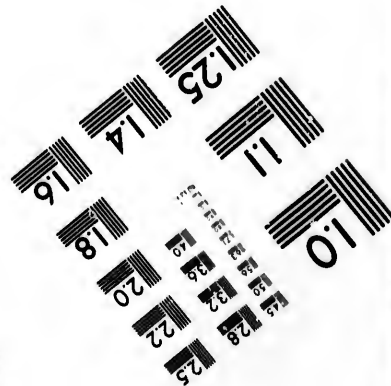
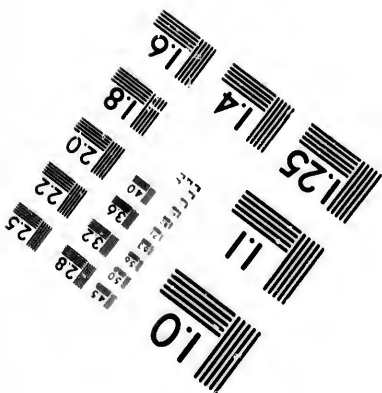
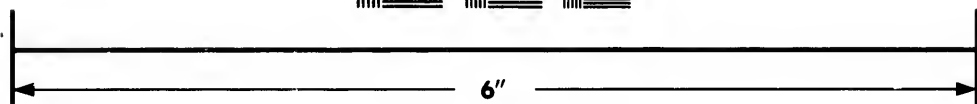
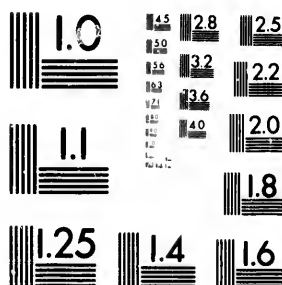


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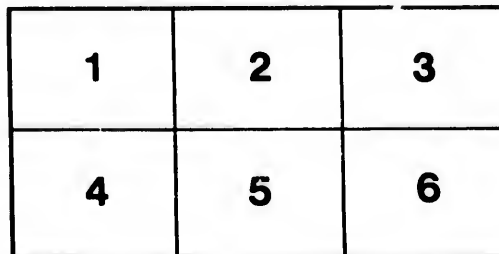
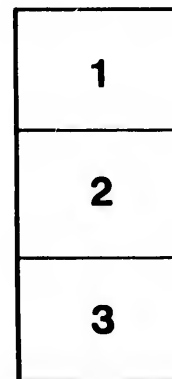
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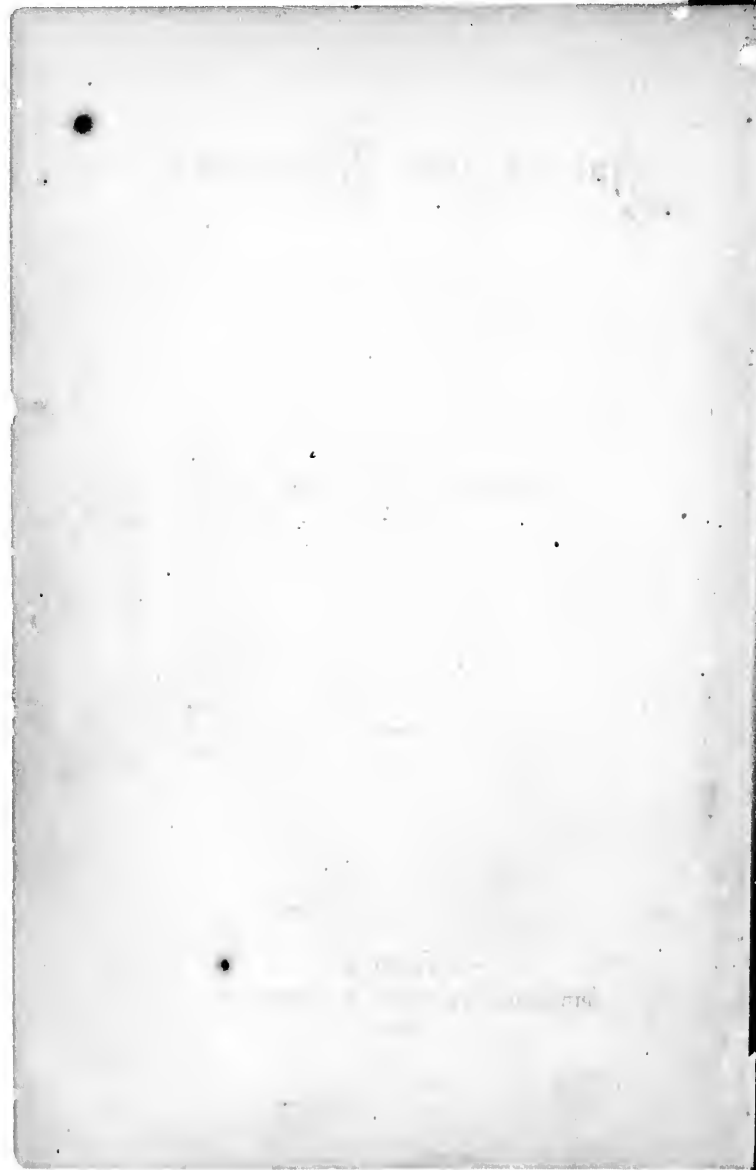
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Out of the Wilderness.

#7781

BY
MRS. JANE DUNBAR CHAPLIN.



BOSTON.
PUBLISHED BY HENRY A. YOUNG & CO.

1870.
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OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.

CHAPTER I.

STRANGE GUESTS.

"MOUGHT we see de minister, missus?" asked a genuine son of Ham, as he presented himself with his wife at the parlor door.

The minister was not in, and the lady and her guests were a little startled by the sudden appearance of the sable pair, redolent with smiles, and lavish of bows and courtesies.

The man was tall and stalwart. His head, small, round and closely shorn, sat literally on his broad, high shoulders, giving his whole figure the appearance of a colossal clothes-pin.

There was no mingled blood of the races in his veins. He was black, actually *black*; but a kinder and more agreeable face one rarely sees, be the complexion what it may.

His wife was small and frail, about forty years old. In any other company she might have been called "black but comely," but beside him her color faded, and she was only "a little brown woman." Her features were not cast in the Guinea mould. Her nose was small and straight, and her thin lips, which only half hid two rows of small, white teeth, were fixed in a sad smile. Her eyes were soft and kind, and her low voice had a plaintive tone which at once won the hearts of the ladies.

The strangers were offered seats, and invited to wait for the minister's return; but they hesitated, evidently afraid of using too much freedom.

"We's mighty disappointed not to see de gen'l'man," said the man, who had introduced himself as Zack Cameron, "because we come on business — mighty important business to us."

"I suppose you want to be married," said the lady, smiling.

Then he broke forth into a genuine African laugh, which proved contagious, and the whole little party joined in the mirth, when he found voice to say:

"Bless yer heart, dear missus, we's been married dese many years, good; and all de money in dis country couldn't onmarry us, we's so mighty

well satisfied wid each other. Ha, Weza?" he cried, looking down at the little woman for confirmation.

"Yes, Zack, dat's so, sartin; we wouldn't change, not if we had de whole world to pick from;" and turning to the ladies she added, "Yer can't reckon how kind and lovin' dis man has been to me in all dem awful years. De Lord knowed what was a comin' on dis, poor, weak heart, and so he send dis great, kind man for me to lean agin. I believe, ladies, dat dis Zack is de very best man de dear Lord ever made on his arth."

This compliment sat very well on the proud husband, and he looked down at the little brown woman with a patronizing smile, and then said, "Yer musn't believe all she says 'bout me, ladies, she's only a poor weak woman."

"I'm sure you are strangers here," said one of the ladies. "I never saw you about town."

"Yes, missus, we's strangers and pilgrims, both in dis town and on de arth. I 'spose yer can tell by our clothes" — they were clean, but miscut, and uncouth to the last degree — "dat we's from de South — that mad place dat's gin you all so much trouble as well as us."

"How came you here?" asked the lady of the house.

"Well, missus, when de war was over we felt 's if our liberty was too good to be true, and we got to surmisin' of evil. We was feared dat somebody 'nother would betray us into de hands of de Philistines. We felt like mice dat's just got out of de trap alive; we wanted to get dat trap out of our sight as well as off of our feet. We had lost heaps o' our friends in de war; dey was either dead, or scattered hither and yon, and we two was most alone on de arth. So a gentleman coming North offered to take us along with him, and let us pay up our passage by workin' on his place; and dat's what we's at now, missus, in dis town."

"And I suppose you are happy here?" asked the lady.

"Well, yes, missus, as happiness goes on dis arth. We's bound to be happy anyway, come what's mind to. De Lord reigns, and dat one thought is enough to make any poor child o' his'n happy; isn't it?"

"It ought to be."

"We's bound to put it through here till de political yarthquakes and tumults is over, and we gets a little ahead in life. And den I reckons we'll go down home agin. Oh, oh, oh! dese east winds makes us shiver, and we dreads de snow to wade through! and 'side dat, ladies, it's a blessed thing to live 'mong yer own folks."

"Yes, yes, Zack, dat's sartin!" echoed the little brown woman, who had kept her admiring gaze fixed on him during this speech; "it is a blessed thing to live 'mong your own folks;" and she wiped away her tears with the corner of her faded blue apron.

"And what can the minister do for you?" asked the lady.

"Well, missus, we heerd he was goin' down to our parish, and thought dat may be, as matters was a' settlin' down a little, he could hunt up our folks dat we lost down dere," replied Zack.

"Yes, yes, dat's true, Zack; dat nigh 'bout killed me," again echoed Weza.

"Yer see, kind missus, she has got two boys somewhere or nother down dere in de wilderness, and if yer a mother yer understand how poor weak women feel 'bout dere children, and fathers, for dat matter, too. You remember how old Jacob took on 'bout Joseph, when he thought de wild beasts had devoured him up, and how Rachel wept and wouldn't be comforted no how, becuse her chil'en was kil'ed? Oh, I tell you, ladies, mothers' hearts is tender things to handle rough."

"Yes, mothers' hearts is tender," the little brown woman repeated, with her eyes still fixed on her sable hero.

“Dem two boys isn't my sons, but dey're hern, and she's in trib'lation 'bout dem. She suffers for dem, and I suffers for her. She dreams 'bout 'em, and cries in her sleep, and I can't rest no how till she can rest. So I wants to get dem hunted up somehow or nother. We's got heaps o' friends sold off to save losing dem, just afore de war. Dey're among the sugar canes somewhar. I don't know whar dey is, but de Lord know, and he can pint right straight to 'em so dat de minister can find 'em. You know, missus, de Book says, 'De eyes of de Lord are in every place, beholdin' de evil and de good.' My people is either in Georgy, or else in Floridy, or Lou'sanny, or in Texas. Jim, dat was brung up near by me, an' most like my brother, he was in Texas, a herding' of cattle, last time we got wind o' him. But ye tell de minister if he'll hunt up one or all on 'em, I'll pay him well for his trouble; and de Lord, who loves dem all as his believin' children, will pay him full measure, ten times, heaped up and a runnin'-over. Yer tell him if he'll do dis little job for us, we'll pray for him while we lives, dat de Lord would bless him in his baskets and his stores, in his family and in his own dear soul.”

The lady felt sure the minister would gladly aid the poor wanderers, but the effort seemed to her

hopeless, and she asked, "But how would a stranger go to work to find your friends?"

"Oh, let him give it out in nootin', dear missus. Dat's de way to find out what yer lost down dere. Once I was in a meetin' in dat city, and just arter dey had sung de benediction, de minister was axed to give out dat a woman had lost her henkecher; and bless you, it wasn't a minute afore a little boy fetched it up. Dere's a colored preacher down dere got a mighty big crowd of a church,— Bill Aiken. Now let de minister ax Bill to speak out arter sarmon, and say, 'Is dere anybody in dis crowd dat has met up wid Rosa Le Rue, dat got scattered in de war? or wid Dr. Percy's three women? or wid Dike and Sampson, de sons of de Doctor's Weza? or wid lame Jim dat Widow Waters owned?'"

"Well, my good man," said the lady, smiling at the amount of work laid out for her invalid husband, "you must let me write all this down, for I can never remember the names."

"Yes, missus, I'll do dat, cheerful," replied Zack, with a patronizing bow. "May be Bill would ax, 'Is yaller Dave in dis crowd dat borrowed ten dollars of Zack Cam'ron, when de regiment was dismissed? If so, he must forred that same to said Zack to buy boots wid afore the snow comes up North.'"

"Yes, yes, dat's true, Zack; dere will soon be snow here," reiterated the little brown woman, drawing her thin shawl more closely about her.

"But are you sure Bill Aiken will ask all these questions in meeting?" asked the lady.

"Oh, yes, he'll ax 'em. He's a mighty feelin' sort of a fellow. But, if he refuse, why, the minister must just make him do it. He must threaten to turn him out of de church for contempt o' court; dat's de way Bill hisself does to sich as don't do his bidding."

"But my husband has no power there, not even a vote in that church," said the lady.

"Well, well, dat's queer. A larned doctor of divinity got less power den black Bill Aiken dat sweeps de bank and makes de fires week days, and only preaches of a Sunday! But if nobody in dat crowd knows where any of our peop^l is, den tell de minister to go to old Aunt Sally's candy shop, in St. Cyprian Street, and ax her. Dere ain't nothing in de whole creation dat she don't know in de way of news. She keeps de run of every livin' creetur, bond and free. De church mothers (deaconesses) sot out once to have her turned out of de church for a busy body; but bless yer, de next time dey wanted to know de news dey went to her demselves — de poor weak women. So dey

let her off, and Bill give his reasons in a sarmon. He said de church was a body made of many members, some was legs to run, others was hands to work; 'most o' you women,' says he, 'is ears to listen, and Aunt Sally she's de tongue to talk. I don't know as it's any wickeder to talk den it is to listen.'

"Aunt Sally has, no doubt, got de run of all de scattered ones by dis time; and she'll tell de minister 'bout our people."

"Yes, yes, she'll tell him 'bout our people," said Weza, "and may be de Lord will heal my heart yet."

"We should like to hear about your troubles, little woman," said one of the ladies.

Weza dropped her head, and replied, "I'm a mighty poor talker, I'm so bashful, but dere is a heap to tell, and Zack can talk powerful fine."

"If you'll come in some evening and tell us all about your life, I'll give you a new dress," said the lady of the house.

"Dere, dere, now yer got her, ladies," cried Zack; "you've touched de spot now, for she, like all de rest of de poor weak women, is mighty fond of fine clothes. I'll fetch her in some night a purpose to talk of her life,—poor little woman."

"My life hasn't been what slaves call a hard

one, ladies," said Weza, "for no man ever laid a lash on me, — never. But de partin's, and de separations, and de longin's, and de achin's, and de dreams, — Oh, dat's what wore me up."

"Yes, dat's it, missus; she's such a lovin' creature, she can't be happy no how without somethin' to love; and 'em boys — she wouldn't know 'em if she met 'em — and yet she yarns and yarns arter 'em in a way dat's pitiful to see. And if de good Lord spares me to get ahead a little, I'll find 'em if I tarns up every State in de Union a tryin'. De Lord knows where dey is, and he'll let me know."

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CHAPTER II.

THE STORY OF A CLUMSY LIFE.

ZACK was as good as his word; he did bring the little brown woman to the minister's one evening soon after their first visit there. But he made a slight mistake in his errand, for instead of encouraging her to tell the story of her life, he spent the time in giving his own. He explained his course by saying, that, as they were twain as well as one, it took two stories to make it all out, and that he, having been born first, and moreover, being "de head of de woman," thought it but proper to begin the tale.

His argument was quite satisfactory, and with a beaming face Zack related the story of what he called "a mighty clumsy sort of life."

"My missus," he began, "said I must ha' been named in sport for 'Zaccheus He;' but I never heerd my mother say so. I was about five year old when she and I was sold with a gang to go

from Virginny to a sugar plantation in Lou'sanny. She was just my color, and a powerful big woman. She held up her head like she owned all de plantations round. She never make free wid nobody, nor sing songs, nor dance wid 'em. At home she carry de keys and give out stores and de like, and I never knew why she was sold. But I remember hearin' her say den, dat no one should ever hear a groan or see a tear 'bout it, but jist only de dear Lord.

"A goin' down de coast, dey had high times, fiddlin' and dancin' to keep up dere courage and make 'em forget all dey had left behind. But she sot off from de rest; and when dey got through she would sort of preach to 'em, and read out of a book she kept in a roll, wid other things, in her pocket. She would tell 'em 'bout Jesus, how he loved de poor and de mise'ble, and how he died on de cross, and how he rose again, and how a cloud received him out of sight, but dat he was livin' yet up dere, and stoopin' down to listen to hear when anybody calls on him. De wicked ones in de gang said she was too proud to dance wid field hands; and one bad man called her 'De queen o' Sheby;' and den de rest call her so, and finally she went by de name of 'Sheby,' always, 'stead o' by Carline, on de new place.

"When we got to de plantation, dere was a great panic dere wid de small pox; and de worse cases was in de mansion house. De massa had got a doctor to give medicine, and a minister to pray; but dey had no nurse dat knew any thing about de sickness. So after a few days, wid de leave of de overseer, my mammy put on de white turban she brought in de roll wid de book, and taking me by de hand, marched up to de big house, and axed for de lady. And says she, 'Madam, de Lord sent me from Virginny to help yer in de hour o' need! Take me to dem sick chil'en and yer go to rest. I've heerd dat yer is one of de massiful, and de dear Lord says dey are 'blessed, for dey shall find massie.' Yer have listened to de cries from de house o' bondage, and de Lord has heerd yer cry now dat yer are in distress! *Yer children is whole from dis hour!*"

"'Dey can't live,'" says de lady. 'De doctor has give 'em over, all three—my beautiful boy, and my sweet little twin daughters. How can I live if dey are taken?'

"'Is any thing too hard for de Lord?'" says my mammy. 'He has sent me here wid dis message, dear cretur, "Dey shall not die, but live;" so don't yer dare to doubt him! Go and rest and give dem

into my hand; but my child, dat is as dear to me as yers is to yer, *must stay in dis house.*'

"De lady looked a little skeart at first, but soon axed 'Are you de woman they call "Sheba," dat I've heerd on?'

"And from de hour my mother took dem children in hand dey begun to mend; and she was ever after de queen o' Sheby dere, I tell you. She reigned in de mansion house!

"I come up a mighty favored boy, widout much to do but only to play with the chil'en. When de little twins got big enough to go to school, I used to take 'em dere—a mile off to another gen'lman's gov'ness. De two didn't weigh half as much as I did; and sometimes I would draw 'em in a little coach, and sometimes carry one on each arm, in a big basket, and agin I'd give 'em turn about on my back! We used to have high times a singin' and laughin' through de brakes. How dem two little ones loved me, and I loved dem! And as for young master, dat was 'bout my age, he loved me like I was his brother, and I worshipped him!

"De people all thought my mammy was a prophet, and I reckon she was. De wicked ones was awful 'feared of her. De family had a kind o' veneration for her, and she 'bout rule de plantation.

If dere was trouble 'tween de poor field hands and de overseer, she'd march down dere and look into it; and den she would go straight to de missus and warn her against bringin' down de cuss o' heaven on de place by winkin' at de oppression of de poor dat was cryin' day and night to de Lord. Den de missus — oh, she was de lovin' woman! she'd go to her husband, and she'd plead wid him and give him no peace till he'd go down and put a rein on de overseer — a bad, cruel man from de North!

"My mammy sot up a meetin', too, and used to preach, and pray, and sing. She always wound up her sermon with something like dis: De Lord has heerd de cry of de needy and dem dat has no helper, and has put on his garments dyed in blood. He's gettin' ready de sword, and de spear, and de battle-axe, and de chariots, and de horses for de day o' slaughter! And soon yer'll hear de roar o' cannon, and de drum, and de bugle; and den yer'll know de great and terrible day o' de Lord has come for dis nation — de day in which he will reckon wid 'em for de blood and tears, and groans of our people! And dat day is near. I hear de sound of war a'ready in de still hour when all but me is sleepin', and when I's pressin' the Lord to hasten on, and cryin', 'Why tarry de wheels of dy chariot?'

“Such like talk roused de overseer when he heerd it, and he told de massa, and massa told de missus dat she must stop Sheby; and den de missus begged my mammy not to talk so to de people. But she said she had a message to deliver to black and white; and dat her time was short and she must tell it. So den de massa he speak sharp to her; and he took *his* sarmon and *his* prophecy. Says she, ‘Yer better flee to God, and lay down yer wepons o’ rebellion, for dere’s an awful reckoning ahead! And den turnin’ to me, she said, ‘Dis boy will be a free man, by right, not by runnin’ off; because de Lord will break every chain and let de oppressed go free! Stand still, my son, and *wait* for de salvation o’ de Lord, and don’t run like a coward. Dis proud nation, having beaten and cast us into prison, may yet be forced to go and bring us out with dere own hands for fear of de judgments of de Lord! Perhaps dis righteous soul,’ she said, pointing to de missus, ‘may save dis house; but de desolation cometh, and dese swamps and brakes shall flow wid de blood of de nobles? not my little lambs dat I saved from de pestilence, for I’ve got dem hid up safe under de wing of de Almighty. Now, massa, yer let me alone, and go humble yerself before de Lord, and pray for massy in dat day—for it’s

comin' as sure's dere's a God above us! As for me I shan't see it, for I shall soon be out of de wilderness!

"She was consid'able of a keer on 'em, for talk she would, among our own hands and other folks' too! I reckons dat was why she was sold from Virginny!

"De planters round said she'd kick up an insurrection if she wasn't shut up quick. First, massa took sides wid her, and said she teached de people to be patient and obey dere masters in de Lord. But his neighbore said dey'd shoot her if she wasn't sold right off! Missus was nigh about wild. She was afeared of God, and she told massa she wished he hadn't a slave in de world; dat she'd rather be poor and please God; and dat she wou'd not have de woman dat had saved her children's lives sold. She said, 'If Sheby goes, I'll go too; for I believe God stays where she is!' But in de midst of de rumpus, God took de matter into his own hands. Missus went into de nursery one night to speak to her, and dere she was on her knees before de children's bed, — dead. De dear Lord had come and led her safe out of de wilderness! Very soon after dat, de little girls both died, of de scarlet fever, in one week. Dey was hid up safe under de Almighty wing, as she said dey would be.

“My poor missus was nigh heart-broke; but she kept sayin’ may be, as Sheby had said, dey was saved from de evil to come; and she vowed she would take care o’ me for Sheby’s sake!

“I was so strong and big, dere was nothin’ I couldn’t do; but I never was put into de field. I minded my young massa’s horses, and rode wid him, and drove de carriage, and so on. Dey tried very hard to make me a butler, or waiter, or somethin’ like dat; but I broke every glass dish I touched, and spilt de gravy on de company’s clothes, and trod on dere toes when I went to pass tea in de parlor. So missus got discouraged; and said she didn’t know what to make on me no how! But I can tell you I found enough to do one way or another; it took one man to wait on my young gen’leman; and he must always have me at his heels. If any body interfered wid me, he’d hit ’em a lick in de face ’fore dey knew it; and so I can stand up dis day before de world, and say, ‘Here is a slave that was never struck by no man.’ I was as good-natured as a kitten; but I had a buried feeling in me dat would never take a blow! I believe in dem days, ’fore I knew Christ, and had his spirit, I’d have murdered any man dat would ha’ tried it. I was always a tender-hearted man, particular to little chil’en and poor weak women.

"Well, well, de years rolled on, and master and missus both died, and my young massa had all de plantation and de people for his own. Den my word went a good way, I tell you. He fixed up de quarters, and added to de rations and de clothes, and give more holidays; and den we got a new overseer dat had a heart into him. And we never got so much work done 'fore by de same hands. And de thorns and de nails was took out of slavery dere for dat year, on our plantation.

"But it does seem as if men can never 'let well enough alone.' My young massa went up North to de springs; and dere he fell in wid a lady dat had been to a boardin' school somewhere or nother. She was a rich man's daughter from de coast o' Floridy; and didn't dey strike up all of a suddent and get married? He'd never seen a blessed one dat belonged to her. He mought ha' found *whiter* ones workin' on many a plantation; and such an eye as she had! Why, it seemed to cut right into yer when she looked at yer. De long and de short on't was dat she was a tarmagant and a fury in shape of a lady. Strange enough, dere were slaves on de plantation dat knew her—had lived nigh by her—and dey said her father was a wracker off de coast; dat he 'lured ships on to de rocks by false lights, and

when dey struck he had boats and men all ready to plunder 'em ; and dat he had laid up heaps, and bags, and barrels of gold, and diamonds, and everyting.

“ Well, she begun with young massa ; and I tell you, she trained him up handsome ! He was mighty easy to begin wid, and when she'd got her heel on him, she took de house servants next, and dere de field hands. She driv off de overseer, and overturned all we'd done for de comfort of de people. She sot an evil eye mighty quick on me. But I looked her right back in de eye as long as she could stan' it. I drew myself up, and looked very savage, meanin' to skear her if I could ; and she told de massa she was 'feard o' me ; I was so big and so black she knew I'd kill her some day.

“ But he give me a great character, and told her I was the importantest man on de plantation, and and dat de whole consarn would go to ruin if I wasn't dere.

“ Well, dere was hard times in our house, I tell you ; dere was more tears shed den dan ever before since it was built. She would strike her maid wid whatever come handy, and throw cheers and books at de women and chil'ren. De young massa saw it all, but he was trapped now, and couldn't help hisself. Once he said to me, 'Yer

see how it is, Zack; make things as easy as yer can for de servants, and give 'em a cheerin' word, poor things.'

"One day when massa had gone off to a 'lection dinner in de city, she come out on de verandy wid 'de knife in her eye,' as de women used to say, and called out, 'Whose baby is dat screamin' sp?'

"She made de woman bring de child to her, and she slapped it in de face over and over, and o' course it screamed more. De mother run, sayin', 'De baby's sick,' and she chased her, and struck de baby a big blow on de head. I saw her from de carriage-house, and at first I thought she bein' only a poor weak woman, I'd let her slap her temper out, and may be she'd feel better. But when I saw her run after de woman, I thought she meant to kill de child, so I run too. I come up behind her, and I took her little wrists right between my thumb and forefinger, and held her tight. Den I told Dely to go into de kitchen and nuss up de baby with camphire and such like. Young-missus turned round, and when she see me she screamed like I was a tiger, and tried to get away; but I held on, and de house servants was all a peepin' out o' doors and windows, hopin' I'd kill her, and den run. But I was just as ca'm as I be this

minute. I held her till she got quiet and begun to cry, like any poor weak woman. Den I let go on one wrist, and led her back to de house by de other. I threw my voice down very low, and says I, looking mighty savage, 'Go to your room, missus, and stay dere till massa come home, or dere'll be trouble here.' She flew in and locked de door behind her, as if poor Zack had been a murderer after her life. She forgot dat she'd aigh about taken dat baby's.

"I went to de stable den and harnessed a hoss and set off for de city to meet massa, and ride home wid him. And as we come along together, I told him all about it, and showed him just how I held her. 'Dat's de livin' truth,' says I, 'whatever she says; and I did it to save you bein' de husband of a murderer.'"

"'Yer did just right, Zack,' says he, 'and I thank yer. But how am I going to put through life dis way? Sometimes I wish I was dead, Zack; but yer de only man on earth I'd say dis to. I'd give my whole plantation to be back where I was before I ever saw her.'"

"And when we got home he went into de kitchen to see de baby 'fore he ever went near her; dat was his mother's heart in him — and he stroked it and whistled to it; but it didn't look up.

'Dely;' says he, 'I'm sorry for dis from de bottom of my heart. Don't cry; it'll brighten up to-morrow.'

"Dely sobbed and sobbed, but all de words she said was, 'If he dies, massa, I'll jump into de old well. I couldn't live to 'member dat my sick baby was murdered in my arms.'

"And I tell you it would a brung tears out o' Northern eyes, that can't see no good thing in a slaveholder, to ha' seen dat splendid young man sit down on a bench in de kitchen, and take de baby on his knee, and feel its pulse, and give it drops to bring it to. But dere it lay like dead, and he had to leave it at last wid Dely and old Hannah, for de night.

"As we went out of de kitchen, Dely said, 'O, Lord, I wish I was out of de wilderniss, for I'm sick and tired of dis yere life!'

"I never heerd what passed between massa and missus 'bout de baby or me, but very soon arter de baby died, massa told me dere would be no peace while I stayed there; and dat I must go up river to his uncle's for a year or two; 'We'll call it selling yer,' says he, 'but yer and I understand each other, Zack; and I hope we shan't be separated long.'

"And de next week I went up wid my massa to

Col. Leon's plantation; and dat was a lucky trip for me, for it was in dat neighborhood I first saw dis dear little brown woman dat has made me so happy dese long years."

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CHAPTER III.

A BROKEN PROMISE.

THE little brown woman came to the parsonage very often after this, "for a comfortin' word in de wilderness." She told her story, and received, beside her new dress, the sympathy of every heart there.

At the time when Zack was carrying his master's children in baskets or on his back, always busy but never at work, "Weza" was in the adjacent city, a child at the house of Dr. Percy, where her mother was a favorite slave. As she was well treated, both in the kitchen and in the parlor, there were "neither nails nor thorns" in her lot, till she came to years of understanding; then she felt her fetters, for although they were soft, they were strong.

"Weza" grew up a gentle and active child, with whom the most exacting mistress could scarcely have found fault. It is, then, little wonder that as the white children of the house dropped one after

another into the grave, she became a humble pet in the family. When she was about twelve years old her mother fell sick, and knew that her end was near. She sent for her master and mistress, and holding her child by the hand, she said, "Massa, I've got a few words for yer, afore I leave dis world. What de livin' woman wouldn't dare to say, de dyin' woman may. No man can be angry wid a feller crectur dat's a strugglin' wid de last enemy, and dat's all I can battle wid to day. Ye've always held me up as an example of contentment to yer people when dey got restless. May be yer thought I was as easy in de halter and de collar as yer hosses and yer dogs. But that isn't true. My innerd soul has rebelled against slavery from the hour I first felt de chain; and de older I growed de deeper dat chain has cut into my soul. Ye've been kind as fur as good words and good victuals and warm clothes has gone, but ye've been cruel to my soul, massa. Yer shut me out from de knowledge of de Lord Jesus, and I might as well been brung up in Africa fur all de religion I ever heard on till Massa Lorton bought old Job, and so brung God into dis street. Old Job has got de Scriptur' all burnt into his soul, and he can't open his mouth but de fire comes out. I've got de Gospel light in my soul now, and dat makes de grave shine like heav-

en, and look so beautiful! When de great day come, and de Lord ax me, 'Who led you to glory, Molly!' I must say, 'Not de rich man dat put a soft chain round my neck and hold me by it; not de pleasant lady whose babies I nussed and laid in de coffin; but an old plantation nigger, all worked out, dat was bought by his son's master out of pity. I'll have to tell dat yer two dressed up in silk, and satin, and broadcloth, and earings, and gold headed cane, and velvet pray'er book, and sot off 'mong a gay crowd every Sunday morning to see 'bout gettin' yer own souls saved wid masses and high music; and left us black folks to get a big dinner for company, like we hadn't any souls. For all ye've done, massa, I mought be going out into de black night, 'stead o' steppin' into de river all alive with glory, and seein' the Blessed One, as I do dis minute, a waitin' for me on 'tother bank.'

"Molly," said the doctor in a subdued tone, "you surely are not cursing your kind master with your last breath?"

"I'm a blessin' 'stead of cursin' yer, massa. I want to save yer from believin' a lie. Yer may think 'case yer 'lowed no lashes laid on, but ruled by sellin' folks off when dey didn't please you, dat de great Lord will a'most *thank yer for your goodness* when yer stand before him. But I tell yer,

he'll bring yer square up to de mark, and lay de sins of our ignorance on yer soul dat has kept us in de dark. He'll say, 'Go 'way, yer dat shut out de light from de souls I made, and 'most made 'em think dey was cattle of de field, and at de same time he will call up old Job, but you won't know him, may be, for de glory dat's round about him; and he'll put a crown on his grey head, and he'll say, 'Come up higher, yer blessed old man.' He'll put a weddin' garment on old Job, and a ring on his finger, and kiver him all over wid shinin' glory, so dat yer'll wish you was old Job 'stead of de rich and fine Dr. Percy.

"But dat day haint comë, massa and missus. Dere's yet left time for repentance, and my advice is dat yer heave away yer fine music religion dat has no Christ into it, and go sit down and larn of old Job de way to de lovin' Jesus. I'll pray for yer wid my last breath."

"Thank you, Molly;" said de doctor, kindly, "and now tell me if I can do any thing to make your mind easy about poor little Louisa."

"Yes massa, yer can do dat."

"What is it?"

"Give my little Weza her freedom, and teach her dat she's born for a woman, and not for a pet kitten. *Will yer make her free?*"

"Yes, Sally, I will for your sake, for you've been a good and faithful woman to us."

"When will yer do it. Now? While I lives to know it?"

"No, Sally, I can't do it now; but I will just as soon as I can without making trouble among the other servants," replied the doctor, wiping a tear from his eye.

"If yer could look into eternity, as I do now, massa, Oh, how glad ye'd be to get the whole on 'em off your hands. Dey'll be a heavy drag on yer soul I tell yer, in that great and terrible day."

Then she turned to little Weza, and said, "Well, den if it's de Lord's will, I must leave dis child still a slave. But mind, massa, ye've promised a dyin' woman to set her child free. In de meantime I ax no more favors den she's had; and I die easy dat no lash will never fall on her shoulders while she's in yer hands. My head's tired and swims now," she said; and then her mind wandered back to the day she entered the vessel at Richmond, sold to go South away from all she loved. "All aboard now, cap'en," she murmured. "Pull up de anchor quick, and let's get away from de sight and de groans of my old mother on de shore. Good-by, old Virginny home."

The faithful nurse had uttered her last words, and slept away her few remaining hours.

It was some time before the doctor and his wife got over this scene. For several Sundays they stayed away from mass and gave no dinner parties, being almost afraid of the gay dress and the hollow forms against which poor Molly had warned them. But a change of seasons brought a change of garments, and the warning did not attach itself to the new ones. Then they returned again to their own services and to their Sunday parties.

Weza grew up in the house, performing a little very light labor which was scarcely more than play. She ran errands, polished the silver, fed the dogs and kittens, attended to the canaries, and watered the flowers. But she was not taught any thing which would make life easy when its burdens should fall on her.

When almost a child, she was married by her master to a young mulatto, also belonging to him, and life seemed as fair before her as before any young slave. Soon after her marriage, she asked her master to do as he had promised her "mammy," and to set her free now. The answer was, "By-and-by." But before "by-and-by" came, a little slave boy was born in the house. With the

birth of that child, Weza woke to a real sense of what slavery was, and her heart was crushed beneath a sense of injustice and wrong both to herself and her child. She felt that had her master fulfilled the pledge made to her dying mother, this baby would have been free.

Again, after tender care of her mistress through a long illness, she repeated her request, and again was told that her papers should be made out "by-and-by, when it could be done without making trouble among the other servants." But before the arrival of the promised day, she held another little slave in her arms.

Her husband felt as keenly as herself the cruelty of this delay. He had no hope of freedom himself, but he had gloried in it for his children. He had neither the wisdom nor the meekness of Weza to help him bear this wrong. So he spoke to his master, and received a stern rebuke for his insolence. In reply, he said morosely, that he had always vowed no child of his should ever be a slave, and that he would bury those babies alive rather than have them remain in bondage.

Of course no such insolence could be allowed; and as the doctor prided himself on the fact that he had never caused a slave of his to be whipped, he took the less merciful course of selling him on

the block. The first hint poor Weza had of the quarrel, was the word that her husband was gone with a "gang" to Texas; and that was the last she ever heard of the father of her children.

And the years rolled on amid light tasks, brightened by the love of the two little mulattoes, and by an occasional promise of freedom. Liberty had, however, less charms for her now that she had slave sons, but still she fancied that once free herself she could soon earn money to purchase them.

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CHAPTER IV.

THE SALE AND THE SEPARATION.

ONE of Weza's boys — while they were yet little more than babies — swept the doctor's office and answered the door bell; and the other, a handsome child with the roses shining through his tawny skin, rode with his master and held the horse while he was calling on his patients. If they had been his own sons he could scarcely have been prouder of them, and nothing gratified him more than hearing them praised. So Weza still had them with her, and but for dreading the blank future she might yet have been happy.

But in the midst of life and vigor, the doctor was smitten down with sudden paralysis. Then he remembered his promise, broken both to the living and the dead, and in his first lucid moment it rose up like a ghost to haunt him.

He called Weza to him, and said, "I have not forgotten my promise to your mother, and now I

declare, with your mistress for my witness, that the first day I am able to do it I will make out your papers. You shall certainly be free."

"O, massa, but my boys," cried the tender young mother—for she was still very young—"how could I take freedom and be separated from dem?"

The doctor was silent for some time. Conscience and avarice were struggling in his soul.

"Well," said he, "I have been so slow in fulfilling my promise to you that I will atone for it by giving the boys their liberty too; but you must all stay with us. I will hire you. I can't part with those little fellows; the house would be so dull without their merry noise."

"We will stay wid yer, massa, and call down heaven's blessin's on yer head for dis," replied the hopeful creature. "I shall den know dat we can never be sold and separated."

That night, when his mind wandered, he called out, "Bring me my hat and my cane; I must go."

His wife and other attendant assured him he was too ill to walk, but still he called, "Take me to the court, to the judge, any where that I can get Weza's free papers! Didn't I promise Molly? How can I look her in the face there in the awful

unknown world, with this broken promise on my hand? Send for old Job, I want to ask him how they make light to shine on the grave."

Old Job had been years in his grave, but he was not forgotten. The rich and wise man remembered that he knew how the dark valley could be lighted and the cold stream crossed. Though dead, old Job was speaking still. The doctor could not rest for thoughts of that broken promise, added to all else that lay upon his heart in that solemn hour. Then his wife, hoping to relieve his mind, pledged herself that she would surely see to the free papers if he did not recover; and thus calmed, he fell asleep, never to wake again.

The doctor's estate passed into the hands of a nephew, a well-meaning, gay young fellow, who never had dreamed that slaveholding or slave selling was either unmanly or sinful. He despised the man who was cruel to his horse or his negro, and resolved that the people who had fallen into his hands should be well treated and made happy.

This young George Percy soon came, to settle up the estate; and his aunt thought she had nothing to do but to tell him that Weza and her boys were free by the word of her husband. But he looked on the statement just as a young Northerner would when told that part of the property

which was legally his must be thrown into the sea or the fire. He had no idea of casting away fifteen hundred or two thousand dollars, because his uncle had told him to do it.

"If," he said, "this had been a matter of conscience with my uncle, he would have attended to it in life. He held on to the woman and her boys as long as he could, so you surely cannot expect me to make a sacrifice for his conscience which he would not make himself." "And who could gainsay his reasoning?"

Little Dike won the heart of the young man at first sight, who thought he was pleasing poor Weza by telling her that he was going to keep him for a pet boy, to hunt, and fish and drive with him.

The result of young George Percy's visit was a sale of the property, including the slaves belonging to the Percy estate; the widow keeping those she had brought with her, that she might return them to her old home and their relatives. And so, after all the promises of the dead to the dead and the living, Weza and little Sampson were, one bright summer morning, with thirty others, exposed for sale in the slave market. All the horrors of plantation life, which she had heard described, rose before her, and she begged George Percy to

sell herself and her boy to one man; which he promised, if possible, to do.

When her turn came to mount that block which had been like the scaffold to hundreds of agonized hearts, a man came up, and said to her, "I want a nurse. Are you kind to children?"

"I'd be kind, sir," said Weza, "to any livin' cretur"; but it takes happy folks to make little chil'en happy. I'd rather work harder, so as to have no time to think; for my heart's broke."

"Well, I don't want you. I've got homesick folks enough about me now. I'm after a merry-hearted woman for my nursery," replied the man, as he gave a short whistle and passed on.

The bidding began on "a faithful, Christian woman, born and brought up in Dr. Percy's family, and her boy, Sampson."

Some one made a bid, and then the work went on, poor Weza being too faint to see the faces about her. Presently she heard the word, "Gone," and the boy, pulling her skirts, shrieked out, "O, mammy, dat awful ole Frenchman from de big plantation in B. parish has bought you *widout me!*" And at these words she fell fainting on the block, and was taken up by the man in attendance, who gave her water, and spoke cheerily to her—this was part of his business.

That afternoon, with twenty others, Weza sailed up the broad river towards the plantation, whose owner, fearing neither God nor man, used his slaves up fast, and was, therefore, constantly replacing them. She proved the poorest bargain he had ever made in the slave-market, for she fainted at her first task in the field.

The overseer, whose duty, he said, was "not to nurse up feeble women, but to get all the work he could out of tough ones," pronounced her worthless for field work; and told her there was luck before her, as she must be sold again. Weza plead with him to try her one week, as she had lost track of little Sampson. The child knew where she was, and she had a faint hope that some merciful person might have bought him who would write to her owner about him. "If I go away," she said, to the overseer, "I'll lose dis boy forever and forever."

But the man "couldn't be bothered;" and to pacify her, he said there was a small planter there from higher up river, just now looking after a woman for housework, and he'd give her a good name to him, and so keep the run of her, and if her boy was ever heard from, he'd let her know. He was not a brutal man; he spoke kindly to her, and said, "Trust me, now, to look up that boy."

Mrs. Percy had parted with Weza with many regrets and some twinges of conscience; but these were not strong enough to draw the purchase money from her own private purse, and thus to fulfill her promise to her dead husband, and wipe that stain from his memory. She had, however, given her a trunk well filled with clothing for herself and her boy, into which Weza had put all the little keepsakes she and the children had received at Christmas and other times, with half of a torn New Testament which old Job had given her mother, who, as well as himself, had been able to read. The trunk, however, was missing when she reached the Frenchman's plantation, and she set off with her boorish new master — who seemed to occupy a middle ground between the planter and the poor whites — with nothing but a clean dress and two aprons, tied up in one of her gay turban handkerchiefs.

"O, Lord Jesus," she whispered, as she followed the heavy tread of Dave Huggins to the boat, "come down and lead poor Weza out o' dis wilderness? I's got nobody else now; let me lean full on dee, God o' my mammy!"

CHAPTER V.

DAVE HUGGINS "AT HOME."

THE crazy little steamer La Belle, after uttering several ludicrous shrieks, landed half a dozen passengers at "Sandy Bend," back of which lay the Huggins plantation. Weza, with her little bundle in her arms, followed Dave, as with heavy steps he ploughed up the sand, leaving deep furrows behind him. She walked much of the way with her eyes closed, and her lips moving in silent prayer. She did not mean to be heard, but once she cried out, "O, Jesus!" laying her hand against her throbbing heart, when Dave turned round, in a little surprise, and exclaimed, "A swearin', ha? Well, now, that overseer lied, for he gin yer a character for a Christian. Yer must quit that, for it only wastes yer breath without doin' no good. Nor I don't 'low no drinkin', nuther, on my place; 'cause if the folks get that habit, they'll steal my gin, and besides, they won't work

so well. I'm a powerful moral man, though I don't go to meeting. I have a religion of my own, though my neighbors don't know it, 'cause I keeps it to myself; and I won't have no wickedness about me. It don't pay." These were Dave Huggins' moral principles.

"I was only prayin', massa, to my brother Jesus," replied Weza, with a sigh. "He's de only one dat can stick to me now, and I been axin' Him not to quit me for one minute, fear I goes wild 'bout my boys and my friends to de doctor's."

"Pho! pho!" cried Dave, cheerily, still plowing up the sand, "you'll soon get over this and forget 'em all. Them that's been sold a dozen times don't mind it a bit."

