"Well now, Miss Ray," said Daph, "I wants to make a little money. I jus thinks I might do de ironin' for you ebery week, for you can't stand such hard work, and then, maybe, you'd jus let me hab de use ob dat beauty oven for somewhat I wants to do. I'se jus used to cookin', and, maybe, if I makes some ob de cakes missus used to like so much, I might sell dem at some ob de grand houses, and so make a pretty sum by and by."

This arrangement was easily made, for Mrs. Ray felt within her but little strength

for work, and she was also anxious to show her sense of Daph's late kindness.

One bright June morning Daph put herself in what she called "splinker order," and the children shouted with delight when her toilet was made. With the help of Mrs. Ray and Mary she had cut out and completed a good calico dress and a full white apron, and these, with her snowy turban, made a most respectable appearance. A new basket, covered with a clean cloth, was on her head, and within it was stored a variety of nice cakes, which she was proud to show as a specimen of her cookery.

Mary stood at the window with the children as Daph went off, and the little ones kissed their hands to her until she was fairly out of sight.

Daph had learned her way about the city with ease, for she had quick observation and a ready memory, and she now found

no difficulty in reaching what she called the "grand houses," which were ranged in imposing rows in what is now one of the business streets.

At door after door she tried to gain admittance, but the consequential servants turned her off with a contemptuous word, and her heart began to sink within her. At last, as an imperative footman was ordering her away from a great family mansion, two ladies passed out to enter a carriage. Daph was desperate. She dropped a curtsy and said, "Ladies, like some nice cakes?" and at the same moment she lowered her basket, uncovered it, and displayed its tempting array.

The frank, good face of the negro, and the attractive appearance of her wares, secured the attention of the ladies, and they purchased largely. Encouraged by their kindness, Daph said, "If de ladies

would jus speak for Daph to some ob de great folks, to buy from her Tuesdays and Fridays, Daph will try to please dem."

"I like the woman, mother," said Rose Stuyvesant; "shall we engage her to come here always, and see what we can do for her?"

The mother assented, and Daph, turning to express her gratitude, looked into the face of the youngest speaker.

It was a sweet face. Nature had made it fair, and parted the golden hair above the soft, blue eyes; but there was a sweetness round the expressive mouth, and a purity in every line of the oval face, that told of a soul at peace with God, and ruled by his holy law.

Daph long remembered that face, and, as she visited the Stuyvesant mansion week after week, she deemed that a bright day when she caught even a glimpse of her whom she called "the sweet young lady."

Time passed on, and Daph thrived in her little traffic, until her cakes were well known, and her form eagerly looked for in many a splendid home; but the best triumphs of her skill she ever reserved for the Stuyvesant mansion, where she had first found a welcome.

CHAPTER VIII.

NEWS.

As the honest efforts of poor Daph were crowned with success, she found herself abundantly able to provide for the physical wants of her master's children. Three years of toil had rolled quickly away. Charlie had passed his fourth birth-day, and become a strong-willed, sturdy boy, while the slender figure of the fair Louise had grown and rounded, and the rose had learned to bloom on the cheek of Captain Jones' "Water-lily."

Daph looked at her little ones with affectionate pride, and watched over them with the most tender care. She encouraged them to play in the small garden in the rear of their humble home, but in the

street they were never seen. The garments she fashioned for them were neat and tidy, and the snowy aprons which they always wore were proofs of her skill as a laundress; but she was conscious of a something in their external appearance which was not as it should be. About the manners of her charge Daph was still more troubled. "Why you eat so, Miss Lou?" she would sometimes say. "How shall I eat, Daffy?" the child would reply. "Well, I jus don't know," poor Daph would answer, "but dere's somewhat bout de way you childen do be at de table, dat Daph don't jus know how to spress it."

More serious troubles than these by degrees came upon Daph, in her management. Charlie, though an affectionate, generous child, was hot-tempered and willful, and when he resisted Daph's authority, or raised his little hand to give an angry blow, the

poor creature knew not what to do. In these scenes she generally triumphed by the look of real distress which clouded her usually pleasant face, and brought Charlie repentant to her arms.

With Louise Daph had another difficulty. The child was usually gentle and submissive, but she seemed to pine for other companions, and a home different from that which Daph was able to provide for her.

The early lessons of piety which Louise had learned at her mother's knee had faded from her mind. Daph could remind the little girl to say her simple prayer at morning and evening, but she could not talk to her of the loving Saviour, or recount the wonders of the Gospel, as her mother had been accustomed to do.

The little book, with the golden clasps, Daph had cherished with the utmost care. She knew it contained the secret which

could bring peace and order to her little home, but its treasures she, in her ignorance, could not unlock.

Once she had ventured to ask Mrs. Ray to read a little to her from it, but she met with a short negative, and a cold, averted look.

Mary was almost as ignorant of letters as Daph herself. So the poor negro kept the precious book unopened, and awaited God's time for leading her from darkness unto light.

That the children of her dear mistress would be allowed to grow up ignorant of the knowledge that belonged to their station, and strangers to the Bible their mother had loved, Daph would not allow herself to believe. "It will come, I'se sure!" Daph would say to herself; "de great Lord can make it right!" and thus she stifled her anxious forebodings, and strove to do the duty of the present hour.

Mrs. Ray's temper was not quite as trying as when Daph first made her acquaintance. The kindness of the honest negro, and her cheerful acceptance of the trials of her lot, had their influence under that humble roof, and won respect and affection even from Mrs. Ray. The sunshine of Charlie's happy, roguish face had cheered the lonely widow, and Louise had exerted on her a softening, refining influence. Mrs. Ray was improved, but not thoroughly changed.

Little Mary had many harsh words yet to hear, but time had abated the poignancy of the mother's grief for her lost darling, and made her somewhat more alive to the virtues of her hard-working, quiet little girl.

During the three years that had passed since they had dwelt under the same roof, sickness at various times had made the

little household seem like one family, and the habit of helping each other had daily drawn them nearer.

Mary's demure face was lighted up with wonder as she said to Daph one day, "There's a gentleman at the door, asking if mother still lives here, and if you are at home."

"Is it a tall, tall gentleman, that looks grand-like and magnificent?" said Daph, earnestly, as the thought of her master at once rose to her mind.

"Not exactly," said Mary; and as she spoke Mrs. Ray opened the door and ushered in Captain Jones.

Although her first feeling was disappointment, Daph shed tears of joy as she clasped the hand of the honest captain; her tears, however, brightened into smiles as she saw the approving look the captain bestowed on her pets, as he caught them in his arms.

Charlie struggled and fought to be free, shouting, "I like you, sir, but you need not squeeze me so, and rub me with your rough whiskers."

Charlie got another hug for an answer, while Louise said, "Who is it, Daph? It can not be my father!"

"No! no! darling!" said the captain, quickly, and he dashed the tears from his eyes, and was sobered in an instant.

Mrs. Ray looked on with astonishment and curiosity at the cordial meeting between her old acquaintance and her lodgers.

Captain Jones had known Mrs. Ray slightly in her better days, and he now turned to her and inquired kindly after her welfare. As usual, she had a series of grievances to relate, but she forbore speaking slightly of Mary, who had modestly retired into the background. The little

girl was somewhat astonished when the captain came towards her and gave her a hearty greeting, as the child of his old messmate, and seemed to think her well worth speaking to, though "only a girl."

