

PLANTATION

EDITION



VOLUME IV

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✦ THE NOVELS, STORIES,
SKETCHES AND POEMS OF
THOMAS NELSON PAGE ✦

RED ROCK

A CHRONICLE OF RECONSTRUCTION

I

CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
NEW YORK, ✦ ✦ ✦ ✦ 1906

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TO
F. L. P.
AN OLD-FASHIONED LADY

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PREFACE

THE Region where the Grays and Carys lived lies too far from the centres of modern progress to be laid down on any map that will be accessible. And, as "he who maps an undiscovered country may place what boundaries he will," it need only be said, that it lies in the South, somewhere in that vague region partly in one of the old Southern States and partly in the yet vaguer land of Memory. It will be spoken of in this story, as Dr. Cary, General Legaie, and the other people who used to live there in old times, spoke of it, in warm affection, as, "the old County," or, "the Red Rock section," or just, "My country, sir."

It was a goodly land in those old times—a rolling country, lying at the foot of the blue mountain-spurs, with forests and fields; rich meadows filled with fat cattle; watered by

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streams, sparkling and bubbling over rocks, or winding under willows and sycamores, to where the hills melted away in the low, alluvial lands, where the sea once washed and still left its memory and its name.

The people of that section were the product of a system of which it is the fashion nowadays to have only words of condemnation. Every ass that passes by kicks at the dead lion. It was an Oligarchy, they say, which ruled and lorded it over all but those favored ones who belonged to it. But has one ever known the members of a Democracy to rule so justly? If they shone in prosperity, much more they shone in adversity; if they bore themselves haughtily in their day of triumph, they have borne defeat with splendid fortitude. Their old family seats, with everything else in the world, were lost to them—their dignity became grandeur. Their entire system crumbled and fell about them in ruins—they remained unmoved. They were subjected to the greatest humiliation of modern times: their slaves were

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put over them—they reconquered their section and preserved the civilization of the Anglo-Saxon.

No doubt the phrase “Before the war” is at times somewhat abused. It is just possible that there is a certain Caleb Balderstonism in the speech at times. But for those who knew the old County as it was then, and can contrast it with what it has become since, no wonder it seems that even the moonlight was richer and mellower “before the war” than it is now. For one thing, the moonlight as well as the sunlight shines brighter in our youth than in maturer age; and gold and gossamer amid the rose-bowers reflect it better than serge and crêpe amid myrtles and bays. The great thing is not to despond even though the brilliancy be dimmed: in the new glitter one need not necessarily forget the old radiance. Happily, when one of the wise men insists that it shall be forgotten, and that we shall be wise also, like him, it works automatically, and we know that he is one of those who, as has been said,

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avoiding the land of romance, "have missed the title of fool at the cost of a celestial crown."

Why should not Miss Thomasia in her faded dress, whom you shall meet, tell us, if she pleases, of her "dear father," and of all her "dear cousins" to the remotest generation; and Dr. Cary and General Legaie quote their grandfathers as oracles, alongside the sages of Plutarch, and say "Sir" and "Madam" at the end of their sentences? Antiquated, you say? Provincial? Do you, young lady, observe Miss Thomasia the next time she enters a room, or addresses a servant; and do you, good sir, polished by travel and contact with the most fashionable—second-class—society of two continents, watch General Legaie and Dr. Cary when they meet Miss Thomasia, or greet the apple-woman on the corner, or the wagoner on the road. What an air suddenly comes in with them of old Courts and polished halls when all gentlemen bowed low before all ladies, and wore swords to defend their honor. What an odor, as it were, of those gardens which Wat-

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teau painted, floats in as they enter! Do not you attempt it. You cannot do it. You are thinking of yourself, they of others and the devoirs they owe them. You are republican and brought up to consider yourself "as good as any, and better than most." Sound doctrine for the citizen, no doubt; but it spoils the bow. Even you, Miss or Madam, for all your silks and satins, cannot do it like Miss Thomasia. You are imitating the duchess you saw once, perhaps, in Hyde Park. The duchess would have imitated Miss Thomasia. You are at best an imitation; Miss Thomasia is the reality. Do not laugh at her, or call her provincial. She belongs to the realm where sincerity dwells and the heart still rules—the realm of old-time courtesy and high breeding, and you are the real provincial. It is a wide realm, though; and some day, if Heaven be good to you, you may reach it. But it must be by the highway of Sincerity and Truth. No other road leads there.