Weza made no reply, but followed on till they turned from the road into a lane which presented a very sudden change. The pine rails, which had once formed a fence, lay scattered on the ground just where they had fallen from time to time, as their props decayed; and the deep cart ruts, with weeds springing on either side, told that little use was now made of the lane, either for business or pleasure.

They soon came in sight of the house, and Weza, struck by its contrast with her old house, exclaimed,

ed, forgetting herself for the moment, "My goody, sure, dis isn't de mansion house, massa?"

"Yes, and it's the biggest house, on the ground floor, in all this parish; only it wants a little fixin' up," replied Dave, triumphantly.

"A little fixin' up!" It wanted pulling down for fire-wood, rather. There wasn't a firm shingle or clapboard on it. The roof of the verandah was propped up at one end, where the original pillars had given way, by two unhewn pine trees, stripped only of their most prominent branches. On this verandah was a settee—a missing leg having been supplied by a butter-tub—and two bottomless chairs. A broken cart in the last stages of decay lay on the lawn, with its rusted irons under it. A carryall, once a fine affair, reclined gracefully on the grass where the lost wheel lay, with several openings for air and light in the leather top. Seated most insecurely within this vehicle, were some half a dozen little blacks, eating corn cake and molasses, and enjoying a most painful ride of pleasure.

Dave stamped his heavy foot on the rickety thill, making the whole structure shiver, and cried out, "Cut off, there! Home with yer, and tell yer own master he must provide wagons for yer to ride in! He is rich enough, dear knows!"

The children scrambled out, tumbling over each other, heels over head, losing their corn cake and bumping their crowns. The driver, a confident youth of seven summers, replied, with a sardonic grin, "Our massa got heaps o' carr'ges, but he haint got no tumble-down ones for chil'n to play 'take jorney' in. He aint rich 'nough to keep sich-like a one as dis. He! he! he!" Then he took to his heels, the others scampering after him, over a sick-looking corn-field. Dave growled out something about "a gun," and threw two or three clods of earth after them. Young Africa, nothing daunted, shouted back from what he considered a safe distance, "He, he, he! Dat's one of de guns yer hears tell on, but never sees. He, he, he!" Dave, however, took no notice of this taunt.

They now overtook, near the house, a pale mulatto boy, seated on a white horse which defied description,—a caricature of that noble animal. Before him, and resting on the neck of the meek brute, the boy held a bucket of water, which slopped over at every step, drenching both the horse and himself. He turned round with a pleasant smile, and holding the pail on with his left hand, gave his right one to Weza, and cried, "Hillo! mighty glad to see yer. Hope ye's well," and the tri moved on together.

"There, now," cried Dave, proudly, "see that

contrivance for gettin' water from the spring. That boy's mighty lame, haint got no use of his legs, and all he can do he has to do a hossback. I've gin him that hoss for his own, and 'tween 'em they do a mighty heap o' work," he added, looking proudly at both the horse and his rider. "I reckons they go down to the spring twenty times a day."

When they reached the door, Weza took the pail from lame Obed, and when she saw the small supply of water it contained she wondered that he did not go forty times instead of twenty.

Dave threw open a door, and exclaimed, "Well, old woman, I've fetched what yer want this time, I reckon. Old De Grow's overseer tells me this woman is a mighty fine Christian; that she cooks like an angel and never runs off; yer couldn't hire her to go, 'cause she believes in de cuss on Canaan, and dat it would be better to get rid on't. Now speak to her civil, for she's mighty down in the mouth about some boys she's left: and let's see if we can't get a decent meal o' victuals for once."

The lady to whom these remarks were addressed occupied two chairs, lolling on one, and stretching out her limbs on another. In her mouth she held a pipe, which was not removed when she said, as well as she could with clenched teeth, "Glad to see yer. Hope yer tough, and good natur'd, and

cheerful, and willin', and smart, and that yer hate company, and keep clear o' meetin's and sich like. Take a cheer. Got a pipe?"

This was uttered with such monotony of voice and such lustreless eyes that Weza at first thought the woman half drunk; but she soon saw that it was not so, and replied with a trembling voice, "I wasn't never 'lowed to smoke, thank yer, missus."

"Put down yer bundle and go out in the kitchen and get dinner, then. Be mighty quick, for I'm a'most starved. Yer'll find corn-meal some'ers out there, and bacon, heaps 'ont, a hangin' round," she said, by way of orders. "If there ain't no wood split, yer can pick up corn cobs, I reckon."

"How many for dinner, missus, and where'll I lay the table?" asked poor Weza in a tremulous tone.

"Him and 'me's all the ladies and gentlemen there is, and we have our table sot right here by my cheer," replied the mistress, from the side of the pipe. "We've got a dinin' room to the mansion house, but it wants a heap o' fixin' up; and then it's a heap a trouble to git up out o' yer cheer and go into another room every time ye eat. So I have this table hauled up to me, and a cheer sot for him."

"Has yer got the rheumatiz, missus?" asked Weza, compassionately.

"Well, no, guess not 'zactly; but my jintz is kind of weak and tired all the time; so I likes to sit still mostly, with my legs up in a cheer," said the lady.

This statement was strictly true not only of Mrs. Huggins herself but of her husband, and, indeed, of every thing they owned. He sat in one chair, she sat in two. The few men they owned sat down in the field half the time. Obed, the lame boy, sat on his horse, and the horse, once the star of a circus, retained the one trick of sitting like a hound on his haunches. Obed had acquired a strange facility of holding on to his friend under all difficulties; so that a young gentleman on the next plantation had playfully named the united pair "The Centaur." Several carts and wagons belonging to the plantation had also taken permanent seats on the grass. The verandah roof, as we have stated, sat on pine logs, and the settee sat on a butter tub; while the mansion house — Huggins clung to this name as the ghost of its former grandeur — looked as if it were making an effort to sit down also. The owners and their whole establishment could have said from the heart, with "Cheap Jack," "Our favorite posture is sitting down."

This physical inactivity was not without its blessings to the slaves of Huggins, several of whom had deliberately walked off, feeling quite sure that he would not have the energy to chase them, although he would shout after them about "my gun." Smart blacks had been too much for him; and he had lost so much by them, that he had long since come to the conclusion to buy cheap such as could scarcely better themselves by running off. So his working force now consisted of three old men, a young one with a stiff leg, and two half grown boys in the field, with the cripple Obed, and Weza for the house. The last had been bought to fill the place of "an ungrateful creature" who had run off after having had a present of a red calico dress, and a pink turban at Christmas.

Dave Huggins labored under the impression that he was the scion of a noble but fallen house, and that he must in some way keep up its dignity. As he had not energy to vie with his neighbors, he threw all his deficiencies into the descending scale of "bad luck." The truth was, he had no reputation to keep up, having been in his best days—if he ever had such—the overseer of this place. The plantation had long been a bill of expense to its former owner, who had sold it to him and gone North, years ago, to educate his

family. The decay, which had been going on there for two generations, advanced rapidly when Dave, now his own master, married one of the "poor whites," a woman too lazy to breathe—if she could help doing it—and devoted his time to the pipe and gin bottle. While he had a great desire to be a respectable man like Col. Leon, his neighbor, he could not rouse himself to plan, or carry out work on the plantation. When he occasionally woke up to see his low estate, he would say, mournfully, "If I'd only a married Madam Leon, I might have been a gentleman by this time." When Mrs. Huggins couldn't get tobacco enough, or had to rise from off her chair for any thing, she would sigh, and say, "If I'd a married Col. Leon when I was a gall, I mought a had whatsomever I wanted now, and been a lady, too, as well as 'Madam' that holds her head so high, and don't ax us to her dinner parties." They both seemed to regard their elegant neighbor and his saintly wife as in some way responsible for their "ill luck," and comforted themselves by calling them "nabobs" and "dukes." Still, when the colonel sent Dave new corn seed or samples of sugar cane, or when he chatted with him a moment in the road, he was greatly flattered, and usually boasted of it at home, saying,

"Well, I tell yer, he's a real gentleman. There's something in 'lood, after all, for them Leons always was a sort o' noble. I've heern tell that their great grandfather took dinner with the French king once."

CHAPTER VI.

DAVE HUGGINS RECEIVES HIS FIRST LETTER.

WHAT Dave's establishment lacked in style it made up in plenty. There was little variety in the culinary department, because they never had a cook; but bacon hung from every beam in kitchen and shed—the smoke-house having taken a permanent “seat” in the form of loose boards and shingles—and an overflowing corn bin invited both slaves and poultry to come and partake; which they did with equal freedom. And this generosity was the planter's boast and pride. His one argument on the subject of right and wrong, which was then shaking the nation, was, “Let them meddlesome Yankees come down here and see my niggers eat, and I guess they'd quit abusin' slavery; I'd like to see the one o' 'em that would take this lot off my hands and feed 'em as well as I do for the work they'd get!”

That man couldn't have been found at the North;

and Dave's working force would probably have been provided with hospital accommodations here. He was truly a philanthropist, in his way. He was too generous to starve, too good-natured to scold, and too lazy to whip them; so that his government had resolved itself into this threat: "Yer'll see me a fetchin' out my gun."

This gun was a myth, a fabulous creation of his own brain, and occupied, among fire-arms, much the position which "Mrs. Harris" occupies among women.

Weza cooked the first rude dinner and laid the cloth without an additional hint from her mistress. While "hunting up the dishes," as she had been told to do, her poor heart throbbed with the pain of homesickness and bereavement, and the tears stole down her cheeks. Mrs. Huggins saw the drops between two whiffs of her pipe, and said, kindly, "Don't fret; life's full o' botherations, any way, whether yer rich or poor, black or white. I lost two boys once myself, without their bein' sold, — they died with snuffles-like, a wheezin' and wheezin' till they died. I felt powerful bad, first go off; but I soon got over it, and now I never think on 'em 'less somebody speaks on't. Children's a heap o' trouble, any way; and if yer hain't got 'em, they hain't to be looked after.

There was forever somethin' to be done for 'em; corn cake to be spread with molasses, and then their faces to wash, and—all creation. It was a mighty bother, too, to keep the run of their shoes, and as to stockin's, I never could keep two o' one color on mine! And yer children would ha' been forever gettin' splinters in their bare feet, and yer'd had awful times takin' keer on 'em, 'sides doin' yer work."

"But O missus, I could work myself to death for one sight o' my boys, or even for a word from dem; dey's so dear to my heart. I believe it's a bleedin', for I thinks I feels de blood a tricklin' down."

"Oh, keep up heart, and when quarterly meetin' comes, yer shall go to't, if I have to make the hoe cake with my own hands, yer shall; for I like yer looks, yer so feelin' in yer way to tired folks!"

"Please, missus, moughtn't I go to de Lord's house once of a Sunday to git a few words to lean my soul agin durin' de week?" asked Weza.

"Well, no, I'm 'feared not, for yer master's got powerful sot agin the meetin' near us. Col. Leon sot out to git it painted, and he come to see what Huggins would give towards it. But Huggins said he never wore the paint off, and so wasn't goin' to put it on. He said he never once leaned

up agin the clapboards, as some folks did; but always *sot down on the grass* afore and after meetin'. The colonel he got riled, and said Huggins was mean. Now Huggins is a powerful high-spirited man, and couldn't stan' that; so we've left the Presbyterians and goes to Methodis' meetin' quarterly—that's once in three months; and it saves a powerful lot o' time, besides yer Sunday clothes, not to go so often. My best silk looks five years younger since I quit 'goin' every week, and my parasol that's got a slit into it, don't let the sun on my head, neither, when I don't use it," said missus.

Weza groaned, but made no reply.

"Yer massa will let yer eat as much as yer want, day or night; but there's two things he's down on,—goin' to meetin's and havin' company. It gets yer all stirred up, and makes yer discontented with yer own home. And yer can get religion just as well by yerself, as if yer had a paid minister to get it for yer. I'm mighty glad yer a Christian, 'cause yer want heaps o' patience here. Yer the only sound one on the plantation, and there'll be heaps put upon yer. We've been awful unlucky in havin' so many of our people get old and lame." She forgot they had all been bought so, at low prices.

Here Dave came in, dragging his feet heavily along, to ask if dinner was not ready. Seeing Weza's tears, he asked, good-naturedly, "What's the matter? Aint you had enough to eat yet?"

"Yes, thank ye, massa, plenty; and there's heaps there when I'm hungry agin," she replied.

"Well, well!" cried Dave, in surprise, "when a body has enough to eat, I can't see for the life o' me, what they can find to cry about." Such was Dave Huggins' idea of the vast capacities and the deep longings of the immortal mind.

Weza found it true, as Mrs. Huggins had suggested, that she would need grace in her new home. She was really at the head of a private hospital, and her coming to the plantation was like the advent of a cheering and healing angel. She relieved poor Obed of many a long, wet ride from the spring, and put his clothes in order so that he was not forced to tie them on with rope-ends. She fed the hogs — whose name was legion — to ease the youth with the stiff knee; and for the old men, who wrought in the field or not, as they pleased, she sewed, and talked, and "preached" — they called it — about "de dear Lord Jesus, dat was all and in all to her soul now." But her talking was very meekly done; it was her pure, patient life, and her whispered prayers, that broke

as a sunbeam on the dull, slow, lazy life at the Huggins plantation.

Weza had been some weeks in her new home, toiling hard to perform her own duties, and to aid the less favored, and not an unkind word had fallen on her ear.

A remarkable event occurred one day on the Huggins plantation: Dave received a letter. Obed and the horse had not been to the post-office for a year, for their owner lived as independent of mail arrangements as did the fowls on his place; but the colonel's Jim had shouted to the "centaur," on the road, that he had brought down a letter for massa Huggins when he went for the mail.

Obed possessed himself of the mysterious treasure, and in his haste to deliver it and to hear the news it contained, he actually slapped his horse with the palm of his hand, under the vain delusion that he might thus quicken its pace.

When Dave took the letter in his hand, he exclaimed, "Who on the face o' natur' could have writ *me* a letter, and what can it be about? I don't owe nobody nothing, and I haint got nobody to die and invite me to their funeral." Then he peeped into the end, much as one would into a serpent's retreat, but all within was blank or dark.

Then he studied the handwriting ; he was not an expert, and all writing looked alike to him. Still looking seriously at the paper, which was a ruled leaf from an old account book, he asked his wife, "Have yer got any folks any where that could die?"

"No, not as I know on. I had a sister once, yer know, and after the old folks died she went off to Texyas, or some of them wild countries. But she wouldn't know where to send for me if she was dead," replied Mrs. Huggins, not at all disturbed by the sad suggestion.

"Well, it beats all!" cried Dave. "Who can have writ it?"

"Why don't yer open it and find out?" was the sensible suggestion which Mrs. Huggins sent forth from the side of her pipe stem.

But Dave enjoyed the excitement of suspense ; so he tantalized himself a while longer, before he put on his brass-bowed spectacles and broke the red wafer. When he did so, his wife actually rose up, crossed the room and looked over his shoulder, although her youthful training had been so neglected that she could not read writing. Let us not be misunderstood. We do not affirm that Mrs. Huggins was an illiterate woman for one of her class ; for she was not. She could read the Bible

—if she wanted to—and was mistress of the almanac in all its diversified lore of sun, and moon, and tides.

After studying and deciphering the hieroglyphics a few moments, Dave whispered "It's from old DeGrow's overseer, about Weza's boy. He says he's had a letter from the gentleman that bought him, and that the boy is only a plaything in the house, and is as happy as if he never had a mother. 'He—is—dre-dressed—up like a puppy,'" read Dave, "no, tain't *puppy*; p-u-p-p-e-t, puppet, and the—ladies—call him the—Black Prince. So—tell—yer—little—woman—I have let the gentleman—know—where—she—is,—so that if he—ever—comes—this way—with the boy—he can hunt her—up.'

"But it'll never do to let her know this has come, or she'll take advantage and run off. If she should ever get powerful troubled about him I'll tell her on't," added Dave, in a confidential tone, to Mrs. Huggins.

So Dave crumpled up the rude letter and put it in among the innumerable contents of his deep pocket, as a kind-hearted grandmother stows away sugar plums for the future comfort of some troubled child. Mrs. Dave settled back into her

old posture with the remark, "She's a mighty nice little creatur' and very feelin' toward tired folks, and we must keep her at all hazards."

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CHAPTER VII.

A VISION AND AN INVITATION.

THE evening of the day on which the letter was received, Huggins and his wife heard an animated voice holding forth in the outer kitchen, interrupted occasionally by such exclamations as, "Well, now, dat's mighty strange!" "Praise de Lord!" "Hallelujah."

"Got company, sure's I'm alive!" cried Dave, rising; "for none of my folks talks off like that! Fetch me the gun!"

Of course, as Mrs. Huggins knew he had no gun, she did not essay to obey orders, but retained her comfortable position in two chairs, enveloped in a delicate drapery of tobacco smoke.

Neither did Dave wait for her to obey him, but went out with considerable animation to the kitchen to take aim at the intruders with his invisible weapon. But there were no intruders there.

His own family were all seated, some on up-turned corn baskets, others on blocks and benches, while the lame boy reclined at his ease in a nest of corn husks. With open mouth and eyes they were listening to the usually shy and quiet little woman, who was relating to them some wonderful event.

"Who's been here for *company*?" asked the master, gruffly.

"Nobody, massa," replied all in one voice.

"Who's this a preachin', then?" he asked with a searching glance, for he thought there was some neighbor's slave there who had hidden at his approach.

"Nobody," replied Weza. "Dat was only me a talkin', massa."

"Yer makin' suchlike noise as that! I didn't know there was so much noise in yer. What was yer a sayin'?"

"O, massa, I've had such a mighty power come over me," cried the little woman, "dat I couldn't hold my peace. 'Pears like somebody else was a talkin' with my tongue, and sayin' things dat's too high for me to speak; and de more I talk, de more de great words and big thoughts pours into my soul. 'Pears like I had wings now and wanted to fly away!"

"No, no, yer mustn't talk about rnnin' away. I don't 'low that, and besides, yer a Christian, Weza, and yer surely wouldn't cheat me out of the price I paid for yer."

"No, massa, yer welcome to de poor frail body, and I'll sarve yer faithful wid dat; but *de soul*, dat aint bound! Dat flies on wings hether and yon, up to heaven and back to earth, and far way off to de chil'days when I had a mammy dat loved and sarved de Lord, and dat gin her poor bashful little child up to him to take keer on, when she went home to Jesus."

"Why," cried Dave, "yer've got a heap of religion, little woman, as much as if yer'd been owned by Col. Leon and got Scriptur' larnin' from madam every Sunday night with her black folks! She's been 'cused of larnin' some on 'em to read, sly; but I can't believe that! She's too good a woman to break the laws of the land. What were yer preachin' about?" he asked.

"Why, massa," cried Weza, smiling through her tears, "I see de Lord Jesus last night, and he held my hand in his and talked wid me, oh, how lovely! I was tellin' dese ones on't."

"Pho, pho," cried Dave, "that's all stuff! Black folks that has religion always sees sights and such like in their sleep, and thinks it's real."

"No, massa, not *all*; I never see de Lord afore. *He did truly come to me last night* and whisper such lovin' words, dat I cried 'cause he wouldn't take me home wid him den, — my Brother Jesus! O massa, ax him to visit yer."

"What did he say?" asked Dave, taking a seat and looking at Weza in surprise.

"He said words beautiful enough to make a whole heaven out of," replied the little woman.

"Well, go on," said Dave, "I like to hear stories when such good behaved folks as yer tells them."

"Well, massa, I was a layin' in dat great empty room wid my eyes wide open and seein' of de stars through de window, when all of a sudden I heard de sweetest music, like it was miles off! Oh, it made me think of my home up yonder, and de tears roll down and I say, 'O, Brother Jesus, take me and my boys where dat music is!' Den, massa, all de big room look like it was a forest full of great pine trees and I was feared I couldn't find my way out. De pine trees sing round me, and de far off music come nearer and nearer, and de stars shine through de branches. All in a minute a great light shine round; and in de midst of de light, wid de crown on his head and de wounds in his hands, dere stood my brother; him dat was

once a sufferer on de arth and so knows how to feel for us. Den I went up to him, and I says, 'Lord, I'm in de wilderness here, and I can't get out!' Den he took my hand in his and clasped a long gold chain—like my other missus wear round her neck—on my wrist and told me to look round 'bout de wilderness. I looked, and it was full of a company dat no man could number; and massa, heaps on 'em was held by a chain like mine, and all the chains was gathered up in his heart. I looked way off in de dark corners to some dat was hanging back. De chains was very loose and some on 'em was down in de dust all dimmed; but dey was dere still; and our lovin' brother dat loves unto de end, he still held on, even when some on 'em tried to break loose from him! Den I saw my little boys and heaps more I knew, all bound to him by gold chains, and he led 'em on safe. Dey sometimes stumbled and fell, but he drew 'em up and on after him.

"Den I cried, 'Oh, take me out of dis wilderness!' but he say, 'No; but I will lead yer through it, and by-and-bye out of it, and take yer home to glory!' But he said, 'Yer most travel on patient and faithful and praying, and give yerself up for others, like I did. I've got work for yer in

dis wilderness.' Den I say, 'All dat I will try to do for Jesus!'

"Soon I saw one powerful great man dat look mighty cross, and I was feared of him and tried to get far away from him. But my brother Jesus read that in my heart, and he point to de great man and say, 'He too is bound by a gold chain to my heart and I love him wid everlasting love! I give him to be yer shepherd, to comfort yer poor, weak heart here and to help yer on to glory!' When I look at de big man again, his face was covered with kind smiles and he held out his hand and say, 'I'll take keer o' yer poor, weak little woman!' And den I felt like I had a whole garishon o' sogers a guardin' of me. 'Peared like de Lord and his hosts was all about me.

"I talked with him till de light broke, and den de wilderness vanished off; and my brother went too, sayin' still as he left me, 'I will lead yer through the wilderness and out of it and home to glory!' And I feel de gold chain round my hand yet and him drawing me!"

Dave made no reply, and encouraged by his silence, the little woman said, "I been tellin' dem dis and all 'bout my life when I was at home, and dey been tryin' to pick up de little religion dey

once had, and we was just goin' to say our prayers and sing, when yer come in, massa. Mought we go on?"

"Pho! pho!" cried Dave, "yer've been dreamin' and I reekons yer've talked enough for this night! and don't yer go teachin' my boys to read, Weza, mind that."

"Two on 'em can read as good as me, massa; but it won't hurt 'em. Dey'll work just as faithful," she replied.

"Well, I never larnt 'em that," replied Dave, with a nod of satisfaction; "and so can't be held responsible for it! If they'd never tell on't, so's to stir up the neighbor's blacks, they mought take old books out of two chests in the garret to 'muse themselves o' nights, for all I care."

"Mought we have a Bible, massa? I lost my piece of old Job's dat he gave my mammy when I was sold," said the little woman.

"Your missus has got one that a trampin' parson gin her, and she's so choice on't that she won't even read it herself. It's got gold on the kivers. I don't believe she'd let yer touch it with one finger," replied the master.

"Mought I ax her, massa?" inquired Weza.

"Yes; and if she'll lend it to any body on arth, she'll lend it to yer, little woman; yer so pleasant,

and need so little looking arter," he said patronizingly.

Weza tried the experiment, and to her joy was allowed to cover "the Book" with brown paper and carry it into the kitchen, her mistress remarking to her husband, as she disappeared with her treasure, "We never had such peaceable creatur's since we've had a house; and if they don't go to dances, nor drink, nor go to meetin,' the least we can do is to wink at their readin' the Book a little. It can't hurt 'em!"

After this speech, Mrs. Huggins filled her pipe, lighted it, and then settled herself back into her chair "to rest."

With their new liberty the tongues of the folks in the kitchen were loosed, and they told of their early life, and friends, and of their thoughts of God and eternity. They sung sacred words, without regard to metre or rhyme, to the airs of old plantation songs, and thus lulled their master to sleep when he had sought his pillow.

When wonders once begin they seem never to cease. It was not long after the arrival of the letter, which Dave had told Obed was "an order for four pigs," that the Colonel's Jim rode up to the Huggins mansion house and asked for the missus. That lady gave orders that he should

ride round to the end of the house, where she could speak to him from the window without getting out of her chair! He did so, and handed her a note, saying, with a grin of delight on his sable face, "Dere's a billet my missus wrote yer, and she wants yer to read it and tell me the answer; yer needn't stop to write it," added the roguish boy.

"Thank yer," said Mrs. Huggins, her cheeks flushing with pleasure. "Tell her I'll come if Huggins will, and that I've been nigh 'bout possessed to git to one o' them parties for a long time."

"Don't want yer," said Jim, gruffly.

"Oh, it's only for men folks, ha? Well, that's too bad; but still I'll let Huggins go, for the Colonel's sake. I think heaps of the Colonel—he's such a gentleman," replied Mrs. Huggins, a little crest-fallen.

"Don't want Massa Huggins, nuther," replied Jim, not very respectfully; "and we won't let him in if he comes."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Huggins, looking anxiously at the closed note, "tell yer missus I'm obleeged to her, but I couldn't make up my mind about it till Huggins comes in. Then I'll let her

know." So Jim rode off to repeat the joke to his friends.

When Dave came in and heard there was a note from Madam Leon, he called the brass-bowed spectacles into use again, and read, that on account of the industry and good behavior of her people during harvest, she had promised them a party in the kitchen, and desired Mrs. Huggins to let her people, and especially her new woman come to it. This was quite a blow to Mrs. Huggins' aspirations for high life; but the note directed to herself—the first one she had ever received in her life—acted as a healing balm to the wound. She meekly accepted the compliment offered through her servants, and said, "They mought as well go, I suppose?"

"Well; I don't know 'bout that," replied Dave. "Weza'll get acquainted with the Colonel's women, and then there'll be trot, trot, from one plantation to tother all the time. Weza's easy now that she's got yer Bible and leave to talk religion to the men; but she'll see how the Leon blacks is dressed up and made on, and she'll get oneasy here and think we ain't grand enough."

"Well, and now I think on't, the creatur' hain't a stitch to wear," said Mrs. Huggins; "she's wore out the two gowns she brought with her, and I've

been too tired to go to town to buy any since she came. She will look like a beggar side on the Leon girls; and they'll think we're too poor or too mean to keep her decent."

The word "mean" touched a sensitive spot in Dave's heart. "Yes, yes," he cried, "the Colonel called me mean once about that meetin' house, and now I'll show him if I be! I'll go to town to-morrow, and buy the winter clothes for the boys, and new boots; and they shall go and look as good as any body's niggers! We can't buy women's clothes ready made; but yer can give Weza one of yer gowns and buy yer another, ha?"

"Yes, that I'll do," replied Mrs. Huggins; "and I'll put her in such trim as shall make the Leon women blush! Call her in."

Dave did as ordered, and when poor Weza heard that she was going to a party, she burst into tears, and said, "O, missus, I thank you, for I'm powerful lonesome here, and will be so glad to see a woman's face for once."

"Yes, and I'll dress yer up right smart in my own clothes that I wear to quarterly meetin'; and I'll let yer carry my peacock fan and my pocket handkercher." This latter article was a luxury never indulged in by any one there except on festive occasions, such as quarterly meetings and

funerals, when Mrs. Huggins appeared out in the changeable silk in which she was married, and her snuff-colored crape shawl, embroidered with flowers in all the hues of nature.

She had forgotten, when making this generous proposal, that her own wardrobe was reduced to the red and green silk, honorable for age, the one she had on, and a thin pink muslin, somewhat faded by time and wear.

The next two days little was thought of by these grown up children, who lived a hermit life, but the social joy before them in Madam Leon's kitchen.

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CHAPTER VIII.

THE PARTY AND THE MAN OF THE VISION.

THE day of the party came, but alas, the rain fell heavily, and a raw, cold air drove all who were not pressed with outdoor business, round the fire! The sable members of Dave Huggins' family watched the clouds, hoping against hope, and prophesying, against all signs, that it was goin' for to clear at noon." Obed remarked jocosely that weather made no difference to "great men that always rid a hossback," and that he should go "if de mud was up to his hosses' eyes." The old men said they'd never made any but stolen visits to the Colonel's folks, and that go they would, rain or no rain! The youth with a stiff knee begged a ride behind Obed, and the half-grown boys "liked rain" they said, "better'n sunshine." But poor Weza trembled when she thought of the long walk through deep mire in a pink muslin and Mrs. Huggins' slippers, twice too big for her, tied on by a twine which was fastened at the heel!

The men were in high spirits over their new clothes and shoes and gay cotton neckerchiefs. They felt that these were to give them a new position in society, for hitherto they had been obliged to stay at home, even from quarterly meeting.

As they sat round the kitchen fire when they should have been at work, Dave opened the door suddenly. "Come, now, yer lazy fellows," he cried, "is this the way yo're a goin' to pay mo for them splendid clothes? Off to yer work, or yer shan't go a step to the dance! Weza, yer missus wants yer.

Mrs. Huggins wanted to say she thought Weza "had better give up the visit, as she mought take her death of rhumatiz; and wors'n that, Mrs. Leon might think they were either poor or mean or shiftless, to let a woman walk so far without an umbrelly in a summer muslin!"

"O, missus dear, don't please say one word 'bout me not goin', else I'll either go crazy or die. I must go!"

"Well, then, if you must, you *must*, I suppose," replied Mrs. Huggins, too tired to argue the point; "but be sure to tell 'em our best hoss was lame, and that our wagon was to the wheelwright's, and

that yer wouldn't wear a thick dress and shoes nor carry an umbrelly, all I could say to yer!"

Weza did not pledge herself to repeat this beautiful fiction, but she was so afraid Mrs. Huggins might get energy to change her mind that she began her preparations soon after dinner, resolved to slip off and hide till the time came. Toilet accommodations were rather scant at the "mansion-house." On a bench by the door stood a pail of water with a gourd dipper in it, and against the outer wall, secured by the heads of four large nails, was a piece of looking-glass to accommodate such of the family as regarded personal appearance. One of the blacks accommodated another by pouring out water from the gourd, which was caught up and thrown over the face and hands. This was called "washing," on Huggins' plantation.

A difficulty now presented itself in the way of poor Weza. There was no white skirt to wear under the thin pink muslin; but that was a trifle compared to staying at home when her heart was aching to speak to some woman. So she arrayed herself as best she could, in the dress which was too big for her and in which she had taken a deep tuck with green thread, the only available color. She saw the blue linsey skirt through the thin fabric, and whispered to herself, "What

would my old missus say to see me lookin' dis way! But I'm bound to go! I feel like I'll hear somethin' 'bout my boys, or somebody! I feel like I was goin' to a preachin' more'n to a dance; like I was goin' to meet Jesus, 'stead of poor, tired creaturs like myself, tryin' to kiver up dere sor-sowr wid nonsense; I feel like dis is goin' to be a mighty night in my life!"

She had no reason to hide till the hour of the party, for Mrs. Huggins called her in, and after surveying her a moment, said, "Yer look mighty nice—all but yer dark petticoat; and yer as pretty a little woman as any lady can send there to-night. I've been up-stairs to a chist I haint opened this three year and found this here green scarf and blue bow of ribbon for yer! And if yer'll open that drawer yer'll find the handkercher"—the Huggins pocket handkerchief—"and the feather fan. And I do believe," she added, with more kindness than truth, "the rain has settled into a drizzle, and that aint nothin' to mind." It was still pouring in torrents and the mud was ankle deep. "Now," said she, "that I think c-i't it, I do believe there's an umbrelly in a corner behind the old loom, among a heap of trash the last master left here. Go up and hunt it."

Sure enough, that garret supplied an umbrella,

half of which was sound, so that with a pair of men's boots, which Weza drew on over Mrs. Huggins' slippers, she was equipped for the walk when she made her appearance down stairs.

"Now remember every thing yer hear, to tell me," said her mistress. "Yer'll set madam, for she's among her people, mostly, when any thing's goin' on. She's always on hand to the buryin's and the marryin's; and she looks after 'em when they're sick and old, like she was only a nigger herself, and no big lady. She'll speak to yer, no doubt, for she's civil to everybody's blacks; and she mought ax for me. If she does, tell her I'm a real lady, that I don't turn my hand to work but sit still in a cheer, mostly. Tell her I don't need to work; the master's got so well off—got such heaps of pine wood to sell yet off his land; and tell her, too, how't I give yer a Bible to read in the kitchen, 'cause I was so beset to have yer all religious! If she offers to come over to see me, seein' I'm weak in the jints, make her set a day, so we can have the place cleaned up first and be ready for her."

Both Mr. and Mrs. Huggins went to the door to look after the little brown woman, as with the two boys she set off, one half of her umbrella flapping against the side of her head at every step.

The other members of the family had preceded them. "Now look out yer don't make no 'quaintances," Huggins called after her. "Don't ax a livin' creatur' to call here. Well, that's sarchin' after pleasure, ha," he said to his wife, as he saw the trio plodding through the mud; but I'm afeared that ain't the worst on't! We'll hear of the roast pig and the chicken pie and the fancy trashes madam will give 'em, for the rest of our lives! and I'll bet my head, afore she lets 'em off, she'll give 'em all a trainin' in religion, -- she's so awful bigoted!"

"Well, I do say," replied Mrs. Huggins, "that if I had a married the Colonel when I was a gal, and was missus of all his fine things now, I wouldn't come down so low as to teach niggers every Sunday night in my kitchen; not I!"

"Me neither!" cried Huggins. "If I was so bigoted that I would have 'em larn religion, why I'd hire one of them low bred, ignorant Yankees, 'nat has to do it for a livin', to come down a purpose! It's their business, and I say let every man stick to his own trade! I'm amazed at the Colonel for a sufferin' her to do it! I'm too high sperited to let yer larn niggers!" and he cast a look of mingled pride and tenderness at his wife, who ac-

knnowledged his compliment with a capacious smile, taking care it didn't endanger her pipe.

"That's so, Huggins; I hold to everybody keepin' his own place; and I say the place of ladies that lives in mansion houses and whose husbands own acres and acres of pine land, is to sit still in their cheers, mostly: A lady mought as well be poor and have to earn her bread as to be always a worryin' about cuttin' out clothes and a mixin' physic and larnin' religion to the people!"

"I tell yer what I think madam is up to," said Dave; "she's sot out to git a high seat in heaven. Them Leons' was always bound to be on the top o' the heap wherever they be!"

"Yes, may be," said Mrs. Huggins, taking out her pipe to fill it; "but I believe what I once heerd a minister say, that every one has got to look out after his own individual soul; so I needn't look after our black people's souls—supposin' they've got souls. But I'm amazed at the Colonel, that he don't put a stop to her doin'."

"Pho! the Colonel!" cried Dave; "he's the easiest creatur' that ever lived. She's got the upper hand of him, mostly. They do say there ain't a livin' thing goes on over that great plantation that she don't poke her finger into. If there's a row 'tween the overseer and the field hands she

holds court and hears for and agin, and gives sentence like a judge. That's why Blaters was driv' off. She took sides with the people and said he was rough and overworked 'em, and he had to walk back to Ohi' quicker'n he come down. Let the old Colonel enjoy his company and go huntin' and fixin' up meetin'-houses and tendin' 'lections and readin' books, yer may do 'bout as yer like with him. The wonder is that the plantation hasn't turned itself upside down, or run off som'ers."

"It seems to stand, though, and things do look fine there, for all," replied Mrs. Huggins, with a sigh, as she thought of the contrast between "the easy Colonel's" plantation and her "high spirited" husband's.

The two boys and Weza, after awhile, conquered the mud, and in a very moist state reached the Colonel's plantation. As they approached the large kitchen, which was now brilliantly lighted by pine knots, they heard the buzzing of voices and the peals of laughter. Then Weza's heart failed her, and fearing to face the very people she had so longed to see, she drew back to hide herself behind the boys, and said, "I's feared to go in; I'll have to go back again, I's so bashful of strange folks." Just then a very great and very black

man, with arms full of pine knots, crossed their path.

"Hilloo, dere, Job and Dick, dat yer? And dis is the little new woman, ha, dat don't know nobody to speak to? Dat's a mighty shame, now! All human creatur's is human and wants company. I told missus what Obed said 'bout yer a lovin' of the Lord, and a livin' the life of a hermige there; and she said yer should come to-night, for she'd write a letter about it! Glad to see yer, sister; and our women be glad too. Dey're in a right big hurry to welcome yer. Here, Dick, car' in my pine knots and I'll show her up to de folks inside."

He gave the trembling little woman a grasp of his great hand as if he was an officer of justice arresting her, and quickened her steps not a little.

"Why, yer's drenched!" he said. "Couldn't Massa Huggins lend yer one of his diajinted hosses to ride over?"

"I never rid a hoss, brother, and would be skeart to try," replied the little woman. "'Sides, the hosses are sort of used up or something, and —"

"Ha, ha, ha!" burst forth and echoed again from the powerful lungs of her new friend. Every

thing down dere's used up or somethin', I guess, as well as the hosses, ha?"

"Dey was very kind to me, brother," said Weza; "lettin' me off peaceable and willin'."

"Ha, ha, ha! Dey hadn't sperit enough in 'em to forbid yer, ha?"

Weza looked up in the big man's face with surprise, and asked, just as they reached the door, "Has I ever seen yer afore and heerd yer voice, brother?"

Zack — for it was no other than our old friend from down river — replied, with a patronizing smile, "No, little woman, yer hain't never seen nor heerd me before, but may be yer've seen some ugly great fellow dat looked like me, though."

Several matronly women, with or without babies in their arms, now came to the door with a cheery welcome to the stranger.

The great kitchen presented a picture that almost dazzled Weza. It was lighted most gloriously with a pitch-pine fire, while women in bright gowns and turbans bustled round, cooking, laying tables, cutting bread, chatting and laughing. The men were seated on benches, barrels and chairs ranged close to the wall, and ordered by the busy women to "stay dere." Children crept about the floor or sat in the laps of the guests, while two

men seemed to be constantly piling on wood to keep up the light.

"Here, here, sisters, clar de track from dat fire, and let dis little brown woman dat's come through de rain to see us have a chance to dry her clothes! Dere, yer tend to her, Mammy Cle'patry, like a kind mother as yer is to us all!" cried Zack.

A wizened little black woman, who seemed exempt from the toil of the occasion, came up and grasping her hand, said, in an earnest tone, "Do Lord bless yer, and cause de light of his face to shine upon yer, dear. We've heard 'bout yer prayers dat yer might be brung out of dis wilderness, and we has jined in de prayers for yer!"

"Whar did ever yer hear of me, sister?" asked Weza, in a low tone, as she gave the old cloak and the boots to Cleopatra.

"Why, from Obed, sure. Whar else does any black folks get news? He and dat old hoss o' his'n travels reglar 'bout dis country, carryin' news as well as water; and dere isn't much goes on for twenty miles dat ho don't keep de run on, though he's mighty sly fear he'll be shut off from goin' to de spring!" All the party laughed heartily, and Obed laughed too; when the old woman said kindly, "Dis here comin' to us is one step out of de wild'ness, dear, and when de Lord once

takes hold of a poor child's hand, he never lets go! If yer've took one step yer'll take another and another, till yer get clear out of de wild'ness to de high plain whar yer get a view of de city whose maker and builder is God! Bimeby yer'll get clar up onto Mount Zion; and den yer'll shout and sing praises dat ever yer was led into de wilde'ness 'stead of bein' left on de plain of Sodom to tarn into a pillar of salt or a stone, as some has, and never see de heavenly land!"

"Dat's so; yes, yes!" cried Zack, "we must praise de Lord for de bitter physic as well as for de sweet honey from de comb!"

The sorrows of the wilderness began to press heavily on the poor woman's heart when she saw happy little boys hanging round their mothers, while she stood by the fire to dry the thin muslin dress that hung limp and wet about her.

Ere long the table was ready. At each corner was an immense pumpkin, holding a lighted pine knot, which cast a wild light over the merry scene. The centre of the table was occupied by a standing pig roasted to a rich brown, and holding in his mouth a bunch of gay autumn flowers, as if in mockery of his martyrdom. On each side of him stood a plump chicken pie, gayly decorated also. Four large wash-basins, lent by madam, were filled

with sweet potatoes, tomato-sauce, squash and onions, while pies and cakes towered up in the intermediate spaces. The chairs, tubs and benches were now drawn up and all took their seats, when one of the women, the bustling heroine of the occasion, called out, "Brother Zack, d'liver de blessin'!"

"No, Chrissy," said Zack; "here's Mammy Cloe, dat's been talkin' to de Lord 'fore I was borned, and has got more favor wid him by half den I has. Ax de blessin', mammy."

Cleopatra raised her withered face, extended her arms, and then cried out, in a solemn voice, for the help of Heaven here and "free seats bimeby at de right hand of God close by Jesus, who ain't no "spector of persons." All cried "Amen" to this prayer. The men then struck into the pig and chicken pie with tremendous energy, dividing them both with generosity and justice, and the supper vanished in a way that was perfectly marvellous.

When all had been cleared away, a young man with a very old fiddle was brought forward, and the master of ceremonies cried out, "Now all de young folks squar' off for a dance."

Several rose to their feet, but every eye was turned on Mammy Cloe, when she gave utterance to a deep groan. Some of the young girls scowled

at her, but Zack, who seemed a sort of king there, called out, "Speak, mammy. If de Lord has gin yer a word for us, pass it along."

"He has gin me a message to ye, chil'en, and it is shut up like a fire 'mong my bones till I delivers it out. De Word of de Lord tells dat dere is a time for to mourn, and a time for to dance. Dis is de time to mourn over our sins and over de sins of dis great and moughty nation o' people, and to humble ourselves, if mought be de Lord would turn away his anger from us.

"When de Is'lites made a calf and worshipped it, dey danced 'bout it; and trouble followed. Old Herod, he sot his niece to dancin', and dat led to mischief enough, for it cost our dear forefather — John de Baptist — his head! So Baptises is de last lot o' Christians dat ought to smile on dancin'. Now de Scriptur' do saith, 'Our dance shall be turned into mournin'.' I go for dancin' like King David danced — afore de Lord, to show his joy in him. But dere's a moughty difference 'tween de Lord's and de devil's dance. If ye'll shout and sing of de mercies of de Lord, and dance for his glory, I'll dance too, old as I is."