The whole party sat down together, and time passed rapidly on, while the captain sat with the children in his arms, and heard Daph's account of her various trials and adventures since they parted. Mrs. Ray listened with eager curiosity, but she could gather but little from Daph's words that she did not already know.

At length Captain Jones said, with a great effort, "Daph, I have something to say to you which is not fit for the children's ears," and he gave at the same time an expressive glance towards Mrs. Ray.

The widow seized Mary by the hand and flounced indignantly out of the room, saying, "I am sure we have too much to do

to stay here where we are not wanted. No good comes of secrets, that ever I heard of!"

"Come, children, come with Mary," said the girl, apparently unconscious of her mother's indignant manner.

The children followed, somewhat reluctantly, and Daph and the captain were left alone together. Since the moment of her landing, Daph had had no one to whom she might speak of the dark fears for her master and mistress that at times preyed upon her. To her own strange departure she had never alluded. She had met questionings with dignified silence, and had patiently endured insinuations which, but for her clear conscience, would have driven her to frenzy. Now she felt that she was to hear some important news, and her trembling knees refused to support her. Anxious and agitated, she sank on her low

bench, and fixed her eyes eagerly on the captain.

“Daph,” he began; “there was horrible truth in your words that night, when you pleaded so earnestly on board the *Martha Jane*. I thank God that I did not turn a deaf ear to you then! Daph, you have saved your master’s children from a bloody death, and you will be rewarded, as there is a Father in heaven!”

The captain paused, and Daph bent anxiously forward, exclaiming, “My dear missus? — master?”

Captain Jones could not speak. He drew his hand significantly across his throat, and then pointed solemnly upwards.

Daph understood his meaning but too well. She had hoped on, determinately; but now the hour of awful certainty had come, and she could not bear it. She gave one loud scream, and fell senseless on the

floor. The wild yell that burst from the anguished heart of the negro rang through the house, and Mrs. Ray and Mary were at the door in a moment, followed by the terrified children. Little Louise dropped down beside Daph and began to cry piteously, while Charlie flew at Captain Jones like a young lion, and loudly exclaiming, "The naughty man has killed dear Daffy, and I'll punish him."

While Mrs. Ray and her daughter were making every effort to recall poor Daph to consciousness, Charlie continued his attack upon the captain, with sturdy foot, clenched hand, and sharp teeth, until the honest sailor was actually obliged to protect himself by putting the child forcibly from the room, and firmly locking the door.

Perfectly infuriated, Charlie flew into the street, screaming, "They've killed my Daffy! The wicked, wicked man!"

Several persons gathered round the enraged child, and a young physician, who was passing, stopped to find out the cause of the disturbance. Charlie's words, "She lies dead there! the wicked man has killed her!" caught the attention of Dr. Bates, and he eagerly asked, "Where, where, child?"

Charlie pointed towards the house, and the doctor entered without ceremony, Charlie closely following him. His loud knock was answered by Captain Jones, whose cautious manner of unlocking the door seemed to the young physician a most suspicious circumstance.

Charlie no sooner caught sight of his enemy than he leaped furiously upon him. The strong sailor received him in his muscular arms, and there held him, a most unwilling prisoner, while he watched the proceedings going on about poor Daph, and rendered assistance where he could.

Dr. Bates ordered her clothes to be instantly loosened, and then commanded Mrs. Ray to lay her flat on the floor, while he proceeded to apply his lancet to her arm.

While this process was going on, the clock on a neighboring steeple struck twelve. Captain Jones looked hastily at his great silver watch, and saw that it was indeed midday, and he had not a moment to spare, as the *Martha Jane* was by this time quite ready to set sail, and only waiting for her captain.

He hurriedly placed a little parcel on the mantle-piece, and with one long, sorrowful look at poor Daph, and a hasty farewell to Mrs. Ray and the children, he left the house.

It was long before Daph returned to consciousness, and when her eyes once more opened they were wild with fever and anguish. She declared, however, that she

was quite well, and would have no one about her; she longed to be alone, to struggle with her great sorrow. The children would not leave her, but it was in vain they tried their little expressions of tenderness, and begged her to look once more like their "own dear Daffy."

The sight of the unconscious orphans redoubled the grief of the poor negro, and she burst into a flood of tears. The poor children, overcome at this unwonted sight, sank down beside her, and mingled their tears with hers.

Mrs. Ray and the young doctor were sorely puzzled by the strange scenes they had witnessed. They had both seen the rich chains about Daph's neck, which had been disclosed while she was unconscious, and not a little wonder was excited by the sight of that expensive jewelry in such a place. Dr. Bates had not failed to observe

the refined appearance of the fair Louise and the noble bearing of little Charlie, contrasting as they did so strangely with the plainness of their humble home, and the unmistakable African face of the woman of whom they seemed so fond.

The wild agitation of Daph, the disappearance of the sun-browned stranger, the necklaces, the children, all tended to fill the mind of Dr. Bates with dark suspicion. He lingered about Daph as long as he could make any excuse for doing so, and when he reluctantly turned from the room, he did not leave the house without thoroughly questioning Mrs. Ray as to what she knew of her lodgers. Mrs. Ray had but little to tell, excepting that they had been commended to her, three years before, by the same tall sailor whose appearance that day had created such a commotion. Of Captain Jones she could only say, that he had

been a messmate of her husband years before, and had always been reckoned an honest, kind-hearted man.

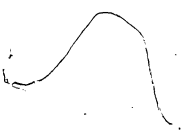
The questions put by Dr. Bates roused all the curiosity of Mrs. Ray, and revived the suspicions with regard to Daph which had been much in her mind during the early days of their acquaintance. Such thoughts had long since been banished by the honest, upright life of the kind-hearted, industrious negro, but now they rose with new strength.

She recalled the richly-embroidered dresses in which the children sometimes appeared, the first summer after their arrival, and she dwelt on the reluctance which Daph always exhibited to answering any questions as to her past life, or the circumstances attending her departure from her southern home.

These remembrances and suspicions she

detailed to the willing ear of Dr. Bates, who was satisfied that he was on the eve of unraveling some tangled web of iniquity ; and with slow and thoughtful steps he walked away from the humble home, so wrapped in mystery.

Once more left to herself, Mrs. Ray felt ashamed of having doubted poor Daph, and was half inclined to go to her, and frankly own the misgivings the late occurrences had excited ; but the thought of those strange circumstances again set her curiosity at work, and all right feeling was soon lost in an eager anxiety to find out the dark secret which hung like a cloud over the poor negro.



CHAPTER IX.

THE MINISTERING SPIRIT.

DAPH had been smitten by a blow too sudden and violent to rally immediately from its effects. Her strength and energy seemed for ever gone. The hope which had upheld her had been stricken from her, and she knew not where to go for comfort.

“De great Lord has gib poor Daph up!” she said, disconsolately; and, prostrate in mind and body, she lay on her low bed, her eyes shut, and her soul all dark within.

It was now that Mary Ray had an opportunity of showing her deep gratitude for the unwearied kindness of her humble friend. She assumed the care of the children, and tried to keep them happy out of

Daph's sight, and thoughtfully volunteered to go round herself to Daph's customers, to tell them that sickness had prevented her from preparing her usual supply.

All that Mary offered Daph quietly accepted, almost without opening her eyes.