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RED ROCK

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH THERE ARE SEVERAL INTRODUCTIONS

THE old Gray plantation, "Red Rock," lay at the highest part of the rich rolling country, before it rose too abruptly in the wooded foothills of the blue mountains away to the westward. As everybody in the country knew, who knew anything, it took its name from the great red stain, as big as a blanket, which appeared on the huge boulder in the grove, beside the family grave-yard, at the far end of the Red Rock gardens. And as was equally well known, or equally well believed, which amounted almost to the same thing, that stain was the blood of the Indian chief who had slain the wife of the first Jacquelin Gray who came to this part of the world: the Jacquelin who had built the first house at Red Rock, around the fireplace of which the present mansion was erected, and whose portrait, with its piercing eyes and fierce

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look, hung in a black frame over the mantel, and used to come down as a warning when any peril impended above the house.

The bereft husband had exacted swift retribution of the murderer, on that very rock, and the Indian's heart blood had left that deep stain in the darker granite as a perpetual memorial of the swift vengeance of the Jacquelin Grays.

This, at least, was what was asserted and believed by the old negroes (and, perhaps, by some of the whites, too, a little). And if the negroes did not know, who did? So Jacquelin often pondered.

Steve Allen, who was always a reckless talker, however, used to say that the stain was nothing but a bit of red sandstone which had outcropped at the point where that huge fragment was broken off, and rolled along by a glacier thousands of years ago, far to the northward; but this view was to the other children's minds clearly untenable; for there never could have been any glacier there—glaciers, as they knew from their geographies, being confined to Switzerland, and the world having been created only six thousand years ago. The children were well grounded by their mothers and Miss Thomasia in Bible history. Besides, there was the picture

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of the "Indian-killer," in the black frame nailed in the wall over the fireplace in the great hall, and one could not go anywhere in the hall without his fierce eyes following you with a look so intent and piercing that Mammy Celia was wont to use it half jestingly as a threat effectual with little Jacquelin when he was refractory—that if he did not mind, the "Indian-killer" would see him and come after him. How often Mammy Celia employed it with Jacquelin, and how severe she used to be with tall, reckless Steve, because he scoffed at the story, and to tease her, threatened, with appropriate gesture, to knock the picture out of the frame, and see what was in the secret cabinet behind it! What would have happened had Steve carried out his threat, Jacquelin, as a boy, quite trembled to think; for though he admired Steve, his cousin, above all other mortals, as any small boy admires one several years his senior, who can ride wild horses and do things he cannot do, this would have been to engage in a contest with something supernatural and not mortal. Still he used to urge Steve to do it, with a certain fascinating apprehensiveness that made the chills creep up and down his back. Besides, it would have been very interesting to know whe-

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ther the Indian's scalp was still in the hollow space behind the picture, and if so, whether it was still bleeding, and that red stain on the bottom of the frame was really blood.

Jacquelin Gray—the one who figures in these pages—was born while his father, and his father's cousin, Dr. Cary, of Birdwood, and Mr. Legaie were in Mexico, winning renown in those battles which helped to establish the security of the United States. He grew up to be just what most other boys of his station, stature, and blood, living on a plantation, under similar conditions, would have been. He was a hale, hearty boy, who adored his cousin, Steve Allen, because Steve was older and stronger than he; despised Blair Cary because she was a girl; disliked Wash Still, the overseer's son, partly because Steve sneered at him, and partly because the negro boys disliked him, and envied every cart-driver and stable-boy on the place. He used to drive with string "lines" two or four or six of his black boon companions, giving them the names of his father's horses in the stable; or sometimes, even the names of those steeds of which his Aunt Thomasia, a famous story-teller, told him in the hour before the candles were lighted. But if he drove the black boys in har-

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ness, it was because they let him do it, and not because he was their master. If he possessed any privileges or power, he did not know it. If anything, he thought the advantage rather on their side than on his, as they could play all the time, while he had to go to school to his Aunt Thomasia, whose bell he thought worse than any curfew; for that rang only at night, while Miss Thomasia's bell was sure to tinkle just at the moment when he was having the most beautiful time in the world. How gladly would he have exchanged places to mind the cows and ride the horses to the stable, and be free all day long; and whenever he could slip off he was with the boys, emulating them and being adored by them.

Once, indeed, his mastership appeared. Wash Still, the overseer's son, who was about Steve's age, used to bully the smaller boys, and one day when Jacquelin was playing about the blacksmith's shop, Wash, who was waiting for a horse to be shod, twisted the arm of Doan, one of Jacquelin's sable team, until the boy whimpered. Jacquelin never knew just how it happened, but a sudden fulness came over him; he seized a hatchet lying by, and made an onslaught on Wash, which came near performing on that

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youngster the same operation that Wash's august namesake performed on the celebrated cherry-tree. Jacquelin received a tremendous whipping from his father for his vicious attack; but his defence saved his sable companions from any further imposition than his own, and Wash was shortly sent off by his father to school.