"Whist, now, and listen to me," cried Zack, in tones that almost shook the rafters. "Le's have a vote took how we'll muse ourselves dis

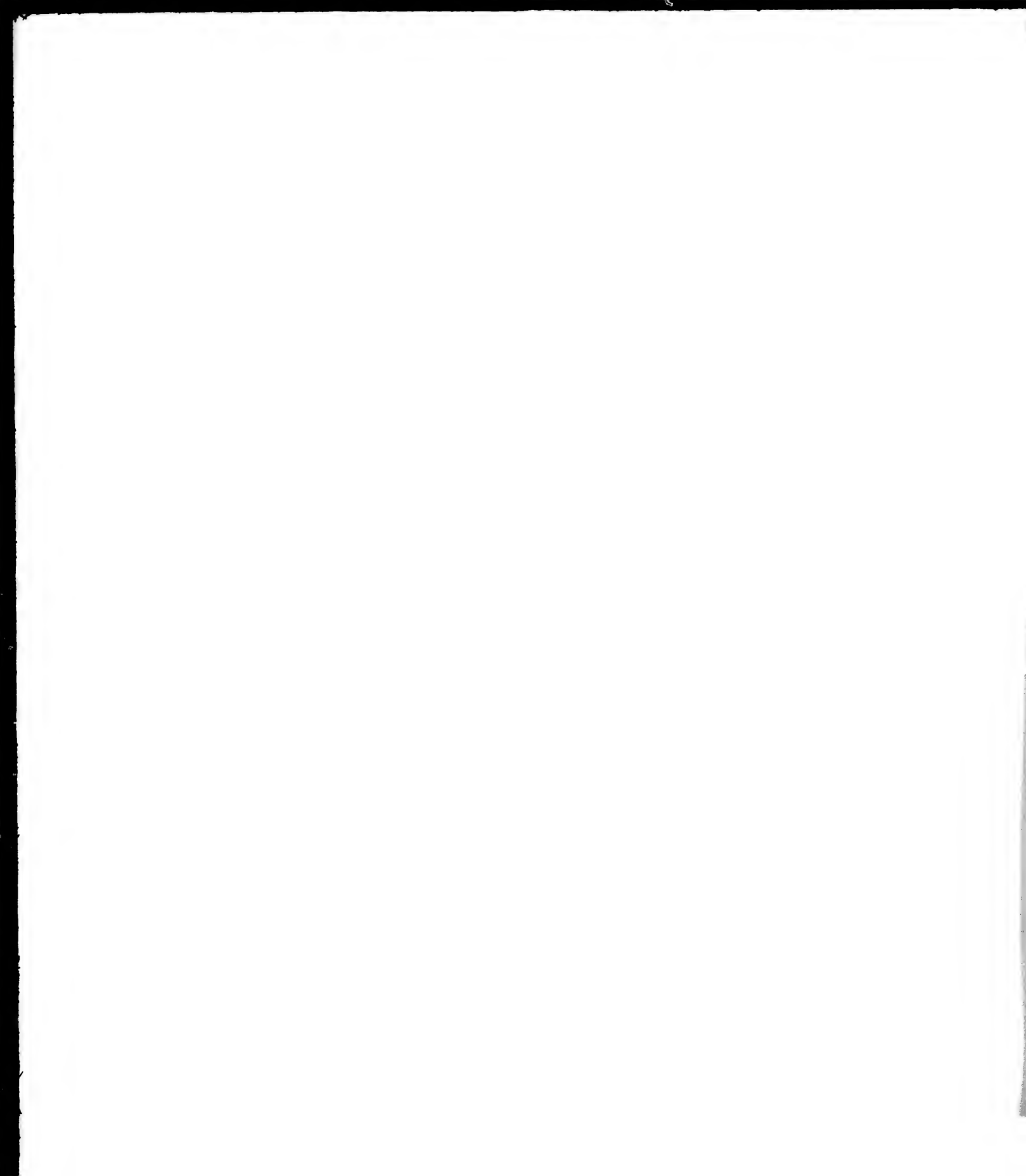
night. Den de majority shall rule. But if de majority grumbles, den let 'em go into de new corn-house and 'muse demselves like dey're a mind to; for how can two walk together 'cept dey be agreed?

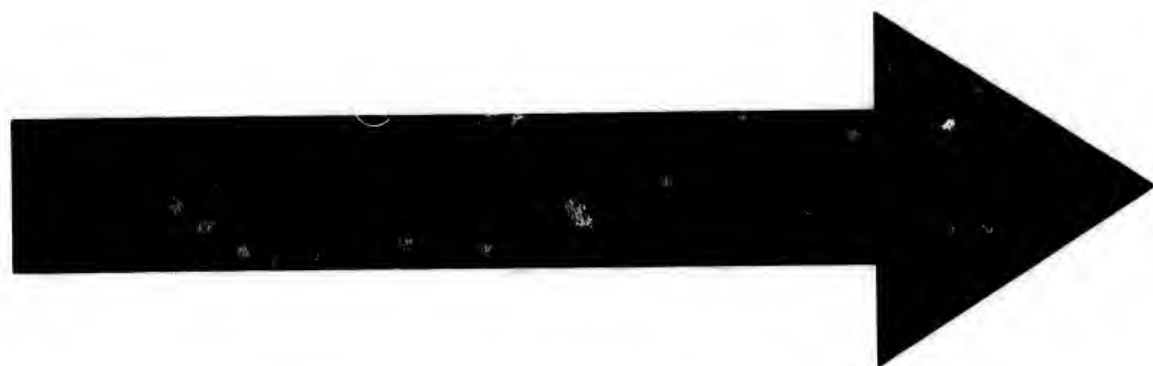
"Yer dat goes in for de fiddle and de dance, hold up yer right arm—only a little way up."

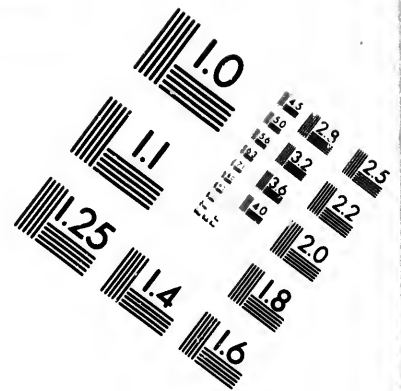
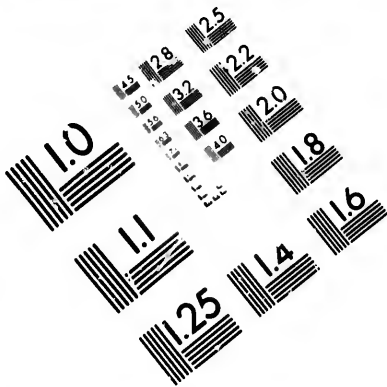
Half a dozen small arms and a few large ones went up, rather irresolutely.

"Now, den, yer dat goes for sensibler 'musements, yer dat's got good minds and common sense, yer dat would like talkin', and singin' and tellin' 'speriences, hold up your right arms and hold em mighty high," cried Zack, showing in a most unparliamentary manner which side he, the self-appointed moderator, was on. "Now up wid yer arms like good Christians!" Up went every arm very high, even those which had just been raised on the other side of the question!

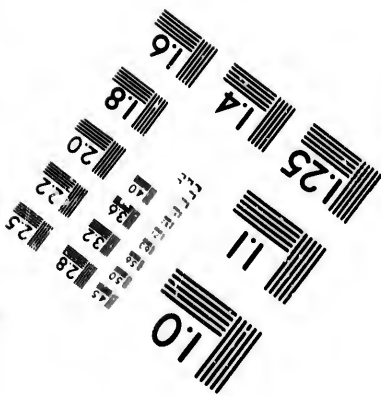
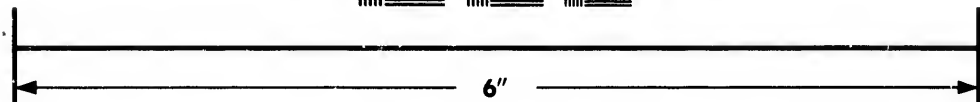
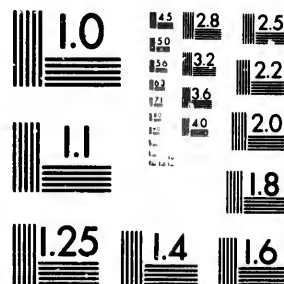
The sleeping children were now carried off, and the middle of the floor was cleared. A table, a Bible and a Psalm book were borrowed from "missus;" and Zack, the only man present who could read fluently, was seated by them on a barrel cushioned with the guests' shawls. He read, as he always did whenever he opened his own little Bible, the account of the Israelites crossing the







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Red Sea, and of Pharaoh's fate. "See, now," he added, by way of comment, "if he didn't get come up wid handsome for oppressin' of de Lord's people. Mind yer, now, I don't say a word about dese times nor de Pharaoh dat lives now. It's about de dead one, and it's allus safe talkin' agin him, for he's gone wid his hossmen and his chariots and can't chase us if he wants to, so we'll give him his dues and take warnin' ourselves how we dare to fight agin God and his people. Friends, dere's no work in dis world dat pays so poor as dat, 'cause we loses all our time, and is sure to come off beat in de end. My dear mammy died on her knees while she was at prayer, a axin' de Lord, no doubt, to do his own will wid her, — and he done it. She was a prophet, and she foretelled dat de Lord was a comin' down from heaven wid a heap of angels, and wid de sound of a trumpet, to shake dis arth to its foundations bymby, and dat den we — all dat's in trouble and sorrow, yer know — would be brung out of de wildness wid signs and wonders and plagues like Pharaoh had onto him. De last words she said to me was, 'De great and terrible day of de Lord is at hand. Don't yer run out of de wildness, like a coward or a thief, but stand still and wait for de salvatio' of de Lord.' And so I will, Lord help

me. When dat day comes, if dere's one of you dat wants a strong arm and a big fist to help yer out, call on me, for, thank de Lord, he's gin me both, 'sides a lovin' heart and a good temper, if I do say it myself."

Zack's speech was well received and frequently applauded. It was an honor to listen to him, standing as he did in a mysterious relation to Massa Leon, and being, as he was, well supplied from some unknown source with clothes, pocket money and jack-knives, and always at the head of some work and showing little regard for the overseer's authority. Had Zack not been a good man, he would have been a very dangerous one on the estate. When he ended his talk, they all sang to a lively tune,

"We'll join de army of de Lord,
And fight for yunder crown."

Then the old saint Cleo told her "sperience," which of itself would make a book and teach heavenly wisdom to the wise of this world. Another and another related the story of his life, each one acknowledging God's hand in leading him through the wilderness, and expressing a firm hope that he would lead him out of it and up to glory. There were songs of praise and pleasant

tales of other days, and words of hope for time to come; and, mingled with all these, was such laughter as might have led one who did not know their hearts to say there were neither "thorns nor nails" in their lot.

During the evening Madam Leon came in to say a pleasant word to them. In her arms she bore a load of bundles containing a new dress for each woman, hostess and guest. To the men she gave jack-knives and gay cravats, saying that she knew they would rather have them than garments. She asked the strangers about their masters' families, and sent a message that she was going to open her Sunday evening school to all the colored people around, and hoped they would be allowed to come and learn about Jesus. She said, "I'm your friend, and I want to do your souls good. I want you to be happy here, and I want you all to live with me in heaven." After saying a few words of sympathy to Weza, of whose troubles she had heard, she shook hands with each one and then left them to their enjoyment.

"She's a weman to be worshipped if any on 'em is," said Zack, as she passed out. "I'm de man dat can tell a saint when I sees one, 'case I've seen so much of 'de tother kind. I believe de Lord o' glory loves dis one, and is fast a fittin' her for de

kingdom. 'Pears like I must go down on my knees afore her when I goes whar she is. If she was a Catholic she'd been called a whole saint 'fore dis time."

Although the dance had naturally turned into a " 'sperience meetin'," when they separated, long after midnight, all were perfectly satisfied with the entertainment.

When Weza was getting ready to go Zack asked, "Mought I hilp yer through de mud, little brown woman?"

Weza told him she had "her own folks along," but he cried, "Pho, what's three old men, and two cripples, and a couple o' half growed slips to get a poor weak woman through dis mire? I's goin' any how, to take keer on yer!"

And he did go: and during the walk the innocent Weza told him that the shepherd in her vision was just like him, and that he had a gold chain to bind him to the great Massa that loved him; and he was pointed out as the one to help her out of the wilderness and up to glory.

"Well, den, I'll do dat, so please de Lord!" cried Zack, "for ye're only a poor weak woman, and does sure need some stout arm to lean agin. I'll keep my eye on yer, though."

And he fulfilled his promise in a way that made Dave Huggins lament bitterly that he had allowed Weza to go to that party at the Colonel's.

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CHAPTER IX.

AN UNWELCOME GUEST.

"IT'S just as I told yer, old woman," cried Dave Huggins, as angry as he had energy to be; "look out o' that 'are window by yer, and see if I aint a true prophet."

Mrs. Huggins did look out, and there, with a stout set of cedar bars between them, stood Zach and Weza talking together.

"Mighty fine work this," exclaimed Dave, "for two Christians, a breakin' of the Sabbath this way, beside the twelve commandments into the bargain, which says, 'Sarvants 'bey yer masters in all things, which same is well pleasin' unto the Lord.' I larnt that forty years ago of my grand-mother; and see how I remembered it so's to do my duty by my sarvants. That sly little woman's been a deceivin' of us all this time, 'pearin' to care nothin' for company, nor nothin' but her two boys and 'ligion. Didn't I tell her not to make

one 'quaintance to the party, and never to let me catch any of them Leon blacks over here, or I'd fetch out my gun? And now here's that great fellow that don't seemed to be owned by nobody, big enough and black enough to be a Guinea pirate, a prowlin' about, and a plottin' of my life, for all I knows."

"Mought be he come of his own 'cord, without her axin' of him at all," said Mrs. Huggins, "and then 'taint no fault o' her'n. She's a mighty nice little woman any how, and powerful feelin' and tender of weak folks. Ye mought throw a few stones at him, but look out and not hurt my little-woman," added the philanthropic lady.

Huggins drew his chair up to his wife's, and whispered, "I wouldn't throw a stone nor even a lash word at that fellow for the valley of the whole plantation, — for betwixt us, I'll confess that I'm feared on him. He's the proudest, pompos-est, boldest creatur' I ever laid eyes on with the name of a slave; and I only wonder he hasn't riz and murdered all the Leons at night. He will do it yet. T'other day I met him a haulin' fence rails, and I axed him a passin' if he thought it was four o'clock. And what does he do but out with a great silver watch as big as my fist — just like he was a rich planter — and shame me by tellin' me.

the time. If I live to go down river I'll buy a watch, I will, as big as that one; for mine's been good as dead this five year."

"Obed says," replied Mrs. Huggins, "that he 'blongs to a mighty rich young man down river, that wanted to get rid on him for some reason or nother and darsen't sell him. He sent him up here for safe keepin'."

"Feared of his life, I'll warrant," said Dave.

"Darsen't keep him, and darsen't sell him; so he turned our place into a pintintuary and sent him up here for his own safety. He'll git up an insurraction here, and we'll all be murdered, else lose our black folks, some night."

"He seems to be helpin' peaceable enough," said Mrs. Huggins, calmly, by way of apology for Zack. It took more than suggestions of insurrections and murders to disturb her equanimity when her pipe was full.

Dave ventured to peep out of the window again, and there was our honest friend Zack feeding the hogs, while the little brown woman and the stiff-kneed boy leaned over the bars and looked on complacently.

"Isn't that alarmin'," cried Dave, "to see him a takin' of my matters right into his own hands? Ha?"

"There's no great crime in feeding of hogs, as I see," replied Mrs. Huggins, determined not to be disturbed by any fears real or imaginary.

"But they aint his hogs, so what business has he a meddlin' with 'em?" asked Dave, in a fretful tone.

"Done it to help Weza, I s'pose. She always does it now to save Dick. She tries to save everybody but herself; and I tell yer them wrists o' her'n is powerful weak for heavy lifts; and that's why he's a helpin' of her, and I'm glad on't."

"And he'll go back and tell that I haint got a sound hand on my plantation, he will; that he had to come over here to help; and then the Colonel will call me 'mean' agin. I suppose he'll think it's as 'mean' to let a little woman like yonder one feed hogs and split wood as it is not to paint meetin' houses," cried Dave, looking deeply wounded.

"Phc" exclaimed Mrs. Dave, "ye're a gettin' yerself all riled up for nothin'. I don't care ef he does come and help and go home and tell on't; and I don't care if they do say ye're mean; like's not if I'd married the Colonel when I was a gal, and yer'd a refused to help paint the meetin'-house I mought a said so myself. Don't talk no more, it tires me to hear yer."

Dave, getting so little sympathy where he had a right to look for it, was thrown upon his own resources for consolation and wisdom in the matter. He peeped out of one window and then out of another. He opened his mouth to call Weza in, and then shut it without uttering a sound. He walked the floor a few moments meditating on a plan; when suddenly he opened the door and went up the broad old staircase, now seldom used at all. He found his way to the garret, and from the heap of broken chairs, old boots and hats, books and saddles, where Weza had found her umbrella for the party, he drew out two guns which had been fine pieces in the days of the old master, and which still looked very fierce. Their outward appearance was as terrific as ever, but they lacked the soul of a gun. These he bore in triumph down stairs to exhibit, thinking thus to alarm the intruder. With one in each hand he walked round the house, not appearing to see the group at the bars, but expecting that at sight of him Zack would run over the corn-field; when he would point one of them at him and threaten to take his life if ever he showed his face there again. What was his surprise, then, to see Zack leave his friends, and walk deliberately up to him. Had the guns been

loaded, Dave would have run now; but as it was, he felt uncommonly brave.

"Good evening, Massa Huggins," said Zack. "What yo' doin' wid two guns? Le's see 'em, please, I's a powerful fellow at firearms," continued he; "been a great gunner and hunter in gineral, from de cradle, most; and I'm great on repairin' guns, too. Well, 'pears like I'll have business here, for dese is only de shells of guns, but over'n our shop on t'other plantation we've got heaps of things to work wid. I'll take dem home for ye, sir, and fix 'em up to-morrow or next day. Mighty nice weather, sir."

As he smiled, and showed his great white teeth, Huggins became reassured. It could not be, he thought, that a villain's heart could be hidden by such a merry face. But although he let Zack take the guns to repair, he was as firm as ever in his resolution "not to have him prowlin' about the plantation."

Zack was quite independent, saying, as Huggins turned to go in, "I dropped over to see yer folks arter de preachin', and I reckon I'll take a bite of somethin' with 'em 'fore I goes back, wid yer leave, Massa Huggins."

To this proposition Dave said, "Well," in no very gracious tones, but Zack wasn't sensitive; and

now, quite at his ease, he added, "As yer people don't go to the meetin', I thought it might please de Lord, my great Massa, if I come over and repeat what I heerd from de preacher dis day."

"Got heaps of religion theirselves," growled Dave. "If yer missus thinks her folks is the only ones that gets Scriptur' larnin', she's mistakened, for they aint. My wife has giv'n our folks a mighty nice Bible, and sot Weza a teachin' on 'em religion. There's three on 'em can read for theirselves, too. I never teached 'em. They kind o' ketched their larnin' from Miss Huggins and me, I reckons;" and with this disclaimer he walked into the house, leaving Zack quite at home on the place, a self-invited guest at supper.

Huggins' dormant energies were aroused for once. He was grieved, frightened and angry, as he walked back to his chair; but Zack was master of the situation, and had matters all his own way in the kitchen. After Weza had prepared supper for her master and mistress, and cleared it away again, there was talking and reading and singing and praying in the kitchen, and as much freedom exercised there as if the happy creatures owned not only themselves, but the whole world too.

There were times when this class were lifted above poverty, pain and oppression; when they forgot

themselves and all their outward circumstances, and were men and women saved by grace, and standing face to face with their Lord and Master. Then they envied no one, feared no one; but were safe and happy under His shadow, where alone the high and the low can find rest and joy. And this was one of those times which they called "standin' on de mount."

"Here we is now, brothers and sisters," said Zack, "wid our feet planted firm on Mount Zion, a talkin' to de blessed Master Jesus, and hearin' him answer us. 'Pears like dis was a greater time for us den dat was for de holy 'ciples when de dear Lord take dem on de Mount wid him, when dere 'peared Moses and 'Lias a taikin' wid him. He was transfigured afore dem *once*, and his garments shined liked de light 'fore dem *once*. He is *always* transfigured in our eyes; his garments *always* shinin' like de light 'fore us. He stays on de Mount no more hungry, no more tired, yet he comes down to us, and talks wid us like we was Moses and 'Lias. He looks out for us like we was kings, and he's gettin' places ready for us up dere 'mong de many mansions, and bymeby he'll come and take us home to glory. Does we envy any body? No sir. Does we wish we owned two plantations, like dear Massa Leon, but had no Christ?"

No, no, no. Does we wish we took life easy, and was our own massas like massa Huggins, and had nothin' to do but eat and drink and sleep like dem folks I just been feedin' out in de pen? No, no, no. We's willin' to wear de thorns on our head like he did. We's willin' to walk a little while like Jesus hisself walked on de 'arth, — poor, and tired, and without a house like de birds and de foxes, and no purse o' money, and not even our liberty to go and come as we please. We can 'ford, friends, to drink ef de cup he drink of, and to be baptized wid de baptism he was baptized wid; yes, more den dat, we's willin' to die like he died, and lie in de grave a little while like he did; 'case bymeby we'll rise and reign wid him in glory. Now I'll sing one o' my dear mammy's down-river hymes, and you may jine in de chorus, dat goes like dis:

“O, glory, glory, glory!
De happy day shall rise,
When we shall meet our Jesus,
Singin' 'glory' in de skies.”

“O, yes, brother,” interrupted the little brown woman, “it's easy wearin' thorns on yer head, and sleepin' like de birds and foxes; easy 'nough goin' to prison or to death; but could yer sing 'Glory, glory, glory,' if de thorns was in yer heart? If yer had two pretty boys, one dat yer couldn't get to,

and t'other one lost forever and forever somewhar in dis great wilderness, could yer look so happy and sing, 'Glory, glory, glory?'"

"Sartin," replied Zack; "do bigger and de sharper de thorns, de louder I'd sing of de glory dat's beyond! If things went all our way here we'd be mighty shy of heaven and keep mighty still about de glory dat's ahead! We'd be satisfied to hang on here forever! Jesus knows dat, so he lets de thorns be put on to de head or into de heart, just whar we needs 'em most! He know'd what arthly love was, well as we do; and he was tempted in every pint like we's tempted; and he pities us, and when he sees fit he'll remove de thorns! Now try for to trust him wid yer boys, yer poor, weak woman, and bimeby he'll show yer what he's been a doin' for yer all dis time. De very best way to take de pinta off o' dem thorns is to keep all de time lookin' ahead and singin', 'Glory, glory, glory'!"

"There, now," cried Dave Huggins, "I've stood this ere noise as long as I can!" and opening the outer door, he called to Zack, "What time is it, I'd like to know? I reckons dat watch o' yern is run down!"

"Well, Massa Huggins, it's ten o'clock," replied the good-natured fellow, "and I reckons yer

thinks it's 'bout time folks dat haint got no passes should go home! Good-night, massa; say good-night to missus for me, please, and if yer ever wants a good turn, jist call on dis boy wid de strong arms, sir."

Dave couldn't help calling out "good-night" through the darkness, and felt not a little relieved when he heard the heavy steps of Zack falling on the sod as he walked toward the lane.

"There, now!" cried Dave to Mrs. Huggins. But he might as well have addressed the "cheer" as the lady who sat in it, for she had long been in blest oblivion. "There, now, yer can't quarrel with that fellow if yer want to; and it's too bad! I shouldn't ought to have let him off this way without forbiddin' of him to come here agin!"

The truth was, that Dave, now relieved of the wholesome fear Zack had inspired, wanted to quarrel with somebody. Mrs. Huggins was asleep, and couldn't interfere in behalf of her favorite, so he called in a stern tone, when sure that Zack was out of hearing, "Weza, come here to me!"

The little woman had never heard him speak in such a rough voice before; and remembering that she had been forbidden to make any acquaintances at the party, she trembled violently as she

crossed from the outer kitchen to the door where he was standing in the darkness.

"Well, massa?" she asked meekly.

"What did I say to yer 'bout them Leon niggers a comin' over here, ha?" growled Huggins.

"I didn't ax dis brother, sir, and didn't know he was a comin' till I see him," she answered.

"Well, now, this ere's only a begining, I suppose; but I'll put a stop to it. Don't yer ever look at that fellow nor speak to him while I own ye! Do yer hear?"

"Yes, massa, I hears," replied the little woman, trembling in every limb.

"And will yer promise on yer word as a Christian that ye'll obey yer master in all things?"

"O, massa, he's been so kind and massiful to me. He's so pitiful, and he's got power with de great Jesus above,—'pears like He does whatever Zack axes him to do; and he's promised to keep at Jesus, day and night, like de widow keep at de unjust judge, till he send me some word about my poor boy!"

"Then yer won't promise, ha?"

"O, massa, dem chil'en is so dear to my heart!" she sobbed out; "how can I 'fuse to speak wid him dat's callin' on God day and night for dem? 'Pears like dem two children stands right 'twixt

me and my great Massa, sometimes, and hides Jesus from me; and I can't stand dat."

"Oh, very well, just as yer like," replied Dave sarcastically. "I see yer don't care nothing for yer missus and me; we've been so cruel to yer; we've starved yer, and whipped yer, and abused yer so!"

"No, massa, dat's not so; ye've been kind to me; and de Lord knows I prays day and night dat he will bless ye for it! I'm such a poor weak creatur' that hash words would break my bones as easy as hard blows!"

"Yer want to be taken down river and sold, I reckons," continued Dave, in irony. "It's mighty nice to have a change once or twice a year, and yer might run agin yer boy somewhar or nother. There's a man round now, makin' up a gang for Texyas; that would be a pleasant walk, with plenty of company."

At these words the little woman fell down at his feet in the darkness, and cried, "O, massa! Let me sarve yer in de field or any whar. Give me half food and half clothes, but don't sell me; for if yer do, my boy'll lose track of me forever and forever! And Massa George, dat's got my other little one too, he'll lose me, and I'll be like Rachel dat wept herself to death 'bout her children!"

"Will yer promise then not to speak to that fellow, nor any other of the Leon people, nor any body else that comes here spyin' round my plantation, as long as yer belong to me?"

"I can't promise dat to-night, massa," sobbed the poor, comfortless creature.

"Very good, then. That Zack was a pirate once; he used to sail to fureign shores, and trap vessels and rob 'em, and then burn 'em up crew and all! And he's been a highway robber, too; and he's raised seven insurractions and killed two or three masters, till at last they couldn't hire no body to own him; and so his master sent him up here for his own safety. Now, if yer, as a Christian woman, that makes believe to love the Lord, can choose him afore yer kind massa and missus, yer may!"

"O, massa, dat can't be true! He's as peaceable as a kitten; and Madam Leon tells her people if dey'll all follow Zack dey'll be faithful to de Colonel and reach heaven bymeby," she ventured to reply in a whisper.

"That's to flatter him, 'cause she's feared on him," said Dave.

"No, sir; when dey went off, he slept in de mansion house and kep' all de keys and —"

"That's enough, now! I don't argy with nig-

gers! I lays down my laws and that's an end on't! Yer may go to bed now. I'll talk to yer in the morning, and tell yer 'bout a letter I've had from little Sampson's owner! I know all about the boy, and if I was to try I could get him here to see yer!"

Weza shrieked in her joy; but her master checked her by adding, "Now ye'll get yer pay for not promisin' what I axed yer, for I sha'n't tell yer a word. Zack can pray it all out, may be!"

"Please, massa, mought I speak to missus afore I goes?" asked Weza, weeping bitterly.

"No, yer moughtn't! If that driver that's round here calls afore I'm up, tell him to wait, as I've got business to do with him!" And he closed the door and went in.

The distressed little woman sat down on a bench by the door and placed her hands despairingly over her heart. She closed her eyes, and asked help of Him who giveth wisdom to the weakest and upbraideth not. And a calm peace stole over her heart as she communed with her "Brother Jesus."

The light disappeared from Huggins' window; and in a few moments all but herself were sleeping. Then remembering that the Colonel's house was full of guests who would probably be late in

retiring, she sprung up, and as if by inspiration, resolved to run over the fields and throw herself on the mercy of the gentle mistress there.

Without any covering on her head or shoulders, she set off in the chill evening air to seek a shelter; and as she pressed on through the darkness, she started at every motion of the trees or at the barking of a distant dog. And as she went she prayed for strength and pity.

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CHAPTER X.

MADAM LEON.

MADAM Leon was a tall, graceful lady, with a pale, sweet face, far too young for such silvery curls as hers. But she, amid all her riches and comforts, had seen deep sorrow. She too had trod "the wilderness," and its thorns and briars had pierced her feet. She had passed through floods and flames such as encompass few women in the quiet walks of life. In maidenhood she had been stung by family mortifications as well as by the death of those who had brought the cloud upon their name, and who were yet very dear to her. In later years death had made sad havoc among her treasures, laying mother, sisters and little children in the grave, and she had borne her sorrows alone. Her father believed only in "fate," and had encouraged her to bear bravely what must be borne in some way. The Colonel, kind and tender, had — after she became his wife — striven to draw

her mind from death by leading her into gay life, hoping to make her forget her dead idols by replacing them with living ones. Journeys, parties, dress and jewels could not heal the spirit God had wounded. There were none of her family, none of her associates who understood her case; and as blow after blow fell on her defenceless head, she became convinced that God meant to destroy her. The gay minister whose church they attended at a distance, tried to console her, as the Colonel did, by drawing her mind still farther from Him who held the rod. He preached on Sunday, and talked of the consolations of religion in the week — if occasion required; but most of his time was spent in riding, hunting and feasting with his few wealthy neighbors, apparently as regardless of their souls as if he had never heard of God or eternity. He was a blind leader of the blind.

One evening, years before our story opens, this man being the Colonel's guest, and the "missus'" heart being borne down by restless longings for peace, she gathered her large family for prayers in the long dining-room. The clergyman satisfied himself by calling down blessings on "the basket and the store" of his friends, and by praying at the servants, thus giving them incentives to obedience and threats against rebellion. When he and

the Colonel left the hall for their cigars, "missus" asked old Cleo what she thought of the prayer.

"I thinks," replied she plainly, "dat it is like de chaff which de wind driveth away; like steam, and froth, and fog, and mist, dat yer can't get a hold on! It never went higher den de ruff o' de house, missus, dat's sartin; and it won't bring down no answer of peace into yer soul. I's a better doctor for yer den yer grand doctor; and I's a better minister den dis huntin' and fishin' and billiardin' gen'l'man is. Missus, I must keep my place, and not go preach to a fine, high-born lady; but let me speak out once fer my Master and tell ye dere is a balm in Gilead and a physician dere. If yer'll only jest go dere, yer'll come bright out of all yer troubles. Den yer'll shine like a star in de firmament forever, and change yer tears for songs o' praise to de Lord dat love yer and led yer up out o' de wild'ness, and dat will save yer with an everlasting salvation. O, missus, dear, yer lookin' de wrong way for peace. Do ye 'spect life to spring out of de grave, or peace out o' rebellion? No, no; just take a hold o' dat hand dat's a beckonin' to yer, and yer'll soon find yerself on de road to glory. 'Tain't no use fightin' agin God, and it aint no use tryin' to buy 'ligion wid good works and sich like. De Lord is a dealin' wid yer in

massy, like a mother deal wid her bad child to bring it down. But she loves her child all de more for she try to make it good; and so de dear Lord deal wid yer dear heart. 'Cause he love he chasten, so de good book say."

"O, you happy old woman!" cried the rich lady. "How I envy you your peace and joy!"

"So well yer may, missus dear; for I wouldn't change crowns for no queen on arth. Now yer send Tom hossback over to de judge's to-morrow, and ax mought 'Preachin' Jack' come over here to see yer. I knows dat's mighty humblin' to proud natur' for a rich lady to seek larin' of a poor black man; but poor natur' has got to bow down some way, and dis way is as good as any other. I know de way, de truth and de light as well as Preachin' Jack does, but I haint got 'de gift' like him. Now I 'spects dis fine clergyman here for a *gen'l'man*, but for a *Christian*,—pho! he aint got no more 'ligion into him den our tort'shell cat has. Now, dear, I's said my say dat's been a burnin' in my heart a long' time and dat I've been axin' de Lord to gin me a chance to say. If yer can stoop down in de dust to get it ye'll find peace to yer soul."

Madam Leon did stoop to the dust. She sent for 'Preachin' Jack', and through a few simple

words from him, the veil was removed from her eyes, and she ceased from her great efforts for peace, gave up her rebellion against God, and found rest to her soul,—rest which, although it had now and then been ruffled, had never been broken, but had flowed on like a broad, calm river.

Being isolated from spiritual Christians, this lovely woman had not scorned communion with the lowly members of the Lord's fold in her family and around her. By the indulgence of the Colonel, winking at what he did not approve of, she imparted while receiving instruction. Her Sunday evening school became a joyous festival for her large family, many of whom had now been brought to Jesus by her efforts for them. She also read a chapter in the kitchen every evening after tea, and called on one or another of the family to pray, after which they sang their rude melodies of praise to God. If there could have been such a thing as extracting "the nails and thorns" from slavery it would have been done on that plantation.

Madam Leon, always forbearing and pitiful, became doubly so after her union to the compassionate Saviour. She thenceforth charged her heart with the sorrows and the sicknesses of her people, and watched for their souls as one who must give

account. And yet, brought up amidst slavery, and having seen little of its worst features, her conscience never accused her, nor did she at that time make one effort to break the chain. But shall any one dare to say she was, therefore, not a living and a loving disciple of the Lord Jesus? Never. She did not dream of raising her sable friends to a social position among their whiter brethren, and yet she would have washed their feet in imitation of Jesus, and in obedience to him.

Such was the woman into whose family Zack had been introduced by his master, under the feint of a sale, to please, or rather to appease, the mad-spirited woman to whom he had blindly linked himself in the bond which only death can sever. Such was the woman to whom poor Weza flew in her anguish, with a strong assurance that she could help her.

It was late on the Sunday night after Zack's departure from the Huggins plantation, that Colonel Leon sat on his broad, fine verandah, with three or four gentlemen, chatting of politics, and of the crops, and testing cigars. In the long avenue which led from the house through an orange grove to the road, a heap of corn-cobs was smouldering for the inconvenience of the mosquitos that swarmed about. A pretty mulatto boy ran between that

and a distant shed with a basket to replenish the fire, which, when stirred up, cast a wild light over the party on the verandah, the glossy foliage and the boy, who, having slept half the day in the sun, was now wide awake, and eager to hear all that was said.

At length the fire waned, and the little foes approached the house and gained access to the parlor, where the ladies were singing songs in keeping with the hour.

A complaint was made by them, when the Colonel called out, in a voice terrific to one who did not know him, "Prince, keep up your fire there, you lazy young dog; you might as well be in bed—where you ought to be—as here."

But Prince, who was leaning against a pillar of the verandah, didn't move, but mumbled something between his teeth.

"Why don't you start?" cried the Colonel, in still fiercer tones, but with a most unruffled manner.

"'Case I's feared, massa! Can't Jim, or Ceaze, or some o' dem bold ones, bring de cobs now, please?"

"Afraid!" cried the Colonel. "The truth is, the women in the kitchen, and the ladies in the house, pet and coddle you up till they're making a

fool of you! You won't bring the price of a dog when you're a man."

"Dey say I's mighty smart, 'stead of being a fool," replied the little fellow, grinning. "I reckons Mammy Cleo wants me to fill her snuff box now, in a mighty big hurry! Can't I go send Ceaze, sir?"

"Tell me first what you're afraid of with half a dozen gentlemen close by you?" And the colonel took him by the curls and shook him playfully.

"I heerd a sound, massa," replied Prince, opening his fine eyes and setting his lips apart, as if to show his white teeth off to the best advantage.

"What kind of a sound? Music from the parlor, or praying from the kitchen?" asked the gentleman.

"Nether, massa; but a sob-like, and a groan-like, and a rustin-like, and a moanin', and a creepin', and a whisperin', and all kinds of easy noises, like ghosts in de graveyard, and when der's dead folks about! I'll run and hide if Ceaze don't come; and den de 'squitters will eat up all de ladies!" And with this terrible threat the independent young gentleman took to his heels and was soon safe under the wing of Mammy Cleo, with whose authority neither blacks nor whites interfered. She took the discipline of all the children into her

own hands; and the result was, there was little which went by the name of discipline among them. But for all that, they were good and pleasant children and less given to lying and theft than most of their class. There was no premium set on these vices by the Colonel, by either whipping or starving them; though they swarmed like hungry locusts. As to "madam," it was true, as Huggins had said, "she kept a sharp eye on the overseer and had a finger in every thing that went on on the plantation."

The little mulatto's departure was not a mean desertion in the face of the foe; for he at once sent a substitute in the person of the keen-witted little fellow who was driving the pleasure party in "Massa Huggins' old tumble down car'age," on the day of Weza's arrival there. He now came up, armed with a stick longer than himself, saying to the laughing gentlemen, "I's two years younger as Prince is, but I isn't half such a goose! I aint afeared o' sights nor sounds nor nothin' that can't hit me a lick! Don't believe he heard nothin', only he was mighty sleepy and want to go to bed. I's brave! I can kick hot coals wid my bare foot and lift corn-cobs up when dey all afire. Harkee, massa, what's dat noise 'mong de trees, ha?" And reaching forward his head, the brave hero

peered in among the bushes, looking the very picture of horror! And not stopping to kick or pick up the coals, he followed Prince!

"I heard something myself then," said the Colonel, rising and going towards the spot whence the sound came.

"Hallo, there!" he cried. "Who's this, and what are you hiding for! Matty, is that you?"

"No, massa," cried a weak voice, "it's none of yer happy people, but a poor sheep of de Lord Jesus', wanderin' heart-broken in de wild'ness! I felt just like He told me to come here to yer missus, and tell her my troubles and she would listen for Christ's sake, 'case I was his'n. I got here and darsn't go up to de house till de company was gone in and de lights was out, and de music quit, den I was goin' up to call her and fall down on my knees and beg her to make Massa Huggins tell me where my boy is! I can't live if I don't know mighty soon! Have massy on me, massa, and let your blessed missus come out and speak to me, way from de fine company," cried Weza, clasping her hands as if in prayer.

"Come out here, my woman," said the Colonel; "you surely haven't run off from fear of your master? I should as soon be afraid of an old sheep! It isn't in hix to be cruel. Whatever's the matter

between you, he'll sleep off his anger. But come with me if you want to see madam. She's the friend of all, thank Heaven! And she keeps herself in business too," he added to his guests, with a smile.

The poor, trembling woman was led into the hall, and the lady, when called, left her guests and came out to meet her.

"Ah, my poor little woman," she said, "is this you? I hope nothing has gone wrong with you and my neighbors. Come with me to my own room and let me know if I can help you."

The "little brown woman" told her whole history to the lady, down to the hour when Massa Huggins revealed the story of the letter, and vowed that she should never see it and never know where her boy was.

The lady asked, "What did Mrs. Huggins say?"

"O, missus dear, massa wouldn't even let me speak to her, and said maybe I'd never speak to her on arth agin. Dere's a driver round arter a gang, and I's feared he'll sell me in de morning."

Madam Leon smiled. "Keep your mind easy, my poor woman, about being sold. There's no driver about. Although we never sell our people, we hear every thing that goes on among those who do; and I know there's no truth in this! Beside,

you're the only person in that house to get the food; and they like you too well to sell you. Go home now and go to bed quietly, trying to trust your boys with God, and I will ask the Colonel what he can do for you. Be sure Mrs. Huggins will take your part; and as for your poor massa', he's more afraid of her than you are of him. I will shield you from being sold; for if they offer you, the Colonel will buy you rather than have you sent off far from your children. Surely, my little woman, you can trust your boys where you trust your soul, can't you? — with the tender Saviour?"

Weza burst into tears; and smiling through them, she said, "Yes, yes, angel of a lady, I can, and I will too; and I'll go home and love old massa and missus, and love my hard work, and thank de dear Lord for dem all!"

Then the lone creature set off with a far lighter heart over the corn-field for home; and that night she slept the sleep which God giveth to his beloved.

The next morning poor Dave looked far more like the humbled party than Weza did. He had unwisely related his last night's work to Mrs. Huggins, who was more stirred by it than she could have been by one of the "yarthquakes" she had always talked of. She had actually taken her

pipe out of her mouth and laid it beside her plate at the breakfast table that she might scold without hindrance.

"Mighty hard on me, a poor, tired woman and stiff in the jints too! Mought ha' let my little woman alone when she's the only decent one I've had for seven year! But you must go scoldin' about her 'ligion and 'cause a man spoke to her, and tellin' her about that letter, and a frettin' of her in general."

"I didn't!" Dave ventured to say, but it was said much as a whipped but unsubdued boy replies to his father. "I knowed he'd go home and tell that our fences was down and our carts broke and our hosses lame and our house runnin' down and every thing! And I don't want nobody a spyin' about and tellin' my family secrets."

"Family secrets!" cried Mrs. Dave, scornfully. "I guess the Colonel's got eyes! He couldn't live within ten miles of us and not know that I've gin up tryin' to keep things straight, 'cause yer haint got no ambition. I tell yer our secrets is all out doors. If I'd a married the Colonel when I was a gal, things wouldn't a' been in this here condition!"

"Umph!" growled Dave, "if I'd a married Madam Leon when I was young, things on that

plantation wouldn't 'a' looked as they do now,— no, no, that isn't what I mean. I mean things wouldn't 'a'—'a'—looked,—”

“Pho!” cried Mrs. Dave, “I reckon that's it, whether yer mean it or not. They wouldn't 'a' looked as they do now, sure! They'd 'a' looked used up in gineral, mostly, I reckon.”

Dave was just trying to right himself on the subject, when Mrs. Huggins dropped her hands and threw back her head as if smitten with a sudden palsy, and exclaimed, “As sure's I'm sittin' in this cheer”—a surer thing couldn't be—“there comes the Colonel's smart car'age with him and her and two of their companies comin' to call on me. Where shall I hidé? No, Huggins, you go hide; Weza, bring me my changeable silk gown and crape shawl, and my bonnet and parasol and fan. No, no, not the bonnet nor parasol nor fan. Folks don't need them to see company. Pick up the dishes! Fly, now!”

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CHAPTER XI.

GREAT EVENTS.

THERE are great events in the history of every family, and such was this visit of Colonel and Madam Leon to the Huggins mansion. Mrs. Huggins had barely time to throw on her changeable silk and hide its unclosed front with the gay crape shawl, but not time to arrange her elf locks, before the carriage stopped at the door. The lord of the mansion was in his shirt sleeves, their elbows bearing evidence that Mrs. Huggins was stiff in her fingers as well as in other "jints." His slippers had been manufactured with a jack-knife from a pair of old boots, and bore strong proof that "reconstructing" was not recreating.

"Ketch up the odd things that's lyin' round and fling my pipe out of the window, Weza, for Obed says madam thinks it's a shame for a woman to smoke, and don't even let her black women do it; and when they knocks tell 'em yer'll come in and

see if I'm home, 'case I wouldn't like them to think I dressed up a purpose for them," said Mrs. Huggins.

It was the middle of the forenoon, and quite a proper time for a call. The "companies" sat in the carriage, while the Colonel and his lady came in just in time to catch a glimpse of Dave's elbows as he fled into the back entry. They must have been a little surprised at the style in which their hostess was half gotten up, but more so when she expressed regret that she, "bein' uncommon stiff in the jints that mornin', should have such a late breakfast and been ketched with this here old gown and shawl on." For although there was no social visiting between these two families, they often met at funerals; and the lady had never seen Mrs. Huggins in any other dress, summer or winter, but the one just spoken of so scornfully.

After the usual civilities were over, the Colonel asked, "Can we see neighbor Huggins this morning?"

"Well, yes," replied Mrs. Dave, "he's about some'ere or nother, a seein' arter things. He has to be up with the sun, a lookin' arter these lazy creeturs. I tell yer, Colonel, it's mighty hard runnin' a plantation without an overseer. The niggers shirks so under the gentleman hisself—at

least ours does, mostly. Weza! Weza-a-a-ah!" she added, at the same time thumping loudly with a chair on the floor.

The little brown woman appeared, looking very shy. The excitement of this great event, on which she felt sure that her destiny hung, brought color even to her dark cheek.

"Weza," said her mistress, "take your master's coat out to him — he's some'er's off on the plantation a lookin' arter his men — and tell him no matter what he's a doin' of he must come in, for Colonel Leon and madam's here. And tell him he's been out so long it's time he had a rest."

Weza took the coat from a press and went into the front entry, and in an incredibly short time — considering how far off her master had been — he appeared, shining as if he had been scoured with soft soap. His full gray hair stood up in strongly defined ridges, having been combed with his big fingers, there being no adequate toilet arrangements in the back entry. He gave his guests a very damp right hand, and said to each, "I'm prond to see yer, and I hope yer find yerselves well."