Daph seemed to have no wants, and it was in vain that Mrs. Ray came in and out, and bustled about, putting the room in order, opening and closing the shutters, and making herself very busy, to no possible advantage; Daph did not notice her; her thoughts were far, far away.

In one of these visits Mrs. Ray chanced to find the gold chain the captain had laid on the mantle-piece. This added fuel to her suspicions, and she felt justified in secreting it, and showing it to Dr. Bates, as a further proof of the mystery clinging to Daph.

Mrs. Ray's mind was in a most agitated

state. Sometimes she was haunted with vague notions of some most awful crime committed by Daph, and then again the kind, truthful face of the negro would rise up before her, and change her suspicions into shame and self-reproach.

At such times she could not help feeling that only virtue and honesty could be at home in a heart capable of such generous forgiveness, and patient return of good for evil, as she had received from the now sorrow-stricken negro. These moments of relenting too soon, alas! were gone.

Daph was lying sad and alone in the silent room, a few days after the visit of Captain Jones, when she heard a low tap at the door, followed by Mrs. Ray's loud voice, saying, "Walk right in, miss. She ain't much sick, to my notion, but she don't take no notice of any body."

Daph did notice the stranger who en-

tered, and she even smiled sorrowfully as she looked up into the face of Rose Stuyvesant.

“We missed your nice cakes on the table, Daph,” said a soft voice, “and when I heard you were sick I determined to come and see you myself.”

These words of kindness from a refined and gentle woman melted the heart of the suffering negro. She burst into tears as she exclaimed, “Oh, my sweet young lady! You speaks to poor Daph like her own dear missus used to!”

Rose Stuyvesant sat down beside the low bed that Mary had spread for Daph on the floor. “Are you very sick, Daph?” she asked, tenderly.

“Daph is all dead here, and all dizzy here,” said the poor creature, laying her hand first on her heart, and then on her head. “De great Lord has sent Daph a

big trouble, and den gib her right up ;” and the tears again flowed fast.

Rose bent over the unhappy negro, and said gently, “ The great Lord loves you too well, Daph, to give you up in your trouble. Perhaps he has sent me to comfort you.

Daph looked up with a gleam of hope in her eye, and murmured, “ No reason why Daph shouldn’t jus tell all de truth now. Perhaps, if de sweet young lady knows all, she may comfort Daph up.”

“ The Lord Jesus can comfort us in any trouble,” said Rose, softly. “ What makes you so unhappy ? Can you not tell me ? ”

Daph looked long into the sweet face turned lovingly towards her, and then said, “ De great Lord has sent a’most an angel to poor Daph, and she shall hear it all.”

The secret that had so long burdened the lonely negro was now poured out with all the unconscious eloquence of a true,

warm, single heart. The tears flowed fast down the cheeks of Rose Stuyvesant, as she heard the simple story of devoted, heroic affection, and long, patient self-sacrifice.

She understood the hope that had cheered Daph through years of labor and anxiety, — the hope of placing the children of her mistress again on the bosom that had nursed them, and of seeing the happy father again embrace his long-lost ones. That hope was now for ever gone, and Rose Stuyvesant mingled her tears with those of poor Daph as she concluded her story.

Those real tears made Daph feel that she had found a true friend, who sympathized with her in her distress, and this in itself was a whisper of comfort.

As soon as Rose could command herself, she said, as she took the black hand in her own, “ Daph, the mother who loved to teach

her little ones of Jesus has gone to be with him. Your master, too, is now with the Heavenly King. You will still be able to give them back their little children, in that better land, where there is no parting, where no sorrow ever comes."

The negro looked earnestly in the face of the speaker, as she went on: "You must teach the little ones to love the Lord Jesus, and lead them to his home in heaven. Daph, you have that now to do, and that is worth living and striving for."

"How shall poor Daph show the way to heaven? she don't know jus zackly herself," said the poor creature; and the momentary gleam of hope faded from her face as she spoke.

"Jesus Christ has opened the door of heaven wide for all that love him and trust him," said Rose, eagerly. "His blood shed on the cross can wash away the sins of the

whole world. The great Lord will forgive you all that is past, and receive you into heaven, for Jesus' sake, if you really wish it."

"What else Daph want now in dis world, but jus know de way to heaven herself, and lead de children dere?" was the earnest reply.

Poor Daph had been entrusted with but little religious knowledge, but to that she had clung in simple faith through all her trials. She had improved the few talents that had been given her, and now came her reward in the fullness of the light of the gospel.

Again and again her young teacher explained the way of forgiveness and eternal peace through the blood of Christ.

At last the beauty, freedom, and matchless love of the plan of redemption burst upon her; and there was joy in heaven,

when the poor negro, in the midst of her tears, welcomed Christ as her Saviour, and knew "the great Lord" as her reconciled Father in heaven.

While the long conversation, so full of moment to Daph, was taking place, Mary Ray had kept the children happy in the little garden. Their patience at last gave way, and they pleaded so hard "just to look at dear Daffy," that their young nurse could resist them no longer.

Charlie burst impetuously into the room, unmindful of the stranger, while Louise more timidly followed. Warm tears filled the eyes of Rose Stuyvesant as she looked for the first time on the orphans. Charlie saw immediately the happy change that had passed over Daph's face, and walking straight up to her, he said, exultingly, "Daffy's better! Daffy's better! Good Daffy!" and he laid his curly head on her

dark arm, which told how dearly she was beloved.

A peculiar attraction seemed to draw Louise to the side of the stranger; and when she was tenderly kissed, and that sweet, soft face bent down to hers with loving interest, the child put her head on the bosom of Rose Stuyvesant, clung to her neck, and sobbed as if her heart would break.

“It is not mamma!” murmured the child; and then she more and more fondly embraced one who had brought back from the dim recesses of memory the image of her long-lost mother.

Rose was but little less moved than the child, and in her heart she prayed that she might give to the little one such lessons in holiness as would win an approving smile were they heard by that mother in heaven.

By degrees the agitation of little Louise

subsided ; but she quietly kept her seat on the lap of her new friend, and seemed to find a new pleasure in looking into her kind face, and smoothing her fair, soft hand.

Meanwhile Daph drew from her pocket a parcel which she had ever carried about her, perhaps with the vague idea that it had some talismanic charm to keep her from evil. Wrapper after wrapper was taken off, until at last the little book with golden clasps appeared.

“That was all about him, I know,” said Daph, “about that good Saviour ; but Daph can’t read the blessed book.”

Rose took the Bible that was handed to her, and read on the fly-leaf, “*Elize La Tourette*, from her devoted husband. One Lord, one faith, one baptism !”

The sight of that book in the hands of Rose again awoke the dim memories of the child on her knee, and Louise through

fresh tears was doubly drawn towards her new friend.

“Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven,” read the sweet voice of Rose. “All are the children of Jesus who put their trust in him, and truly love him.”

A thrill passed over the frame of little Louise at the sound of these words, and she kissed the lips of the speaker, with strange joy in her eyes.

“I can not stay any longer now,” said Rose, attempting to rise.

“Don’t go! Don’t go!” said Louise, almost wildly; “I can not let you go!”

“But I must, my sweet Louise,” said Rose, as she gently disengaged the child; “I must go now, but I will come every day and read to you and your ‘Daffy’ out of this dear book.”