As to learning, Jacquelin was not very apt. It was only when Blair Cary came over one winter and went to school to Miss Thomasia—and he was laughed at by everyone, particularly by Steve, because Blair, a girl several years younger than he, could read Latin better—that Jacquelin really tried to study. Though no one knew it, many of the things that Jacquelin did were done in the hope that Steve might think well of him; and whether it was riding wild colts, with the certainty of being thrown and possibly hurt; diving into deep pools with the prospect of being drowned, or doing anything else that he was afraid to do, it was almost sure that it was done because of Steve.

With some natures the mere performance of an action is sufficient reward: that man suffers martyrdom; this one does a great act; another lives a devoted, saint's life, impelled solely from within, and with no other idea than to perform

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nobly. But these are rare natures: the Christophers, à Kempises and Theresas of the world. The common herd must have some more material motive: "wine, or sleep, or praise." That charge was led because a dark—or blonde-haired—girl was waiting somewhere; that gate was blown up because an army was standing by, and a small cross might be worn on the breast for it; that poem was written for Lalage, or Laura, Stella, or Saccharissa. Even the saint was crowned, because somewhere, in retired monasteries or in distant cities, deeds were sure to be known at last. So, now it is a big boy's praise, and later on a fair girl's favor; now the plaudits of the playground, and a few years hence salvos of artillery and the thanks of the people. And who shall say they are not worthy motives? We are but men, and only the highest win even these rewards.

Steve Allen had come to Red Rock before Jacquelin could remember—the year after Steve's father was killed in Mexico, leading his company up the heights of Cerro Gordo, and his mother died of fever far down South. Mr. Gray had brought the boy home on his mother's death; so Steve was part of Red Rock. Everybody spoiled him, particularly Miss Thomasia, who

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made him her especial charge and was notoriously partial to him, and old Peggy, Steve's "Momma," as she was called, who had come from the far South with him, and with her sharp eyes and sharper tongue was ready to fight the world for him.

Steve was a tall, brown-haired young fellow, as straight as a sapling, and with broad shoulders; gray eyes that could smile or flash; teeth as white as snow, and a chin that Dr. Cary used to say he must have got from his mother. He was as supple as an eel. He could turn back-somersaults like a circus man, and as he was without fear, so he was without reverence. He would tease Miss Thomasia, and play practical jokes on Mr. Gray and Dr. Cary. To show his contempt for the "Indian-killer," he went alone and spent the night on the bloody rock, and when the other boys crept in a body to see if he were really there, he was found by the little party of scared searchers to be tranquilly asleep on the "Indian-killer's" very grave. This and similar acts gained Steve Allen, with some, the credit of being in a sort of compact with the spirit of darkness, and several of the old negroes on the plantation began to tell of his wonderful powers, a reputation which Steve was not slow

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to improve; and afterward, many a strange, unearthly sound, that scared the negroes, and ghostly manifestations which went the rounds of the plantation might possibly have been traced to Steve's fertile brain.

The only persons on the place who did not get on well with Steve were Hiram Still, the manager, and his son, Wash. Between them and Steve there was declared enmity, if not open war. Steve treated Hiram with superciliousness, and Wash with open contempt. The old negroes—who remembered Steve's father, Captain Allen, Mr. Gray's cousin, and the dislike between him and Hiram—said it was "bred in the bone."

At length Steve went off to school to Dr. Maule, at "The Academy," as it was called, no further designation being needed to distinguish it, as no other academies could for a moment have entered into competition with it, and there was a temporary suspension of the supernatural manifestations on the plantation. Jacquelin missed him sorely and tried to imitate him in many things; but he knew it was a poor imitation, for often he could not help being afraid, whilst Steve did not know what fear was. Jacquelin's knees would shake, and his teeth some-

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times chatter, whilst Steve performed his most dangerous feats with mantling cheeks and dancing eyes. However, the boy kept on, and began to do things simply because he was afraid. One day he read how a great general, named Marshal Turenne, on being laughed at because his knees were shaking as he mounted his horse to go into battle, replied that if his knees knew where he was going to take them that day they would shake still more. This incident helped Jacquelin mightily, and he took his knees into many dangerous places. In time this had its effect, and as his knees began to shake less he began to grow more self-confident and conceited. He began to be very proud of himself, and to take opportunities to show his superiority over others, which developed with some rapidity the character existent somewhere in most persons: the prig.

Blair Cary gave the first, if not the final, shock to this development.

She was the daughter of Dr. Cary, Mr. Gray's cousin, who lived a few miles off across the river, at "Birdwood," perhaps the next most considerable place to Red Rock in that section. She was a slim little girl with a rather pale face, large brown eyes, and hair that was always blowing into them.