After they had chatted about the crops and the wood which Dave was selling to the river-boats,

the host rose and asked, "Have brandy or gin, Colonel?"

"Oh, neither, thank you," replied the gentleman, with an arch smile. "Among the bad habits this good lady broke me of twenty years ago was that of drinking gin. She told me then never to touch it, and I haven't dared to do so since."

"Yer drink wine, don't yer?"

"Very seldom. Once in a while at a public dinner, when she's not there to watch me, I do take one glass; but I call myself a temperance man," said the Colonel.

"Well," replied Huggins — quite at his ease on a theme of which he felt himself master — "so be I a temperance man — on my own hook. I've been axed agin and agin to jine pledges, but I tell 'em I can be a temperate man without no oaths. I'm an American citizen, born free. The first article of faith in the Constitution of the United States is, 'All men is born free and equal'; now, if I signs away my liberty to drink gin when I'm a mind to, why, then, I'm no longer 'free and equal,' but a slave to a temperance 'society. I call it an awful thing not to be free and equal in a country whose articles of faith says, every man's free and equal. But I'm a temperance man, for all that; for no man alive ever saw me so tipsy that I didn't know

what I was about. I can drink, and drink, and drink, and yet walk as straight as yer do. Now that's more than these temperance 'sicties can do. If they should drink a tenth part the gin I do, they'd stagger like a spent top, they would."

When Dave had thus defined his position on the temperance question, the Colonel changed the subject to negroes; and after a moment he said, "I hear you are trying to sell this little woman we just saw. My wife wants one about like her, so we thought we'd drive over and make some inquiries,"

"Sell *her!*" exclaimed Mrs. Dave, "I'd as soon sell *him,*" and she pointed at her husband with most unconjugal coolness.

"Excuse me," said the Colonel. "I was informed that you said there was a driver about here making up a gang for Texas, and that he was to call on you this morning, when you were to sell her. I hadn't heard of the driver before."

"There, now," cried Dave, "that ere's the work of Obed. Him and that hoss o' his'n is doing heaps of mischief by carrying news from one plantation to another. I suppose they was sittin' about some'er's in the dark last night when I was for-biddin' Weza to steal bacon and chickens to give

to the boatmen she's got acquainted with and that are forever prowlin' about."

"Never see a boatman on the place, and don't believe she ever stole a pin," said Mrs. Huggins. "Did yer threaten to sell her?"

"Well, I just hinted that if she didn't walk straight and keep strange niggers off my plantation I mought be driv' to rash measures," said Dave.

"If you've any such thought," said madam Leon, "my husband will give you a hundred dollars more than you paid for her?"

"I wouldn't take a thousand," cried Mrs. Dave. "I feel like I'd bought a mother and a sister and a darter and a sarvant all in one. She's the only real bargain Huggins ever got; and he wouldn't have got her so cheap at auction. She was on a plantation, and couldn't stand the hot sun. She was born a lady's maid, and that's what makes her so valuable to me; she can dress my hair so beautiful and wait on me in general. The rest of our niggers aint wuth their feedin'."

"Yes," said Dave, "she's right. I have had mighty bad luck with hands. See how old my three men is and how lame them two boys is."

"But you know," suggested the Colonel, "the men wern't infants when you bought them, and the others were always lame."

"There's Obed, I couldn't give him away,—hoss and all," cried Huggins, mournfully.

"Did you give any thing for him?"

"Well, no, not a big price, and I wish I hadn't took him at all. He's gettin powerful sharp now-a-days. When he goes to the spring he takes a journey round tellin' family secrets. I do believe he sleeps a hossback and was woke up by me advisin' Weza."

"Well, neighbor Huggins, my news didn't come through Obed, at all. But of course the woman is yours, and you've a right to keep her. I'm not the one to worry a neighbor."

"Thank ye Colonel, ye've always been civil to me," said Dave.

"You've had a letter about the poor woman's boy, haven't you? My women told their mistress how distressed she was about losing him when she was sold," said the Colonel.

"Well, yes, a kind of a letter," replied Dave.

"There wasn't much in it, and what was in it wasn't worth tellin'. So I didn't read it to her and had forgot all about it."

"But you will tell her where the boy is and write to his owner surely?" asked the Colonel.

"You and I had mothers once, Huggins, and we must feel for other poor mothers. You can make

this harmless creature as happy as a bird by reading that letter to her and promising her a trip at Christmas to see the boy."

"I'm afeard she'd get uneasy," replied Dave.

"She'll surely be uneasy now. I find the best way to keep my people easy and to get work out of them, is to make them as happy as I can. And I've always thought that was your plan too, for I never heard a complaint of ill treatment or hard fare here," said the gentleman.

"If I may make so bold, Colonel," said Dave, "I don't like that powerful great fellow of yours coming round here. I mought as well own up that 'twas 'bout him that we had the quarrel last night. He's been round here a beatin' religion into my folks like he thought they was heathen; and has got round this woman by a promisin' to pray for her boy, that he mought turn up some'er's. Next thing he'll put her up to runnin' off, too," said Dave.

"No he won't," answered the gentleman; "he promised his mother when a boy that he'd never steal himself, and I'd take his word as quick as I would Judge Bacon's. If he wanted to run he could do it any day, for I don't own him and shouldn't spend my time hunting him." The Colonel smiled, and added, "I'll send him over

to-morrow, and if you want any saddles or harness mended you may call on him. There isn't much he can't do. And now, before we go, let me beg you to tell this woman about her child, and to answer the letter for her."

"I ain't much of a writer," said Dave, by way of excuse, "and our ink is so dried up and our pen so rusty that I had a mighty job to sign Capt. Carr's receipts for the wood last week."

"I think it's always best for us rough men," said the Colonel, "to pass this 'woman and baby-business' over to the ladies. My wife's quite good at keeping up correspondence for her people, and if you like, she'll write to the little boy's mistress for your wife."

"That suits my mind, now, Colonel," said Mrs. Huggins. "I was never in favor of hidin' up the letter. Now, Huggins, you give it to madam, and she'll write and get a letter back; and that'll make my little woman mighty happy," she added kindly.

Dave began to feel in his almost unfathomable pocket. He brought out treasures by the handful; lumps of tobacco, chalk, nails, twine, buttons, suspender-buckles, jack-knife, ginlet and screw-driver. He coolly remarked, as he poured them out on the table, "If a man don't carry about his things with

him he never has 'em when he wants 'em. Well, that letter aint here!" and to prove it he turned his pocket inside out. "I must 'a' lit my pipe with it."

The letter was gone; and as a last hope of getting a clew to the boy, Madam Leon took the name of Degrow's overseer, and promised Mrs. Huggins, who really seemed interested in the matter, to write to him for the gentleman's address.

She wrote, and the reply was, "The gentleman's name was either Jones, or Smith, or Hill, or Hall, or some such short name; but the town and county I've quite forgot." And again oblivion closed over the hopes of the poor lonely Weza.

After this, the dullness of Weza's life on that plantation was broken only by an occasional chat with a passing slave or a long tramp to quarterly meeting. All intercourse with the Colonel's servants had been forbidden, and the acquaintance with Zack broken up by Huggins' repeated threat of selling her. He had either a terrible dislike or an unconquerable fear of the fellow, and after he got his gun back, sent word to "Massa Leon" to keep him at home, or he'd have him shut up for trespassing. Now and then, after Zack had been to "the river" transacting business, the little woman would receive through Obed, a gay turban,

a pair of shoes, or a big sugar heart covered with silver spangles; but she had to hide the delicate love-tokens, and so could not enjoy displaying them even in her own narrow circle.

One morning, to her amazement, she saw the offensive visitor walk up very boldly towards the house and tap at the door. Huggins himself opened it, when Zack stepped in. Taking off his hat, he politely asked Mrs. Huggins, who sat smoking in her "cheer," "Mought yer little brown woman and de men go to de camp-meetin' seven miles off, wid Massa Leon's people? Mainmy Cleo and heaps more of our way o' thinkin', dat has no preachin' 'bout dese parts, is goin' to have a three days preachin' wid de communion and a baptism, like de real Jordan kind, in de old grove on de judge's plantation. Massa Leon's give all his people dat loves de Lord leave to go up and praise him wid de heart and de voice. He 'lows me to take de big lumber wagon and de mules to drive de women and chil'en. Missus said she'd take it as a compement if yer'd let Weza go one day, at least, with our women."

"She may go," said Mrs. Huggins, from the side of the pipe, "for yer missus' sake, for I sha'n't soon forget the honor she done me by that visit."

"We'll have that party business over agin,

then," grumbled Dave, "and all my frettin' and scoldin' will be to do over agin; for company a runnin' I won't have."

"Tell yer missus my woman may go, but I can't say about the boys; that'll be as their master says," remarked Mrs. Huggins, as if she had not heard her husband's objections.

"Yer don't know what yer believe," said Dave to Zack. "The 'ligion that gets up the biggest noise is the 'ligion for yer."

"Massa Huggins, I knows what I b'lieves and why I b'lieves it," replied the man.

"Well, then, let me hear yer say yer creed," said Dave.

"Haint got no creed, massa."

"Haint got no creed? Then how on arth do yer know what to believe?" asked Dave.

"I believe just what de Lord said, no more, no less; and I's bound to follow whar he leads, if it be through fire and flood," replied Zack boldly.

"But yer haint got larnin' like a parson, to know what the Bible means," said Dave, warming up with the spirit of controversy.

"Massa," replied Zack, "my Lord tells me dat his orders is so plain dat a wayfarin' man, do' a fool, can't miss 'em. I s'pose I'm a 'wayfarin' man,' though I don't profess to be a fool. I tell

yer what I told my dear missus last Sunday night ; dere's more danger of folks losin' heaven through larnin' den through ignorance. De wise of dis world gets so sot up by dere larnin' dat dey thinks dey's got ahead of de Master hisself. Yer don't ketch dem wise ones when dey's sick goin' to Jordan to wash and be clean. No, no. Dey has rivers of dere own dat's better den his Jordan ; so dey turns dere back on him and sets up on dere own hook ; and fine work dey makes on't, too."

"Then yer go agin larnin' as well as creeds in yer 'ligion, ha ?" asked Dave, now a champion for theological education.

"No, sir, I only goes agin false larnin' dat makes men wiser den God. Our brother Paul dat was a great larned scholar, said, 'My larnin' has not made me mad, most noble Festus ;' but dese proud Pharisees 'bout us can't say it."

"Well, well, Zack, I think there's 'ligions enough in the world now without yer black folks settin' up a new one," said Dave.

Zack laughed outright. "Why, Massa Huggins," he said, "My 'ligion's de oldest Christian 'ligion dat is. 'Tis de one dat Jesus and his 'postles sot up, and men's been tryin' and tryin' to improve on't ever since, but dey can't make it out.

It has as many white folks as blacks belongin' to it."

"Pho!" cried Dave, scornfully. "It's mighty likely if yer 'ligion was as old as that, that I shouldn't 'a' come across it some'er's. I've lived in Kentuck', and Georgy, and Alabam', and here; and every body I knew was always Presbyterians, or Methodis', or Church-a-Englanders — except black folks; and do yer s'pose they know more'n their owners 'bout the Bible?"

"Mought be they do," replied Zack' "for deo things is hid up from de wise and prudent, and is revealed to babes,—babes mean unlearned folks. O, Massa Huggins, if yer would only come to de camp-meetin' yerself and missus, yer might get a blessin' to yer own souls. Jesus, de Master, will sure be dere, and whoever comes will have a chance to touch de hem of his garment; and dat touch takes away sickness, and sorrow, and sin; and changes poor weak sinners into shinin' saints, and lifts dem up to a throne."

"S'pose there will be any white folks there?" asked Dave.

"Sartin! Missus herself is goin', and so is her niece Miss Julia. Dey aint ashamed of de Lord, nor of de poor of his flock," said Zack.

"We mought shut up one day and go, and that

would save gettin' any thing to eat at home," said Mrs. Huggins. "If madam aint too proud to go, we needn't be."

"No," replied Dave, somewhat softened, "we needn't, sure; and then I could see about them mules the old judge wants me to buy."

"Well, then, Zack," said Mrs. Huggins, "make my manners to yer missus, and tell her I'll let my people go, and come myself and bring the massa with me. Tell her I aint proud when it comes to 'ligion;—though in every thing else I holds myself as good as any other white folks."

"Well, thank yer both," said Zack, who saw that Dave was being thrust rather too much in the back ground for "de head of the woman," "and I'll come here next week and fix up all yer carts and harness and saddles and such like; and dat'll make up any time yer people mought lose."

"Hope yer don't think I can't hire'em mended?" said Dave, still watchful of his dignity.

"I knows yer can, but I likes to do a neighborly thing now and den," said Zack with a smile.

The vision of a "gineral clearin' up" completely overcame Dave's prejudice, and he was quite genial. This encouraged Zack to go a step further.

"Den, sir," he said, making a low bow, "I's got another message from missus. I's made up my

mind for to have a wife. De great Master, who manage all dese things for his chil'en 'peared to yer little brown woman in a vision-like, and showed her me,— a great ugly black' fellow dat she was 'feard on. But he said, 'See, he's got a shepherd's crook, and he'll help yer on to glory.' So, wid yer leave, I'll take her, and do as de great Massa say; and more, if ye aint too proud to take this black hand, I'll help yer and Missus Huggins on to glory too, for I's got de power' for de work in my soul. I feels it."

The sublimity of Zack's assurance' quite overcame Dave, and for a moment he seemed stunned by this strange patronage.

"I thought this would be a mighty nice time for a weddin' 'mong all de other ord'nances of de Gospel. Missus, who has her people married 'cordin' to de Gospel and not slave-fashion, will give Weza a mighty fine outfittin'."

"Massy!" cried Dave, who had now collected his senses; "if I lets yer marry her, next thing ye'll run off together — yer've got a powerful long rope for a slave."

"Dat's so," said Zack, laughing heartily; "but I haint no object in runnin' off; and I'll risk dat poor weak woman runnin' off widout me. I's as free as I wants to be, and has as many comforts as

I could arn if I lived in Bosting or them other free places. Here is my hand, Massa Huggins, and my word as a man dat fears de Lord, dat I'll wait till he bring me out of de wild'ness wid a high hand and a mighty arm, and wid signs and worders like he did de chil'en of Israel."

"Somebody'll marry her if he don't," suggested Mrs. Huggins, in aid of his plea; "and if they live fur off they'll keep her everlastin' oneasy."

"Dat's so, missus," said Zack, "and 'tween you and me, de judge's Noah, dat drinks powerful, telled once dat he's bound to have her. And Ab'm, dat robs yer hin-roost, he's mighty took up wid her. Better gin her to an honest man dat fears de Lord and will look out arter yer interests, — mendin' yer carts, and such like."

The last motive was all-powerful. "Thump yer 'cheer,' missus," cried Dave. And in answer to the rude summons Weza appeared, the picture of terror, not knowing what she was to be accused of now.

"This fellow wants for to marry yer, Weza," said Dave, with grave dignity; "and his massa and missus and yer'n has thought the matter all over and gin consent on conditions that yer, as a Christian" — this was Dave's unfailing argument

—“promise me that yer’ll never run off while I own yer.”

For five minutes in her life Weza was a white woman. Wherever her color went to, it was gone; and her agitation alarmed Mrs. Huggins so that she laid down her pipe, rose from her “cheer” and brought her a mug of water. “Poor thing,” she said kindly, “I’m sorry for yer. Ye clar woke up a frettin’ arter them boys.”

Poor Weza soon got breath to make the promise, and to say that now she should have some one to help her bear her “worry,” and that she had taken one step towards getting “out of the wilderness” in the Canaan.

And the happy pair withdrew to make arrangements for the camp-meeting wedding and to thank the Lord for his help; and leaving Dave to grumble out his forebodings, and Mrs. Huggins to defend them and to prophesy good from the sudden event.

CHAPTER XII.

THE CAMP-MEETING WEDDING.

OUR happy girls may talk of silks, and lace, and jewels, and wedding rings, and bridal presents, and receptions, and of splendid outfits in general, but they can have little idea of the joy which filled the heart of our poor, lonely Weza on the morning of the camp-meeting, and of the day on which "de dear, good Lord was to give her de best man he ever founded to lean agin."

The night before the wedding day the tender-hearted Madam Leon had sent a little trunk over to the mansion house on Zack's shoulders. It contained a turkey-red dress and a fancy turban, with a shawl, a white apron and new shoes for the outfit,—a complete supply of comfortable working clothes,—thus making the little creature happy for the time. It was wisely sent to "missus" for Weza; and she took the compliment straight home to her own heart, and then formally presented the gifts.

That blessed sun rose at length, and the bride elect, having given massa and missus their breakfast and prepared their dinner, that the latter need not rise from her "cheer" to do it, was dressed in her fiery array and waiting in the door for the sound of wheels. As a mark of special esteem, Mrs. Huggins had lent her the pocket handkerchief, the parasol and the fan, all of which fancy articles the innocent creature held in her hands as part of her outfit.

"Weza," cried Mrs. Huggins, in a whining tone, "my heart sinks now fear yer'll leave me some time with that free man, and then I mought as well die as not."

"Missus, I'll stick to yer for life 'less de good Lord in massy sends me freedom; and I'll love yer while I lives for lettin' me off dese days. And, missus dear, do try to get massa over to de campground to-morrôw, and get his soul saved as well as yer own; for, happy and prosperous and proud as I is dis day, dere's joy in 'ligion dat beats all dis."

"Hark, Weza! I hears wheels," said Mrs. Huggins; "I must go to the window to see you off;" this was her sacrifice in the matter.

A jovial company it was that filled the lumberwagon and set up a shout of welcome as Weza came towards them, escorted on one side by Obed

on the white horse, and on the other by the stiff-kneed boy on foot. Zack, who, perched on a high seat, drove the mules, invited Weza to sit beside him, but she declined, and the women all said she must "have her own way dis time, 'cause it was de last time in de world." When she was seated on the corn-husks among the others, Mammy Cleo, who occupied a little rocking chair to ease the jarring, gave orders to "unkiver dat ar corn-basket and show Weza what missus and Miss Julye done for her honor and glory dis day."

The basket was uncovered, and there was displayed a most gorgeously ornamented wedding cake. Two white sugar doves in most tender proximity, with pink chenille around their necks, and silver feathers on their wings, surmounted it. Beneath this bride's cake was a heap of pie, and gingerbread and apples, and Weza was informed that three other baskets were as well filled, "for missus meant to set zamples to de barbarous planters 'round 'bout how dey ought to deal wid dere people, like dey was born of de same blood as dereselves, and had a right to be married as pure, and holy and 'spectable as if dey was free and white."

"Yes, yes," cried Zack, looking down from his high perch, with his ivories glistening in the sun-

light, "Dat same missus is a bright and shinin' light unto de Gentiles; and through her de thorns and de nails is took out of slavery on dat plantation as far as dey can be while de cuss lasts anywhar. Now, friends, set up de song of jubilee, and sing it right smart, and hymeby, when dis business is over, we'll sing de marriage song wid de shout of 'Glory Hallelujah' onto it."

"Preachin' Jack," whose deep, earnest piety had brought down many a blessing on his master's house, and who had in his simple way led Madam Leon to the cross, had now grown very old. His abundant, crispy hair was like snow; his form tottered and his voice trembled; but his hair was a crown of glory, and his remaining strength of limb and voice was still used, as it had long been, for the glory of God. His day of toil was over, and he was now enjoying such peace and rest as God giveth his beloved when the shadows gather about them. His owner, in justice—he thought in generosity—had provided him with a little cabin to himself, and his fellow slaves felt it an honor to minister to his few wants. Before the early bell rang for labor old Jack always sat in his doer with clasped hands; and such as could do so, halted a moment on their way to the field, and knelt on the grass while he uttered a prayer

for them and commended them to the dear Lord. And in the evening, when toil was over, he held "perpetual prayer meetin'" in his cabin. Never a night but a score or more of dusky forms were gathered there to hear of heaven and to praise Him who had opened its shining doors for them. These little meetings were the subject of sport to the young folks in their masters' families, and of very little account abroad. But among the lowly group there walked One unseen by their poor vision, shedding abroad his gifts of patience and peace and joy; One whom--had they known him and their need of his pity--the masters would have entreated to turn aside and abide with them.

It was firmly believed among all the blacks, and by not a few of their owners, that Preachin' Jack had power to bring Jesus down whenever he called upon him, and many instances were related, in good faith, where dying men and women had been raised up from the hour that Jack had called on the Master in their behalf.

He had, therefore, become a sort of bishop over the blacks of the region, and any especial honor they had to bestow was considered as his just due.

Madam Leon felt a tender love for the old man who had taught her that wisdom to which the

proud world cannot stoop. "Zack," she said, on the morning of the camp-meeting, "I want Father Jack to marry you. There will be plenty of noisy fellows there who will talk, and shout, and make a great show of themselves, and who may seem to you better men for the ceremony. But I want you to have this old man's blessing as you start anew in life. You may depend, Zack, that his prayers will avail much in getting that little woman out of the wilderness she talks so much about and in helping you both on toward heaven."

A "black camp-meeting" was a new thing, and all who had "a gift"—and many who hadn't—had come to talk and preach. But old Jack was bishop, and when a good number had gathered, he called them to order, saying, "I'll 'pint myself moderate of dis meetin' and give out de articles of faith by which I means to rule it. I shall preach de first sarmon myself, and it shall be Christ and him crucified. Den in de evening I shall commit de ceremony of marriage in de legal form and covenant. Dat was de first place whar a miracle was performed, when water was turned to wine; but we has a greater miracle here—we don't want no wine! To-morrow some other brother may preach; Dave Montgomery, if he walks humble in de mean time, and don't tip his hat on

one side his head; or dese Sam, if he'll promise not to preach hisself 'stead o' de Master, — as he usual does. But Joe Simpson and Phil Hunter I puts out of de ministry altogether, 'cause on account of dere stealin' poultry from dere massas. True, dey says, 'Massa takes all my time and powers and only gives me what de hosses and mules has, — feed.' True, brothers and sisters; but *dat's for dere masters to settle on dere own 'count* wid de great Massa. We's de light of de world, and we's got to set zamples o' holy livin', 'voidin' de 'pearance of evil. De day o' reckonin' is a comin', I sees it wid dese dim old eyes; and dere will be business enough for de Judge 'mong de mighty, de rich and de larned, widout yer poor, ignorant black folks takin' up his time. No man shall preach to dis meetin' dat don't live up 'ligion in de field and in de kitchen, as well as in de meetin'; and no man shall preach dat don't think more of Christ den he thinks of hisself. Now, chil'en, dese two days is gin to God. and see if yer can't get hold of de skirts of his garments by faith, so as to fetch him down to us. We'll know he's here, for we'll smell de myrrh and frankincense in his robes, and we'll taste de honey from de hills and de grapes from Canaan. We'll hear de music of heaven when de doors opens to let him out; and

we'll see de glory in our souls if not round dis here grove.

"Now sing of Calvary. Oh, dat's de place dat makes de heart ache and de tears flow. Sing of de dark night when our backslidin' brothers fell asleep and left Jesus to fight alone wid de powers o' darkness. I'm ashamed of 'em, and my tears falls in de dark night to think of dere meanness, and I can't hardly forgive 'em yet to go desart my loyin' Master dat way 'stead o' standin' shoulder to shoulder wid him agin de devil. But take care, take care, old Jack, yer only mortal yerself, and mought a done de same. Ye mought even have said wid Peter, 'I never knowed de man.' Thank de Lord, brothers and sisters, dat yer haint been left to yer own selves for salvation, but dat de Lord has provided one mighty to save unto de uttermost all dat calls on him. Lets us help to make up dat all."

"Now sing till de rocks ring and de trees of Labanon clap dere hands wid de swellin' dereof. Sing up, as if it was yer last chance dis side o' glory!" And they did his bidding.

De very night He was betrayed,
He went a little way and prayed;
De sleepy 'ciples dey lay down
To rest demselves upon de ground;

Chorus. — I'll let yer know before I go,
Whether I love de Lord or no!

"If I'd been dere like lovin' John,
I'd lean my head His breast upon;
Nor like old Peter broke my word,
Like if I didn't love de Lord.

I'll let yer know before I go,
Whether I love de Lord or no!

"I loves Him wid my deepest soul,
I loves Him part, I loves Him whole!
I loves His prison and His grave,
I loves Him mighty for to save!

And now, my brothers, I've let yer know
Whether I love de Lord or no!
I love, I love, I love Him so,
To glory now I wants to go!"

The forest echoed back some twenty verses of this hymn, each new one pledging the singers more firmly to love the Lord, and carrying their zeal up till they were ready to cut loose and soar away from earth.

"Now, chil'en," cried Preaching Jack, "I's goin' for to preach to yer, and most like it'll be de last sarmon I ever utters, for de hosses and de chariot wid de hossmen dereof is just overhead, and I's every day a listenin' for de rumble of de wheels. My text dis day is one word CHRIST. De sarmon will have three heads onto it. De first is CHRIST, de second is CHRIST, and de third is CHRIST. I hasn't heard nothin', nor felt nothin', nor loved nothin' for many a year but CHRIST; and I's not

coming down now to meaner things: He's de chief among ten thousand and de altogether lovely, and if any of yer's got grand and wants a grander 'ligion yer can quit dis grove 'fore I begins, for yer'll get nothin' here but de old, old story, dat will be talked and sung arter

' We've been dere ten thousand years,
Bright shinin' as de sun.'

" Now I's ready for to begin de story dat makes de angels stare and hold dere breath in wonder; and mind, I don't 'low no whisperin' in sarmon time, and no bowin', nor smilin', nor winkin' to each other; but all to be circumspectable and sober minded, like dey knew whose presence dey was in."

And old Jack preached; and we can say for him what can't be said of all wise ministers of the Word, he stuck to his text. He brought forward Jesus in the prophets, Jesus in the manger, Jesus in the miracles, Jesus persecuted and betrayed, Jesus crucified and slain, Jesus risen and alive, and to-day reigning in glory and yet dwelling in the lowliest heart. It was a sermon which drew tears from the eyes and groans from the hearts of his humble hearers. Now and then one of the more excitable among them would swoon, causing

a great tumult. There was leaping, and shouting, and shaking of hands, mingled with the singing of impromptu lines as :

“ When old Peter was sinkin’ down,
De savin’ power to him was shown!
Keep me from sinkin’ down!

De church was built when de angels moaned—
’Twas Jesus lay de corner stone.
Keep me from sinkin’ down!

O, what visions has I seen—
Wid His blood He washed me clean;
Keep me from sinkin’ down!

De shinin’ doors is open flung,
Our souls is into glory brung,—
We’re safe from sinkin’ down!

O glory, O glory, O glory!
We’s got de Master’s hand!
Whoever sinks, our feet is fixed
On Zion’s mount to stand.”

After the second sermon, the text and heads of which were the same as the first, there was a great scattering of the hearers who lived near by. They hastened away to ask leave “for to come back to de torchlight weddin’.” The intermission was spent in singing and shouting and praying and exhorting. As soon as the stars were out, the Leon women spread their dainties on a loose barn door which the judge’s people had provided, and

“all de near 'lations” — which meant every body that knew Zack and his fellow servants, for Weza was a stranger — gathered around the board. High torches blazed from each corner of the table and from a keg in the centre, while the whole was graced by gaudy garden flowers and laden with Madam Leon's bounty. Father Jack and the other preachers were to be seated on barrels at each end of the table, to “say blessin' and to sarve.”

Then all the guests stood up in a group, and Preachin' Jack, with both hands extended, said, “Yer twain dat wants to be made one flesh in zample of de priests and prophets and holy men of old, and Sarah and Rebekah and de mother of Zebedee's chil'en and de blessed mother Mary, stan' up aforo me.”

Zack, dressed in coarse white, with a rainbow cravat, and Weza, looking like an animated holly-hock, came forward and stood before him; while their friends formed a wide circle about them.

“Now, chil'en,” said the old man, “take hold of hands, while I pledge yer to mutual obedience. I will now make a few desolatory and purile remarks on matrimony in general, and dis case of it in particular.” And he did so, beginning at Adam and Eve, and coming down to the present day and hour. “All dem zamples of holy men

and women has sarved dere day and gineration and fell asleep. It is wid yer dat's alive and awake dat I's got for to deal now. Zack Cameron, does yer promise me here, afore de Lord and dis yere heap of witnesses, for to love, honor and obey de woman you holds on to by de right hand? Ha?"

"Yes, father, I does promise dat and as much more as yer pleases to ax me," replied Zack, holding his head very high.

"Will yer promise to be de head of her as our great Master is head of de church? Ha?"

"I will, to de best of my 'bility, sar."

"Will yer promise to live wid her—if ever yer get a chance to—and wid no other woman till death do yer sunderate?"

"Yes, dat I will, and longer too, father," replied Zack, "for I hopes to live wid her whar no man can separate us, in de house above, in de great family of de dear Lord, dat we both loves and strives humble to sarve."

"Well, dat's all very good," replied the old patriarch, "but yer mustn't talk so much while I'm a marryin' of yer, or I shan't get through to-night."

"On t'other hand, Louisa Huggins, do yer promise to take dis big fellow dat yer holds on to

by de right hand for to be yer lawful married husband?"

Poor Weza's heart had wandered from the scene where all were gay and happy, and she was "off in de wilderness" hunting up her boys and accusing herself of giving her love to another. She burst into tears and made no reply.

"Pardon her, father," said Zack, pitifully, "for she's only a poor weak woman."

"Well, well," exclaimed old Jack, "women's mighty strange things, any way. Dey'll comyash sea and land for to get a husband, and den when dey got him fast by de hand afore de altar, dey'll bust out cryin' 'sif somebody was marryin' 'em off agin dere will! Come, wipe yer eyes now, and look up bright, little woman, for wid such-like a man for a husband yer can look any body in de eye, and face a frownin' world. Leave de tears and de sighs for de women dat can't get no husbands. Else fer dem dat's got bad ones and can't get rid on 'em. I can tell yer dere's heaps o' women here dat would clap dere hands and laugh if dey could be a standin' whar yer is now. But de dear Lord, dat 'ficted yer wid one hand, has blessed yer wid de other, and saved dis noble great sarvint of his to fill a place better den sons and darters to yer. Now tell me if yer will take dis

man for yer lawful married husband? 'Case if yer don't want him, I'll stop short here; for it takes two to make a bargain."

"I will, sar," sobbed Weza, "wid all my heart, and I thanks de Lord for de chance. Dese tears is 'bout my boys dat's off som'eres in de wild'ness whar I can't get 'em."

"God bless yer poor heart! He owns de wild'ness and de waste places, and has an eye on all dat's gopin' 'bout in 'em. He's got dem boys by de hand—a leadin' of 'em round, and bymeby, when he's ready, he'll fetch 'em to yer. But yer look out how yer fight agin him or he'll lead yer about forty years, like de chil'en of Israel, afore he gives yer de blessin'. But I've wandered from my subject. Will yer promise to love, honor, and obey dis man, and to live wid him as de laws directs, and wid no other man, till death do yer sunderate?"

"I will, sar, and thank de Lord for givin' me such a strong arm to lean agin in my weakness," said Weza.

"Dat's good, den, so fur," said preaching Jack; "and now, 'fore I pronounces de bands, let me ax if either of yer has any remarks to make to de company?"

Weza shook her head, but Zack smiled and re-

plied, "I got nothing to say but to raise my Ebenezer, and thank de good Lord for my luck, and to hope dat all de boys will get as good a wife, and be as kind to her as I vows to be to dis poor weak woman."

"Brothers and sisters," said old Jack, turning about to the company, "if any of yer has a word of exhortin', or would like to tell yer experience, I'll halt a little."

Zack's quick eye caught Dave Montgomery in the act of beginning, and he cut him off by saying,

"Moughtn't yer better say the benediction first, father, and have a prayer-meetin' arterwards? Dese people all looks hungry to get hold on de weddin' supper."

"Dat's true," replied the old man. "Den in virtu of dese mutual promises to love, honor and obey each other and de laws of de land — when yer massas will 'low yer to — I declare yer upon heaven and arth, and all dese witnesses, for to be husband and wife. And de Gospel do saith, 'What God jines together let no man put assunder;' and I adds, of my own wisdom, 'dat he, dat does put assunder will have to answer for it.' Now, friends, de marryin' is over, and yer may all kiss de bride, arter I, yer father in de gospel, salutes her with a holy kiss."

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CHAPTER XIII.

PREACHING JACK AND SCRIPTUR’ BILL.

WHEN the marriage ceremony was over and the barque matrimonial was fairly launched, old Jack said, by way of an additional blessing on the happy pair, “And now chil’en, go forth and take yer place ’mong de nations of de ’arth, and may de blessin’ of Moses in de bush rest upon yer dis time; henceforred and forever more.”

There were many little parties gathered in the grove, each of the number having its own caterer; and we very much fear that the hen-roost and larder of many a master paid tribute to the feast. Fires blazed and torches glared; the men plucked and dissected the chickens — showing the haste and secrecy which they had brought them — and the women put on their pots and cut bread and cako, and bacon to fry. It looked like the witch scene in Macbeth.

But their merry laughter and cheerful chattering

dispelled all thoughts of the dark incantations of sorcery.

Such a feast was partaken of as is rarely seen — in style at least — and then, under the command of Preaching Jack, the tables were cleared and the place made “right decent for a prayer meetin’;” “None of yer pots and kittles left standin’ about here, nor yer burnt brands lyin’ hither and yon, nor yer victuals left loose about!” he cried, like one having authority. “And yerselves must be neat and orderly afore I begins. If de President of dese United States was a comin’ here to-night, what flutterin’ dere would be to clar up de place and to see dat every turban was on straight, and dat all de aprons was clean! And what is de President, whose breath am in his nóstrils, to de company dat’s promised to be here to-night! Don’t never dare to come careless into His presence, chil’en. If yer too poor to ’pear before him wid jewels, and purples, and fine linens, and badgers’ skins — like de temple of old — yer never too poor to honor him wid neat dress and decent places.

“Now ’fore de meetin’ begins, I have de honor to ’nounce ’fore dis ’sembled universe, dat Scriptur’ Bill will preach at ten o’clock to-morrow. Obed Huggins, that’s always goin’ up and down

and to and fro in de arth, like our great pergenitor, brung word — wherever he got it — that we mought suspect Bill for de mornin' sarvice! I hopes yer will listen to him wid reservation and respect, 'cause he's a stranger. He comes to misrepresent de Methodis' posuasion. Of course den dere's a chance dat wid all de truth he'll give us, he'll add a little error! When he speaks what yer b'lieve, ye may say 'Amen;' but if he gives utter to any false doctrine, den keep still. Don't contradic' him on de spot, but leave him in my hands and *I'll settle him arter meetin'!*"

'Scriptur' Bill' was a noted man among the black Methodists of the region. He got his name from a habit he had of using Scripture language as far as possible in his common conversation.

But much as Preachin' Jack loved what was like Christ in the spirit and words of his clerical brother, he had somewhat against him — and rarely did the two meet without having a theological encounter, as well as a smart brush about minor matters; but they always parted in love, and that is more than can be said of all wiser religious controversialists.

The evening service was what might be strictly called an "experience meeting," although we must

admit that much of the talking savored not a little of gossip; for in telling their own experience and their feelings afterward, many took occasion to bring in what "massa," or "missus," or "de overseer," or some fellow servant had done, and thus the air was let in among the family secrets of the neighborhood generally. If at any time bare-faced disloyalty was expressed, old Jack would speak out, sometimes saying, "Whist, dere! keep to de question;" or he would ask, "What says de Bible 'bout bein' subject to de powers dat bees, ha?" or, "Who give yer dis time for to praise and pray in? Heaps of black folks can't come here; yer dat can, use yer liberty well; and leave dem same powers' wid dere own Master to stand or fall down."

Zack and Weza, as the great characters of the day, had been appointed to speak; and both told of their early life, their religious feelings, their visions and their deliverances; and in winding up, poor Weza, in a trembling voice asked "de prayers of dis crowd dat de Lord, who had brung her such mighty helper dis day, would comfort her heart by a letter or a word from one boy, at de least."

Old Jack began to ask her questions, when Mammy Cleo interrupted him by saying, "'Taint no use a prayin', brother, for dem boys. She's de

one to pray for, dat she be willin' to have de great Massa's will donè. Once I lost all my chil'en by my old massa a dyin' and we bein' sold to Tom, Dick and Harry, whoever had money enough to buy us! Well, I sot up my will, and I thought it moughty hard I couldn't hold de reins of de univarse and drive! I fit, and fit, and fit! And just as long as I fit, de great hand was 'laid on me to keep me down. But bymeby I spent myself and hadn't no strength left to fight wid. Den I fell down at his feet for dead; and I said, 'Lord, all I has is dine; do as pleases dee wid my chil'en; only bring dy own glory out o' my black cloud and I'll be satisfied! What's me and what's my father's house, dat I should bid de Lord of heaven how he should deal wid us! And after dat I was so hungry and thirsty after de Lord's presence and his glory dat my chil'en didn't seem to be nowhars! And den I got word of two dat was alive and three dat was gone to glory! And I tell yer what it is, Father Jack, as long as dis little woman frets at God, just so long he'll head her off—husband or no husband. Dis brother Zack looks like a powerful big fellow dat's of some consequence; but bless yer, he aint so big as de dust in de scales in de eye of him dat made him! He can't fotch news o' dem boys no more den he can

make a world! She's got him, sure, but she's just as pendent on de Lord as she was afore! S'pose yer jines in prayer dat she—poor chile—may grow subjected to de will of Christ in all things, Father Jack, and we'll say de 'amens' to it."

He prayed for Weza, appealing to Him who felt the power of Mary's love and sorrow, to pity and to bless her; and such tender and earnest appeals followed as quite lifted their poor subject above her grief, and the peace of God soon filled her soul. "And to-morrow, chil'en," said old Jack, "some of de white folks will be here—yer massas and dere families, dat yer bound to honor, if yer can;—and yer must let dem set on de boards, 'cause dey aint used to squattin' on de ground, and can't do it so handy as yer can. And yer needn't groan and howl for de sake of makin' a show of yerselves, nor do any thing else dat's savage-like. And mind, every thing yer do dat's foolish or 'dicalous will be sot down agin de Master! If yer caper about, and hoot, and fall down—when de Spirit don't do it—dey'll say, 'Dat's all dere 'ligion does for dem! It don't keep dem from stealin' poultry,'" and here he made a dead pause and turned a withering look on Joe Simpson and Phil Hunter, the two preachers he had "put out of de ministry" for the crime now delicately hinted

at. Not reflecting on the conclusion to which the audience would be forced by their course, they both stealthily caught up their hats and made their way outside the lines, anxious to get out of sight.

The people all laughed at this, and old Jack said solemnly to them: "Well, den, yer dat is clar of 'all sin and all onfaithful dealin' wid yer masters, git right up and fling stuns at 'em. Whose chickens has I smelt a cookin' all day?"

Many dropped their heads, but Zack rose and said, "Father, I could heave stuns all night, as far as stealin' is consarned, and so could heaps more here; but in de heart is de seat of dis war atween massas and sarvants; and few of us but yer can pint at and cry, 'Don art de man!'"

On the morning of the second day there was a still greater gathering. The fame of "de glorious times" had been carried far and wide; and the blacks from a distance, whether from the East or the West, the North or the South, when asked how they heard of it, replied, "Obed Huggins telled on't!" Where "the centaur" hadn't been — beside being present at each meeting — was more easily told than where he had! It began to be whispered among the crowd that the horse and his rider had the power of being in many places at the

same time. Four men testified to their being on "massa's plantation just as de sun was sinkin' ;" and these places were four miles from the grove, in different directions ! The report had been personified, and those who had heard the message believed they had seen the bearer of it.

The "boards" were filled at an early hour by a dozen or more white ladies and gentlemen, most of whom had favorite servants they wished to gratify ; while a few, doubtless, had come hoping that while the Master was feeding the multitude, they might share in the blessing.

Madam Leon and Miss Julia were there as humble and devout worshippers ; the judge and his wife had come "to please old Jack ;" a family of lovely young girls were among the number because their "dear mammy," in whose care their dying mother had placed them, had plead with tears that they would come, "for mought be Jesus of Nazareth would pass by and touch them !"

Huggins was wandering uneasily about the grove, making excuses to everybody he met for being there. Unfortunately he did not tell the same story twice. He told Madam Leon he came to please her, and Zack, and Weza ; he told the judge he was forced to come to watch that big man of Leon's, that he didn't run off with his little

woman; while to a few rough companions he sometimes met at the store, he said, "everybody was gone off his plantation, and there was no work doin' and nothin' to eat, so he and his wife had set off to visit some folks at 'Shallow Bend,' and just looked in here, to see the sport as they passed!" The truth was, "missus" had made him come; for unwilling as he was, he hadn't energy to resist her demands.

Mrs. Huggins was there, painfully conscious that her attire was the same Madam Leon had seen her have on about house and of which she had heard her speak so scornfully. Her bonnet was on one side, bringing the few soiled and mashed roses, whose proper place was on top of her head, directly over one eye; and her shawl, all ablaze with rainbow-hued flowers on a snuff-colored ground, was worn in the easiest possible style, the corner being on one shoulder, while one end was near her belt and the other trailing on the ground. She looked so uncomfortable—as if not at home among either whites or blacks—that the kind-hearted Madam Leon took her under her own care, chatting with her before the time for service, and seating her beside herself when that hour arrived.

Scriptur' Bill had come early and had been some

time on the ground, exhorting, admonishing and rebuking, before Preaching Jack appeared. As the old man tottered towards him at length, Bill held out his hand, exclaiming, "Grace, massy, and peace be unto yer, Father Jack, and upon all de Israel of God."

"Dat's a good prayer, brother Bill," replied the old man, looking sharply at him; "but I wish ye'd keep as close to Scriptur' in yer doctrines and yer dress as yer does in yer words. Where does yer find de command for de preachers of de Gospel to wear a white cloth 'bout dere necks, ha?"

"Dar aint no color 'signed for neckcloths, is dere', father?" asked Scriptur' Bill, in a conciliatory tone.

"I reckons de fust of de perfession hadn't no neckcloths, no how; I reckons our brother Peter didn't pay much 'tention to de clerical riggins when he girt his fisher's coat about him. Ha?"

"I reckons de brethren hadn't no white cravats when dey was a mendin' de nets afore dat powerful haul of fishes; and I reckons de dear Massa hadn't no sich like gear 'bout him when he girded his blessed self with a towel and washed de 'ciples' feet. No, no, no. When de cruel Jews parted his raiment, dere was no sich nonsense 'mong it as dat, Bill."

"De times and seasons were different den, brother," said Scriptur' Bill, apologetically.

"Pho!" cried old Jack. "Men was sinners den like dey be now; and de Lord's sarvants was bound to be humble and set a zample to de flock den as dey be now, and no more. May be Judas 'Cariot, dat was a time-sarver, always a tryin' for to please de grand folks, wore a white cravat, and de fashion come down from him. But de night he betrayed our dear Jesus I reckons he pulled it off; for he didn't boast den — as I ve heerd o' yer doin' — dat he was a clargyman."

"If eatin' meat makes my brother to 'fend," replied poor Bill, meekly, "I'll wear no more white cravats while de world stand."

"Now dat's like a Christian," replied old Jack. "If ye'll pull down dat sail o' pride, ye'll cripple Satan in de right hand. Ye see, while dere aint no more sin in white den dere is in black, a wearin' dat thing is a follerin' dem dat's sot up rules and fashions dat ain't in Scriptur'. De nex' thing, ye'll want a gown, like dat man preaches to de Court House; and de nex', may be ye'll want to shave de top of yer head like a popist monk, or wear a coat down to yer heels like a priest. Ah, Bill, Bill! I believe yer born agin and dat yer'll reach glory yit; but yer've got a weakness, Bill.