“When? when? what time will you come?” asked the child, anxiously, while Daph listened eagerly for the answer.

“To-morrow, at eleven o’clock, you must stand at the window and watch for me; I will not keep you waiting long.”

With this promise, again repeated, Rose kissed the children, and, with a murmured word of comfort to Daph, passed from the room.

Not so soon passed away the influence of that visit, prompted by Christian kindness, rich in blessings to the humble negro; most precious to that young disciple of Christ who had learned to love to be “about her Master’s business.”

CHAPTER X.

STRANGE PROCEEDINGS.

DAY after day Rose Stuyvesant continued her ministry of love to Daph and the little ones. The hour of her morning visit was watched for, and hailed with joy; and well it might be, for she brought with her the sweet influence of a loving heart, and an earnest, devoted spirit.

The children were, as usual, eagerly looking out for her one morning, about a week after her first appearance in their humble home. Daph, who was once more on her feet, was moving about with a step a little more languid than usual, trying, as she said, "to make the place look a bit more fitsome for the sweet young lady to sit down in." Charlie, who was perched

on a chair beside his sister, and had had his nose pressed from time to time flat against the window, and had drawn all sorts of strange characters with his fat fingers in the dampness left by his breath on the pane, at length had his attention suddenly arrested. "O Lou!" he shouted, "look this way, on the step! there's that ugly, old, bad doctor, that cut dear Daffy's arm, and two big men with him."

"Good doctor, Charlie!" said Daph; "he wanted to make Daffy well, but he didn't jus' know how. It took Miss Rose wid her sweet, holy words to do Daph good."

"He's an old, bad doctor, I say, and shan't come in!" said Charlie, springing towards the door, as the voice of the doctor sounded in the hall, and his hand touched the latch. The sturdy little figure of the boy, resolutely backed against the door,

was but a small obstacle in the way of the strong hands that forced it instantly open.

“For shame, Mass Charlie! Let the young gemman in!” said Daph, as she came forward, dropping a curtsy. “I’se quite well, sir, to-day,” she continued, “and I’se mighty tankful for you being so uncommon willing to do somewhat for to cure Daph, for by her arm do be a little stiff for the cuttin’ you gib it de oder day.”

“He’s an old, bad mar’, to hurt Daffy, and I ain’t glad to see him a bit,” said Charlie, with an angry look.

“Do your work!” This is the woman!” said the slender young doctor, turning to the stout men he had brought with him.

A strong hand was laid on each shoulder of the astonished Daph, and a rough voice said, “Come with us, old woman!”

“I isn’t göing to do no such thing,” said she, with an indignant glance. “What for

is I goin' to waste my time goin' with them as I has no business wid? Perhaps you dosen't know what manners is, to be layin' hands on a poor nigger dis way. Take your big hands off! I'se my missus children to look after, and we's would be glad to hab dis bit of a room to ourselves."

Daph had not spoken very rapidly; but, even as the indignant words forced themselves out of her mouth, she was hurried towards the door.

"You'd better do your talking now," said one of the men, coarsely, "for before half an hour's over you'll be locked up where nobody'll hear you if you holler till you are hoarse."

Daph began to struggle violently, and the sinewy men who held her were well-nigh compelled to relinquish their grasp.

"Is you a gemman, doctor?" she said, desperately, at last,—"is you a gemman,

and stand still to see a poor woman treated dis way?"

"You are only getting your deserts," said little Dr. Bates, drawing himself up, and trying to look dignified. "You are to be tried for stealing, and for the other awful crimes which your own conscience can best count over to you; and be sure the severest punishment of the law awaits you!"

"Is that all?" said Daph, her spirit rising. "Carry me to any real gemman and it would take more liars than ever grew to prove any such like things against poor Daph. I'se not a bit afeard to go wid you, for sartain I'se be back soon 'nough."

The children, who had been at first struck with silent astonishment, now began to realize that Daph was actually going from them. Louise burst into a violent fit of weeping, and clung to the unfortunate negro; while Charlie, with an uplifted

wash-basin, made a sudden attack upon the slender legs of Dr. Bates, which broke up his dignified composure, and made him give a skip that would have done honor to a bear dancing on a hot iron plate.

“Now, Mass Charlie, I’s e do be shamed,” said Daph, subduing the grin that had suddenly overspread her face. “De young gemman don’t know no better! ’Tain’t likely he ever had any body to teach him. You jus let him be, Mass Charlie, and ’tend to your own sister, Miss Lou, here. Don’t cry, pretty dear, Daph will be back soon! De Lord won’t let em hurt Daph! You be jus good childen, and dat sweet Miss Rose will comfort you till Daph comes home.”

The last words were hardly uttered, when the negro was forced into a long covered wagon, and rapidly borne away from the door.

At this moment Mary Ray ran breathless-

ly up the steps, exclaiming, "Where have they taken Daph, mother? Mother, what is the matter?"

"Matter enough!" said Mrs. Ray, vehemently; "who could have told ~~it~~ would end that way! I am sure I never meant any such thing. Daph's gone to prison; and just as likely I shall never hear the end of it, and have the children upon my hands into the bargain. Well, well; I wish I'd never set eyes on that little Dr. Bates!"

The bitter reproaches that rose to Mary's lips were hushed at the mention of the children, and she hastened to comfort them as well as she could; while Mrs. Ray went back to her kitchen, in no very enviable frame of mind.

CHAPTER XI.

ANOTHER FRIEND.

“DIS don’t be de cleanest place in de world!” said Daph to herself, as she looked round the small, bare room into which she had been thrust. “Well,” she continued, “de Lord Jesus do be every where; and Daph no reason to be above stayin’ where such as he do set foot. But den de children! what’s to become of de children?”

Here Daph’s resolution gave way, and she took a hearty cry. “Daph, you do be a wicked cretur,” she said to herself at length. “Jus as if de Lord Jesus didn’t love little children eber so much better dan you can! He’s jus able hisself to take care ob de dears; and Daph needn’t go for to fret herself ’bout dem.”

Thus consoled, Daph was prepared calmly to await whatever should befall her. The stream of sunlight that poured through the small window slowly crept along the floor, and the weary hours passed away.

The new and beautiful truths that had of late been brought home to the soul of Daph were much in her thoughts and full of comfort.

"I do be afraid," she said to herself. "I'se did not act so bery Christianable, when dose big men did catch Daph by the shoulder. Dere's somewhat in Daph mighty strong, dat don't like folks puttin' hands on widout tellin' what's de matter. Well, well, I spose Daph will get like a lamb sometime, if de Lord helps her. I'se do wonder what the dears is a-doin' jus now. Maybe that sweet Miss Rose is just speakin' to dem beautiful words out ob de blessed book. How Daph would like to hear dose same words her own self!"

Daph's meditations were interrupted by the sudden turning of the key in the lock, and then the door of the small room was thrown open to admit the entrance of a stranger.

The new-comer was a short, stout, elderly man, with a dignified bearing, and a calm, kindly expression in his round, unfurrowed face.

Daph looked at him, from his powdered head to his white-topped boots, with entire satisfaction. "He do be a *real gemman*, and dat's a comfort," she said to herself, as she dropped a curtsey, and waited to be addressed by the stranger.

Daph's favorable impressions were increased by the mild manner and clear voice in which she was addressed. She soon felt sufficiently at ease to comply with the request made by the gentleman, that she would tell him frankly all that she could

remember of her life for the last few years, and explain how she, a poor negro, came in possession of jewelry fit for a duchess to wear.

Daph began in her own simple way, and described those pleasant home scenes on that far southern island. Her heart grew light at the thought of the happy family circle in those good old times. It was with difficulty she brought herself to speak of the sudden destruction with which that home was threatened. She touched but lightly on her own efforts to save the little ones, when there was no earthly friend but herself between them and a bloody death.

From time to time her listener questioned her suddenly; but she answered him with such apparent frankness and simplicity that he felt ashamed of the momentary suspicions that had crossed his mind.

When Daph came, in the progress of her

story, to the captain's late visit, and to the day of dark, hopeless despair that followed it, the eyes that were fixed upon her slowly filled with tears.

Those tears suddenly gushed forth, as with the eloquence of a grateful heart Daph described the face, like that of an angel, that bent over her in her distress, and told of the Saviour, who is the friend of the sinner, and the comfort of all that mourn.

"God bless my sweet Rose!" murmured the stranger. "This was an errand of mercy indeed!" After a moment's pause, he added aloud, "You need say no more, Daph;" and, as he spoke, he put out his hand to take that of the humble negro.

She did not notice the movement, for she had lowered her eyes as she dropped her modest curtsy, and relapsed into silence.

Diedrich Stuyvesant loved his daughter

Rose as the apple of his eye; but he thought her a little too enthusiastic in her desire to do good, and he trembled lest her warm feelings should lead her judgment astray.

When she had burst into his library that morning, her face flushed with excitement and unwonted exercise, he had met her with more than his usual calmness and phlegmatic consideration. The hasty outline she gave him of the story of her new *protégée* seemed to him strange and improbable; but he could not resist the earnestness with which she besought him to hasten to the release of an innocent and injured woman. Rose felt a little relieved when she saw her father take his gold-headed cane and walk forth, with the deliberate air of one who has important business on hand. She would gladly have hurried his steps; but she knew that,

though slow and cautious, whatever he undertook would be kindly and wisely done; and in this belief she forced herself to wait patiently for his long-delayed return.

Good Diedrich Stuyvesant did not go directly to the prison, as his daughter had advised. He first called on Dr. Bates, heard his pompous statement of the grounds of his suspicions, and received from him the troublesome gold chain that was deemed of such importance.

Having agreed to meet the little doctor at a certain hour, at the place of Daph's imprisonment, he proceeded to the red house with the blue shutters, and inquired for Mrs. Ray. That personage was thrown into a fit of mortification to be found by so grand a gentleman in a *dishabille* plainly intimating its recent proximity to the wash-tub; and her curiosity alone prevented her

absolutely refusing to be seen in such a plight.

It did not take Diedrich Stuyvesant many minutes to fathom Mrs. Ray, and to give to her mean and idle curiosity the contempt that even she herself felt that it deserved. "All accoutred as she was," she found herself obliged to accompany her new acquaintance to the prison, where she and Dr. Bates occupied a room near that in which Daph had been placed, while Diedrich Stuyvesant proceeded to converse with the prisoner. The time seemed long to the little doctor; for he had the full benefit of all the vituperative epithets in Mrs. Ray's vocabulary, which was by no means a limited one in that department. On him she vented all the dissatisfaction she felt at having been led "into," as she exclaimed, "the worst, the very worst piece of business I ever put my finger in!"

Daph had completed her story, and was standing silent and humble, when Diedrich Stuyvesant summoned Dr. Bates and Mrs. Ray.

The doctor, small in every respect, entered with an air of triumph, while Mrs. Ray followed — pity, self-reproach, and curiosity strangely blending in the expression with which she looked upon her lodger.

Daph met their glance with quiet composure. In her heart she had been giving thanks to the merciful God, who had raised up for her a new and powerful friend; and, fresh from the presence of her Divine Master, she could look on those who had injured her without one taint of bitterness.

Diedrich Stuyvesant had spoken often in the councils of his country, and to his clear, calm voice none had failed to listen, for he ever spoke with the power of reason

and truth. Now he stood with the dignity of one accustomed to be heard, as he looked for a moment in silence on the accusers. Then, in a short, clear statement, he told the story of the humble negro, who listened with wonder, as he named with admiration and respect the acts which she had performed, guided by her own loving heart, and upheld by simple faith in "the great Lord" of all.

Sternness and contempt struggled for mastery in the voice of Diedrich Stuyvesant, as, in concluding, he turned towards Dr. Bates, and said:—

"As for you, young man, look at that dark-skinned, ignorant woman, from whom you would have lightly taken her only wealth,—her good name,—which is above all price! Think of your own fair skin you deem so superior,—of the education you rightly value,—the Christian teaching

that has been sounded in your ears since childhood, and then say what good work you have done in this world! What have you to bring forward in comparison with the heroism and self-sacrifice of this poor woman, whom you despised? Young man, think twice, if you are capable of thought, before you again peril the good name of the industrious poor, who are under the especial care of the great Father in heaven! Explore the secrets of your profession, but honor the sanctity of every humble home, and pry not into those things which a lawful pride and an honorable delicacy would hide from the eye of a stranger. Know, young man, that you have this day broken the laws of this free country, where no honest citizen can be deprived of liberty on bare suspicion; and you yourself merit the punishment you would have brought on the guiltless. But go! I would do you no

harm. Go, and be a wiser and better man for what you have heard to-day!"

Dr. Bates, with a crest-fallen air, turned in haste to leave the room, but his better feelings prevailed, and, stepping back, he said, "I am young, foolish, and conceited, I know, sir, and I hope I have learned a valuable lesson this day." Then, going up to Daph, he added earnestly, "I have wronged you, good woman, and from the bottom of my heart I am sorry for it. If it should ever be in my power to serve you, I should be glad to make amends for what I have done." "Now don't, sir! don't, please!" said Daph, dropping curtsey after curtsey, and murmuring, "The young gemman meant no harm, I'se sure," while Dr. Bates slowly left the room. As soon as the doctor was out of sight, Mrs. Ray took Daph by the hand, and humbly asked her forgiveness.

"Now don't, Miss Ray; I do be shamed!" said Daph, in great confusion, her own tears for the first time beginning to flow. "Don't speak so to a poor creetur like me. We's all poor sinners; it's only the Lord Jesus, sweet Miss Rose says, that can make us clean." The thought of having said so much in the presence of a "real gentleman" now overcame Daph, and she suddenly relapsed into silence.

"Come, Daph," said Diedrich Stuyvesant, "it is time for you to be out of this place."

"May I go free, sir?" said Daph, with a wondering, joyous look.

"Free as air!" was the reply of Mr. Stuyvesant; "there's no power in New York can keep an innocent woman in such a place as this."

Daph poured forth her thanks to her

deliverer, and Diedrich Stuyvesant walked forth, followed by the women.

He was detained but for a moment in the doorway by the officers by whom Daph had been arrested, who pleaded that no action should be taken against them for their unwarrantable proceeding; and were glad to be assured that their fault would be passed over.

It excited some wonder when the well-known citizen passed along the street closely followed by Mrs. Ray and Daph; but he cared little for the remarks of the passers-by, his mind having been once made up to see Daph safely restored to the home from which she had been so rudely taken.