Yer've got a notion that yer can improve on de Lord's plan. No, no, no. He, de Lord of heaven and arth, come meek and lowly, a workin' wid his hands and ridin' on an ass. He pick out poor fishermen for to be his company and to preach his gospel, and he go homeless and hungry; and when de end come, he lay down in a borrowed grave. But bless ye, dem dat comes arter him, and bears his name, and call theirselves his sarvants, is so grand dat should he come back like he did afore, dey wouldn't speak to him. Do you 'spect if he should come back here wid his feet all dusty from de journey, dat grand clargymen would ax him into their pulpits to sit down aside o' dem? I reckons not. Dey would turn de cold shoulder on him, and den he would say, 'I'll go to de lost sheep of de house of Israel,' and turn right in here to dis camp—he would."

Before Scriptor' Bill mounted the platform the white cravat had vanished.

After singing a most spirited hymn, Bill rose up and said, "Dear beloved and longed for,—I's very happy to stan' up dis day and speak unto yer de words of truth and sobe'ness. I shall give yer no 'laborate 'scurce, but throw a few hints at yer that yer can carry home and work up; and den I shall improve de subject by an 'count of de death

and funeral of Aunt Zena, dat yer all knowed for a mother in Israel. De last words she said to me was, 'Next time yer preach, Bill, magnify de grace of de Lord by showin' how easy he led me through de dark river and let me into glory.' And I'll do it at de close of dis yere exordium.

"My tex' is in 'Ax' — 'Ax of de 'postles.' Dis book is called 'Ax' becuse de words in it, cut so deep into de hearts of de Scribes and de Pharisees and de Rulers. Don't yer know it says, 'Dey was cut to de heart, pierced to de heart,' &c. ?

"Dese wicked men hardened dere hearts like de never milestone; but de Gospel 'Ax' cut into 'em. Dey made chains and stocks for de feet and de hands of de Lord's holy ones; but de 'ax' severed 'em. 'Nias and 'Sophira, dey built up a big lie, and thought dey was to get great glory from it; but dis 'ax' of truth cut through it, and slew dem too. Our dearly beloved brother Paul, while he was Saul of Tarshish, was struck down wid an ax in de form of a voice; and dat laid his pride low and made him a humble child like de rest of us.

"Brother Peter, he t up his pride, and he wa'n't goin' to cut a y' thin' but what he thought best. But he fell asleep — into a vision-like — and dis 'ax' fell on him, and his pride was cut in two,

and he was glad arter that to eat any thing he could get hold on honestly. After dis de Jews bound demselves by an oath dat dey wouldn't eat or drink till dey fust killed our brother Paul. De 'ax' of Providence cut dat oath in two, and dey ate and drank as long as dey lived.

"Dis 'ax' has two edges; one is de edge of vengeance, and dat slays de King's enemies; de other oder is de edge of Providence, and dat cuts de soul of de believer free from every thin' but Christ. It cuts every chain and link, and even a string dat binds us to dis world; for Jesus says we shall have nothin' dat's dearer to our souls den he is."

And so the preacher went on for an hour and a half, giving examples from the days of the Egyptian bondage to the present time, of the wonderful blows given by this 'ax.' His rhetoric was of the rudest style, and his figures were often sadly confused; but this did not offend the taste nor outrage the sense of his humble hearers. And intermingled with all that was offensive to the more refined in his audience, there was an ingenuity that amused them as well as a fervor that subdued all criticism. Bill, however, did not soar on one of his wildest flights that day, being evidently under some restraint from the presence of Preaching Jack, who was always watching for heresy. Ar-

minianism being the old man's horror, he felt it his duty to be always on the alert lest it might creep in among his flock unawares.

On the outskirts of the little grove there were now quite a number of white men come as spies or scoffers; and it occurred to Bill that he might catch them by a little holy guile. So he said, "Father Jack, wid yer leave, I would oppose dat we hold a debatin' s'icty as de afternoon sarvice, and let all men of one blood, of all de nations, give dere 'pinion 'bout 'ligion, and how dey 'spects to get to heaven. 'Let dere be light,' says de gospel, and if anybody here has fetched a brighter torch dan mine to light up de valley and de shadow, dere will be liberty for him to hold it up. Infidels, Mahom'dons, Jews, Gentiles, Hotetots, Arabs, Methodises and Baptises will all be on equal footin'. Den when de 'scussion is over we'll vote which has got de best of de arg'ment; and de majority shall rule, as is 'done in decency and order' in all 'publican governments on de arth."

"Whist, there, Bill!" cried the old man. "Do yer mean to say dat if dem outsiders dat never see de Lord shall outnumber us, dat we's goin' to give in to de devil? No, no! dere's no majority work in dis business. If all's on de devil's side but only old Jack, he'll stand up like a rock for his beloved

Massa Jesus, and say, 'Do' all men forsake dee, yet will I never forsake dee.' I 'proves of de 'batin' s'iety, but no majority shall draw me 'way from him my soul love. De bigger de 'jority agin him, de harder I'll try to bring dem over to de minority."

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CHAPTER XIV.

LAST WORK OF PREACHING JACK.

SCRIPTUR' Bill's "batin' s'iety" proved one of the most amicable discussions that ever graced the annals of controversy — the combatants being all on one side. They could not find a man to oppose the great truths of revelation, the few whites who scoffed at them being too ignorant to give any reason for their unbelief. This was a source of some disappointment to Bill, for having suggested the debate he felt a little pride in seeing it go warmly on. He could not help showing a little chagrin at the one-sided nature of the movement.

"Well, friends," he said, "if I believed every man on dis yere ground was heart, body and soul on de Lord's side, I'd shout for joy till I made de anthems ring wid de arches dereof. But I knows better; and so I wants every man for to show his colors and give a reason of de hopes dat's in him.

I'm a Christian, born agin, a new creatur', old things passed away. I knows dat I's passed from death unto life, 'case I loves de brethren. And I ain't ashamed on't. I glories in de fact. I talks 'bout my big hope by de daylight, and dreams 'bout it when I's sleep, and many's de time I rouses at midnight, and leaves my bed and goes out under de stars, and looks up to God wid my soul so full of de glories of 'demption for lost man dat I can't speak, but only let de tears of love run from my eyes. Dat's de way I feels 'bout my hope, and I persumes dat skeptacle folks feels just so 'bout dere hope, and if dey does, let 'em boast on't. Massa Huggins, if I mought make so bold, I'd ax yer to say a few words 'bout yer principles. It's told dat yer a skeptacle, and so fur in life I never heerd one of that persuasion tell his 'spe-rience."

Dave was not an orator, and whatever weaknesses he had, hearing himself talk in public was not one of them. He was sitting on a stump quite near Scriptur' Bill when the gauntlet was thrown down at his feet; and he was so startled by it that he sprung up as if by a shock of galvanism, and turned his back on the speaker, growling out a few words nobody could hear.

Then Father Jack came forward and addressed

him, saying, "Please, massa, tell dis poor crowd if dere is any more joy 'in denyin' de Lord of glory den dere is in leanin' on his bosom, and washin' his dear feet wid tears, and cryin' 'My Lord and my God.'"

"I reckons," replied Dave, surlily, "that I haint been a planter and my own master all these years to herd with black folks at this late day. But if yer wants my 'pinion 'bout 'ligion it's just this; that yer too ignorant to know the meanin' o' the word, and that the white folks ought to get together and settle which is the true 'ligion, and then make yer all believe it, and quit this ere noise, and stay to home and work!" — and leaving his hearers aghast at such statements, he walked off.

"Well, if dere's no more to be said agin de Lord," said Bill, "s'pose yer put de vote, Father Jack, and see how de case stands?"

The vote was put thus: "All yer dat don't believe man's got no soul, or dat if dey has souls all goes to one place arter death, or dat de Lord Jesus was only a good man, and dat we's good men too, hold up yer hands agin de King of Glory. Yer dat wish yer'd been dere to drive de nails and de spear, and to cry, 'Crucify him, crucify him,' and to put vinegar mingled wid gall to his sweet lips,

and a parted his raiment — lookin' sharp to get yer share on't; yer dat would like to have writ 'Dis is de King of de Jews,' over his head, and put de purple robe on him, and smote him, and mocked him, and spit upon him — O, Lord, if dere is one such wretch in dis yere ordance, have mercy on his guilty soul! — I says, if dere is one sich black-hearted creatur' here, let him hold up his hand now agin him dat loved us wid an everlastin' love, and dat gin himself for us, and purchased us wid his own blood."

This remarkable way of putting a motion had a moving effect on his excitable hearers. They wept, and groaned, and cried out, "No, no, dear Jesus! I'll die wid dee, yet I will not deny dee! He is de Lord! He saves us from our sins! He's waitin' for us now in glory! Come, dear Jesus, and take us home! We's right homesick arter dee! Put dy en'mies under dy feet, and reign King over de nations like as dou now reign in our souls."

"Well, den, de scoffin' side of de house hab voted all dey will," cried old Jack, with a smile, "for dey's all clared out. Now yer dat will have my Jesus for to reign over yer, now and hereafter, up wid yer right hands."

Not only their right hands went up. The audi-

ence sprang as if with one consent to their feet, talking, and laughing, and weeping, and shouting, and calling on Jesus by every endearing name to look into their hearts and see if they did not love him and long for his glory. Madam Leon and Miss Julia rose with the rest; and the judge and his wife unconsciously followed their example, hardly realizing how far behind this poor throng they were in all that goes to make up the real happiness of life. The judge always said he felt safe as long as he could keep hold of old Jack; for he'd get him into heaven by some means.

It was several minutes before quiet was restored, and then Jack said: "Dat question is settled for all time in dis part of de world—even on our brother Bill's s'gestion—for de 'jority has ruled right for onçe. Now go off wid grateful hearts and eat yer suppers, and den, after a short prayer meetin', we will all dispense to our sev'ral homes to be more lovin' to each other and more faithful to our masters den ever before; for de nearer we gets to de Lord, de faithfuller we'll be to dem as has de rule over us in de flesh."

Father Jack's "short meetin'" was lengthened out three hours; and it was one never to be forgotten in that region. The Master manifested himself there with great power, convincing of sin

and granting pardon to those who had not known him before; and giving new joy and fresh assurance to the poor pilgrims who had long been groping after his guiding hand and following his voice amid the storms and the darkness.

As the moon rose high and lighted the grounds, old Jack said, "Dear chil'en, the time has come for us to sunderate, and I would spread my hands over yer and call down de blessin' of him dat led Israel through de wild'ness, dat he will go wid yer and be a pillar of fire by night and a pillar of cloud by day."

They all rose, and he said, "Dear Jesus, dis is my family, my chil'en. I has come to de end of my days dat's been few and evil; like to our father Jacob, I wants to bless dem before I dies. Blessed shall dey be in de house, in de field, by de way-side, and everywhar. Blessed be dere chil'en, and may dey be a seed to sarve dee. Blessed be dere massas in dere baskets and dere stores, in dere houses and dere lands, in dere oxen and dere asses, and in de stranger dat is widin dere gates. To de massiful do dou show massy; and if any is onmassiful, bless dem by forgivin' and lovin' dem. And bless dis great and wickod nation. I sees dem a standin' now on de shore of a sea of blood. De waves rolls up and cry out for dere sons to

swallow 'em up. De holy ones is a cryin' to God, 'Spare,' and a pleadin' wid dee to roll back de waves of vengeance. But no, de 'pressors beckons 'em back and throws dere own beautiful sons into de sea. Dey is rusiin' madly on to dere own destruction, but God is mightier den dey, and he will bring good out of evil and peace out of war, and reign over de whole arth in righteousness. Amen and amen.

"Now, brother Bill and Luke, take me up to de mansion house, and not to my cabin. I's weak and faint, and I's got a word for massa 'fore I goes home to glory. I wants my missus now, like a sick child wants his mother."

The judge and his wife received old Jack very tenderly, the latter mixing a reviving cordial for him.

"Don't you know, daddy," said the judge, pleasantly, "I told you it would take only one more camp-meeting to make an end of you; and I'm afraid I spoke the truth."

"Dat's so, Massa Henry," said the old man, addressing him as in the days of his childhood. "I knowd de end was near, and I wanted to go up wid a shout; and now I's got my staff in my hand, and has come to bless yer 'fore I crosses over Jordan. Send Luke and Jess away while I

tells yer and missus what de Lord has showed me in a vision dat's comin' on dis yere country, dat yer may repent, and believe, and flee from Sodom widout lookin' back. Yer've been lovin' and kind to yer people, but for all dat de Lord has somewhat against yer."

His fellow slaves quietly withdrew; and what he said to his "owners" none ever heard. He talked long to weeping listeners, while all others in the house were sleeping. Then he sunk back exhausted in the great leathern chair, and said, "De long day breaketh, I must be gone."

His fellow servants, being summoned to his side, saw that he was dying. It was too late to remove him to his own cabin, but the family were not horror-stricken at the thought of his dying where he was. Little as they themselves regarded God or his claims on them, they believed in their hearts that old Jack was an heir of glory, and that his crown was just above him; and they felt it an honor to serve him.

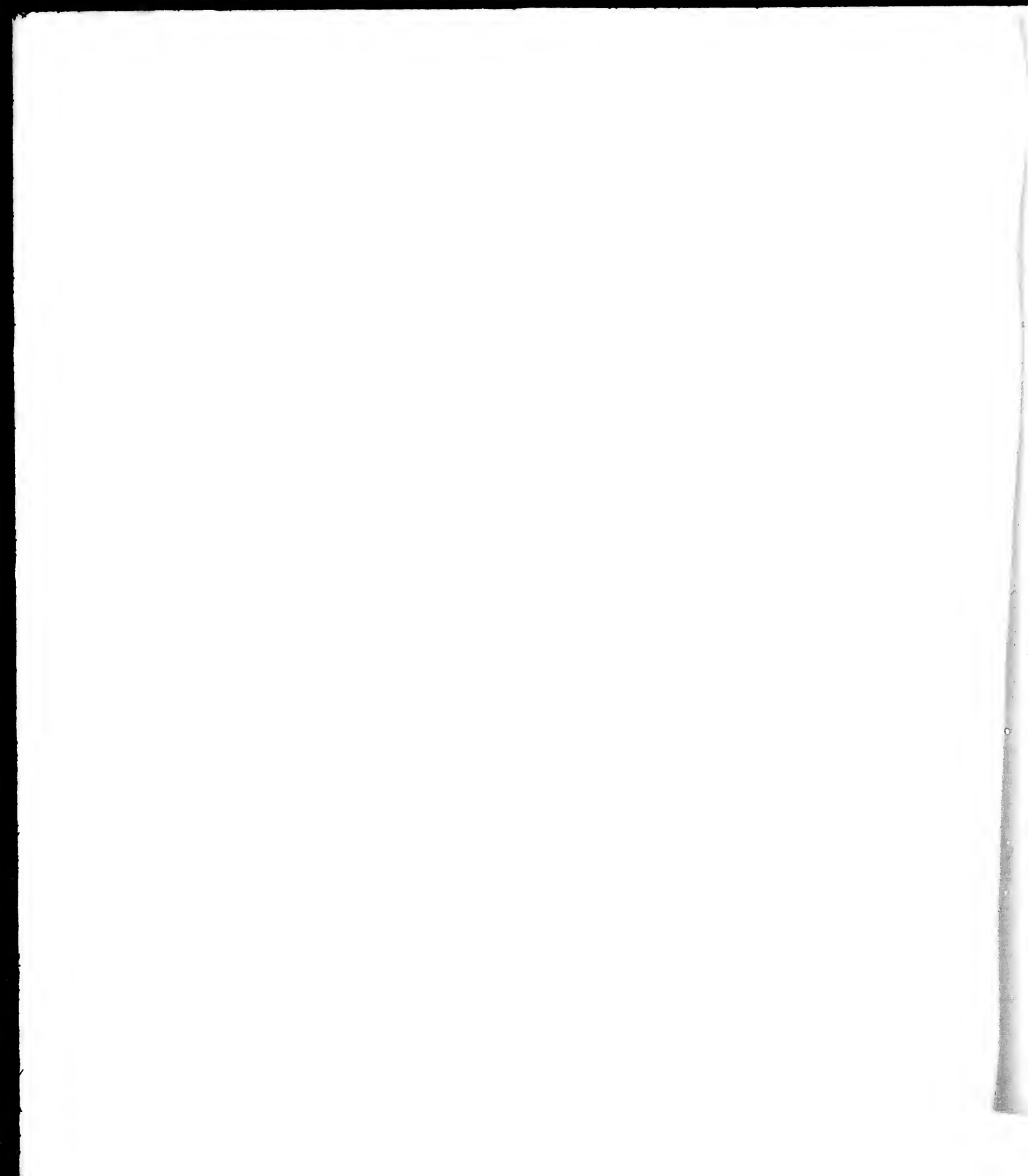
As his friends wept around him at break of day, the old man looked on them for a moment, and then said, as if suddenly waking from a dream, "Weep not for me, but weep for yerselves and yer chil'en; for de days of darkness cometh, and dey shall be many. De chariots of Israel and de hoss-

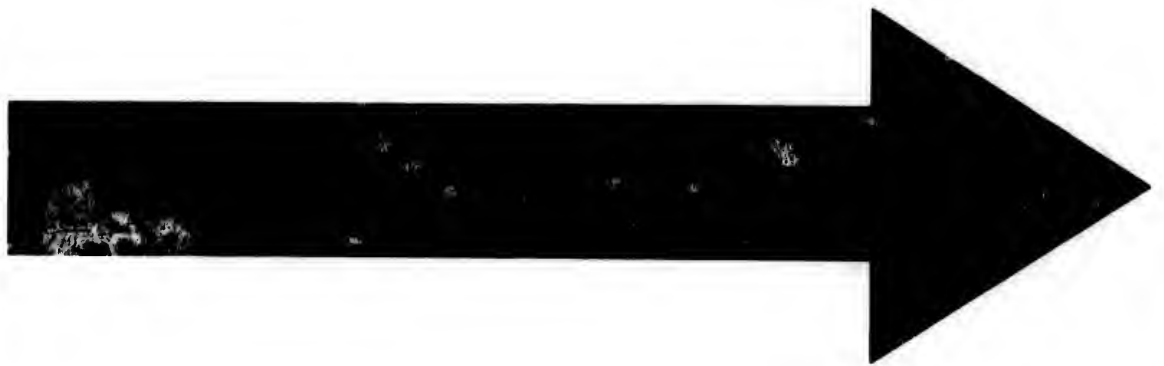
men dereof," — and with these words the released spirit soared away from the house of bondage, leaving a mantle of forgiveness and love upon those who watched its happy departure.

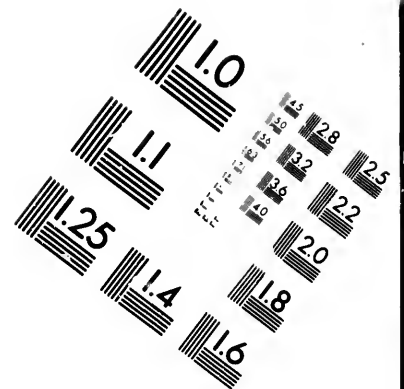
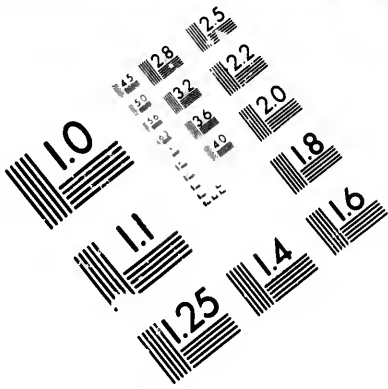
In the morning Weza found Mrs. Huggins greatly subdued in spirit, weeping while she asked questions about the prayer-meeting which was held in the grove after her departure. "Oh, goody me!" she cried, "I haint got no comfort. There's them poor ignorant black folks so happy they was most wild with 'ligion and a wantin' to go home to God, while here am I, white, and a planter's wife, a livin' in a mansion house, just as mise'ble as I can be. I'm so feared of death that I can't take no comfort, and don't get over anybody's dyin' for a week, fear I'll go next. And this here camp-meetin' will keep me worked up a thinkin' of my sins and sich like, till somebody else dies, I reckons, and that will stir me up worse and worse agin."

"O, no, missus," said Weza, cheerfully, "dere won't be nobody die soon, for nobody's sick 'bout here now. But if yer will scuse me I'd like to tell yer de way to get a peace dat can't be broke up by anybody's death."

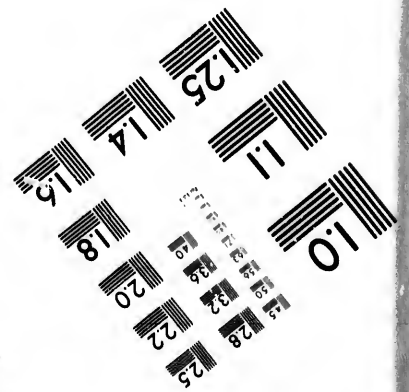
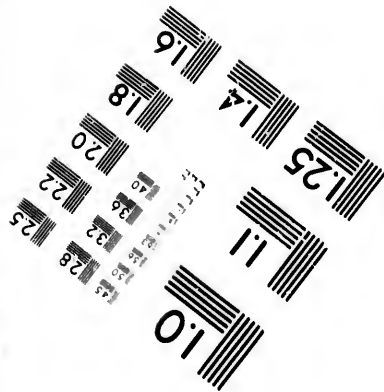
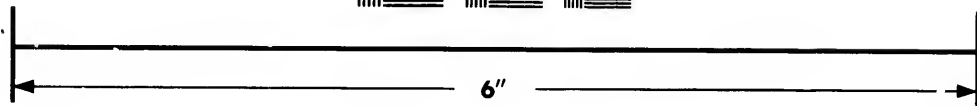
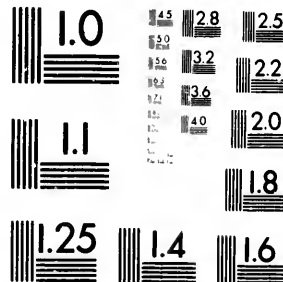
"I know what yer goin' to say — that I must get 'ligion, but it's no use a tryin'. Huggins is nobody







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to help me on, and I don't know how myself. I used to make up my mind every livin' Sunday that I would sure get 'ligion fore the next one. But I put it off and off, and Huggins got sot agin the Colonel about paintin' that meetin'-house, and we quit goin', and that turned my mind off. So now when I goes to quarterly meetin' all I thinks of is the dresses and bonnets, and seein' whose black folks is the best dressed, and sich like. But yesterday I had them old feelins' come back agin, and I'd half a mind to tell Madam, only I thought she'd think I'd been stealin'-or somethin', to feel so wicked."

"No, missus, she knows what de feelin' is when de Lord stirs up de sinner; and she'd be de very one to show yer de way. Zack could do it, but course yer would rather larn of a lady den of a poor colored man."

"Huggins is such a high-spirited man he wouldn't let me larn of either. He'd say madam would set me down for ignorant, and that it would be stoopin' to talk to Zack. But I do hope to goody nobody will die while I feel this worried way."

At this moment the "centaur" passed the window and cried out, "Dere's awful news, Weza! Who think yer is dead dis mornin'?"

Both women ran to the door, when Obed, almost white with fear, cried out, "We's lost Preachin' Jack. He's gone up to glory like he said he would; and now who'll ax de Lord to pity and save us?" and the poor fellow gave vent to his feelings in a flood of tears.

Mrs. Huggins staggered back and leaned against the wall, and with her hands clasped tight, exclaimed, "This here will be the death of me! It can't be he's dead, Obed, when he was so 'live just last night."

"He is," sighed Obed, "for on my way to de spring I just rode over to de colonel's, and de judge had sent for Zack for to get up a big funeral for him. Luke said how dat dere was a cheriot made out of fire come down arter his soul, and he got into it joyful and went up, a leavin' only his body behind. And de missus cried like she'd lost her father, and said his prayers for dat ar house was ended now."

"O deary me," exclaimed Mrs. Huggins, "it was in my heart to ax for his prayers 'fore I come away last night, but I thought it mought look mean and stoopin', to Madam. But oh, now I wish I had, for may be he'd have prayed and got answered when he was so close to heaven."

"Jesus is just as near to us now, missus," said

Weza, "as he was to old Jack last night. If yer ax for yerself he'll sure hear, and answer, and bless yer."

"I wouldn't care much if I was only sure I wouldn't die of a suddint," sobbed Mrs. Huggins. 'Ligion gives a body a safe feelin', I reckons."

"O, missus," cried the little woman mournfully, "yer oughter care if yer was goin' to live forever. Yer need de comfort Jesus gives to carry yer through de wild'ness; for it wont always go easy wid ye; and, above all, yer oughter seek de honor and glory of God more den yer own comfort."

"Be they goin' to have a mighty big funeral, Obed?" asked Mrs. Huggins, whose elastic mind had sprung from the sad subject of death to the great gathering it would occasion. "The judge set such heaps by Jack, and then he's always proud of doing the biggest things for his people. I shouldn't wonder if he invited all the white folks about, and had everything as fine as if Jack was white."

"Why," cried Obed, "Luke reckoned he'd put up a headstone for him, tellin' 'Well done, good and faithful sarvant' onto it, as a zample to de rest on us to work smart like Jack use to when he was young."

"Well, Weza, yer mought as well have all my

things brushed up smart; for if other white folks go, I'll go too. And I'll see if I can't get yer massa to let yer all go,—though there's been such loss of time by the camp-meetin' that I 'spect he'll growl like a bear when I ax him. He thinks 'ligion and funerals is a mighty hindrance to work, and that, twixt the two he can't get nothing done on his plantation year in and year out."

CHAPTER XV.

A VISIT FROM ZACK'S MASTER.

THE months grew into years, and still the little woman toiled away cheerfully, daily thanking God for the great gift of the "strong heart to lean agin," and looking hopefully forward to some news from her boys. One day Zack's master, while on his annual visit to his uncle, the colonel, rode over to see Huggins, and to ask some questions about Weza, in whom, for Zack's sake, he felt an interest. Huggins was very nervous at sight of him, fancying he had come to spy into or to meddle with his affairs. He had decided on meeting a haughty young nabob who would either scorn or ridicule him, and resolved to be out of the way on his arrival. But as usual, he was not smart enough to carry out his plan. The gentleman rode up on horseback while he was still at his breakfast. Huggins had two sound "cheers" taken to the veranda, and going out, he braced

himself against the assault he expected, with his brows knit in a terrific manner. The gentleman met him most graciously, not casting one glance at his disordered garments, nor yet at his premises, till Huggins himself began to wonder "where on arth he put his eyes." He spoke in a subdued tone, and took the offered seat. After the ordinary preliminaries he said, "I suppose you are aware, Mr. Huggins, that Zack is my man, and not my uncle's?"

"Yes, so the Colonel told me," replied Huggins, gruffly.

"Did he tell you why I sent him up here?"

"He said you did it for yer own convenience, and I had my suspicions at first that yer was afeared of yer life—he is such a savage-lookin' fellow. But since he married my woman, I've given that up, findin' him peaceable and good-natured."

The gentleman smiled and said, "Parting with this man was one of the trials of my life. No money could have bought him from me. But my wife took a terrible dislike to him from the hour she came to my house, and could not be happy while he was about. Thus, for years, I have kept him here, and no one knows how I have missed him. My wife has recently died, and I have come

for Zack to take charge of my plantation ; and as it is against my principle to separate husband and wife" — that was all that had prevented his doing it nearer home long ago — "I came in to ask if you would sell the woman."

"No," said Huggins, with decision, "I can't part with her ; she's so good to my wife, and don't have no company a runnin', and keeps the men's clothes together, and is a good woman in ginerall, mostly. And if I did want to sell her, yer wouldn't be willing to pay the worth of her."

"I will give you a hundred dollars more than any of your neighbors will name as the market value of the woman," said the gentleman.

"O' course my neighbors would go agin me, and put her value down to help yer," said Huggins, sourly.

"I don't know why ; all but my uncle are strangers to me. But set your own price and perhaps I will give that. I want the man, and he is not willing to go without his wife."

"Ha!" cried Huggins, "I'd like to have him tell me that if I owned him. I'd break his 'will' or I'd break his neck, one or t'other."

If the stranger had not heard of Huggins before he might have thought him a monster of cruelty, and have given him a lesson on mercy ; as it was,

he only smiled, and said, "I have no desire to break either his will or his neck, and so I came here to see if I could get him home in an easier way without worrying either him or his wife."

"Missus!" called Huggins in at the window, "do you want to sell yer little woman for a hundred more than I paid for her?"

"No, yer knows I don't, and I reckon that rich folks might have better business than a worryin' me when I'm so misc'ble in health and so stiff in the jints. Aint there no women left in the world but just only my woman?"

"Two hundred more?" continued Huggins, in a tantalizing tone.

"No, I tell yer. Didn't I settle that ar when the Colonel wanted her?"

"Three hundred more?"

"I reckons yer better quit auctionin' her up that way. I'll git hysterics if yer don't stop." This was a new accomplishment "missus" had acquired, by which she could bring Huggins to terms when the plea of "stiff jints" failed, and she was too tired to talk.

"Four hundred? Zack's owner's here, and wants her."

"Don't care if the king of England wants her; he sha'n't have her and there's an end on't," cried

"missus," removing a supporting boot-jack and letting the window down with a crash.

"It's no use talkin', sir, she says 'no,' and she's as stiff as a mule when she's once sot on a thing," said Huggins.

The gentleman looked troubled, and said, addressing the window in a loud tone—for Mrs. Huggins herself was invisible—"Madam, I will give you a new horse of your own selection, if you will let me take the woman."

"I won't!" was the prompt reply of Mrs. Huggins, "so yer can clar, now. I never had no peace nor no rest in life till I got this little woman, and I'll keep her till I die, see if I don't."

"I doubt that, madam," replied the gentleman. "I think none of us will keep our servants till we die, unless our lives shall be very short."

"Why, sir," asked Huggins, animated by alarm; "there aint no more news 'bout that ar muss in Congress, is thar? I haint seen a paper for two weeks, but my men gets all the news, and I over-hears 'em tellin' it to each other, nights, mostly."

"There's nothing new, but the thing is moving on, step by step, and I have no doubt it will end in war," replied the stranger.

Huggins threw up his hands and uttered an oath, a thing he never did except when awfully

excited and off his guard, for he was not a profane man.

"Suppose worst comes to worst," he asked, "whar will the fight be? I hope the Yankces will take us on our own ground. The blacks would stand by us to a man, and we'd grind the North down to powder, we would." Here Huggins rose up, set his teeth firmly, clenched his great fists and shook them vigorously, as if he held every man of the free North in their grasp.

"I don't believe the slaves will stand by us, friend," said the gentleman, "and I shall despise them if they do. If I was one, I'd make common cause with the North, if I had to shed my last drop of blood in the fight. We're a barbarous race to hold our fellow men in slavery here in the nineteenth century. My only wonder is that God has not wiped us off the face of his earth. I have felt this ever since I knew right from wrong, and heard the subject discussed in the parlor on one side, and in the kitchen on the other. I always meant to liberate my people when I came into possession of them. But I married, and my wife's views were not like mine: so the matter has slipped along. I have been told that Zack's mother, a noble woman, whom they called 'the Queen of Sheba,' had a revelation of what I think

is now com'g. She told my mother that God had promised to hide her safe from it, but that Zack would see it; and she bound him over when a boy never to run off, but to stand by his own people in the evil day."

"Then I'll warn yer he'll play traitor if there's trouble, and jine the Yankees, he will," cried Huggins.

The gentleman made no reply to this, but said, "If that prophecy is fulfilled, you'll lose your woman; so you might as well sell her for a high price and save any risk of the money."

"That's true, but I can't mar'ge my wife no how; and the truth is I'm afeared to try. And Weza aint good for much, neither," said Huggins, by way of reconciling the gentleman to the disappointment. "She was sold off from her two boys when a Dr. Percy's 'state was settled up in the city, and she's awful mise'ble at times, and can't hardly work, thinkin' 'bout 'em."

"Did she belong to Dr. Percy? I know his heir well. That young mulatto of his used to set up the pins for us when we were playing together. Did Percy never write to let the poor mother know that he had sold her boy?"

"He don't know whar she is," replied Huggins, "for she's been sold twice since the doctor's death."

She thought he liked the boy too well to part with him, and hopes to get at him some time."

"A lady from Florida took such a fancy to the fellow that she offered Percy more than he could refuse,—he's very fond of money,—and he took it, though he was sorry he did, before they got off. Can't you get any clew to the other boy?" asked the gentleman.

"The man that bought him writ a letter to the first man that bought her; and his overseer writ one to me; but that lazy Obe of mine lost it on the way from the Post Office, so I never knowed who it was from, nor whar to answer, nor nothin."

"How did you know it was from him, then?" asked the gentleman.

Huggins turned all colors, and replied, "Oh, no, that was another letter. My wife lighted her pipe with this one 'fore I got it half read."

"What a lie!" cried the injured lady, who had slipped the boot-jack softly under the window again. "That's the only letter we ever had, and yer couldn't find it when Madam Leon offered for to answer it, 'cause our pen was rusty and our ink dried up."

"Well," said the gentleman, rising, "it is of no use to waste any more words about Zack's wife. If you won't let her go, he will have to leave her

behind; for I must have him for a while. I shall let him come to see her as often as he pleases; and as he has full liberty, he'll be pretty sure to smuggle her off some time. I advise you to sell her while you can."

As he left the house he was assailed by a volley of words which proved that one member, at least, of Mrs. Huggins' body was not "stiff in the joints."

When the gentleman had gone, Huggins heard the sound of weeping in the kitchen, and went out. But he had no word of comfort for the stricken Weza; he only said, "'Member now, yer gin me a vov when I let yer get married that yer'd stay here till yer died, 'less yer got yer liberty. Now, if ever yer speak o' goin' with Zack, I shall know that yer 'ligion has teacht yer to lie to me and to rob me, and to be cruel to yer poor sick missus that's so good to yer. Now step smart and make the boys' hoc-ecake, for they'll soon be in from the field."

And the poor heart was again driven back into the deep, dark wilderness.

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CHAPTER XVI.

HUGGINS GETS RID OF ZACK.

WHEN the men had eaten their hoe-cake and gone back to the field, and the heart-broken "little brown woman" had taken refuge in the great empty chamber where she slept, Huggins closed the doors and windows, and drew his chair up close to his wife's for a confidential talk. She was not in good humor, being sorely vexed by the offer of Zack's owner, and angry at Huggins for "not threatenin' to shoot him, as any man that was half a man would ha' done."

"Come, now, cheer up, missus," said Huggins, as he took her pipe and filled it, with unwonted gallantry; "yer best days is ahead yet. I'm more pleased 'bout Zack's goin' off than I would be by the gift of a new 'hand.' I've always felt since he come about like 'sif I had an overseer a watchin' of me to see if I kep' my place up smart and used my people well. When I tell anythin' afore

him he looks into my eyes as if he was watchin' to ketch me in a lie, and I've been afeared to work Weza enough to make her pay, knowin' every livin' thing was carried back to the Colonel's and sot down ag'in me for 'meanness.' Now I'm goin' to begin all new, and see if I can't get work done like other planters does. I'll lay down laws, and I'll pint my gun at the first man that breaks 'em. I'm goin' to put that tattlin' Obed to work,— he travels enough to kill a strong man; and Weza can do all in the house, and help hoe when our work gits the upper hand on us—as it always does."

Mrs. Huggins turned her back on her husband, hitched her "cheer" further from him two or three times, and puffed away at her pipe with uncommon activity, looking much like a little steam tug laboring to get out of port.

"Yer may get rid of Zack, and work Obe to death, and make new laws, and any thin' else, but yer shan't send my little woman to the fields when I aint able to git out o' my cheer without pain," she said, with spirit.

"Everythin's goin' to destruction now," moaned Huggins.

"Course it is; yer haint just found it out, have yer?" cried Mrs. Huggins. "I don't keer if it

all goes to ruin. I haint no heirs to leave it to when I'm dead and gone. All I cares for is to take life a bit easier while I lasts. But every body is agin me as if they wanted to work me to death."

"Who's agin yer? I rckons 'taint me," said her husband.

"Well, the Colonel's aching to buy Weza, and now this here new man, he wants her, and like's not Zack 'll want her too. When I've fit 'em all off, then yer, that vowed to love, honor and obey me, turns round and talks about first workin' her to death in doors and then sendin' her to the field over hours. She won't do it, no how," said missus.

Huggins took good care not to press the matter, and rising up, tried to beat an honorable retreat, but he was thwarted by the ever-victorious foe.

"Sit down there," she said, pointing to a chair; and he dropped into it as if he had been brought down by the magic of the gun which even Zack's skill had failed to make anything but harmless.

"If I was a great big white man like yer," she continued, "I'd be ashamed to own I was afeard of a black man. I'd have more sperit than that. It makes me ashamed to be yer wife. If I'd a married the Colonel when I was a gal, I wouldn't

have been the wife of a coward nor yet been worried to death by work, as I be. I'd a been a lady, I would."

"Why didn't yer marry him, then?" asked Huggins, plucking up a little courage.

"Never see him till he'd been married for years," replied Mrs. Huggins, with a sadness in which the Colonel would probably not have sympathized. "But there's no use cryin' over spilt milk; so I may as well make the best of the one I've got, and control him as well as I can."

"I ain't a coward," growled Dave.

"Is that ere so?" asked Mrs. Huggins; "yer surprises me with the news. What yer goin' to say to Zack when he comes over here,—for come he will,—to beg yer to sell Weza, 'fore this day's over?"

"I'm goin' down river in an hour and shan't be back till him and his master's gone. If he comes, yer tell him I was right sorry not to see him 'fore he went, and that I wish him well, and that if it wasn't for yer enjoying such abominable bad health I'd sold Weza for his sake."

"Humph!" cried Mrs. Huggins, "if I was a coward I wouldn't be a hypocrite too."

"If I get his ill will he'll like's not coax Weza off, and I suspicion his master would help him do

it," replied Dave. "He talks like the onprinciplest, heathenist, bloodthirstiest abolitionist that ever raved and tore about; and if he lived near me he'd stand a chance o' tar and feather, he would."

"Pho!" cried Mrs. Huggins, scornfully. "He'd get all his 'cendiary work done 'fore yer got out o' yer cheer. When are yer goin' to get off out of Zack's way, did yer say?"

"Well, I thought I mought go in 'bout an hour; he won't come over till his teams is in for the day," replied Huggins, stretching himself out on two chairs for a rest.

"He wont, ha! Well, look out o' the window, and tell me who's that on a fine hoss comin' up our lane: ha!"

"Oh, my goodness stars!" cried Huggins. "He's come to bid her good-by; and he'll sure lay a plot with her to 'scape if I leave 'em alone a minute. Yer go up and tell her not to come out o' that are room to the peril of her life. Tell her I've gone ravin' crazy, and am flying about here with a gun and yer expect every minute I'll shoot yer. Turn the key on her to keep her safe. Oh, goodness! there ain't no key! Order her fierce to stay where she is, and I'll go out and tell him she's gone down to the Bend for a pair of shoes."

And with this weak fiction on his lips Dave went to the side door to meet Zack. But that independent son of Ham was armed with his savage look, which he could put on or off at will; and without even a "good day, massa," he called out in thunder tones which shook poor Huggins' very soul, "I want to see my wife, massa."

"She's a — a — gone — to the a — Bend — a — to a — buy shoes."

"Massa Huggins, she's a gone nowhars. I can tell by yer eye she's in dis yere house. Can yer make me believe dat when her poor little heart's a bustin' 'bout losin' me, dat's all she's got in de world, she'd go off for such a paltry thing as shoes is, 'stead o' havin' a last word wid me? No, sir, yer can't fool me dis way. Call her out here, will yer, please?" — and the scowl Zack put on was enough to terrify a braver man than his antagonist.

In nine cases out of ten, a slave addressing any planter in this independent style would have been shot on the spot. But Zack knew his ground and his man, and had come prepared for a little harmless artifice, hoping to accomplish by fear what his master had failed to do by money. He knew that as Huggins stood alone in that neighborhood, and

was a laughing stock for both whites and blacks, his course would be regarded as a good joke by all; and that his master and the Colonel were at home waiting to hear of his success.

He got off his horse and hitched him to a post, and then said, looking Huggins in the eye, "Call my wife. She's mine, for de Lord gin her to me, and I'll have her, too, 'fore she's much older."

Huggins opened the door of "missus' room," and asked, "Has Weza got back from the Bend yet?"

"Yes," said "missus," between the puffs of smoke, "she's been back half an hour. Go call her. Zack, come in, poor fellow. I'm right sorry for yer and Weza; she's a'most wild, and if I wasn't so mise'ble I'd make Huggins sell her to yer master."

"Dat ar would be fur yer interest, missus," replied Zack, "for yer won't have her long, no way. But settle it to suit yerself. My part of de bargain will be a heap better den yer's. Dere's a war just 'pon us, and Massa Linkum, what's got hold of de reins, he'll drive powerful, I tell yer. Dere's been heaps of talkin' and prayin' 'bout him dat yer haint heerd on; and de Lord has clothed him wid iron and brass and put de 'venger's sword into his hand and a woman's heart into his breast; and now he's goin' forth a conquerin' and for to

conquer. His work—what de Lord made him 'special for—is to break de fetters of de slave and to set de 'pressed free. De black folks says he was born wid a 'glory' round his head like de Virgin Mary and her child and some of de 'postles. Any how he's de great Moses dat's to d'liver out of de second bondage by turnin' de rivers to blood, and slayin' de first borned, and such like judgment on de Pharaohs and de 'Gyptians of dis day."

"The papers tells that he's low-born and bred," said Mrs. Huggins, "and it must be so, for I've heerd that every thin's as true as the gospel that's put into newspapers."

"Den dere's some hard things 'mong us. De judge takes a paper from de North, de *Triboon*, and dere's hard talk agin de South into it. Luke gits de readin' on't 'fore de judge does."

"O' course that's full of lies. Every paper and everybody lies there to the North. But our papers, that's all true, says that this yere Lincoln was low born, and aint no way fit to rule over gentlemen; and that he was brung up in a log cabin and never lived in no mansion house in his life;" and the mistress of this mansion house drew herself up in conscious superiority over Abraham Lincoln. "They mought better a pitched on Huggins for President," she continued. "He never

lived in a log cabin, and he wouldn't a worried the South this erę way; and he'd a let 'em just move on as they was mind to, and the North too, for all he'd care."

This was too much for Zack, who was well posted up in public matters through the slaves that went to the post-office. And forgetting for the moment the sad errand on which he had come, he burst out laughing.

Mrs. Huggins smiled too, not seeing the point of the joke.

"I don't wonder yer laugh," she said. "The idea of gittin' a President out of a log cabin!"

"Missus," said Zack, solemnly, "we got a greater den he out of a stable once. Look how low born de great Deliverer was in de eyes of proud man. But half de univarse bows to him now, and t'other half's got to do it yet. De babe in de manger, de man o' Calvary, he is de King o' Glory. So God does his big work by dem dat's poor in dis world."

"Why, Zack, yer talks a'most like Preachin' Jack use to," said Mrs. Huggins, in surprise.

"Thankee, missus, but I's in a big hurry dis time. Wiil yer please to call Weza, wharever she is?"

"I sent Huggins to call her long 'go; and there

he is now just a shoutin' from the bottom of the stairs. A body can't get a thing done in this yer world 'thout they up and does it theirselves. Now, Zack, yer tell her to be cheerful and contented, and I reckons when Christmas comes 'bout agin we'll sell her to yer owner. Mought be I'll be smart, gin that time and have a new woman to fill her place." But this prospect did not elate Zack very much. He saw the die was cast.