Diedrich Stuyvesant moved at what was an unwonted pace for him, and the house with the blue shutters was soon reached, and the door of the familiar room thrown open.



7

1-2



OUT OF PRISON.

Rose Stuyvesant was sitting on a low chair, Louise at her side, and Charlie on her lap, while the book with golden clasps was open in her hand. With one shout of joy the children darted towards Daph, and gave her a welcome which filled her honest heart with joy.

That sight was a reward to Diedrich Stuyvesant for all the unwonted labors of the day.

“Come, Rose!” he said; “they can do without us now. I must learn to know these little people some other day. But stay,” he added, as he looked around on the scrupulously neat but very plainly furnished apartment; “Daph, I must speak to you a moment before I go.”

The children for an instant were quiet, and the wealthy citizen drew his purse from his pocket, and holding it towards Daph, he said, “You ought to have something to

make amends for this day's trouble. Take that for you and the children."

"I'se thank you, sir," said Daph, drawing back, — "I'se thank you, sir, but my missus' childen shall want for nothing while poor old Daph can work for them."

"Well, have your own way, Daph," said Diedrich Stuyvesant; "but one thing you must let me do for you. Let me take the gold chains that have given you so much trouble, and put them in safe keeping. I will see that you get their full value in money, if you should ever be in need."

The treasured jewelry was cheerfully relinquished, and Daph even felt relieved to have them no longer in her charge.

"Remember, Daph," said the kind-hearted citizen, as he bade her good-by, — "remember you have something now to depend upon."

"I'se thank you for your goodness, sir ;

I'se thank you. I'se sure the great Lord will neber let Daph come to want."

"Never, Daph! either in this world or the next!" said Rose; and with one of her sweet smiles she followed her father from the room.

CHAPTER XII.

HOME SCENES.

THE days of excitement and distress, so full of moment to Daph, were succeeded by a time of comparative quiet and peace.

Every morning the kind voice of Rose Stuyvesant broke in upon the solitude of Daph and the little ones. Louise learned to look as eagerly for the face of Rose as a flower for the sunlight, and to turn as fondly towards it. There seemed to be for the little girl an irresistible charm in the refinement and guilelessness of her new friend ; and the sweet words of holy teaching that ever dropped from the lips of Rose had waked to music a chord in the child's heart that had long slumbered in silence. The sensitive conscience and peculiar in-

terest in spiritual things that had marked her when under her mother's influence became again evident. As from a weary dream she woke to the beauty and reality of religious truth.

Rose was no sentimental teacher, contented with exciting mere feeling, that worked to no good end.

The unselfish devotion and respectful deference of poor Daph had fostered a slight imperiousness in the little Louise; and she had learned to seek her own comfort, with but too little regard for the feelings and wishes of others.

Rose soon saw that her little pet was in danger of becoming quietly selfish, and unconsciously proud and dictatorial.

Tenderly, but faithfully, the young teacher pointed out to Louise the germs of those hateful faults, growing and strengthening in the bad soil of an evil heart; and

the conscience of the child made her deeply feel the necessity of the warning thus affectionately given.

Bad habits, long indulged, are not easily overcome, even when the highest and best motives govern the conduct.

“Put on my stockings this minute, Daph! You are so slow!” said Louise one morning, putting out her white foot imperatively towards the kneeling negro.

“Yes, yes, Miss Lou,” said Daph, humbly. “Daph do be radder slow; but somehow she isn’t so spry as she used to be.”

This was not the only complaint that Louise had to make that morning; for every thing seemed to go wrong with her, and Charlie declared “Sister Lou” was so cross that he had rather go and play in the garden alone than stay any where near her.

Daph gave a sorrowful look at her young mistress, and then went to the kitchen to

prepare some of the tempting cakes which were now in such demand, and Louise was left quite alone.

She took up a piece of sewing on which Rose had been patiently trying to teach her to hem ; but the thread "went in knots," the needle pricked her finger, and she threw the work down in despair, and began to cry with all her might.

The door softly opened and a gentle hand was laid upon her shoulder. "What grieves you, darling?" said the sweet voice of Rose Stuyvesant.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed the little girl, not looking up, "I have been so cross and naughty all this morning ; I do not believe I am one of the Lord Jesus' little lambs at all, and I am very, very unhappy!"

Rose sat down beside her little friend, and, throwing her arm tenderly around her, she said, "You must not be discouraged,

my darling ; listen now to me. Suppose that you were so very sick, that if you did not soon get better you would surely die. Now, suppose a kind physician should come to you and offer you some medicine that would check your fever, and save you from the death that was so near. How you would love him ! and how willingly you would do all that he said was necessary for you ! It might be many, many weeks before you were quite well ; but how patiently you would take the medicines he ordered, and how cheerfully you would follow his advice, until you were again full of health and strength ! And when you could walk about once more, and breathe the sweet, fresh air, then you would be most warmly grateful to the kind physician who had come to your sick-bed and saved you from expected death. Dear Louise, Christ has shed his blood to save you from

everlasting death, which is very near to all who are not the true children of God. Whenever you put your trust in the dear Saviour, you are safe from that death ; but it may be long, long before your heart will be clean from sin, and your bad habits will be wholly cured. What says the kind Physician to you? ‘ Watch and pray. Strive to enter in at the strait gate.’ You must be willing to struggle patiently against your faults, trying to do right, and looking to God for strength to go on. You must go forward cheerfully and hopefully, thinking of what Christ has done for you, and dwelling on that happy time when you will be safe in heaven, and your heart will be full of gratitude to him who has saved your soul from death, and purified you by his grace. Do you understand me, darling?”

“ Yes, yes,” sobbed little Louise ; “ and indeed I will try — try harder.”

“Suppose you begin to-day,” said Rose, “to see if you can not do something for others ; that is the best cure for selfishness. Here, I have brought an apron for Daph, which I want you to make. It will please her to think you have done it for her. She is so kind to you, that you should try to make her happy.”

Louise had always accepted Daph’s services as a matter of course, and it dawned upon her as a new idea, that she was to try to make happy the humble creature who never seemed to have a wish but to serve her master’s children faithfully.

Little by little, Louise began to take hold of the idea, that to be Christ-like is to be useful, fond of making others happy, and forgetful of self.

Daph resisted stoutly when Louise first proposed to dress herself, and began by degrees to take some care of Charlie.

“But,” thought the poor negro, “Daph may die some day, and the sweet little mistress do be right; she must learn to help herself a little, for nobody knows what may happen.”

“Here, Daffy, I have made this for you all myself!” said Louise, joyfully, as she held up the apron, which after many days of secret toil she had completed.

“For Daph, Miss Lou! and all made with those dear little hands? Now Daph do feel proud!” and tears filled the eyes of the honest creature.

It was not the mere gift that made the heart of the negro throb with pleasure; but it was the kind consideration, the patient thought for her welfare, that overcame her, as she said, “You do be like dear missus now! Dat’s de way she used to speak to poor Daph.”

“Dear Daffy,” said Louise, bursting into

tears, "I do not mean to be ever naughty to you again. Indeed, I am very, very sorry. I am going to be one of the Lord Jesus' little children now, and you know he was always kind and gentle."

"Now de great Lord be praised!" said Daph, as she sank down quite overcome. "Daph do be too full of joy to hear dose words from her own little dear. De Lord help her, and bring her to his beautiful home."