"Dere she comes," he said; "I hears her slow step on de stairs — poor little woman." Weza entered the door he had opened for her, and with that livid look so striking in those of her race when suffering, she sank into a chair. Zack folded his arms and throw back his brawny shoulders, straightening himself up to his full height, and looked at her pitifully. "Lord of heavens!" he cried, "isn't dis yere 'a sight to make de angels groan? A great man like me wid a immortal soul and a lovin' heart into him, to stand here and see de woman dat God's gin him for his own, caged up like a poor mouse, and can't lift a finger to loose her. Can it be dat I's a man, dat I's born and brung up in free 'Merica? Mought be I's only a brute all dis time, and been dreamin' I's a man wid de love of man into me. No, no, no! dere's a soul inside o' me, and a soul inside of dat dear

little woman dat I'd a gin my life for. God made us all right; but man, starred up by de devil, has put us whar we be. But, dear Lord, his breath is only in his nostrils, and dou can carry him 'way wid a flood and set my people free."

The entry door was open on a crack and Huggins' left ear was quite visible there; so Zack continued this soliloquy for his benefit. Then he said, "Massæ Huggins, open dat ar doot wider! I'll just say yer may thank God dat I's a Christian — dat I's born agin — dat old things is passed away and all is new inside o' me! For if I didn't love Jesus and seek for to honor and glorify him, I believe in my heart I'd kill de man dat wouldn't let my wife go when he's offered a big price for her! But every one dat walks arter him has got to wear a crown like de Jews put onto his dear head, and has got to take a cross up hill on his shoulders, like he did. Dis yere partin' is my crown o' thorns and my cross full of nails, but de dear Lord will ease de crown wid his hand and lift one end of de cross for me! And what I can't do for to comfort Weza's broke heart de Lord will do! Madam Leon send me over to say she want Weza to come and eat supper wid our folks, case sho's goin' to have a partin' supper for me, wid a turkey, and pies and sich like. Mought she go, missus?"

"Will yer promise to bring her safe back to me arter supper, on yer word as a Christian?" asked missus.

"Sartain, missus, I will; as sure's I love de Lord and strives to please him she shall be here by ten o'clock! And I'd wish to say for my dear young massa, dat he don't force me to go home. He needs me very much, and he say if he can't make no tarms wid yer 'bout Weza, byineby he'll let me come back agin. But I tell yer, I'll be round 'bout mighty often to see if she's got happier, — poor little woman!"

Weza asked Zack, meekly, "Moughtn't I stay long enough just to get de supper ready?"

"Yes," replied Zack, "dough yer don't look like doin' much now but lyin' down in yer coffin! I'll go out and talk farewells to de boys in de field while yer gittin' ready."

When he was gone, Huggins came in from the entry, terrible in wrath! He denounced the colonel as "an old nabob," his guest as "a cussed abolitionist," Zack as "a highwayman," Weza as "an ongrateful creatur," and Mrs. Huggins as "nobody at all" for consenting to let her off.

"Did yer think I was goin' to git all stirred up a talkin' and arguin'? She'll come back all safe, I'll promise!" returned "missus."

"Yes, and they'll tell there 'bout her goin' to the Bend for shoes, and like's not they'll say I lied about it and that she was in the house all the time!" said Huggins, tender of his character for veracity.

"Course they will," replied Mrs. Huggins, calmly, as if lying and being called a liar were a thing of every day occurrence, and of very little moment any way.

When poor Weza was arrayed for the sorrowful visit, she walked by the side of Zack, who led the horse, till they reached the end of the lane; then he lifted her on to the saddle, put the reins in her hand and walked on at her side.

"That are's 'dikerlous!" cried Huggins. "He's as tinder o' her as the Colonel is of Madam."

"Why didn't yer say as tinder as yer be of me?" whistled missus from her teeth, which were still shut on the pipe stem. "Course he loves her like white men loves their wives, and why shouldn't he? She's more lovable than many a white woman, I'm sure."

"It always roused my sperit terrible," cried Dave, "when he come over here to feed my hogs and split my wood and to clar up the place in ginerel. It looked like he thought I didn't look after matters sharp!"

"Humph!" cried Mrs. Huggins, with a sarcastic smile. She saw the deficiencies about the plantation as plainly as anybody did; but as she didn't mean to exert herself, she had long ago resolved not to worry about them.

"Well, I'll be rid of him now and have nothing to worry me, — if this talk of war don't!" exclaimed Huggins. "If it comes, like's not I'll have to shoulder my gun and go off as captin'! They say that the chevelry is all to be officers, and the poor whites and the blacks is to be the fightin' sogers. They say the blacks will fight fierce for their homes and their country!"

"They don't disturb women folks in time o' wars, do they?" asked missus.

"Not in general, they don't," replied Dave; "but Daniel Philips, that's been to the North a huntin' up runaways, and knows how furious they be up thar, — he says how't they'd pour down on us like the savage horges used to pour down in Europe on the 'fined and civilized nations! He says they'll stick at nothin'; that they'll rob us and burn our houses and carry off all the handsome women."

"Oh! oh! oh! goody gracious! What will become of me, then?" cried Mrs. Huggins, shuddering, and realizing for the first time the horrors of a

civil war. "Yer must board up the windows, and not let 'em know ye've got a wife, and Weza will feed me when they're off a fightin'.

"I suppose, even if the sogers didn't carry a body off, a war would raise the price o' tobacco?" she asked.

"Course 'twould; men couldn't be a fightin' and raisin' crops to the same time, could they? 'Twould raise calico, and broadcloth, and every thin', like they tell of in the Rivolution times," replied Dave.

"La, I don't care for that; I can easy go without clothes, but I can't go without my pipe! I'd die if I couldn't git tobacco!" said the lady.

"I'll lay yer in a stock afore trouble comes, and some gin for myself,—course a body couldn't live without gin!" exclaimed Huggins.

And while this elegant conversation was going on at the mansion house, poor Weza was listening to Zack's words of comfort, and pleading with him not to go away — as he was not forced to do so.

"Yer knows, chile," he said, "I owes duty to my massa. Most men would a sent me to de auction block to please a new wife; but look what liberty he's gin me! Never a day o' my life but I's had all dat any free, workin' man ought to ask, 'sides always a little money in my pocket! Now

dat he's a sufferin' for my help, I must go wid him. But de time won't be long. Dere's a big muss starrin' up in Cungress all about us; and de Lord's people is siegin' of him day and night for to break our chain. Weza, I 'spects yet to be a free man, wid a free wife; and to build yer a smart little house and give yer a cow and a pig of yer own and live wid ye de year round!"

"But it'll be so long and I'll be so lonesome here!" said Weza. "And de horror 'bout de boys will come back on me."

"Yer must thank de Lord dat yer aint goin' to be left wid savage folks! Yer massa and missus is next thing to fools in some matters, but dey's good-natured and kind-hearted. I shall make errands up, and let yer know how dey gets on 'bout dis war. My massa talks wid me like I was white. He'd give me my free papers dis blessed minute if I axed him, but I'll wait till de Lord draws 'em out for both of us to once."

CHAPTER XVII.

GREAT CHANGES.

ZACK turned the complimentary supper at the Colonel's into a prayer meeting, saying, "Dear friends, when we's tore into sunders from dem we loves, dat's de time to stick close to de Lord dat can't be took from us no how! If de chice was gin me to leave my wife and never live wid her, or to have my right hand cut off, I'd quick say, 'Fetch on yer knife, sar.' Thank de Lord de chice isn't left wid me, but duty settle de question. My dear massa, dat's been so tinder o' my feelin's, says he needs me powerful bad at home, but dat he wout sunderate by force no man and wife. Den I makes up my mind not to go a step. But den I thinks of God! So I goes up to de loft in de carriage house and falls down on my face and cries out, like our brother Paul did, 'Lord, what will dou have me for to do?'

"Den dere shine a big light all 'bout de room,

so dat I see de saddles and de harnesses and de bridles hangin' on de pegs whar all was dark as pitch de minute afore; and dere, crouched up in a corner, sot Satan, and says he, 'Yer stick by, and don't go!' But den come anoder voice like somebody I love was a whisperin' in my ear. I felt de warm breath on my cheek, and de words was, 'Cept a man be willin' for to leave father and mother, and house, and land, and wife, and chil'en for my sake, he ain't fit for my kingdom.'

"But says I, 'Dear Jesus, I's willin' to leave all if I had any more—only dis poor, weak little woman! But I's powerful tinder of her, she's been so tore wid trouble a'ready 'bout dem boys! Dis yere last blow will take her life, poor, lovin' little creatur'.' Den come de voice agin, sweeter den afore, sayin', 'Sarvants, obey your massas 'cordin' to de flesh, and ye shall 'ceive tenfold in dis yere life and heaven bymeby! My grace is sufficient for yer both.' Den such a feelin' come over me dat I spring up and clap my hands and say, 'Dis yere is a powerful little thing to do for Jesus!' I sing right out,

'Beca'se I wear de crown of thorns,
Dere's glory in my soul!
Beca'se I drink de bitter cup,
Dere's glory in my soul!

Dis foolish world is bleak and cold,
 But heaven's widin my skull!
 Glory, Glory, Hallelujah,
 In heaven we'll part no more!

"Den I goes to de mansion house and tells my own massa all dis. 'Fore dis he'd begun for to love Miss Juley and so he knowed hisself what my love was. Says I, 'O, massa, dere's been a powerful big fight in our carriage house!' He opened his eyes and says, 'Who's been a fightin'?' 'De devil and me, massa,' says I, 'and by de Lord's help I beat! He put into my head for to have my own will agin yer's and de Lord's, but I 'membered heaps o' Scriptur' words, and I just took 'em up one arter t'other and hit him wid 'em smack in de face; and next minute he warn't nowhar! Now, massa,' says I, 'look here at me, a great powerful fellow, dat could beat any three white men for strength! Wid de liberty ye's gin me and the shiftlessness o' Massa Huggins, I could run off—wife and all! and yet see me stand, meek as a kitten, in dis heavy yoke and sing praises to de Lord wid my head through it! Please tell me what yer thinks's de reason o' my doin' dis?'

"'Cause yer such a good-natured fellow, Zack,' says he, 'and loves me so!'

"'No, sar!' says I, 'dat's 'not it. I loves yer,

but I loves dat ar little brown woman a heap more! I loves her more dan ever yer loved dat poor, weak woman dat's gone — axin' yer pardon; and I believe I could lay down my life for her! But dere's One I loves more den her, and it's for his sake dat I bows my neck meek to dis yere yoke — to honor him! Could yer do as mach for him, massa, widout grumblin'?

“No, Zack,” says he, lookin' mournful. ‘I never did nothin' for him, nor any body but myself.’

“It's time, den, yer begun for to love and sarve him. De time to do up yer work may be short!” says I.

“And now, friends and brothers,” continued Zack, “I axes yer prayers now and when I's gone dat de Lord would comfort my little woman and save my dear massa, for I tell yer he's de loveliest sinner ever yer met up wid!”

There was embracing and kissing and weeping when Weza left for home, and a score of the Colonel's men and women pledged themselves to stand by her in sickness or any other trouble.

On their way back Zack gave Weza a pair of coral ear-rings which his master said he had “found in a box at home.” Zack remembered them, as well as the bracelet which belonged to

them — “ a gold one with a sarpiut's head onto one cend on't, wid a coral tongue hanging out!” He stopped at Huggins' door and hooked them into the little brown woman's ears, saying, “ Dey b'longs to a better woman dan de poor weak one dat wore dem de day I hild her fast to save de life o' Dely's baby! Little she thought dat time, dat my wife would ever wear 'em! If massa had a loved her much he'd never a brung 'em to yer!”

After this parting the heart of Weza seemed broken. She toiled on, but the patient smile was gone from her lips, and the choerful light from her eye; and every now and then heavy groans escaped her lips. Mrs. Huggins felt quite easy herself and wanted every body else to feel so. To ease this heart-wound, she called Weza to her one day and presented her with a silver quarter, which she had been hoarding some time in a chaos of clothes, yarn, buttons, strings, tobacco and seeds.

Weza looked at the gift scornfully, saying, “ What can I do wid dat? All de money in dis world couldn't make me happy! My heart's gone off now, and dis is only my 'live body dat's movin' 'bout here! I'se hurryin' wid my work so's to go up stairs and stay all alone wid Jesus. He pities me.”

“ So do I,” replied her mistress; “ but I think

yer makin' a big fuss 'bout nothin'. Arter all, Zack's only a great, homely black fellow!"

"O, missus, he's beautiful to me," replied Weza. "Look what a smile he's got; and den dere never was such a loving creatur! 'Pears like he wanted to take all de work and de sorrow in de world on to his own back!"

"Oh, yes, he's clever enough, but yer'll soon quit a missin' of him! Why, once yer master went down river about some pine he'd been a sellin' of; and so he thought, while he was off, he'd stay long enough for to see the sights. He was gone a fortnight, and if yer'll believe me, I never thought on him till I got out o' tobacco and hadn't no money in the house to buy more! And think how much whiter and better lookin' he is than Zack; besides being a gentleman, — mostly."

Weza answered this argument with a groan.

"And furthermore," continued Mrs. Huggins, "ligion ought make yer forgit him. Yer ought to be thankful he's gone; they say real Christians is thankful for every thin'. And mor'n that, p'r'haps it will only be for a little while, for like as not he'll die pretty quick, — they say it's awful sickly down in them ere swampy parts; and he mought's well be dead there as here. I'll ax yer master to let yer have another husband. The judge's Luke's a

fast rate black man, and his wife, dat b'longed to de Hunter's 'state, has just been sold off wid her two children."

Weza could not bear this. It was laying coals of fire on her wound, and she cried, in a tone Mrs. Huggins had never heard before, "Missus, yer's as cruel as de hangman! If yer aint ear'ful ye'll drive me to de crazy-house. Please don't say 'Zack' while I lives; but don't think I'll ever forget him. If I loses him forever here in de wilderness, I'll have him bymeby in heaven and never lose him no more! I's goin' to bear dis as well as de other trouble patient, for Zack says de Lord is a tryin' of me like de silversmith try de silver for to make it shine bright. I promised him dat I would whisper to de Lord every hour of de day what my brother Job said to God when de devil and every body else bothered him! 'Do' dou slay me yit will I trust dee!' I's bound for to love Jesus, whether he does like I want him to or not. I's a poor, small little thing in dis big world o' his!"

As the days and weeks wore on, a deep gloom settled on the minds of the planters. The negroes caught whispers of the war and grew restless. They met in groups to tell and to hear what had been picked up in the families or at the store, and

post-office ; and many who had been regarded by their owners as guiltless of all learning were now caught peeping into newspapers and committing like wicked acts. Of course the masters took alarm and were devising methods by which a stricter watch could be kept on them. It was proposed by some to forbid their going to meetings of any kind, or even to the customary merry makings. This the Colonel, influenced by his wife, strongly opposed at first, but he was overruled by his neighbors, and new fetters were placed upon the blacks which did not set easily. They were forbidden to meet for prayer or praise, but they atoned for this loss of privilege by exercising their gifts in loud tones at home ; the kitchens, the barns and the fields resounding with calls on Jesus to " ride on swifter in de golden chariot, and to deliver his chil'en out of de horrible pit and de miry clay." When the first gun was fired at Sumter they *almost* heard it. They knew of it as soon as their masters did ; and they began laying plans for the future when they should be free. Panic seized those negroes whose relatives were divided among several masters. Every movement of the whites was watched with nervous interest, and war, rather than work, was the theme in mansion house and cabin.

Six months had passed away since Zack's departure, and the time when his master had promised to send him up for a visit was at hand. Weza counted the hours and grew cheerful with hope. But the Colonel, dreading the budget of news he would bring, and the effect of his freedom from restraint on the others, wrote to his nephew forbidding the visit. This gave great offence to the gentleman, but he had a wise reason for suppressing his feeling. Instead of replying by letter, he made his appearance most unexpectedly one morning, leaving Zack, who was his travelling servant, at Huggins' plantation to make a new appeal for his wife.

"Uncle," he said, "I'm worn out with this controversy, and dread a long civil war. I've secured my personal property and am going abroad. I've come to make a bargain with you."

"Ah? to take your place off your hands, is it?" asked the Colonel.

"No, it is to exchange a member of my family for one of yours. My man will bring far more money in the market than the person I want from you. Will you take Zack, whom you know to be a good man and give me — Miss Julia?"

"My dear fellow," cried the Colonel, "I have suspected this before. I will give Julia to you

with all my heart; but I don't want Zack! He is, as you say, a good man; but he knows too much for me in these times. We're hushing up every thing from the blacks, but Zack knows as much as you do, and so will be dangerous here. What will you do with your other servants?"

"I have given Dely and her boys to her husband's owner; Mary and old Nancy and Sue have gone to Uncle John's; and I've let out the field hands to my neighbor Davis at his own price."

"Tom, you're crazy!" cried the Colonel.

"No sir; the rest of you are crazy. I'm the sane man to save what I can and make off while I can."

"And do you think this a manly course?" asked the Colonel, gravely. "Suppose all should run, who would fight the battles of the South?"

"Nobody, sir; and that's just what I want! There is nothing to fight for. The hot heads among us have set up a shadow, and they ask us to fight for it. I don't care to stay here and be shot, and neither do I intend to stay and shoot you and my other honored uncles. This Government satisfies me, and why should I risk my life in trying to destroy it? I have anticipated Mr. Lincoln's probable action by virtually freeing my

people. Shall I leave Zack here, or take him down river again?"

"Take him away, my boy," said the Colonel; "if he talks no worse than his master does, he will do mischief here."

"It shall be as you say. If I could move that old stone post, Huggins, I'd buy Zack's wife and set them adrift to shift for themselves. And now I will find the ladies and see if Julia's aunt will hasten and get her off before these barbarians, of whom Mrs. Huggins is so much afraid, steal her for her beauty!"

At that time ladies cared less for an elegant and varied *trousseau* than for personal safety, and so the gentleman and his young wife were very soon on a ship bound for Cuba.

Zack was inquiring about the different regiments, having resolved to "fight for de Lord and freedom." But before taking this step he went up to visit his wife again. In his usual independent way he told Huggins that slavery was dead to all intents and purposes, and that Mr. Lincoln was only waiting a little while, for prudence's sake, to make out all the free papers. He said he wanted to settle his wife in a little room of her own before he went off. But Mrs. Huggins threw herself into hysterics, and Huggins, pale with fear, ran into

the next room, turned the key and talked about his gun.

Weza refused to follow Zack, because she had given her word to remain until she became free; and she felt that Jesus was watching her to see if she kept it.

"Well, dat's mighty good in yer, little woman," cried Zack, "but yer ain't yer own master, mind; for de good Lord has sot me ever yer to be de head of de woman; and yer only a poor, weak creatur', at best. If I takes yer off, ye've got to go."

Here Mrs. Huggins screamed with fear. The Colonel and the judge, with their families, had fled for safety into the very bosom of the foe at Washington; and she and Huggins were the only whites left in the neighborhood.

"Missus," said Zack, "I wants my wife to have a little rest and to visit some of my old friends and hern down below. As she won't leave yer 'case on account of her word, I'll *take* her for a week; and when I've gone she may come back if she's fool enough to!"

"Yer may go," gasped Mrs. Huggins, "but who'll git a meal of victuals while yer off?"

"I'll tell de boys to do de housework and wait on yer too," said Weza, trembling in every limb.

"Hurry up, dar!" cried Zack, a little sharply, to Weza, who fancied she should be humfed and punished for running off. "Go up stairs and get yer clothes."

At the sound of his changed voice "massa" and "missus" darted into opposite rooms and barricaded themselves in. Weza, then, according to orders, went up stairs and tied up a very small bundle, which she threw out of the window to Zack. On coming down she stepped to the door of "missus'" prison and said, "Good-by, missus," in very tremulous tones.

"Good-by," sobbed missus. "If yer don't come back in a week, Weza, I'll turn infidel and sceptic, and I'll say there ain't no such thing as 'ligion, and that church-member folks is all hypocrites, and that the Bible isn't no truer than Robinson Crusier,—I will. And I'll say that the wickedest, lyin'est, and stealin'est people ever I knowed was them that prayed and sung sams!"

"O, missus, never say dat, for de Lord lives, and he is true and lovin' whatever we does," said the little brown woman.

Mrs. Huggins, who now saw the happy pair departing, called out after them, "I'm in a fit,— a hysteric! O, o-o-o! I can't breathe! The sava- ges is comin'! I hear their guns! I'm all alone

with no womankind about me to protect me. Them sogers will carry me off and make a harem out o' me, like the king of the Injees does out of all his good-lookin' women!" And then she burst into a fit of violent weeping.

Huggins was listening, but dared not leave his retreat till sure that Zack was gone. In a moment her tone changed, and he heard her talking calmly. Zack, leaving Weza at the bars, had run back to the house, and going up to the open window, said,

"Oh, missus, I forgot somethin' I brung up for yer!" And he drew from the pocket of his blouse a pipe he had bought of a Dutchman in the city, as a peace-offering to Mrs. Huggins. The china-bowl represented a head of Punch, his face lighted with an ecstatic grin, while the metal cover was a gay red cap! When he handed it to the distracted lady it produced a wondrous effect on her. The hysterics fled, and she gave herself up to full sympathy with Mr. Punch, laughing merrily, and asking Zack how it was made and what it cost. "I do say," she cried, "that ere will keep me 'mused till Weza gets back; and I'll never forgit that of yer, Zack! I'll treat her well to pay ye fo't, I tell ye!" And again she laughed long and loud, as if there were no sorrow nor fear hanging over her. What was civil war to

her now? What was the fate of a great nation, or the destiny of a struggling race? What were desolated homes and fields covered with slain? She had a pipe with Punch's head on it, and plenty of tobacco to smoke in it! She now shook Zack heartily by the hand and charged him in a most friendly tone to bring Weza back soon; and then sat down on the window-sill to try the pipe.

Zack and Weza looked back and saw Huggins standing by her, and both of them admiring the worthless thing and laughing like two children; first one trying it and then the other.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FLEEING BEFORE THE YANKEES.

ZACK and Weza trudged several miles on foot. They had money to pay their fare on the boat, but so strong was the general conviction that all travelling negroes were runaways, it was hard for such as were left without masters, to go where they could find work. Even those whose owners had given up hope and fled, were watched with jealous eyes by the planters who had resolved to stand by their "property and a righteous cause," for it made their slaves restless to see others holding wassail in their master's halls, or travelling at will.

After a series of trials which would have disheartened most tourists, but which only amused them, our sable friends reached the great city where Weza's childhood and youth had been spent. They went from house to house in search of her old friends, but death, and the changes brought on by war, had scattered them far and wide.

After some days, they found an aged woman once owned by Dr. Percy, but who retained no love for the name, as she, too, had been cheated out of freedom promised for faithful service in a time of great domestic sorrow. She fancied she could tell Weza all she wanted to know about the little boy who went with "Massa" George.

"Bless yer, yes, honey;" she said, speaking as she would to a troubled child. "I know heaps 'bout him, and a little prince he was, too, for a slave-boy. Yes, yes, dear. First, Massa George, as mean, and stingy, and small a soul as ever walked 'bout in a handsome body and fine clothes, he took him home when de property fell to him. He tuk every thin' he could lay hands on, even to the doctor's clothes, and a paper of screws and nails that he hadn't no use for and had to heave away; well, he tuk him 'long when he went home, honey."

"I knowed dat, myself, aunty," replied Weza, "but what come of him after dat?"

"Oh, dat's what you want to know, is it? Well, we heard dat he love him just like he was his own son. He play with him, and dress him up, and teach him to sing and fiddle — and de dear knows what all! But bimeby a lady from de rice country was up dere, and she fell dead in love with de

chile, and say she must have him for to make sport for her company. She offer a heap of gold, big as a bushel basket, I reckons, for him, and Massa George up and sold him! He would 'a done de same if it had been his own chile! And dat's what come of de little beauty!"

"And where did de lady live, aunty? If yer can tell me dat, I can hunt him up yet," said Weza.

"Yes, honey; she live in a place dey call Flo'dy, whar dey kills black people off in de rice swamps. But bymoby she got married, and move up, funder North, to whar de savages lives dat's making dis yere cruel war on us," — and here old Prudy winked at her guests, confidentially. — "Whether she sold de boy or tuk him 'long, is mor'n I can tell yer. So dat's what come of de chile; and I hopes it will give yer a thread for to find him by."

Old Prudy had gossipped faithfully all her life, and she usually kept the run of the sold and t'is dead; but fate was against her in this case. She was a dumb oracle to poor Weza.

"Now, Weza," said Zack, one day, "first business, den pleasure is my rule. I gin yer a long rope to search for de boys, and I's helped to de best of my 'bility. We can't find no trace on 'em.

Now s'pose we put 'em back into de hand o' de dear Lord agin, where we trusts our own 'mortal sperits and our lives, and spend de rest of yer furlough — as de sogers say — havin' a good time. I wants yer to visit my massa's scattered-'bout-peoples, and to see all de shops and de big ice-cream saloon, and go to de black churches whar dey pray so loud yer can hear 'em a mile, and to see de wild beasts — if dere's any 'bout just now. Try to 'member what I always tells yer, dat it's one thin' to pray widout ceasin' for what we wants, and it's another to tease de Lord for it, and to fret at hir if de answer don't come just in our way and time. Now cheer up, little woman, and be happy. Think what marcy from de Lord dat yer husband, 'stead o' breakin' his back in de rice swamps or de cane fields, is goin' to be a soger of de Lord! 'Fore yer go back I'll have my blue clothes and my gun, and look as grand as anybody! I reckons I'd make poor Massa Huggins shake in his shoes if I could go up dere wid U. S. on my belt and a gun over my shoulder."

"What does U. S. mean, Zack?" asked Weza.

"Why, chile, is yer so ignorant as dat?" said the wise Zack, looking pitifully down on her.

"I heerd massa and missus tell about some black folks dat run off and fit wid de North; and

dey dress 'em up and den put great letters, U. S., for 'ugly sarpints,' on dere belts! Dey said dat was all de thanks dey got for leavin' dere kind massas and jinin' dereselves to savages."

Zack laughed heartily at Weza's simplicity, and replied, "I'm 'feared dey'll see 'ugly sarpints' 'en every black man's belt 'fore dis yere war ends!" And then he explained the signification of the letters, and how the country got the playful name of "Uncle Sam;" and Weza looked up to him in admiration, as to a very great and wise man, and thought that, with all the troubles of the wilderness, she was yet the happiest woman in the world!

These gala days had flown at last, and the time had come for the "contrabands" to be armed and equipped. Weza looked proudly on Zack as a "Union soger," and was escorted by him in his new dignity to the boat, loaded down with little packages containing presents of a very simple character for herself and her mistress. Among these was a pair of shoes for "missus;" who had told Zack in confidence "that her feet was clean on to the ground, but, for all that, she'd rather had the funny pipe than even a pair of new shoes, for a present!" Zack took the hint, and supplied the demand from a little purse his master had given him at parting.

"Now, Weza," he said, on the deck of the boat, before saying the last farewell, "dese is no times for chicken hearts, either 'mong men or women; and I don't want to see no tears in yer eyes 'bout my goin'. If we lives to get through dis yer war, we'll be somebody; and if we dies, den our people dat's left will be somebody! I's goin' to fight for de Lord and for my people, and not for self only; and I don't want to have him see yer a grumblin' 'bout it! If yer'll say, even now, dat yer'd rather stay here, I'll get yer a little room and settle yer; but if yer'd rather go back to old missus, go, and stay till yer tired. Whenever yer wants to, yer can leave and come down, and I'll keep de run of yer through Luke, dat can write; and I'll send yer money, too; and de less yer cry de more I'll love yer! De Lord bless yer, dear chile. Good-bye!" And he ran off lest his heart might fail him.

The little woman pursued her journey alone and in tears, though her grief was not the boisterous grief of other days. She felt that in giving up Zack she was helping on a mighty work for her people, and this gave strength to her heart.

When Weza reached the "mansion house" she saw a wonderful change; it seemed to have suffered years of decay since she had left it. The front windows were closed up in the rudest pos-

sible manner with bits of broken board and fence-rails. Ploughs, rakes, harrow, wheelbarrows, old wagons and cart wheels, and finally a bedstead, were heaped upon the ricketty verandah to barricade the front door. The end door was plugged up by a grindstone which the little woman could not pass ; so she selected a long pole from a lot of rubbish in the front yard, and with it gave several smart raps on the window of "missus'" room. They woke an echo that frightened the little woman. Such shrieks and groans she had never heard before ; but it only took a moment to assure her that they were but the hysterical demonstrations of Mrs. Huggins.

"Don't be skcart, missus, it's only me, yer own Weza, dat wouldn't hurt yer for de world. What on arth has happened since I been gone ? Has de sogers been long by dese parts ?"

Mrs. Huggins managed to climb over her bedstead, which had been pushed against the window, and drew out a nail that had been driven in over the lower sash, — a poor defence indeed against a savage horde, such as she was looking for !

"Clomb right in here, yer dear little woman," sobbed Mrs. Huggins. "I vow I'm more beat to see yer than I would be to see an angel ; and a mighty sight pleaseder ! I never believed Zack

would let yer come back, for all yer promising; no more did Huggins. Come in and take a hold on me to keep down the shakin'! I haint eat nor slep' nor nothin' but jist only smoke and shake, narrow-like, for eight'n forty hours; and in all that are time yer poor master haint been able to do nothin' but jist to drink a little gin and shake too! Sich times as we've had here! Why, the old Revolution, they tell on, warn't nothin' to 'em; and them that put through so much for freedom then can't hold a candle to us! If ever this yero horrible war's over, we're goin' to 'ply for a pansion to pay us for all we've done."

"Why, missus, what has happened? What have yer done?" cried the little woman, with real sympathy; for though she prayed for the downfall of rebellion, she didn't want any body she knew to fall down with it! "What have yer been a doin' here?"

"Why, don't yer see? We've been a lumberin' up to keep the Yankees out, and a sufferin' all sorts o' fear! If folks don't git pansions for bein' skeart like this and for luggin' furnitur' round till they're most wore up, I don't know what they will get 'em for! If the North beats, they ought to pansion every man, woman and child to the South while they lives, for the trouble we've took a

gettin' up this yere war and keepin' out o' danger while it's goin' on!"

Weza smiled at this reasoning, and repeated her question, "What was all dis yere rubbage brung 'bout de house for?"

"Well — I'll — tell — yer all 'bout — it — when I've filled — a — my pipe — a," sobbed Mrs. Hugins, wiping her tears on the uplifted skirt of the changeable silk, which, with the crape shawl, she had donned several days before to receive Yankee soldiers in. She had heard they respected ladies more than women!

After smoking a few minutes, with her head thrown back on one c'air and her feet resting on another, she grew c. enough to tell her tale of woe.

"Well, one night jist arter yer left, that hateful, contemptible Luke o' the judge's come drivin' up here in a gig with Scriptur' Bill. They took all our men into the corn-house and haranged 'em for half an hour, as bold as if there warn't no gentry-like within hearing. Scriptur' Bill swore 'em on a book, and all we heerd was that they wasn't to rob, nor burn, nor 'stroy us, nor the place; but to show theirselves peaceable citizens and good Christians! But I makes sartin he whispered some evil in there ears that we didn't hear.

I 'spect that they was round drummin' up a regiment of U. S.'s. to kill us and burn the plantation up!

"The minute they was gone, Obe came in, and says he, 'the North is a marchin' down on us, and we must get off into the woods moughty quick arter dark, and hide everythin' we got there, or they'll steal all we own,'" says he,—"the villyan!"

"So 'at it we went. They hauled all the corn and the bacon and the clothes into the woods and hid them while I packed up here; and then they come back and said we must fly for our lives to a place they'd found whar we'd hide up safe till daylight. But HOW to get me there was the question, I was so stiff in the jints, and I hate to move so! One of the men 'posed that I ride a hossback on Obe's hoss, and he'd bring it back for Obe—secin' that t'other hoss was dead and the mule stole,—but I didn't know how to ride a hossback, and didn't want the trouble o' holdin' the reins, if I did. So Huggins—he's a powerful genus when there's any contrivin' to be done—he got a lot o' rope and mended up the old broke-down gig. One wheel wouldn't turn, but only dragged along, and the whole consarn went bumpyty-bump! bumpyty-bump! enough to shake the life out of a poor weak woman like me! Yer

never see such a lookin' set as we was, tho' I dressed up jist as if I was goin' to quarterly meetin' or funeral, in these yere things, and I haint had 'em off since! I wouldn't go round the road, no how, 'fear we'd meet sogers; and when they sot out to coax me, I went off into hysterics, and they soon come to my tarms, I tell yer! I can always bring yer master 'bout, that way. So Obe and me got into the gig; and as I couldn't sleep on the ground, they piled up a feather bed and pillows and blñnkets and goody knows what all, in front of us and most a top on us, till we could hardly see daylight over the heap; and then we set off over the old cornfield, the rest a follerin' of us! Such a lookin' set I guess yer never see; and the way that are old gig seraped and groaned, and the way that hoss limped, and the jigglety way Obe driv, it was awful! We broke down twice and had to be tied up agin; and the 'mount on it was, the men and their massa 'bout carried us, hoss and all, they had to do so much liftin' and boostin'.

“ Well, when we got into the woods, the things was tuk out, and I concluded arter all, that, as may be the ground was damp, I'd sit still in the gig. The men and yer massa lay down on the ground, leavin' Obed in the gig with me to keep

watch. He didn't onharness, so's to be ready to start any minute we heard the Yankess a comin'!

"Well, I and yer massa fell asleep, and we slep' like stones till towards mornin'. I woke up feelin' awful stiff in the jints and faint for a smoke. I looked up, and there was yer poor massa on the ground asleep — him that has slep' in a mansion-house so long — and not another livin' creatur' within sight or call! I woke him and he looked about, but they was all gone!

"Obe had ontackled the old white horse, and put the cends o' the shafts on two stumps and rode off; and there was me, sittin' up high and dry, a mile from home!

"Well, we looked about, and them thieves had loaded up well with all they could carry; and where the corn and the bacon was hid we haint found to this day, and never shall! I believe in my heart that that are stiff knee, too, was all a humbug, for the fellow walked as smart as any body that night!"

"Well, dere, I can't believe our men could be so trechus!" cried Woza. "If dey wanted to go, why didn't dey say so and walk off like other black folks? But dis yere was none of Scriptur' Bill's doin's! More like ho heerd o' their plans and come over to make dem 'have dereselves. If

I'd been here I'd a told yer yer couldnt keep 'em, for dey's all flockin' to jine de regiments; but I'd looked out to have no sich-like work as dat, — poor missus!" said Weza.

This word of sympathy opened anew the flood-gates, and "missus," biting hard at her pipe stem, sobbed and sniffled; and dropping her silk skirt, caught up a corner of her flower-decked shawl for a pocket handkerchief, and rubbed her poor eyes, already red with the tears of a week.

"And sich a — tug as' we've — had, gittin' — the things — back, and — blockadin' — the house up, — and — and — yer massa — don't b'lieve there's ever been a livin' 'Yankee' 'bout at all!" sobbed poor Mrs. Huggins.

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CHAPTER XIX.

GOOD NEWS FROM ZACK.

THE scales of society were fairly turned now in the region of which we write. The Colonel and the judge, with others of less importance, but who were yet the superiors of Dave Huggins, had, with their families, stepped out of the ascending scale, and thus sent these poor creatures, laden with mortification and poverty, down, with a bump, into the mire of society.

These gentlemen had not fled from terror of their own slaves, as many masters had done, but rather from fear of the Yankees, and from weariness of the uncertainty that hung about every thing at home. They had no heart to put in the ground crops which aliens might gather, nor to feed a troop of blacks who would walk off at will to fight against them. Old Cleo held the keys of the parlors and closets for Madam Leon, to whom she was as faithful as the magnet to the pole. She locked and unlocked the corn and the smoke-

houses, and gave out supplies according to orders. "Freedom or no freedom, I will stick by yer, missus," old Cleo had said. "Massa's had all de corn out of me, and he's got to house up de husk! But I'll be faithful to yer, and look out dat others is; but yer musn't spect me to hold in de boys if dey wants to go fight. Dey looks on de Yankees like ten thousand Moseses dat's comin' down here into Egypt for to say to de hard old Pharys, 'Let my people go;' and if, after all de plagues and cusses de Lord has sent, dey won't do it, and de people walks off a carryin' de gold and de jewels with 'em, why den don't blame me! I warn yer 'fore yer go, dat if the time comes, and de Lord calls, and our folks goes, I shall stand on de verandy and wave a handkercher, and shout blessin's arter 'em in de name of de Lord o' Hosts! And more, if de sogers come down on us a hungry and thirsty, I shall feed 'em and drink 'em out o' yer corn-bin and coffee-pot,—I shall! So now don't let nobody call me a thief nor an unfaithful."

"Cleo," said her mistress, "I'm not afraid to trust you; do the best you can with the people and the food; and if we ever come home again, you shall be tenderly cared for in your old age. You know my feelings in this matter—I would not turn my hand, if by doing it I could place

matters back where they were before this trouble. God rules in the storm as well as in the sunshine, mammy, and I only desire that this great calamity may work for his glory and for the good of your people.

"All the silver and valuables are put away in a safe place; but if it is in your power to do it, I hope you will take care of the furniture and the carpets, so that the house may be neat and comfortable when we return. And one thing more, mammy, don't let Zack's wife starve."

"All dat I'll do, dear," said Cleo, "and 'ceive yer back wid open arms, and have a powerful supper cooked for yer, too. I'll promise for de women dat dey'll stay and wait on dear missus, even if de men's all 'way, as I spects sartain dey will be; for when God calls, folks has to step quick!"

And according to this promise, Cleo allowed no servant's foot in the parlors or chambers. She carried the keys of the store-house and pantry with great dignity, while she dispensed their treasures with a motherly hand. She and her people were now in the upward scale, and looked down pitifully on their poor white neighbors. They came and went at pleasure, having meetings, parties and rides, — when they could find any animals to draw them, for each departing hero had helped himself

to somebody's horse or mule, and those that remained were sorry looking steeds.

All this time Huggins and his wife and Weza had been living on very light fare. The poultry had been dispatched, after the loss of the corn and bacon, and before six months had passed — after the flight of the men — they came to absolute beggary. At first Huggins borrowed from small planters and even poor whites; but that game was now played out, and the larder was empty. There was still a little money which came in from time to time from the sale of pine wood to the boats and for the washing Weza did for the boatmen. But that had to go mostly for gin and tobacco, “to keep up the sperits in these yere horrible times.” As Weza used neither of these delicate luxuries, she fared rather hard in the division of the money, and, but for the injunction of Madam Leon to Cleo, she would have starved. She had a free ticket to her table as long as the corn, bacon, and poultry should last; but the walk was long and she was weak and weary. All the work now fell on her. She was forced to draw logs from the pine grove by 'a rope, and chop and split them for fire wood. She had to gather wild nuts and corn shucks to feed the half-starved pigs, and do the work of the house — such as it was. She

had not yet recovered from the effort of "clarin' up" after the bombardment. Her owners wanted little more than their stimulants; for, having no exercise, they hardly knew the pangs of honest hunger. They appeared to have retired, body and mind, like bears to their winter's den, to live on themselves till the spring of good fortune should open on them again.

Every now and then Scriptur' Bill and Luke would appear suddenly; and after that there were extra luxuries at the disposal of Mammy Cleo. There were also a few more fathers and sons "missing;" but thus far not a Yankee had been seen in the region.

One afternoon, as Weza sat on the step of the kitchen, with her face buried in her hands, she saw young Prince, whose gay spirit it took more than one civil war to crush, coming at full speed over the old corn-field with a soldier's cap almost resting on his shoulders, and a belt with the brazen and magic U. S. glittering on it, round his waist.

When he neared the house his gait changed to that of a solemn march; and with his head erect and his shoulders thrown back, he approached her, touching his cap with a military air.

"Aunty Weza," he said, solemnly, "I's sent over to tell yer to come to our house to-night.

Scrip' Bill and Luke's a comin', and more's goin' on dat I mustn't tell on! Daddy's home for ten days; and dese is his jewelry I got on my head and round my waist! Nobody aint got to run off no more, and dere aint no more contrabanges, 'case Massa Linkum's tarded 'em all into freedmen! And now our people's goin' to have plantations o' dere own, and be dere own massas, and build houses, and never be sold no more, and have schools, and larn books, and read newspapers, and all kinds of fine thin's! What think of dat, Weza?"

"Don't b'lieve a word on't! Yer's makin' a fool on me!" cried the little woman, her eyes bright with excitement. "Who send dat word to me, ha?"

"Scriptur' Bill; and he see Zack four days 'go, and Zack said, Tell Weza 'God bless ye;' and he's got a present for yer, and de dear knows what all!" cried the boy.

"Well, if Scriptur' Bill send dat word to me, it's de livin' truth, for he don't fool nobody nor make jokes. Tell 'em I'll be dere 'fore dey 'spécts me, and here's a dime for yer, ye smart old head! Yer can carry an errand as good as a post-office, yer can; and I guess if Massa Linkum had yer, he'd get sarvice out o' yer; yer'd run round to

pick up black soldiers better'n Luke or Scriptur' Bill does!"

"I's goin' to wait for yer, Weza, so's to have company 'cross fields," said the boy. And the imaginary warrior sat down on the step as she turned to go into "missus'" room to ask leave of absence.

"Don't ax her, Weza," he called after her; "just tell her yer goin'. Yer got no more need to ax her den she got to ax yer. She aint yer missus, 'case yer a freedmen now!"

"Don't yer be too peart, chile, but 'raember dat pride goes afore destruction; and dese poor 'flicted white folks is de Lord's creatur's as well as us. He don't 'spise 'em, no more mustn't we!"

But for all this expressed humility, Weza did hold up her head a little straighter and speak in a little more confident tone when she entered "missus'" room, where that lady sat in a semi-conscious state beside her lord, who, being fully awake for once, was gallantly holding her pipe into her mouth, lest her teeth might relax their hold and the fire drop into her lap.

"Missus, I'll set what dere is on yer table, now," she said, "as I'm goin' over to de Colonel's. Luke's seen Zack, and he's got a message for me. If I don't come back to-night don't be worried, I'll

be here, sure,,time so make de hoe-cakes for breakfast."

"The land o' goodies!" exclaimed Mrs. Huggins, opening her eyes wider than she had in months. "That aint yer, sure, 'speakin' up that are smart way! Goin' to stay all night, ha? Just as if yer hadn't no owners left yer! Such like talk will do for the Colonel's and the judge's poor creatur's, that haint got no kind massas and missuses to stand by 'em; but for yer to speak up so smart arter we've took all the trouble and run resk o' our lives to stay by yer and pertect yer,— it's too much! 'Spose we'd been as selfish as our neighbors and hadn't cared nothin' 'bout yer, and had gone off to Washington or Bosting or some other o' them fureign places, to enjoy ourselves and get clear o' the Yankees, and had left yer to starve,— what then? No; yer can't go! I want yer to home, and to home yer'll stay! If that mean, creepin' Luke has got any message from Zack, he can come here and deliver it in the face and eyes o' yer massa! But he won't dare to do it, not he! The very sight of yer massa a frown-in' on him in the terrible way he can frown when he's forced to would scatter him like smoke! He wouldn't be nowhar! Go out into the kitchien, will yer, and not bother me! I'm tryin' to see if I

can't just get a little nap, and it seems as if the whole world had sot out to torment me."