To be able to read her mother's Bible now became the dearest wish of the little Louise, and with this strong motive she made rapid progress in the daily lessons she took from her kind friend Rose! The patience and perseverance of both teacher and scholar were at length rewarded. Louise was able, after a few months of careful instruction, to take her mother's Bible, and, in her sweet, childlike way,

read the words of truth and beauty that flowed from the lips of Him who "spake as never man spake."

The leaves, brightened by early frosts, still fluttered on the trees, and the soft air of an Indian summer floated in at the open windows. A lovely autumn day was drawing to a close. Daph and her little charge had taken their simple evening meal, and for a moment there was silence in the cheerful room.

"Daffy," said Louise, "I will read to you now out of the dear Book."

Daph sat down reverently on her low bench; and Charlie, in imitation, quietly took his own little chair.

"'The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want,'" read the subdued voice of the child, while the negro bent forward to catch each word of the beautiful psalm.

"She do be one of the great Shepherd's

lamb, sure 'nough," murmured Daph, as the little girl closed the book and said,—

“ Now, Daffy, we'll sing a hymn.”

Little Charlie joined his voice with that of his earnest sister; and poor Daph, 'mid fast-flowing tears, added her notes of praise to that evening hymn. Joy and peace that evening pervaded those few hearts in that humble room, for it was bright with His presence who has said, “Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

CHAPTER XIII.

MARY RAY.

It was midnight.' Charlie and Louise were locked in the sound sleep of youth and vigorous health ; but Daph, with the half-wakefulness of a faithful dog, was not so dead to the outer world.

A slight knock, and then a stealthy foot-step roused the negro, and she started up and looked about her. In the dim moonlight she saw Mary Ray standing at her bedside, with her finger on her lip, and herself setting the example, in every motionless limb, of the silence she imposed.

Mary took Daph by the hand, and led her into the hall, and then said in a whisper, —

“I could not go without bidding you

good-by, you have always been so kind to me!"

Daph looked in wonder at the slender young girl, wrapped in her shawl, and carrying a small bundle in her hand.

"Where is you going, Mary?" she said, anxiously; "it's no good is takin' you from home at this time of night."

"I can bear it no longer," said Mary, with quiet determination; "I have never had a home, and now I am going to look for one for myself. Mother may find out that, if I am 'only a girl,' she will miss me. Good-by, Daph. I should like to kiss the children once more, but I am afraid I should wake them. Good-by!" and the young girl shook the hand of her humble friend.

The hand she had given was not so easily released; it was held gently but firmly, as if in a vise.

“I’se won’t let you go—go straight to black sin,” said Daph, earnestly; “you’s a-leavin’ the mother the great Lord gave you; you’s a-leavin’ the home the great Lord put you in; and there’s black sin awaitin’ outside for you, if you go so young and lone; I’se will not let you go!”

“I can not bear it any longer,” said Mary, and she sank down on the floor, and wiped away her fast-flowing tears.

Mary had of late had a hard life indeed. Mrs. Ray had been slowly coming to a knowledge of herself, and this knowledge, instead of bringing repentance and reformation, had made her doubly unreasonable and irritable, and on Mary she had vented all her ill-humor.

Though still treated as a child, Mary had become, in feeling and strength of character, a woman. The sense of injustice and ill-treatment, which had grown

with her growth, had now reached its hight. The down-trodden child now felt herself a curbed, thwarted, almost persecuted woman, and she was determined to bear her present life no longer.

It was in vain that Daph pleaded with her to give up her wild purpose ; at last all the poor negro's store of persuasion and warning was exhausted, and in her despair she said, desperately, " Now you, Mary, jus sit still here, and let Daph tell you somewhat dat do be all solemn true, ebbery single word." Daph had been no inattentive listener to Rose's frequent reading of the Saviour's life on earth ; and now, in her own simple, graphic language, she sketched the outline of his patient suffering, and painful, unresisted death. She told of the glory of his heaven, where those who humbly follow him shall rejoice for ever ; and the speaker and the listener forgot the

dreary place and the midnight hour, as she dwelt in faith on that glorious theme. "Dere'll be nobody dere, Mary, dat turns de back on de work de Lord gibs em to do!" said Daph, earnestly. "Stay, Mary, and try to bear for de Lord Jesus' sake! Who knows but your poor mother, her own self, may learn to know bout de heavenly home?"

Every human heart has its trials, which it can only bear in the strength that God alone can give. Every human heart feels the need of comfort and hope, which can only be found in God's truth.

Mary Ray was touched by the simple eloquence of her humble friend, and acted upon by the glorious motives held out to her for new efforts of forbearance and patient endurance.

The world she had known was dreary and dismal enough; but what terrors,

trials, and temptations might not await her in the new scenes into which she was hastily rushing? Subdued and softened, she crept back to her bed, and lay down beside the mother whom she had so nearly forsaken. Compared with the wide, lone world without, that poor, low room seemed a kindly and comfortable shelter; and as her mother sighed and groaned in her sleep, Mary felt that natural affection was not yet dead in her heart — that a tie bound her to her on whose bosom she had been nursed.

True prayer was at that moment going up to heaven for the poor, tried, desperate girl. And what faithful petition was ever unnoticed or unanswered?

Mary met Daph's kind "Good-morning!" with a shy, averted face, and kept out of her way as much as possible during the day.

When evening came on, and the sound of singing was heard in the room of the lodgers, Mary lingered at the open door, and did not resist when Daph noiselessly stepped to her side, and drew her to the low bench where she herself was seated.

Mary Ray learned to love that evening hour when she could hear Louise read of the blessed Saviour, and join her voice in the hymns of praise that went up from the faithful worshipers.

Even this pleasure she was soon obliged to deny herself, for all her time and attention were needed beside the sick-bed of her mother.

Mrs. Ray had never wholly recovered from the severe cold with which she had been attacked soon after the arrival of Daph. At times her cough returned upon her with violence, and at length a sudden hemorrhage laid her low. Prostrate, en-

feebled, and helpless, Mrs. Ray had time to dwell upon her past life, and see all too plainly the hatefulness of her own wicked heart. A dull despair crept over her. She gave herself up as a lost and hopeless being, waiting for her eternal doom. Daph felt her own incapacity to reason with and comfort the wretched woman, and to Rose she turned for aid and counsel.

Often and long Rose Stuyvesant sat beside the bed of the unhappy woman, and strove to open her mind to the free forgiveness granted through the blood of Christ Jesus. Her words of peace seemed to fall on a deaf ear and a deadened heart; but to the listening, unnoticed Mary they were the message of pardon and joy in believing.

Long years of humbling sickness were in store for Mrs. Ray, during which she was to be dependent for care and suste-

nance upon the child she had undervalued and ill-treated. From that child to whom she had given life, she was to receive the still greater blessing of being gently led towards the life eternal.

Mary's days and nights of watching, and words of holy comfort, fell like the noiseless dew on the heart of the mother, till at last remorse was exchanged for repentance, and the cold alienation of a sinful heart for the loving trust of one forgiven through the "only Mediator."