By this time "missus" had got her soiled cap twisted half over her face and her apron up to her eyes, preparing for a scene. Huggins himself didn't feel quite equal to the coaxing and rubbing requisite on such occasions, so he said, "Don't don't, don't!" over and over again, till Weza could not help smiling. The cloud blackened and the tears began to fall.

"If—yer—a Christian"—sobbed Mrs. Huggins;—"but I know yer aint—and I—know—there aint no—truth—in 'ligion—and everybody's—hypocrites—and the more they makes b'lieve 'ligious the more they lies and steals—and is peart—to their owners that's fed and clothed—'em all—their—lives for nothin' and"—

"No, missus, yer don't b'lieve no such like thing," said Weza. "Yer know yer trusts me more for my lovin' de Lord and seekin' to please him, and yer know well dat de best and truest black folks 'bout here is dem dat bears de name o' Jesus. But if yer think so poor o' me, and is only stayin' here to take keer o' me, I'll 'lieve yer of de burden dis yere day. I's got no more claim on yer for a mouthful o' hoe-cake, not if I starves; for de news has come dat Massa Linkum has spoke

de word at last and we's all as free as de birds o' de air!"

Dave threw up his hands and then let them fall suddenly into his lap, exclaiming, "Well, then, we haint got no country! Freedom is dead; no republic can't live! Our enemies that fit agin us in the Rivolution, will see the flag o' the free a dragglin' round in the mud now, and crow over us! Oh, the poor black folks that we loved so,— what will come on 'em, with no massas to feed 'em and take keer on 'em!"

And while Huggins' patriotism and philanthropy found vent in these heroic words, "missus," having laid down her Punch-pipe carefully on the window sill, had slipped off into a hysteric fit, or something resembling that as nearly as she could manage it, and was shrieking at the full power of her lungs.

"Oh—that are wicked—President! He's jined hands—with—the Yankees—and took—sides agin us—in—a-a-w-a—ah—in this—yere war! Oh-oh-oh! It was our war—oh-oh-oh! We got it up of our own selves, we did! And arter we—got it—all—nicely agoin'—they—come—all rigged up—in soger clothes—they did—and took it—clean out o' our hands and begun to fight us, they did! Oh, oh, oh! That

wasn't what we got up the war — for ; it — was for to fight them ; and to stop their — breaking up a free — government ; and now see what they've done ; ruined us chevelry and — turned all — these poor — creatur's out to starve in the roads or to cut our throats, oh, oh, oh ! ”

At these last terrific words she cast a look of horror at Weza and shrieked out, “ She wants to kill me ; don't let her Huggins, don't ! ”

Dave evidently saw little that was savage in the mien of Weza, for he made no reply except to ask, “ Hadn't ye better take a little assefidity, or a bit of oppyum ? ”

Weza laid her hand gently on “ missus ” shoulder and said, “ Yer know, missus, dat I wouldn't harm a hair o' yer head, and dat 'stead o' yer stayin' here to save me a starvin', I left my husband down below, agin his will, to come back and take keer o' yer ! And I mean to do it, yet for the Lord's sake, to show yer dat I fears his name ! Yer never 'bused me, and I won't forsake yer ! If I should, ye'd starve to death, sartin ! Who's walked to de river, hot or cold, a luggin' clothes back'ards and for'ards to wash, so's to git a little money for yer ? Who's hauled all de fire wood, and chopped and split it, and waited on yer, hand and foot, so's you haint got out o' yer cheer

no mor'n in yer best days, missus? Think o' dat, and don't call me ongrateful and say ye're afeared o' my killing yer; for it aint true!"

The sudden shock produced by the news of emancipation, being over, Mrs. Huggins' better feelings resumed their sway. The fit being a counterfeit one, was easily gotten over, and smiling a most ghastly smile, and holding out her hand, she said, "Well, if ye're truly a goin' to stick by, I'll forgive yer, for arter all it isn't yer fault that yer free, but that are Mr. Lincoln's; and what better manners could a body expect of a man that was brung up in a cabin 'stead of a mansion-house? I'll forgive ye for bein' free if yer won't go over to the Colonel's to glory 'bout it and to crow over us!"

"Yes, missus, I shall go. If I can I'll come home to-night, but if I'm too tired I'll sure be here 'fore ye're up in de mornin'," said Weza.

"Well then," cried the elastic "missus," with a smile, "take a bushel basket over with yer, for old Cleo might like to compliment me with half a dozen eggs. Tell her our poultry is all eat up and so can't lay us any, glad as they'd be to do it."

Weza smiled and took the hint, and in a few

moments she and her keen-witted companion set off down the lane.

They had gone but a few steps, however, before they heard a shout, and looking back, saw Mrs. Huggins waving her husband's vest at them.

"Tell Cleo," she cried, "that I'm dreadful mise'ble and haint got no appetite for home victuals, but when a neighbor sends me in any little delicacy like, I have a powerful appetite! Tell her we've got lots to eat at home, but that strange bread and cake and pie or even bacon, if it's a piece of a pig I wasn't acquainted with, tastes mighty good! Madam used to have preserves and pickles and jellies and such like, if she didn't take 'em off with her! Make my compliments to the women, and tell 'em I'm mighty glad Mr. Lincoln has sot 'em all free. Tell 'em I think a heap o' him and that I've seen his pictur' in a newspaper and call him a powerful handsome man! I'm mighty glad he has beat in this yere war; and I knew he would, for such handsome men always get their own way! Couldn't you find a bigger basket than that to take, in case Cleo sends me three or four fresh laid eggs that she don't want?"

Weza smiled, and replied that this one was large enough; but her "peart" young champion laughed

heartily, and said, "I reckons Massa Linkum's job will rout her up out of her cheer or else she'll starve! Our folks says yer got to go over dere and live, else yer'll starve too!"

"No, I couldn't do nothin' but have a good time wid yer; but here I can take care o' two poor creatur's dat de Lord made, and dat he pities! And may be dat way I can do a little for him, chile. But when my husband comes, I shall go to him, dough dere was a mountain of Hugginses piled up 'tween us! De Lord gives Zack de first claim on me for all any body; but still I'd feel like I ought to arn money to feed dese poor helpless creatur's," said the little woman.

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CHAPTER XX.

ENTERTAINING SOLDIERS.

WHEN Weza entered the colonel's kitchen, the scene reminded her of her first visit there. The same grand "mammy" in a white turban sat in the old arm-chair giving orders to the same stirring matrons in gay head-gear, who were baking and broiling before the blazing fire. The same number of little blacks crept or toddled about the floor, stumbling over each other and pulling wool at pleasure. Only the strong men were missing. They had "gone to help Massa Linkum."

Weza dropped into a chair, weak from weariness and want of nourishing food.

Well, honey," asked old Cleo, "how does yer feel arter dis mighty news o' freedom, ha?"

"I feels I'd like to use my lib'ty and go hunt up Zack," replied the little woman, sadly. "I'd foller de sogers if I knowed which way to go, and

I'd tell Massa Linkum all my troubles and beg him to let me keep sight o' my last friend; and he'd do it too,— de dear, tender-hearted man dat he is!"

"Well, keep up heart, honey," said old Cleo, "and yer'll see and hear wonders bymeby. We 'spects grand company to eat dis supper,— a handsome young leftenny from de Bosting country, and four sogers in blue— U. S's, yer know," she added, with a knowing wink. "Dey's round 'bout here on some business of Massa Linkum's— Lord bless him! Scriptur' Bill come 'long widout dere axin' him, I guess, to see dey didn't do no mischief 'bout here,— but Luke, he's de leader on 'em. Dey're arter blankets and bacon and hoss-feed and such-like, and if dere's any to be had, Luke will spy it out! He haint never forgive his family's being sold, and he sot it down agin de whole Southern country! He vows hisself de enemy of every man dat has one dollar 'vested in human flesh, 'case one's held up t'other and kept up slavery. We on dis plantation knows less 'bout de cuss den most on 'em; but we must help on de good work all de same. Dat's why we's bringin' on de best we's got to feed Massa Linkum's men for him."

"Well, but tell me 'bout what Prince says. If

we's all free, why don't the sogers go home and we go whar we's mind to?" asked Weza.

"La, honey," cried old Cleo; "it's one step to take a chicken out of de hawk's mouth, but it's another to put an eend to de hawk, so he shan't fly at de brood agin! And dat's what de sogers is at now. We's free, for sartin — dey bring de news; and Bill had prayers wid us, and we sung and shouted to de Lord for an hour dis mornin'! When yer buries me yer can sing,

She enter heaven widout a chain,
For soul and limb was free!
Shout glory, Hallelujah!

But be sure to say dat I spent my life wid de colonel and madam, 'case I'm proud o' *dat!*"

"What's de good o' being free if I can't live wid Zack?" asked Weza, mournfully.

"You can live with him, honey; dis war's goin' to be over quick, now; and den we'll all meet our friends agin and have a little heaven down here 'fore we go home to de big one above," replied Cleo.

"Here!" cried a stout matron, "dat dear creatur' is about starved. Don't wait for de supper, give her a cup o' coffee and some bacon and eggs."

And so Weza was served bountifully at a little

table; and the effect produced on her spirits was wonderful.

Hungry people can never face the ills of life bravely. When one has great things to do or dare he should be well fed before his mission is made known to him. Many an exploit has failed because entrusted to a man faint from toil or hunger. As wine and oil make the heart glad and the face to shine, so do the more substantial blessings of the board strengthen the courage and raise the hopes of weak man.

Weza had scarcely finished her meal when the tramping of horses drew all the women to the door. There was a gay, boyish-looking officer on a good horse, and four mounted privates behind him, while Scriptur' Bill and Luke brought up the rear seated on one mule, and a sorry specimen of the despised race he was, too!

"Sit in yer saddles, gen'l'men," cried Cleo, "and ride round to de front. I'll onlock de big door and 'ceive yer dar, like I told missus I would. Massa Linkum sha'n't never say dat Mammy Cleo took his boys into de kitchen, nor yet into de eend door, when she held de keys of de mansion house!"

The parlors were thrown open and the white folks let in, but Bill and Luke and all the sable

family were kept in the big hall, "to save de carpets."

"Well, aunty," cried the boy-lieutenant, "we're starving; can you give us some supper?"

"Yes, thank de Lord, I can, and I can send a few pounds of real Java coffee to Massa Linkum when yer go back to him." They all laboréd under the delusion that Mr. Lincoln, whom they had sainted by their love, was every where at once; ruling in Washington, recruiting in Boston, and fighting at the front of every battle.

"Well, I'll carry the coffee to him," said the young man, smiling; "but let us have the supper now."

In a few minutes they were seated, according to military etiquette, at a sumptuous supper for those days, having four waiters to a man.

"Aunty," cried the lieutenant to old Cleo, "sit down here and pour my coffee. I want to talk with you so as to tell Mr. Lincoln about you when I see him. How do you like the war?"

"I don't like blood nor sorrow, no way, chile!" replied Cleo; "but when folks will pull a house down spite of all dere friends says, I'm glad if it falls inard and destroys dereelves 'stead o' fallin' outard on de peaceful ones dat's tryin' to save 'em. But de innocent must suffer wid de guilty, always;

so heaps o' holy blood has been shed wid dere own, but de Lord has 'venged it, and now it has brung de blessin', and it shall be told on while de world stands, and arter dat, too,—dis blood o' de martyrs! Do yer love de Lord, honey?" she asked, looking earnestly into the kind brown eyes before her.

A blush tinged the embrowned cheek of the youth as he replied, with a forced smile, "I love my country, aunty, and I couldn't rest till the curse of slavery was removed from her, that she might hold up her head among the nations."

"Well, dat's very pretty talk; but I axed yer do yer love de Lord?"

Every eye was bent on the young man, who quailed beneath the searching glance of this poor old negress.

"Come, now, aunty," he said, "don't question me too closely. I came here to get some supper, and not to say my catechism."

"Do—yer—love—de—Lord—senny?" persisted Cleo, in an emphatic tone.

"My mother does, and she's praying that I may," said the young man, solemnly.

"Well, den, dat means yer don't love him yerself. How dare yer go into battle or how dare yer sleep, till yer at peaco wid him? Dis freedom

dat ye've got for us is a powerful thing; but let me tell yer, sonny, it wasn't so hard for us to be in slavery to man for a little season as it is for yer to be in bondage to Satan forever! Now dat yer got us free, tarn about and pity yerself, chile, and fight wid de big enemy o' souls till *yer* is sot at liberty, too!"

"That's just the way my mother talks," the young man replied, "and I thank you for your advice. As soon as supper's over, I want you to give me all you can out of this house for my poor Yankee boys that are suffering hunger and nakedness for your people. Can you give me some blankets for our horses?"

"Mought be a few old ones," replied Cleo.

"How about bacon?"

"I'll go halves wid yer, but it's drawin' to a close, I tell yer."

"Chickens?"

"Take 'em all and give dem to Massa Linkum."

"Any horse or mules on the place?"

"Our hoys didn't leave not a single huff when dey went. Took all we had and *borrowed* two more," replied the old woman, with an arch smile.

"Any beef left?"

"Yes, got one cow to feed dese babies, and dat yer can't have, no how! I'll fight for de babies,

for I's bound dey shall live to know what freedom is!"

"What have you got, aunty?"

"Well, I's got a heap o' old Java; massa bought two whole bags short time 'fore he go."

"That's what our boys want more than all. Any tobacco?"

"Yes, dere is some, and yer welcome to it, for it's nasty stuff, any way; and Christian sogers from such a country as Bosting is ought to be ashamed to use it! It's bad enough for poor ignorant black men — missus never let her women touch it; yer may take what dere is and welcome."

"You have plenty of carpets here. They would make noble blankets for horses and men," replied the officer.

"Yes, but dey won't, do'. I hold de keys in dis house, chile; and Yankee or no Yankee, yer under Cleo's thumb now. Me and my women could manage yer if yer sot out to master us; and Scriptur' Bill and Luke wouldn't dare to raise a finger to help yer! But 'member, I've fed and drunk yer — dat is my massa's enemies — so be grateful, and don't be too graspin'. Be a man, if yer aint a Christian!"

"So I will, auntie," said the youth, smiling.
"And now where are you going to put us for the

night? We've got more work to do in this neighborhood to-morrow."

"I'll put yer in the best beds. Yer, dat is de gen'l'man of de lot, shall have de big company-room, and I'll settle de others mighty comfort'ble. De house — all but my missus' room — is at yer 'sposal; but yer got to mind me!"

The young officer and his men were now refreshed and in very good humor; so they smiled, and promised to obey her as if she were their colonel.

"Is dere any Christian 'mong dese men, sonny?" asked the old woman.

"That tall fellow there — 'long Dick,' the soldiers call him — is a real saint, aunty. I often hear him reading and praying, and exhorting the men in camp. You don't want to keep him here, I hope, for I can't spare him."

"No, I wants him to have a prayer 'fore we goes to bed. Scriptur' Bill, here, can pray as powerful as any body, but may be yer and yer men would have more respect for a white man's prayer; so we'll ask dis gen'l'man for to lead us, and den we'll sing,

'De year of Jubilee has come,
De Lord has brung his people home.'

"Well, the boys will stay and help you, aunty," said the young man with a side look at his soldiers, "and I'll go out and look round the place a little."

"No, no, honey, yer won't look round 'bout no place, while we's cryin' to de Lord to have massy on yer and to set yer free from de slavery of yer massa Satan! Sit right down dere in dat arm-cheer, and 'member dat yer in de presence o' de Lord de Judge, well as a lot o' poor black folka."

The lieutenant had taken up his cap to go out, but he laid it down again and said, pleasantly, "Well, if yer're at the head of the troop, aunty, I must submit."

Long Dick, although somewhat daunted by the presence of the officer, read a Psalm, and then prayed fervently for the country, the President and the dear ones far away; and at length, growing bold at the mercy seat, he offered a most tender petition for their dear young officer, who had treated them all with a brother's kindness, asking for him the richest of earth's blessings, and above all the salvation of his soul. He had begun to pray for those before him whose fetters had just been broken, when Cleo interrupted him, saying, with true loyalty, "Stop dere, brother, yer forgot to pray for de massa and missus of dis house,

dat's been like a father and mother to us dese long years! Ax de Lord to bless dem wid every blessin' dat's worth havin', here and beyond. Missus is a saint on arth now, but massa, he's much cumbered 'bout his crops and his money, and he's rebellious agin dis yere war, do he knows in his soul dat it's just and right! Pray de Lord to bring him down humble to his feet, and to reward him for his kindness to us and to all de poor 'flicted black folks on other plantations."

This episode caused no mirth, and scarcely a head was raised till the soldier, thus instructed, ended his fervent prayer.

When Cleo had gone off, candle in hand, to show the lieutenant to his room, Luke delivered his message from Zack, and gave Weza a five dollar bill from him, with charges to keep it for her own comfort and not to feed her missus with it.

"Don't forget, Luke," said one of the soldiers, "that you are to take us to the 'mansion house' you told us of. If we get nothing else, we'll have some sport. I'd like to set those old bones to work again barricading against the Yankee savages."

"No, gen'l'man," cried Weza, "please don't do no such foolish thing. Yer wouldn't give ten dollars for all in de house; so dere's no use skearin' de poor creatur's!"

"Our orders are to go to every house," replied one of the men.

At grey dawn poor Weza, accompanied by Prince carrying a well loaded basket, made her way home. She stirred up the family; and after feeding them well, broke the news that the Yankees were coming, and advised them to receive them kindly and to offer them any thing they wanted — a very safe offer.

Instead of being frantic with alarm, as she had expected, "missus" seemed quite pleased with the idea of the visit, as she felt safe under the patronage of Weza. She asked for the loan of her pink calico, Zack's parting gift, remarking that as it was half a yard too short, she would sit still all the time they stayed and then it wouldn't show. So she was gotten up as well as possible in the borrowed dress and the crape shawl, and sat waiting in state; but poor Huggins had no body to borrow from, and being out, both at knees and elbows, he took to the woods for privacy.

When the officer and his men entered, however, Mrs. Huggins's courage gave way and she turned deadly pale. She was soon reassured by the pleasant face of the lieutenant and the civil behavior of the men, and by seeing Scriptur' Bill and Luke in the rear; for she knew they would not look on

quietly and see her murdered. Ere long she got strength to converse with the officer and to answer his questions about blankets and bacon, horses and mules, which was easily done by the use of one little negative! She told them that she and her husband — who had gone to the Bend, on business, and would be mighty sorry to miss their visit — were both Union men, and that they had sent off all their corn and bread to the U. S.'s long ago; and that was why they were so poor now. And then she showed them her Punch pipe and offered each of them a smoke!

And while the men were amusing themselves with her outlandish appearance and conversation, Luke was at the door writing a letter, at Weza's dictation, to Zack. He took a board across his knees, laid a sheet of paper on it, and putting his pencil into his mouth between every two words, wrote:

MI DERE HUSBUN

Thank God yer well and hav got lib'ty for our pepel, ax massa linkin ef he wunt let yer com hom case i'm so lonsom tell him i los do boys and dat i aint strong i been in de wil'ness mostly senc yer been 'way but al times i thank de Lor' dat i got him and yer mor tim i'm way frum yer more i loves yer i wud creep on my knees all de way to git whar u is but i cant its so fur and luk say

womun can't go i counts de minets on do ole clock
 till yer cums we's orful poor but curnul's folks sens
 me thins ur luvin wif WEZA

This was a mighty effort both for the dictator and the amannensis; and poor Luke, after folding the epistle and putting it into his breast pocket, wiped his face and drew a long breath, as if he had been chopping hickory wood.

There being nothing worth carrying off the place, the party soon withdrew, leaving Mrs. Huggins charmed with the Yankees. She was amazed to find they looked so much like other men, and declared that if she had met them on the road, without blue clothes and U. S.'s on 'em, she never should a knowed they wasn't gentlemen — just like the chevelry, mostly."

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CHAPTER XXI.

DEEPER IN THE WILDERNESS.

THE darkness increased as the night wore on towards our country's glorious morning. Want began to thin off the blacks on the plantations. They all hoped that in change of place there might be relief. The Colonel's women and two old men had put crops of corn and vegetables into the ground, and managed to feed two or three hogs and a score of hens, and had, in other ways, nobly resisted the evils brought on them by the wrong doing of others. And amid all their toil and hardships, they had remembered Weza and shared their loaf with her, taking care, however, that she should eat what they gave her under their eye, lest she might give it to "massa" and "missus," whom they would gladly have seen starving for their laziness.

But the hour had come when these humble heroines could do no more with such limited means.

Winter was approaching, and there was scarcely a rag left which bore the name of clothing, and the state of the corn-bin and bacon-house foreboded famine. More than one of the number had hinted that now all the blankets were used up they might make clothes for themselves and children out of the parlor carpets. But Cleo, who had already given all the poorer ones to the soldiers, rebelled against sacrificing these. "I'd be so proud," she said, "if our folks should come back and say, 'See how faithful Cleo has been!' But yer strong ones all go down river and get work, and I'll stay wid old Polly and Cherry and take keer on de old men and de young fry. Dat'll make de corn go farder, and yer can arn money for clothes, and bymeby dis yere war will be over, and den we'll eat as much as we wants. I'll stan' guard over de babies and all de chil'en whiles ye's gone, for I's bound dey shall live to taste freedom."

The women yielded to this advice, and, with Chrissy for their leader, were soon tying up their very small bundles to set off, hoping to induce Weza to accompany them.

Just then Luke, who was always scouring the country on some mysterious errand, rode up on the horse of a poor fallen confederate officer.

After hitching him to a ring which held one end

of the clothes line, he went into the kitchen and sat down very solemnly. He took a handful of change from his pocket and gave it to old Cleo, saying, "Here, mammy, de boys sent dis to yer to keep de folks 'live till dey gets back,— which looks to be mighty quick now. We'se had a powerful big fight, and, Oh Lord," he cried, throwing up his hands towards heaven, "it's cost us dear!"

"Luke, yer as white as an Injun," cried one of the women. "I makes no doubts but de rebs has whipped us Yankees and will tarn round now and 'slave us all agin. Speak out de worst!"

"No, no, dat isn't so. We's got our liberty for sure, but we's lost Zack!"

The women groaned and called on God "to pity de poor lovin' heart dat would now be more broker den ever before."

"Luke," cried Cleo, "I don't .b'lieve Zack's dead."

"Yes, mammy, shot through de heart; dat was de only place dey could shoot him in, he was so tough," said Luke, with a mournful shake of the head.

"Zack am not dead," replied old Cleo, positively.

"De man dat fit by his side and see him fall told me dat, and he's a true man," said Luke.

"He aint truer den de Lord, Luke; Zack's a

livin', I knows. I axed de Lord to save all our boys and bring 'em back to us when de war was over. I hear a voice sayin', 'Cordin' to dy faith shall it be unto dee.' De Lord gin me a promise for Zack in de dark night when I humbled my soul 'fore him wid fastin' and prayer; and do yer think he's goin' to break his promise? No, Luke, Zack's a praisin' of de Lord dis night some'eres; may be in hospital, may be in prison, but he aint dead."

Luke pressed the matter no farther, but it was evident that old Cleo's faith did not extend to him or to the women.

It is vain to attempt any description of the grief of the stricken wife when Luke told her that her last friend was gone. After the first shock—by which Mrs. Huggins was as much overcome as herself—she said, "Well, Luke, de day's a'most done wid me, and I'll soon go to Zack. Thank de Lord, and tell all de sisters to thank him dat when chil'en and husband's all tuk away, I's got Christ left. I'll lean on him alone now while I stays in de wild'ness, and I'll lean on him goin' through Jordan. O, brother Luke, what do poor folks do dat hasn't got any Jesus to lean on when all else is tuk away from dem. Oh, how beau'ful heaven must be to de happy souls dere now dat Zack's in it."

And a smile passed over her sad face, and her heart was comforted with the hope of a heaven with Zack.

After this great sorrow, came the hardest part of this meek creature's journey through "the wilderness." Her sympathizing friends were gone, toil and poverty pressed hard upon her, and the hope of seeing Zack, which had been the star of her darkness, was gone. But still she did not sink. She looked at the two helpless creatures before her and accepted the care of them as her work, — for she had none else on whom to bestow labor, and they had, as Mrs. Huggins said, no friend but her to lean on.

As soon as she could fix her mind on any thing, she gratified her feelings by dyeing black her pink calico and her blue gingham, and exchanging her gay turban for one of white. And then she took up her toil and care again and went on as before this great calamity.

When a new spring opened on that almost deserted region the question of a crop came up.

"If we don't plant we'll die, massa," said Weza. "We must put in de corn I've bought and raise a little, anyhow. If we tries to help ourselves God will help us."

"Haint got no hoss nor mule to plough with," replied Dave, mournfully.

"Can't we spade up a little ground?" asked Weza.

"May be yer can," replied Dave, "but it'll be powerful hard work for yer. It makes *my* bones ache just to think on't. If yer could only plough I'd try to plant and hoe a little."

"I've heerd tell of a country way off som'eres," replied Weza, "where the men ploughs with their wives for mules. So folks can do it without hossés. Now, if yer'll draw the plough I'll hold it, and we can turn up the ground a little."

"There now," cried "missus," "that's just the plan. I do like to see folks have pluck in times like these; and it makes me proud to be yer wife, Dave,—yer such a sperited man. Takes more than the North to put yer down. That man that navigated out this yere half o' the world couldn't beat yer for layin' o' plans or carryin' on 'em out. Yer a genius for contrivin'. I like to encourage folks that's got so much pluck, and I'll tell yer what I'll do; if yer and Weza will plough, I'll let yer move my cheer cross the room to t'other window, and I'll set and look at yer and tell yer if yer furrers is straight." And Mrs. Huggins looked triumphant after this noble offer of patronage and self-sacrifice. She felt that she deserved a martyr's crown!

Dave evidently demurred in heart; and Weza, seeing this, said, "Now, massa, I've gone just as far as I can go alone. If yer'll wake up now and help me I'll stan' by yer to de last, but if yer don't I must go down river and find work to take care of myself, for I'm a'most dead."

This threat always galvanized Dave and brought on a little spasmodic action. So he promised to draw the plough for her, and to do all he could towards planting and hoeing.

The wardrobe of the master and mistress had by this time almost vanished away. Even the changeable silk had dropped off of its owner piece by piece, and the crape shawl had about fulfilled its mission as a cloak to hide radical deficiencies. And "massa's" clothes; well, there was not enough left of them to write about. He was under the painful necessity of running off whenever anybody approached the house. He looked little enough like one of the "chevelry" of whom Mrs. Huggins so often boasted. In this sad emergency, Weza cut up two pairs of blankets and made a suit for each of them. Madam Demorest — that ubiquitous ruler of fashion — may rack her brains to get up something "new and striking," but the like of "missus'" blanket-dress will never dawn on her vision. Weza had exercised some taste in

its construction, arranging the red and green border so that it ran round the bottom and up the front, but the robe was too short behind and too long before, and altogether it was a remarkable piece of mechanism. But Dave's suit of the same material outshone it in its peculiarity. Poor Weza had not been a tailoress in times of peace, but had become one from the necessities of war. She had very little idea of "the human form divine" or how much it owes to that benefactor of the sons of Adam—the tailor. So she cut and made two long bags and joined them together at the top letting the gay stripes come wherever fate decreed. These she styled pants, and they had one charm—they were very loose and easy. But the generosity she had bestowed on this garment told upon the jacket. That was a woefully tight fit; it took both her and Huggins with a good deal of hard work to get him into it. Buttons were things of the past; to be remembered, but not to be laid hold on at the mansion house now. So Weza had cut holes the size of a pea in the unhemmed fronts and whipped them round with blue yarn; and through these Dave had inserted leather thongs—which his own enterprise had evoked from an old boot leg—by which to fasten it.

It was in this array that Dave ploughed, while

"missus" watched the furrows. He felt the *outré* figure he cut, and whenever he saw any one coming up the road he forsook the plough and sought shelter in the corn-house near which he and Weza were scratching up the ground. But his eye was on the public road only, and he was surprised at his work the second day by a stranger coming on him from the rear.

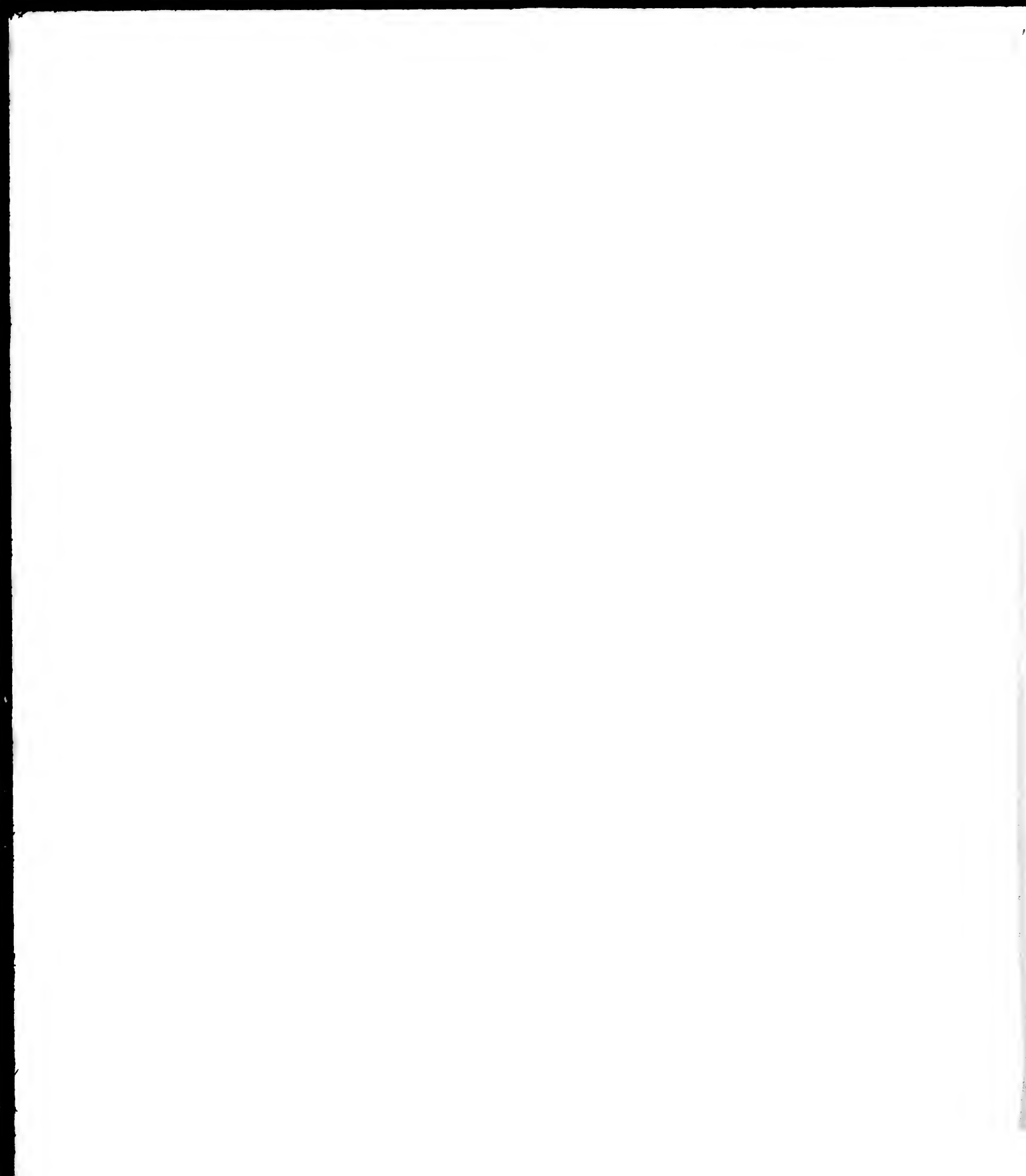
"Is this Mr. Huggins?" asked a tall and rather awkward man, who had come up the lane on horseback.

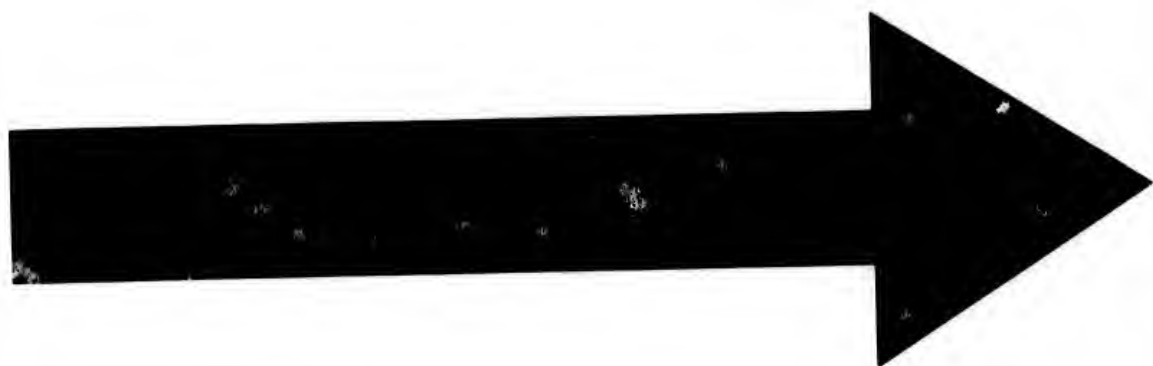
"It u—u—used to be," replied Dave, in great confusion, "and I—I—reckon it would be agin if it had a fair chance."

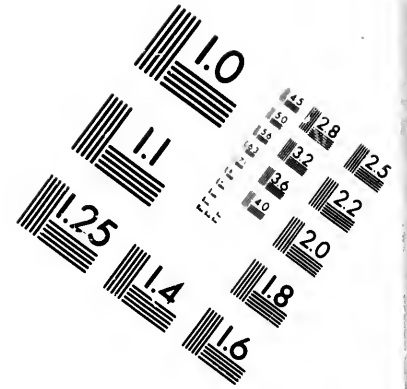
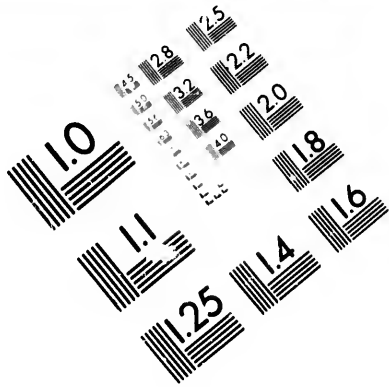
The man tried to look sober, but he laughed outright in spite of himself as he looked on Dave's nondescript garments.

Here Mrs. Huggins raised the window, put the boot-jack under it, and asked, "What does he want of us, Huggins?"

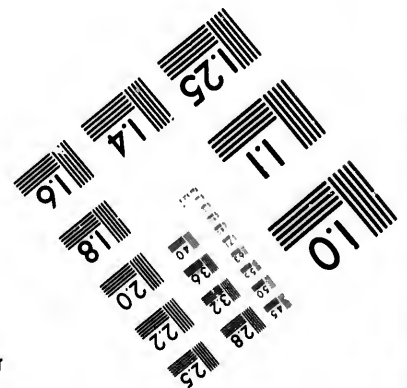
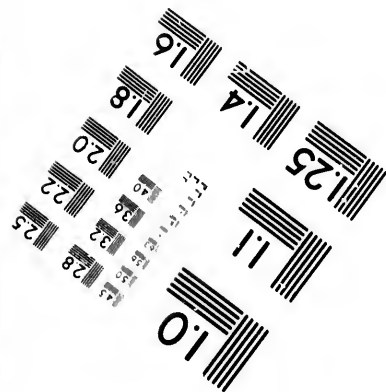
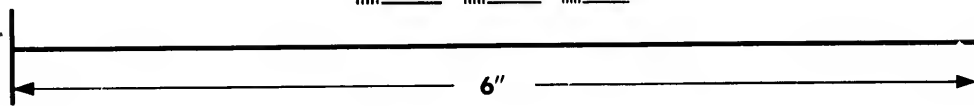
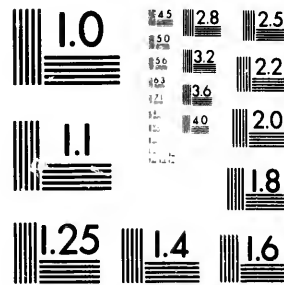
The man turned towards her, and seeing her style of dress said, "I think you want me more than I want you, my good woman. I've got some little capital," he continued, addressing himself to Huggins, "and I'm going to work Mr. Walter Davidson's plantation on shares. We shall have peace before long, and then there will be regiments of







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blacks seeking work. I don't understand your soil nor your crops, and Mr. Davidson said he knew you had been an overseer, and may be, as you was a little under the weather, you'd like to superintend the work for us."

"Does planters that's lived in mansion houses ever become overseers agin?" exclaimed Mrs. Huggins.

"Have yer got anything to eat over there?" asked Dave, who had parted company with his dignity long ere this, and who was already tired of ploughing and was looking gloomily on the prospect of harvest.

"Yes, good quarters and plenty of bacon and corn. We want to be all on hand ready to employ men as soon as the army is disbanded, and that'll be very soon," replied the stranger.

Huggins stepped out from the rope which encircled his waist and so harnessed him into the plough, and said, with a promptness and energy which charmed the man, "I'll go as soon as yer say. The quicker the better, for I can't work here without mules nor nothin', and I'm powerful hungry."

"Well, then, turn your keys here, and to-morrow I'll drive over with Mr. Davidson's team for you and your wife," said the man.

"I'd ax yer to stay to dinner, stranger, if we wasn't all ready to go out a visitin'," said Mrs. Huggins from her casement.

The stranger must have thought they were going to a masquerade ball from their style of dress, but he said only, "I couldn't stay, for we're driving matters over there. The place was run down a good deal, and we Yankees put our own hands to every thing. We never stand still to wait for help."

"Be yer a Yankee?" cried Mrs. Huggins, despairingly.

"Yes, madam. I hope you arn't afraid of me?" replied the stranger.

"Yer didn't come for to entrap us and to make us 'list in the U. S.'s, did yer, mister?"

"No, madam, I came to make business for you. I have served out my time in the army and now want to settle here. As soon as I can I shall get my family down. You'll find me true to my word in all things, I guess." And to assure Huggins of his sincerity in making the offer he gave him a five dollar bill and promised to provide both himself and his wife with clothes as soon as they reached the plantation, some ten miles away.

The plough was left in the furrow, and there the reader will see it again at a future day. What

there was to take was packed up at once. Of course it had to be unpacked again, for there were no surplus articles there to lie over night in bundles.

"O' course yer'll go too," said Mrs. Huggins to Weza. "Yer know that was part o' the bargain."

"No, missus, I wasn't mentioned," said Weza, who felt the fetters for the first time falling from her hands and her feet. "I'm free now to go and look for work. Some time I'll come back and see how yer gits along. I calls dis yere an angel's visit. Dis Yankee gen'l'man was like de raven dat fed de old man dat was a starvin' in de Bible. And now, if massa only spurs up a little, I reckon yer'll have a good home de rest o' yer lives."

"Course they'll have somebody to take keer on me?" said "missus," inquiringly, from the side of her pipe.

"No doubt yer'll have all yer nced," replied Weza.

"Oh, goody sakes!" cried "missus," "suppose they didn't have a woman to wait on me? Them Yankees don't, yer know. I do believe if I was left to myself the spiders would weave webs all over me and bury me up. When yer went off with Zack, that time, one big fellow spun a'most a veil over my face. I slapped him off twice, but in

a minute there he'd be a weavin' agin. He was as bold as a lion, and didn't stand in fear o' me no more'n if I wasn't nobody. He never quit weavin' till Huggins — who's powerful sperited when he once sets out — made a bold push, and pinched him off my cap with the tongs."

In three days all was as still on the Huggins plantation as in the buried cities of the East; for when the family went away there was not even a mouse to make a noise. Every living thing had been starved out long before that.

We will leave Huggins with Mr. Davidson and his deluded Yankee partner, and follow Weza with her little bundle to the Colonel's. The strain on her strength being now removed, she sank down from exhaustion and debility. She had now leisure to be sick, and a slow fever seized upon her. Ere many days she was unconscious of all that was passing around her. Cleo watched over her tenderly for many weeks, and then pronounced her dying. She told some foraging blacks whom she had kept over night, that "Weza was most home to glory, and that they might spread de news 'long de lines so dat our boys might, may be, hear on't some day." They fulfilled their promise, and by that magic and mysterious telegraph always used by slaves and Indians, the news went faster than

the mail could have carried it. And while Weza, the crisis being over, was slowly recovering under old mammy's skilful nursing, her friends, in a far-off camp, were singing funeral hymns in honor of her memory, and consoling themselves with the thought that she had at last got out of the wilderness.

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CHAPTER XXII.

A JOYFUL SURPRISE.

ON Weza's recovery from her long sickness she parted with Cleo and the other matrons at the Colonel's place, and set off for the city, hoping to find labor whereby she might support herself and repay in some degree the kindness of her poor friends.

She felt almost alone in the world now. Once and once only had Mrs. Huggins been to see her, and then she only worried her by complaints of "the people at Davidson's," who seemed to think she was nobody, and told her to wait on herself, and even called her lazy. She cried, and wrung her hands, and said she wished they were all back to the mansion house in their "old splendor." She expressed fear lest some of the Yankee officers — "ginerals or sich like" — might take possession of the mansion house and use up her furniture "arter this contemptible war was over, and they got dis-

bandaged." She pronounced war the meanest kind o' trickery going; it had used up all their furniture, and clothes, and hosses, and mules, and stole off their slaves, and given them nothing in return for it. War had promised them a new country of their own and as many slaves as they wanted, so that they wouldn't have to get out of their "cheers;" but instead of that it had stripped them as clean as bean-poles, and left them where they had to get up for every thing they wanted, and even to go down stairs to their meals; and stairs were awful things for people with weak jints. She thought all the Yankees ought to be hung for meddlin' with what didn't belong to them, upsettin' "our war," and makin' it do just contrary to what it ought to have done. "If they'd only minded their own business and stayed at home," she said, "this would have been the beautifulest war in all the history book, it would."

As she waxed warm she began to gasp and tremble, and finally, before the women could get her away, she "went off into a powerful bad hysteric." Cleo was just the doctor for her. She ordered her to be taken out and stretched on the kitchen floor, and when there had two pails of cold water dashed violently over her. This was a potent appeal. She at once became conscious, and

springing to her feet, cried, "Call that are Bob to take me back to them are hateful Yankces afore I go off agin." She never came where Mammy Cleo was to practise her antics after that.

Aunt Sally, of St. Cyprian Street, to whom Zack directed the minister at the opening of our story, had long been the queen of gossips, and now her very errors of the past made her a valuable person in the community. The blacks were running hither and thither looking for the friends they had lost, that they might gather them together and make off to places of safety, having an undefined dread of being again enslaved. Many of them thought Mr. Lincoln had been assassinated for the express purpose of forging again the fetters which he had broken. Aunt Sally virtually kept an intelligence office—in this emergency—in connection with cakes and beer, which she gave "to any U. S. boy dat was hungry," but sold at exorbitant prices to other folks.

To Aunt Sally's shop Weza made her way, and there learned that the Colonel's women were doing well, and would be "moughty glad to 'ceive her back from de grave agin." With these poor toiling women she found a home and a warm welcome. They had provided for themselves and a good-sized family of aged women and little ones

“up river,” besides lending a helping hand to strangers in want, and yet they had enough and to spare. They assigned to Weza a little loft in their old house in the suburbs of the city, and with the same tenderness they had manifested towards her in times past, they gave her the easiest portion of their work, and set off to find more for themselves.

Peace was at length proclaimed. The soldiers, coming home with honorable discharges, and in many cases with well filled wallets, carried themselves like men, and took their places as heads of their own families with pride they could not conceal.