Meanwhile Daph went cheerfully and industriously on, providing for the physical wants of the children so dear to her; while Rose, with almost a mother's love, led them in the way of truth, and molded them by her sweet influence. Little by little, she managed to throw an air of refinement about the humble room where they dwelt, and to add many comforts and luxuries to

their hitherto simple way of life. She advised Daph as to their plain and tasteful style of dress, and gave to their manners that nameless charm of delicacy and true politeness which Daph felt herself so unable to describe or impart.

While Louise grew tall, graceful, and attractive, and Charlie's ruddy face was bright with frank cheerfulness, Rose fancied that Daph's step waxed feeble, and her figure less straight than in the first days of their acquaintance.

When Rose expressed anxiety about the health of the poor negro, to whom she was really strongly attached, Daph would answer with a smile, —

“Daph do be a bit older, Miss Rose; but neber you fret for her. De great Lord won't take her away yet, she most sure. Neber you mind Daph; she do be well enough — and oh, so happy!”

The upward glance of the eye of honest Daph told of the source of her happiness, and the spring of her faithful, conscientious life.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE BASKET OVERTURNED.

“GOOD-BY, dears!” said Daph, as she went forth as usual one morning, with her basket on her head.

“Good-by, Daffy, dear Daffy!” said the young voices, and she was gone.

Those sweet sounds lingered in the ear of the negro as she walked along the crowded street, unconscious of all around her, and lost in meditation on the many mercies of her lot.

The passers-by noticed her frank, good face, her tidy figure, and snow-white apron; but she seemed to see no one, until, as if struck with sudden frenzy, she gave one leap into the air, exclaiming, —

“Is I in a blessed dream?”

The neat cover flew from the falling basket; far and wide rolled the frosted cakes, and little ragged children made merry with the stores of Daph's cookery. Little did she care. Her arms were thrown round the knees of an astonished lady, and her lips kissed the hand of the tall, pale gentleman at the lady's side.

"Pull off the crazy woman!" shouted a bystander, stepping forward to suit the action to the word; but Daph had found a protector, in the confidence of whose kindness she would have faced the world.

"My own missus! my massa!" sobbed the poor negro, as she clung to the loved and long-mourned friends who stood before her.

"Is it you, Daph?" they said, as, little less moved than herself, they raised her from her humble position.

"I'se got em! I'se got em!" she ex-

claimed. "De children! Dey's safe! I'se got em! De Lord be praised!"

Who can tell the throb of joy that shook that mother's heart, or the deep emotion that filled the eyes of the strong man with gushing tears?

They needed not to tell Daph to lead the way to their treasures. On she sped through street and lane, followed by hurrying footsteps and beating hearts.

The small house with the blue shutters was reached—the threshold was crossed! A moment the mother paused, as if to gather strength for the meeting, and then the door was thrown open!

In that simple, neat room, sat the fair Louise, her bit of sewing in her hand; while beside her Charlie bent over the book he was reading aloud to his sister.

The wondering children were clasped in their mother's arms, and received their

father's loving embrace; while Daph, almost wild with joy, kept repeating, "You's no more lone orphans, with only poor old Daph to mind you! De Lord be praised! Daph's work is done. She be ready to go now, when it pleases de Lord Jesus!"

How those parents rejoiced to have their lost ones restored, sound in health, and bearing every evidence of having been trained to habits of neatness, and nurtured in delicacy and refinement! This was joy indeed! But who shall describe the gladness of the mother when she found her children speaking of the Saviour as a familiar friend, and bearing, however faintly, his image in their hearts! Such joy angels know when they welcome at the gate of heaven the weary pilgrim of earth, and usher him into the eternal home of the Father!

Daph listened with wondering eyes and grateful heart to the story of their escape whom she had so long mourned, and whose place she had so striven to fill.

The coachman, who was pledged to murder his master and mistress, relented, and resolved to save them from the ruin with which they were threatened.

General La Tourette's first suspicion of danger was roused by finding that they had been driven in the wrong direction, while he in careless confidence had been chatting with his wife. In the moonlight he could see the flashing of the waves and hear the murmur of the waters, and yet he knew he was not near his home, but at some less familiar part of the coast.

Calling out hastily to the coachman, the carriage came to a stand; General La Tourette became aware that the horses had been cut loose, and he saw the fel-

low, pistol in hand, seated upon one of them.

In a few hurried words the negro told the danger of the moment, and pointed to a boat at the water-side, which offered to his master and mistress some hope of escape.

Did Mrs. La Tourette forget her little ones in that hour of peril? No! She pleaded to go to them, if but to mingle her blood with theirs. The negro assured her they were already sleeping the sleep of death, and implored her to fly with her husband while yet their lives might be saved.

Thus urged, they entered the little-boat, and while the strong arm of the husband sustained the drooping wife and guided the little skiff over the dark waters, the negro went his way, to show the contents of the rifled trunks as proofs of the crime

he had in reality shrunk from committing.

General La Tourette and his wife reached a neighboring island in safety, but exiled for ever from their own dear home.

Sorrowful as the childless only can be, the world seemed to them suddenly robbed of its brightness. They could not have borne the trials of their lot, but for the sustaining hand of the Father in heaven, in whom they had, in the days of their prosperity, learned to trust.

Several years of foreign travel had in a measure recruited the failing health of General La Tourette, and time had calmed the poignant grief of his wife. They had come to New York, hoping once more to have a home of their own, sorrowful though that home must be.

Bereaved and childless no more, with deep thankfulness they praised the God of

heaven for his most unexpected mercies, and devoted themselves anew to his service.

As for Daph, their gratitude to her knew no bounds, and they felt that for her faithful services they could find no adequate reward on earth.

CHAPTER XV.

THE END.

GENERAL LA TOURETTE and his wife had once more a home of their own, made bright by the smiles of their affectionate children.

At that home Rose Stuyvesant was received as a loved friend, and made a sharer in the pure joy she had assisted in laying up for the happy parents. There Diedrich Stuyvesant had been welcomed as an honored guest; and there Captain Jones had seen, in the united family, something which gave his kind heart more joy than did the warm expressions of gratitude that were lavished upon him, or the more substantial favors that were bestowed with no stinted hand on the honest sailor. Even

Mary Ray and her invalid, suffering mother experienced the cheering influence that flowed from that happy home, and felt that, although their lodgers were gone, they had in them still warm and powerful friends. In the midst of this grateful rejoicing was Daph forgotten? No! Among the loved and honored, she was best loved and most cared for. In the neat room assigned to her was clustered every comfort that could smooth the declining years or cheer the humble spirit of the faithful negro. She prized each token of loving remembrance that made that room beautiful in her eyes; but dearest to her was the Bible with the golden clasps, which lay on her table, placed there by her mistress, with words which filled the heart of Daph with tearful joy.

“Where is Daph this morning?” asked General La Tourette at the breakfast table; “I did not see her dear old face in the hall as I came down.”

“She is not awake yet,” said his wife: “I told the children they must not rouse her. She must take her rest; her days of labor are over.”

“God grant that our work may be as well done!” said the father, solemnly.

Later in the day, the children could not be kept from “just looking at dear Daffy, even if she were asleep.”

The family party entered the quiet room.

The sunbeams shone across the floor with cheerful light; but they were dark to the gaze of Daph, for she was beholding the unveiled glory of the Sun of Righteousness. The voice of earthly affection could wake her no more, for she had listened to the welcome of angels, and heard the voice of her Saviour declare, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!”

THE END.

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