One day after the army had been disbanded and the cities and towns were full of soldiers looking for peaceful work, little Bob, who had been brought down from the plantation to run of errands for the women, came in all aglow with excitement. Weza was bending over her table ironing a fine garment, when he grasped her arm and cried, “O, Aunty Weza, I’s seen Zack for sure.”

“No, honey,” replied the little woman, “Zack’s whar yer poor eyes can’t see him. Zack’s wid de dear Father up yonder, chile.”

“No, Aunty, I seed Zack wid my two eyes a wheelin’ a barrow o’ sand whar dey’s mendin’ de

roads down 'long by de wharves. Sure's I's 'live, I see Zack."

"Honey, yer was so little when Zack went away yer wouldn't know him now if yer did see him. Did yer speak to de man?"

"Yes, I said, 'Aunty's to my house and she wants to see yer;' and he said 'Go long, child. I don't want nothin' to do wid no aunties in dis world; all de auntie ever I cared particular 'bout's in heaven, and bymeby I'm goin' dere to see her, Lord willin'.'"

"Course den it wasn't Zack," replied Weza. "He'd a flew to see me."

"*It was Zack*; go down dar and see if it isn't," replied the boy. "Dere's 'bout forty thousand men dere dat's been let out of de army mendin' de land."

"Den I's sure I shan't go 'mong sich a heap for to hunt up a dead man, dearie," replied Weza, turning again to her fire for a hot iron.

And yet she resolved to go. It would do no harm to look on the returned veterans, she thought. It might be that some one among them had known Zack and could tell her how he died.

So, without saying a word to her friends, she dressed herself in her best black suit after dinner and set off in the direction the boy had pointed

out. Having reached the place, she asked a man she met if he had been in the army.

"Yes, and for dat matter one in every two 'long dis line o' work has been Uncle Sam's man," he said.

"Can yer tell me if any of dem was in de First Rigiment?"

"Yes," replied the stranger. "The furtherest off gang of all dat ye can just see, way off dere—see? Dem beyond de high ships. It's a powerful step off, and rough goin' over de stones and sand, but if yer a soger's wife yer'll get there."

So she stepped over long rows of obstructions here and there till she saw a man of the gang alluded to, coming towards her wheeling sand. When she got near enough she asked him, without looking up, "Please, will yer tell me if any of dese men was in de First Rigiment?"

"Yes," replied the man, in a terribly gruff voice, "I was in dat same myself. Why?"

Still she didn't look up, but with tears in her eyes and in tremulous tones she asked, "Please, did yer know Zack Cameron, dat fell in de battle of——."

"Yes," roared the great man, in tones that actually shook poor Weza, "I knowed him better'n ever yer did."

She ventured to look up and then gave a scream of joy. It was Zack before her, but so changed that she could scarcely believe her senses. He had gained forty pounds, "thanks to Uncle Sam's pork and beans," he said. He laughed, and she cried. He made her take a seat in the sand on the barrow, and standing before her, he folded his arms, looked at her admiringly, and said, in his own natural tone, "Why, little brown woman, yer a heap younger and handsomer dan yer was when I left yer;" and then he laughed again long and loud. "Now, look here, I heard yer was dead of a fever. When I was shot down for dead I was left on de field, but de Lord wasn't done wid me yet. I come to and was picked up and carried off to a hospital, where I lay pretty used up for a long time. I'd got scattered from my rigiment, and dey offered to let me quit and go home. But dis isn't de boy to run when dere's work to be done, and home 'wasn't nothin' to me if yer wasn't in it. So I got 'listed among strangers and couldn't hear a word from our folks. When I come to dis city I went three times to Aunt Sally's to hear did she know 'bout any o' my other friends, for I was sure yer had got through de wild'ness now. Her door was locked, and I couldn't find nobody. I could have dis yere job if I'd take right hold, so I

did, and thought de first day or two I could get I'd go up to de old place and see if dere was any life left dere now. Thank de Lord ye's live to comfort me and to help me on to glory," he cried. "Dis yere is a blessin' I didn't dare to ax for."

Weza reached forward and touched his hand as if to make sure he was really flesh and blood, and then she said, amid her sobs, "Zack, I'll never let yer out o' sight agin long as I lives, for ye'll melt off agin!"

"Ay, ay! Dat's it, ha? Well, den, I hopes yer's larned a lesson to 'bey de man dat de Lord's made head on yer. If yer'd a done as I said, yer'd a been in a little home down here and I'd a knowed whar to find yer. But yer loved Massa and Missus Huggins best, and yer've had it out wid dem," and Zack looked in her face, laughing heartily at her confusion.

"No, Zack, I loved yer best, but dey was poor, helpless creatur's, and I felt dat de Lord had sort o' laid 'em on my shoulders," replied Weza.

"A mighty tough and ugly load dey was, little woman; but if yer carried 'em for conscience's sake de Lord will reward yer; and he has done it. He has sent me back, and if he'll help me I'll make yer as happy as a queen, so's yer needn't invy nobody on dis arth."

While the happy creatures were talking over their future hopes which had had such a glorious resurrection, "the boss of the job" came along—a good-natured man generally, but just then tried and vexed with several eye-servants under his care.

"Here, Zack," he cried, "who's this woman hindering your work?"

Then Zack, with a low bow, told him the story of their long and painful separation and their surprise in meeting here.

"Oh, well, Zack, if that's so, take as much time as you please to talk. You're a faithful fellow and I'll give you the afternoon to yourself. You'll want to hunt up a little home and buy some things to put in it. You may go now for the day."

"Thank yer, massa, but I'd rather finish my day's work. If I've stood bein' seperated from her for years, I reckon I can stand it till sundown!" cried Zack, laughing.

Weza would not leave him, and all the afternoon she walked up and down the long, sandy path beside him and the wheelbarrow, telling the tale of the past sad years. But over all her sorrows she extolled the mercy of God which had upheld her, and brought her at last so nearly out of the wilder-

ness. "Now," she said, "I've just only one more thing left dat I can ax of de Lord, dat he would send me my boys."

"Well, don't begin to fret at him, den. I always tell yer I believe when you quit teasin' of him and gives 'em up like Abraham give up Isaac, dat yer'll either see 'em or hear dat dey's gone on afora, and is waitin' yer in glory."

The simple-hearted pair found a little home, and there they gathered their friends about them for a humble feast in honor of the joyous reunion. A happier pair never took possession of their first home together.

Zack wrought faithfully till his engagement was ended, and then while looking about for new employment, fell in with the gentleman who afterwards brought him and Weza to the North. The very word "North" pictured to their innocent minds paradise peopled with substantial angels; and they, like two children, seized on the first opportunity to visit and behold its glories.

And now they were in New England working cheerfully and acknowledging "de good hand of d dear Father" in all their mercies. Zack worked about the gentleman's place, so Weza could see him at any hour by looking from one window or another of the kitchen. When the day's toil was over,

he usually went into town to the post office, and to bring home what was needed from the store, and she always accompanied him, rain or shine. She was as good as her word, never letting him out of her sight for a moment when she could help it; so that Zack was justified in saying, as he did, proudly, "If I sets of to get a jug o' karsine ile, in a minute I hear steps and looks round, and dar is she close to my heels. She's bound never to lose me agin, the poor weak woman!"

The happy creatures got on well and earned large wages till the snow began to fall and the wild winds to whistle round the large, lonely house where they lived. Then they grew homesick, and as work out of doors was not pressing, Zack had plenty of time to sit within and talk with Weza about their old friends and home. They drew bright pictures of the Colonel's mansion house with the family gathered there, and of the kitchen where they imagined the same group was bustling about, or telling tales and singing psalms around the blazing hearth.

One night they had gone to an evening meeting at the village, about a mile away, when a wild north-east storm came on. As they set out for home the wind was blowing a perfect hurricane, and the flying sleet blinded them so that they

could scarcely see their way. It seemed to them as if all the spirits of evil were let loose that night and were howling around them. They had never heard the like of it before.

"Who's dat screamin'?" cried Weza, pressing closer to the side of her strong protector.

"I reckons dat's de wind 'mong de branches," replied Zack, "but it sounds powerful sad."

"No, Zack," cried the kind little woman. "I's sartin' it's some unlucky creatur' dat aint got no husband. She's out alone, and is 'feared and bewildered like. Oh, oughtn't I to be a thankful woman dat's got yer to lean agin? Go, Zack, and find who's cryin' for help, and 'll stan' here wid my back agin de wind till yer come."

Zack listened for a moment with his hand up to his ear. When one wail died away and another began, he turned about and tried to decide whence it came. And at length he said. "I's sure dat's de voice o' no livin' creatur' 'case it's in half a dozen places to one time, and dat isn't human natur'. It's de wind cryin' 'case he can't tear de world down, I reckons, but thank de Lord, de foundations was laid strong so dat neither winds nor floods can upset things agin his will. Oh, Weza, chile, it's a lovely thing to feel dat de Lord we love's, and dat calls hisself our Father, holds de

winds and de waves in his hand; dat dey is his sarvants, and roars and dashes only when he bids 'em. Let's be thankful, chile, dat our God can shake de arth when he's a mind to, and can make it lie still without speakin' a word or liftin' his hand. Let's hurry home now; dere's no 'poor creatur' widout a husband' out in de storm to-night." And he smiled with pride to think how important a character he was to the life and happiness of the frail little creature at his side. It makes any man happy to feel that great interests are depending on him.

When they were safely in the kitchen Weza said, imploringly, to Zack, "Please take me home agin. Dis yere North is too cold and wild for me. I hasn't been warm to de heart in three months, and 'sides dat I's homesick for to see Mammy Cleo and de other women."

"Aint yer homesick to see Missus Huggins and wait on her a little more?" asked Zack, jocosely. "I's feared if I take yer down dere yer'll quit me and go to plowin' wid Huggins for yer mule, or makin' coats and gowns out o' blankets and sich like for dem."

"No, Zack, I'll never leave yer sure. But I tells yer dat I'll never get quit of dis cold in de heart while I lives to de North. Will yer go to save me a dyin'?"

"Yes, honey, I'll take yer back. Home's de best place arter all; and yer own folks, no matter how black dey be, is de best folks for yer. I's been a tarnin' dis yere over in my mind, and I's got a plan for bein' a planter and livin' in a mansion house myself as well as Huggins," replied Zack, with a smile. "I didn't tell yer on't, fear yer'd be onpatient and bother me 'fore I got my money and was ready for to start. I don't like de cold no better'n yer does. It scourges me all up, and is de first thing in dis arth dat ever made me feel lazy. I hates to get up in de mornin', and I hates to go out in de snow. But I won't yield up to it, else I'd soon be a great goose 'stead of a man."

The lady of the house where they lived was an invalid, and did not like the cold any better than her poor little cook did.

One day after this long, wild storm was over, Zack's employer called him into the library on Sunday evening, and said, "Well, my good fellow, I believe I've proved you one of a thousand for faithfulness. I am going South with my wife for her health, and shall leave you and Weza in charge of every thing here."

"I's proud of yer trust, sir," said Zack, "but I couldn't take it, no how. I was goin' to tell yer

to-morrow dat *I* was goin' South for my wife's health. Dis yere east wind's a killin' of her."

"Zack," said the gentleman, "my wife's very precious to me."

"She can't be no preciouser to yer den mine is to me, sir,— axin' yer pardon," replied Zack. "'Sides dis, I's got plans for takin' a plantation on 'sheres,' wharby I'll do more den make a bare livin' by my hard work. Ye see, sir, since I's been sot free I's had ambitions I never thought on afore. I wants to own a place and to lay up a little for my wife if she should be left behind me in the wild'ness. So, sir, well as I like yer sarvice, I shall have to give it up to take keer on my wife. Dat's my first duty, isn't it, sir?"

In ten days Zack and Weza, finely arrayed in gay and comfortable clothing, were on their journey southward, as light of heart as any two black-birds that ever sought a warmer clime.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

GATHERING AT HOME.

ONE evening, several months after the time when we introduced Zack and Weza to the reader, they were seated once more at the humble board of Chrissy, the matron who had sheltered Weza, and through whose little boy she and Zack had met again, after their long and hopeless separation.

When the first joyful greetings were over, Zack brought out a leather-cloth bag, which he had bought in "Bosting, where he had taken the cars for home wid a powerful achin' to be warm once agin in dis life," and opened it with a key which hung from his neck by a shoestring, — tags and all. "Here, Chrissy," he said, holding up a gay, cheap shawl, "dis is a token of my love and gratitude to yer. Yer may well be proud on't, for yer can now hold up yer head afore de 'sembled univarse, sayin'," "Dis yere shawl come from Bosting, dat holy city whar de inhabitants dereof fit agin

de 'pression o' our people; dat city which gin us de victim of Fort Wagner, whose blood cried from de ground till de Lord 'venged him and us of our adversary. I tells yer, Chrissy Leon, 'taint no small hono for a poor weak woman to wear a shawl dat come from dat glorious city! When I walk 'bont dem streets holdin' Weza by de hand fear I lose her, 'peared like I heerd a voice sayin', — 'Take off yer shoes, for de place whereon yer stood is holy ground.' I 'membered how he loved liberty, and how he pitied us, and how when he fell, dey buried him wid his men; and as I stood 'fore de window of a great pictur' shop, a 'musin' of Weza, de tears rolled down my checks and I was most chokin' wid feelin's. Says she, 'What ails yer, Zack? Yer aint sorry yer goin' home, be yer?' 'No,' says I, 'but I'm thinkin' of Fort Wagner, where I fit once, and of him dat led us dar; and 'pears like I want to fall down on my knees and kiss every stone in de streets of dis old city for what she lay on de altar o' freedom dere.'

"And now," he added, smiling through his tears, "here's a knife from de holy city for dis dear boy, dat by his good membry brung me and Weza together. It's got four blades, and a gimblet, and a corkscrew, and a screw driver,— in fact, it's a small carpenter's shop sot into a handle.

It aint to be carr'ed 'bout in de pocket every day, but only when he's dressed up, to show to folks. I's named dis yer knif' 'Bosting,' in honor of freedom, and as long as yer live, boy, don't yer let de name o' dat city nor de word 'Yankee' be light spoken afore yer presence. Next to God we owes every thin' to de Yankees, and I does hereby pronounce and declar' dem de nation whose God is de Lord."

Then he gave away turban handkerchiefs and toys to the other members of the little family saying, 'I's resarved a new gown for dear old Cleo, and somethin' for de rest of de folks dere. Tomorrow I goes up river to see 'em, and yer, Chrissy, must go wid us to 'zibit dat shawl, and see if 'taint time for all us to go back, for yer know de Lord promised dat he will gather up de solitary ones into families agin."

All through Zack's speech Weza had looked very anxious for a chance to put in a word, and when he stopped for breath, she said, in a plaintive tone, "Chrissy, dear, yer hasn't heerd nothin' from my boys, has ye? Old Sally promised to spy and pry round and let yer know if she got any news."

"No honey," replied Chrissy, "I hasn't. Yer better gin 'em up now and thank de Lord yer got Zack. See how many poor crêtur's has lost dere husbands, and how many never had none."

"But," replied Weza, with tears in her eyes, "de Lord say if we ax we shall receive, and if we seek we shall find. Now he is true, and I have axed and seeked, and how can it be dat I shall never find 'em? Prayer must be answered."

"Pho, pho, child," cried Zack, patronizingly, "dat 'pends on what yer call prayer. I don't call nothin' a prayer dat haint got a 'Dy will be done' to de end on't. Yer don't know but de Lord has had dem boys saved up in glory for years and years, as de best thing he can do for yer; and if so, do yer think he's goin' to work a mericle and send 'em back to trudge through dis yere wild'ness just to let yer carry de day? No, sir."

"But, Zack, I's had bad spells o' bein' submissive to his will, yer know," said the little woman.

"Moughty short ones," replied Zack, shaking his head; "and even den it was, 'Dy will be done if I can't get mine.' I've always said, when yer gin up yer will ye'd either get 'em back or be cured o' this awful hungerin' and thustin' arter 'em."

The little party found all well on the plantation. The men had returned with money enough to live on till they could raise new crops, and letters had just come from the Colonel to have all things in order, as he should return home in the spring. Poor

old Cleo threw open the parlors with real pride, and exclaimed, "Look at dat, chil'en. I's saved dis from de war, and de pestelence, and de flood, to prove how we loves dis family. Nobody knows how I've fit afore I kept it all. I can fight foes mighty brave, but when yer has to lift up de sword agin yer friends dat's a fightin' for yer, it's powerful tough. When de gray coats come here and wanted dem carpets, I driv 'em off quick. I told 'em I'd scald de fust man dat put foot in de rooms, and such like talk. Dey scold and laugh, but dey always clar off. But when dat dear little leftenny in blue, dat had de prayin' mother at home — when he come three times arter 'em, I tell yer it took a soger's pluck to hold on to 'em. De last time I felt so dat I cried, 'case I got nothin' else to give him, and dat touched his heart, and he say to his men, 'Let her keep dem, poor soul, for she's made a vow,' and den I give 'em all I had — corn-cake and milk — and promised to pray for dem like do man in de lions' den prayed three times every day. So I's got de beds, and de parlor carpets, and furnitur' all ready for massa's folks, and a promise from de Lord dat dey and us shall live in dis yere land, and dat verily we shall be fed. O' course ye'll all stick to de Colonel, for I can tell yer, slave or free, yer'll find no better massa and missus."

"I hope dem dat hires out at all will stick by, but for myself," replied Zack, "I thinks o' settin' up on my own hook. I'll be a planter and live in a mansion house, like old Massa and Missus Huggins, dat Weza's so homesick arter dat she comes up river to hunt 'em up." And he and the others all laughed heartily; for Weza's faithfulness to those to whom she owed so little had passed into a family joke at the Colonel's.

That evening, when the happy party was gathered round a pine knot fire, and each had recounted the wonderful events which had occurred since last they sat there, Zack said, "I'd like for to make a few remarks, brothers and sisters. I's seen a powerful sight o' the world, and larned high wisdom since I left yer. My 'pinion is dat white folks has done 'bout all dey can do for us now; we got to do de rest ourselves. We aint a great heap of babies dat's got to be trotted and fed all our lives. I goes for 'construction. I think we's got a heap to do 'fore it's brung about. If any man feels it in him let him hire a plantation and get hands and be a planter, and if he don't let him hire out. I's 'bout made up my mind to go halves with Huggins — dat is, work de plantation on condition dat he'll keep out o' de way, and I'll give him half I makes arter de place is picked up and put in runnin' order."

The men all laughed, and one said, "Massa Davidson and de Yankee gentleman will pay yer moughly well to take him out of de way dere. He's got so powerful lazy now dat he sits down and cries when de men bothers him, which dey does 'bout all de time; and missus, — O, my stars, yer ought to hear how de Yankees goes on 'bout her. Dey never see such like afore. Dey sot out to make her take keer on Huggins' clothes and hern, and every time dey told her to wash or mend she went into hysterics. They don't know what on arth to do wid 'em. Davidson might ha' knowd better dan to hire him; for a man dat won't work for hisself won't work for other folks, dat's sartin. Is yer goin' to hire him, Zack?"

"Yes, hire him to keep out o' my way," replied Zac, laughing. "I'll feed him and old missus for de use o' de plantation, and I'll sell more pine off on't in a year den he ever thought was on't! Got any old mule or other live creatur' I can drive over to Massa Davidson's plantation in de morning, boys?"

"Yes, got three hosses and two mules branded U. S.," replied one of the men, "and we've put all de wagons and such like in order, and dey's at yer sarvice."

Zack rode over to "Massa" Davidson's the next

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morning, and in the middle of the forenoon returned with "Massa" and "Missus" Huggins, both arrayed in cheap working clothes, although the latter, clinging to the ghost of her former glory, still wore the gay crape shawl, the last remnant of her grandeur. Huggins seemed to have lost what little spirit he had ever possessed, and sat still in the wagon like a wooden man till Zack helped him out. When he and "missus" were ushered into the house they both began to cry. Had Huggins been a school boy instead of a planter who owned a "mansion house," we should say he blubbered; as it was he wept. "Missus," after laying down carefully her Punch pipe, to which she had clung through all her reverses, began to twitch her mouth and eyes and to stiffen out her limbs.

"Chrissy," cried Cleo, "see if de two pails is full of right cold water." This hint was enough. Mrs. Huggins, remembering her former drenching, did not care to submit to old mammy's treatment again, so she changed her tactics, and catching Weza's hands in both her own, began to sob and to talk at the same time. "Oh, how glad I be to see yer, yer dear, kind little Weza. I've been the 'busedest cretur' in the world since I see yer. Yankees is awful. They's savages and tyrantses in ginerol, mostly! O-o-o! The Yankee gen'l-

man's as mean as a nigger. He works with his own hands, he does,—a plowin', and sowin', and a greasin' wheels, and every thin'; and his missus, that's right handsome, and wears a gold watch, and plays the music when she's to home where the music is,—she washes dishes, and works butter, and cooks, and,—yes, I will tell on't, I don't keer if it's the ruin of her riputation,—I ketched her once to the washtub, a teachin' the black folks how to wash Yankee fashion. And he, Mr. Green; is so, mean-sperited that he let her do it, he did. And oh, they 'bused me terrible; me, that's been the wife of a chereelry and lived in a mansion house so many years; they said I must keep Huggins mended up, and wash and iron my clothes and hisn. When I told them I didn't know how, Missus Green said—awful unfeelin'—'It's time yer did, and I'll teach yer.' Then I went off in one of my awfulest fits, but the hard-hearted creatur' went out of the room as ca'm as if I was only a kitten in a fit, a sayin', 'When yer get through with what yer at now, Mrs. Huggins, I'll show yer how to wash, and to-morrow I'll teach yer to iron. That will loosen yer jints,' says she, 'quicker'n any leniment yer can buy.' O-oo! how I've been worked! I had to make my own bed, and get out o' my cheer every time I wanted

tobacco, and, O-oo! I had to sweep my room, too. I didn't see no dirt, and wouldn't been afeared on't if I had; but she see it. Her eyes is like a cat's in the dark, and she made me sweep it just to please her! I'm most dead, Weza. I want to go back to the mansion house, even if I dies next day. I'd sooner die'n not. It would be a moughty sight easier lyin' still in the grave than livin' with them oneasy Yankees, that's forever a drivin' themselves and every body else, — it would. I hate Yankees, and I'm afeared o' em, too. Take me home, O-oo-oo!"

And the nervous woman clutched Weza's arms with a vigor that showed her bodily powers were not failing. "O, missus," said Weza, in a soft voice, "I's sorry yer been onhappy, but dis yere's a workin' world. I has to work myself, and I haint got no power to keep yer from it. But Zack's come to talk with massa 'bout us all livin' home on de plantation together agin; and if we does I'll" —

"Hi, hi! Look out dere how yer makes promises, yer little brown woman," cried Zack. "If we ever lives on dat ar plantation it'll be on moughty different tarms from what yer lived dere afore, I tell yer. I'll be de massa, and yer'll be de massa's wife, and be sarvant o' sarvants to no-

body's folks. Yer've had it tough so far, but hencefor' yer'll live easy, lookin' arter your work while other folks does it. Don't yer go makin' any rash promises dat I won't let yer carry out,—mind."

"O, hoo! hoo! He won't let her go back;" and Mrs. Huggins began to shiver and twitch till Cleo got up and looked into the water-pails again.

"Keep easy, missus," cried Zack, "while I talks to Massa Huggins." And then Zack laid his plan before the old master, offering to "bring the run down plantation to tarms," and then to hire hands to run it, either doing it on shares or giving Huggins and his wife a comfortable home up stairs out of the way, as long as they lived.

The offer was like that of liberty to a captive in irons; and Huggins' eye kindled and his voice was choked as he replied, "Fetch me a pen! I'll make my will this minute, leavin' the plantation and the mansion house to yer and Weza for takin' keer on us and savin' us from work while we lives. Don't talk about no 'sheres,' for then I might feel a keer on my mind; but yer run it and feed and clothe us and that's all we'll ax while we lives. We haint got no livin' creatur' to be our heirs."

"Well, but yer don't want Weza to make yer

clothes, do yer!" asked Zack. And then all the little company, including massa and missus, laughed heartily at the remembrance of the suits which poor Weza had improvised from blankets in the hour of their deep extremity.

"Now, den, mammy, order de women to haul out de table, and let's have de best yer got to celebrate dis bargain 'tween Massa Huggins and me," cried Zack. Set a small table for dem alone 'cause dey's white."

But missus was so overjoyed "to be clar of white folks," that she positively refused to sit at a separate table, and soon there was the rare sight of the "chevelry" and their sable neighbors eating and chatting merrily together. All went on well except the slight blunder of "massa" who was unused to prayers or invocations, shouting out, while poor Zack was asking heaven's blessing on the board, "I tell yer them Yankees is awful."

"Now, see here friends, one and all," cried Zack, "I's 'bout half Yankee myself, and I sha'n't hear no word spoke agin dem, dat gin their sons and their own life's blood for us. I shall 'spect everybody dat lives 'bout me to speak of dem same way as dey does of de men in de Bible. Do yer all hear!"

"Yes," said "missus," "they hears and dey'll

member too, case they'd hurt massa and my feelin's as well as yourn, for we're powerful fond of the Yankees too." She was a skilful weathercock, but she had not art enough to hide the act of her turning about.

"Now I reckons 'twouldn't break nobody's heart if I should leave Weza here to gossip a few days while I goes down to the city to look out for hands to work wid me, and to move Chrissy and her folks up again. Weza can tell yer all about de North, and de queer things she see dere, and yer can all go over to de Huggins plantation to see if de house haint run off, nor set down on de grass in de mean time," said Zack.

When Zack was ready to take his "partner" and wife back to Mr. Davidson's, "missus" declared she wouldn't go for a million o' money, and she maintained her position. She suggested hysterics when Zack urged her to go, but he said, "Yer may stay here if Cleo will let yer, but as long as yer live don't let me hear the word hysterics' agin. And the minute yer tries dat game while I's master, either yer or I clars off. I can bear as much as any other man wid poor weak women, but I won't put up wid artful ones. Now mind dat, missus.

"And moreover when I's master and head, I

shall 'spect everybody dat aint sick abed to go up to de Lord's house of a Sunday, and to come into de room when I says prayers night and mornin'. I's goin' to set God afore me and my house, and have his name honored dere, for he has brung us out of Egypt wid a strong and mighty arm; he has plunged Pharaoh and his hosts in de sea, and let us walk over dryshod; he has smit de rock and it sent forth water to us; he has rained down bread from heaven to feed us, turned out de heathen and gin dere inheritaneh to us,— axin yer pardon massa and missus — and we's not goin' to murmur agin him, nor set up gold calves to worship, nor insult him no way; we's goin' for to humble ourselves afore him, and walk like he tell us. Den bymely when we's clar out of dis yere wilde'ness he'll take us home to glory."

Huggins manifested as little desire to go back to Mr. Davidson's as did "missus," and expressed some fear lest that sharp Yankee, Mr Green, might refuse to release him from his obligation! But Zack promised to make that all right, and they set off, Huggins looking back reluctantly.

CHAPTER XXIV.

OUT OF THE WILDERNESS.

WHEN Zack set off for the boat, Weza accompanied him for a few more words.

“Zack,” she said, “I’s had a mighty big fight wid Satan in de night, and by de help of de Lord I beat him.”

“Hi, hi!” cried Zack, “I reckons he was ’stonished to find hisself beat by such a weak, shy little creatur’ as yer be. What was de fight ’bout dis time?”

“Oh, de old story — de boys agin. Satan told me dat de Lord didn’t hear my prayer; dat he was so great and wise he wouldn’t stoop to listen to a poor black woman. Den I feel, all of a sudden, in my soul, dat dem prayers was all tuk up and printed in gold letters afore de throne, and dat my tears was saved up in bottles, like preachin’ Jack used to say de tears of all de saints is. I grew so bold dat I cry out, ‘Get dee behind me,

Satan, for yer a liar and de father of lies!' And he flewed like I'd been a rigiment o' sogers. 'Pears 'twas a vision like, for den I see my sister, de virgin Mary, leanin' on John's shoulder, a lookin' at de Jews as dey mocked and pierced my beloved Jesus. 'Peared like I was 'specting Mary would cry out and ax de Father why he let all dis come on her son 'stead of other women's sons. But dere she stood, beau'ful and calm and pale; not a word from her lips; no 'buse of de enemy, no murmurin' agin de Father. 'Peared like a voice from heaven said to me, 'O ye o' little faith, look at dat mother! If she could give up *such a son to such a death*, can't yer give up yer poor sinful boys into de hand of de massiful God?' And I said, 'Yes, Lord.' Den I thanked him dat dey was in his hand, and axed him to do his own will and not to mind me at all. Den dere come such a power o' peace over my soul dat I thought I was in heaven for a little while. I felt like I didn't care if de world was tared bottom upwards, for God reigned and all must go right. Dem ain't my boys no more, Zack, dey're de Lord's, and he can lock out for his chil'en without poor me tryin' to help him. My heart's fixed on one promise, and I don't b'lieve it can ever be shuk agin: 'All things work for good to dem dat loves God;' and

I knows I loves him. I 'membered de beau'ful vision where I see yer first, and where me, and yer, and de boys, and heaps more was all bound by gold chains to de heart o' Jesus; and I was 'mazed dat I'd forgot it. I b'lieve my sons is either in heaven or some other lovely place, and I'll hear all about it when I gets to my Father's kingdom. Now go down river, yer dear good man, feelin' dat yer've left de happiest wife in de world behind yer, and dat she's a waitin' for yer to bring home somebody she can help. I want to put up over de door of our new home, 'Dis is de house of God and de gate of heaven,' and to love and sarve him here as long as we lives."

Zack was now a planter, with both a plantation and its owner on his hands. It would have been hard to tell which of the two acquisitions was the more hopeless. Any but a strong man with a will to work would have shrunk from accepting either charge, so dilapidated were both.

In looking about for "hands" among the returned soldiers in the city, Zack avoided all drinking and gambling saloons. "De boys," he said, "dat has a taste for such like places ain't de boys for me. I's goin' to begin 'construction from de very bottom, in de hearts of myself and my men, and den no fear but we'll get on well."

He went to old Sally, but she had no men for him. Then he called on Bill Aiken, the black preacher, and asked him to give his business out in meetin' with all "de perticlars," which Bill did in the following words: "As men is commanded to be diligent in business, course it's right to find business for 'em to be diligent in; and as some of yer wants work, gettin' it for yer to-day will be like pullin' de ox and de ass out of a pit on de Sabbath day. Dere's an honest, good-principled colored man here dat has hired a plantation up river, which, 'cordin' to his description, looks like de 'struction of Jerusalem and de downfall o' Bab'lon. Dere's every thin' to do dere fore yer begin, and arter dat dere's plowin', and plantin', and plantation work in ginerall; besides acres o' pine wood to be cut and hauled to de river. Now if dere's any men here dat don't drink nor swear, and dat wants a good home and plenty of work, dey can see dis brother at Hector Adams' barber shop, on St. Joseph Street, at six o'clock to-morrow morning — it's early birds he's arter, yer see. Wives and chil'en is 'lowed on de plantation if ye've got 'em."

Zack was on the spot next morning, and there he met a score of men anxious to go with him, many of them having brought their bundles ready

to start. Among the number was a tall, fine looking young man, who at once attracted his attention.

"Yer wasn't looking for field work, sonny?" asked Zack.

"I've never worked in the field," replied the youth, in a musical voice, "but I want something to do, and am ready to take hold of what comes up first. By-and-by, when matters get settled down a little, our people will have schools, and then I can teach. I've had good learning for one of us, and can write mighty well and keep accounts. When I heard about yer at church, I thought it might be ye'd like some one to keep yer accounts, and pay off yer men, and look after matters round the house while ye're off on the plantation."

Zack was charmed by the fine appearance and the modest demeanor of the youth.

"I'm 'feared yer'd wants heaps of money for all yer larnin,'" he replied, "and not be satisfied with de rough fare we'll have at first. De place I's took looks like Bedlam, and I's most ashamed to take men dere till it's clared up. But dat's de first thing I want 'em for."

"I don't care much for wages," replied the young mulatto. "I've been captain's servant in the war, and have a little sum laid up. I want a home and

work. I'm not afraid of any thing I know how to do; and what I don't know I can easy learn. I was brought up wrong, as a slave, — fiddling, and whistling, and riding, and brushing coats, and carrying notes, and such work. But a free man's got to push his way in the world, and though I'm behind most of these for work, I mean to be up with 'em! I'd rather hoe corn free than ride behind a fast horse a slave."

"Give me yer hand, sonny," shouted Zack. "Yer made of de right metal, and I'll find some-thin' yer can do, and I'll feed yer on de fat of de land, if we can get hold on't. Got any 'lations 'live?"

"Yes, one brother. I found him among the men of another regiment by our looking so much alike. Every soldier that had seen both of us spoke of it; and as soon as we met and talked we were sure of it. We were sold and separated years ago, when Dr. Percy's estate was settled in this city. I went with the heir, who brought me up to make sport for him, and then sold me to make sport for other folks. My brother has fared harder, but he's twice the man for work that I am, and if yer'll take him too, I'd go where he is and tell him this minute."

If the thing had been possible, Zack would have

turned pale. As it was, his emotion was manifested by the great tears that rolled down his sable cheeks. "Got no mother, sonny?" he asked, pitifully.

"I hope we have," replied the youth. "She was sold when my brother was, and he knew where she went. His owner wrote to the family but never got an answer. The man that bought her—old De Grow—has been dead for years, and there's been a dozen overseers on the place since then; but we're bound to get some track of her. My captain's put it in the papers in New York, and Boston, and Philadelphia, thinkin' she might have got to the North; and I've put it in two papers, and had it called out in two meetin's down here."

"I s'pose yer've been separated so long yer don't keer much 'bout her, only for de name of huntin' her up? It's de fashion to make a great stir 'bout yer friends now days," replied Zack, still wiping his eyes.

"Friend," said the young man, "if by having my right arm cut off I could find my mother, I'd have it done without a word, and my right eye might go with it."

Zack dashed away his tears, and burst into a loud laugh. He came so near having one of Mrs. Huggins "turns" that the men gathered round to

see what the excitement was about. He threw his arms round the young stranger, and said, "why, sonny, I can give yer dat mother, and let yer keep yer right arms and eyes too. I's got her myself, and a dearer, and loviner, and patienter little woman de Lord never made! Her name was Louisa Percy — called Weza — and I'm her husband, dat she love, honor, and obeys. She's mourned her life most out 'bout dem two boys o' hern, and oh, how mighty I have called on de Lord for to send 'em to her. Only 'tother night she foun' grace for to give 'em up, body and soul, to de Lord, and I lef' her stan'in' on de top o' Mount Zion when I come down to look for men. I'm 'feared she'll cut loose from arth and go up to glory on de wings of dis great joy. Go now, my son, and find yer brother, and tell him his father and mother's found, and dat God's word is true dat de solitary is gathered into a family. Yer shall keep my figures and pay my bills, and when Madam Leon comes back, she'll set yer a teachin' school and readin' de Scriptur's to them dat's flockin' back to dere own homes. And yer brother, if he's a workin' man, shall be my overseer, and we'll show our inimies whether black folks can't take keer on 'emselves when dey's free! Why, when I was gone to de war, and gin up for

dead, yer poor, weak little mammy took keer on herself and a couple of old live mummies dat's owned her for years, dat would elsewise o' starved to death. But oh, she worked cruel hard to do it."

"She shall never work hard any more," cried the youth, his tearful eye kindling with joy.

"I should say not," cried Zack, "when she's got three big men, and one of 'em a larned 'one, to work for her. But she will work some way. Her heart's so full of love dat she has to work it off wid her hands. Go fetch yer brother, chile, while I looks 'mong dese men for de hands I wants."

The next day Cleo's kitchen was the scepce of a joyful surprisè which we shall not attempt to describe. After the happy mother grew calm enough to talk, she said, "It is as Zack said,—and he always says just de right thing,—when I gin up my will de Lord answered my prayers, and now I's de happiest woman on all dis earth. Why, even Madam Leon haint got two sons!"

On the plantation all hands went to work picking up old cart-wheels and carryalls, mending fences and setting glass, putting on latches and nailing loose boards on the floors, and shingles on the roof; and as they were not very fastidious tenants the place was ready for occupaney in forty-

eight hours. In the meantime they had come upon the rusty old plough buried where Huggins had left it the day he went off with the Yankee gentleman. Zack enjoyed the sight very much and said, "Dere's come a big change to yer, little woman, since de day yer made a mule out o' yer old massa." Zack had painted the floor of the great dining-room a bright yellow, and bought a huge rocking-chair which he placed in the middle of the floor, while six yellow wooden ones surrounded it against the wall. An eighteen inch looking-glass hung between the windows, and two gorgeous and loyal roosters, with plaster plumes in red, white and blue maintained their exultant posture—just on the eve of crowing but never doing it—on the mantel-piece. On one side of the wall was a cheaply framed picture of Mr. Lincoln and on an other a newspaper cut of his deathbed. The rest of the house was furnished by mending up the fallen articles with which half the garret was filled, and supplying a few others; and Weza went to housekeeping on her own account with real womanly pride.

When Mrs. Huggins was ushered into her newly-whitewashed and well-scoured chamber she laughed out like a child, and said, "Well, now, I do say that I'm glad from the bottom of my heart that I

didn't marry the Colonel when I was a gal. For then I'd be a draggin' round Boston, and Pheldelphy, and Wash'nton, and all creation, 'stead o' bein' able to set down on one cheer in this nice room, with my feet in another, and this funny pipe in my mouth, at liberty to take ten naps a day if I'm a mind to. Weza, fill my pipe."

Weza rose to her feet, but Zack cried out, "Sit down, little woman! Missus, de bargain was dat yer should do yer own waitin' and tendin', so now go down peaceable and get yer tobacco — if yer will use the filthy stuff — and then git yer needle and sew a gown or somethin' or nother."

"So I will," replied missus, "for it has put new strength into every jint of my body to be back to the mansion house all fixed up so elegant — even though Huggins aint master here. Huggins is a fine, sperited man that any wife mought be proud on; and though the Colonel's called handsome and grand, and though he steps quick, do he ain't half such a suitable man as Huggins; and I do think suitable men is finer than such keen ones."

Work seemed like play now. The crops they planted, the chickens they raised, the mules they bought were all to be their own. The old house was repaired with labor and cost, in the joyous hope that it would yet be theirs and their chil-

dren's after them. Every member of the sable family toiled with a glad spirit, which was manifested by the merry whistle in the field and the joyful song in the house.

Even Mrs. Huggins, "ketching the Yankee spirit," insisted on washing the dishes and setting the table, spasmodically, and Huggins might now and then be seen feeding the chickens or bringing a basket of corn-cobs into the kitchen, moving as if to the music of the "Dead March in Saul."

When the first crop was springing from the ground, and the work increased faster than the workmen could attend to it, Weza was surprised one day by a strange spectacle drawing near the house. On the living skeleton of the "old white hoss," sat the fellow who went by the one name of "the stiff-kneed boy," supporting in his arms the wan form of poor Obed, looking more dead than alive.

The little woman dropped what was in her hand and ran to the door exclaiming, "Why, yer two poor fellows! How a family is gathering 'bout me and Zaek!" and she put up her arms to hold Obed till his friend could get off the horse and carry him into the house.

"Well, Weza," said Obed, in a faint voice, "I's been a long journey for to hunt yer up, and now I's come here for to die by yer."

"No, my child," cried Weza, pitifully, "yer's come to be nussed up, and to live and to be one o' my boys. O, Obed, de Lord has brung me dem boys dat I was so wild about, and dey's just like two gen'l'man and yet so lovin', and tinder, and 'dustrious dat my heart's full and runnin' over wid de massy of de lovin' Lord. But tell me, chile, whar yer been all dis time, and who took keer on yer?"

"Dis stiff-kneed fellow did," replied Obed, with a faint smile. "He found out his knee wasn't so stiff, arter all, when it was his own. He had more courage a rubbin' it den when it was Massa Huggins' knee. He got into some sort o' business in de army, and left me wid a lot of old contrabange women and chil'en, and he's s'ported me and my hoss ever since. When he come back he got work in de city, and take a room for us, and we kep' de hoss in de back yard, but couldn't half see him. Last week he run agin Luke down dar, and neerd yer was here; and I said, 'Take me home to Weza to die. So here I is most dead. He want me to leave de hoss or kill it, and come up in de boat; but I don't tarn agin old friends dat way."

"It's a wonder," said Weza, innocently, "dey didn't take dat hoss from yer when hosses was so scarce in de war."

"He wasn't de kind dey wanted," said the stiff-kneed boy. "If all our hosses had been like Obe's we shouldn't be where we is dis day. I's fit for de country and been mighty brave since I see yer, but I's glad to be home agin now dat Zack's master here. I hope he'll hire me for one of his men, and I'll work enough to pay for poor Obed's keeping."

"But how comes yer can work smart and yer so lame?" asked Weza.

"Oh, I ain't lame now to speak on. When I got free I found out, all of a suddent, dat I wasn't so lame as I thought I was. It was a moughly sight easier to walk straight wid my own leg dan wid one dat belong to Massa Huggins. I'd got pretty much over de cut I had seven year ago, and an old woman in a hut whar we stop one night arter we left poor missus asleep in de gig, rub some len'ment onto it, and den it was as good as de other, only I had to larn how to walk straight agin. She said 'twas a mericle dat liberty had worked for heaps of our folks. She said she'd knowed blind folks, and deaf folks, and cripples, and sich ones all come out as good as new de minute dey got rid of der massas. Say, will Zack put me to work, Weza?"

"Sartin, chile, yer go out in de field and find

him, and tell him he may have yer, and dat I will take Obed. I dis day been axin' de massa above for somethin' to do for him, and see how quick he answered me."

While talking she had arranged a comfortable resting place for the poor cripple by tipping back the cherished rocking-chair and filling it with blankets, and when his friend laid him into it he looked up in Weza's motherly face, and said, "'Pears like I was in heaven now. Has anybody keered for my hoss?"

When "missus" heard that Obed had arrived, she sprang out of her chair with terrible energy, and declared he should not stay one hour in the mansion house after the way he treated her the night that the Yankee "hordges" that poured down on them, didn't come. But Zack, while he blamed the boys for that trick, reminded her that he was "massa at the place now, and that Weza must have her way 'bout Obed." And Weza's way was to nurse him back to life again.

When the Colonel returned home he was rejoiced at the change on the Huggins plantation, as well as surprised at the manner in which his own had been kept up by a few weak people on whom he had had no legal claim. He even expressed pleasure at the result of the great struggle, and

offered his men their choice, to work for him at fair wages, or to take a piece of land and work for themselves.

While Zack was reaping his first harvest, he had a visit from his own beloved master, who had just returned from Europe with his wife, and was the guest of the Colonel. The gentleman was greatly pleased with the prosperity of his sable friends, and after getting a deed of the plantation for Zack, he ordered the house and outbuildings put in perfect repair, and provided him with the best farming implements to be found. "I mean," he said, "to prove that such men as Zack can take care of themselves without a master." And he did prove it.

As the planters came back and gathered laborers about them, Sampson opened a school in a building erected for him. It was largely attended by children in the day time and by the whole adult population of blacks in the evenings. Scriptur' Bill gathered his family together and settled near Zack, and every Sunday "he held preachin's in the schoolhouse," and was always ready to lend a helping hand at any good work.

When Madam Leon, who now ruled as a queen rather than as a mistress among her humble neighbors, asked Weza if all her desires were

gratified, she replied, "Yes, missus dear. If I was told to ax for any thing I wanted in dis arth I couldn't think of a thin' but just only more grace. I's travelled up and down 'bout as long as de chil'en of Isreal did, but de dear Lord has at last brung me out of de wilderness, and to his name be all de glory!"

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