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She would have given her eyes, no doubt, to have been accepted as companion by Jacquelin, who was several years her senior; but as that young man was now aspiring to be comrade to Steve and to Blair's brother, Morris, he relegated Blair to the companionship of his small brother, Rupert, who was as much younger than Blair as she was younger than himself, and treated her with sovereign disdain. The first shock he received was when he found how much better Blair could read Latin than he could, and how much Steve thought of her on that account. After that, he actually condescended to play with her occasionally, and, sometimes, even to let her follow him about the plantation to admire his feats, whilst he tried to revenge himself on her for her superior scholastic attainments by showing her how much more a boy could do than a girl. It was all in vain. For, with this taunt for a spur, she would follow him even to the tops of trees, or the bottoms of ponds: so he determined to show his superiority by one final and supreme act. This was to climb to the roof of the "high barn," as it was called, and spring off into the top of a tree which spread its branches below. He had seen Steve do it, but had never ventured to try it himself. He had often climbed to the roof, and had fancied him-

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self performing this feat to escape from pursuing Indians, but had never really contemplated doing it in fact, until Blair's persistent emulation, daunted by nothing that he attempted, spurred him to undertake it. So one day, after some boasting, he climbed to the peak of the roof. His heart beat so as he gazed down into the green mass far below him and saw the patches of brown earth through the leaves, that he wished he had not been so boastful; but there was Blair behind him, astride of the roof, her eyes fastened on him with a somewhat defiant gaze. He thought how Steve would jeer if he knew he had turned back. So, with a call of derision to Blair to see what "a man could do," he set his teeth, shut his eyes, and took the jump, and landed safely below, among the boughs, his outstretched arms gathering them in as he sank amidst them, until they stopped his descent and he found a limb and climbed down, his heart bumping with excitement and pride. Blair, he felt sure, was at last "stumped." As he sprang to the ground and looked up he saw a sight which made his heart give a bigger bound than it had ever done in all his life. There was little Blair on the very peak of the roof, the very point of the gable, getting ready to follow him. Her

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face was white, her lips were compressed, and her eyes were opened so wide that he could see them even from where he was. She was poised like a bird ready to fly.

“Blair! Blair!” he cried, waving her back. “Don’t! don’t!” But Blair took no heed. She only settled herself for a firmer foothold, and the next second, with outstretched arms, she sprang into space. Whether it was that his cry distracted her, or whether her hair blew into her eyes and made her miss her step, or whether she would have misjudged her distance anyhow, instead of reaching the thickly leaved part where Jacquelin had landed, she struck where the boughs were much less thick, and came crashing through: down, down, from bough to bough, until she landed on the lowest limb, where she stopped for a second, and then rolled over and fell in a limp little bundle on the ground, where she lay quite still. Jacquelin never forgot the feeling he had at that moment. He was sure she was dead, and that he was a murderer. In a second he was down on his knees, bending over her.

“Blair, Blair,” he cried. “Dear Blair, are you hurt?” But there was no answer. And he began to whimper in a very unmanly fashion

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for one who had been so boastful a moment before, and to pray, too, which is not so unmanly; but his wits were about him, and it came to him quite clearly that, if she were not dead, the best thing to do was to unfasten her neck-band and bathe her face. So off to the nearest water he put as hard as his legs could take him, and dipped his handkerchief in the horse-trough, and then, grabbing up a bucket near by, filled it and ran back with it. Blair was still motionless and white, but he wiped her little, scratched face and bathed it again and again, and, presently, to his inexpressible joy, she sighed and half opened her eyes and sighed again, and then, as he was still asking her how she felt, said, faintly:

“I’m all right—I did it.”

In his joy Jacquelin actually kissed her. It seemed to him afterward to mark an epoch.

The next quarter of an hour was passed in getting Blair’s breath back. Fortunately for her, if not for her dress, her clothes had caught here and there as she came crashing through the branches, and though the breath was knocked out of her, and she was shaken and scratched and stunned, no bones were broken, and she was not seriously hurt after all. She

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proposed that they should say nothing about it to anyone: she could get his Mammy to mend her clothes. But this magnanimous offer Jacquelin firmly declined. He was afraid that Blair might be hurt some way that she did not know, and he declared that he should go straight and tell it at the house.

“But I did it myself,” persisted little Blair; “you were not to blame. You called to me not to do it.”

“Did you hear me call? Then why did you do it?”

“Because you had done it and said I could not.”

“But didn’t you know you would get hurt?”

She nodded.

“I thought so.”

Jacquelin looked at her long and seriously, and that moment a new idea seemed to him to enter his mind: that, after all, it might be as brave to do a dangerous thing which you are afraid to do, as if you are not at all afraid.

“Blair, you are a brick,” he said; “you are braver than any boy I know—as brave as Steve. As brave as Marshal Turenne.” Which was sweet enough to Blair to make amends for all her bruises and scratches.

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From that time Jacquelin made up his mind that he would never try to stump her again, but would guard her, and this sweetened to him the bitterness of having to confess when he got to the house. He did it like a man, going to his father, of whom, at heart, he was mightily afraid, and telling him the whole story alone without the least reference to Blair's part in it, taking the entire blame on himself; and it was only after he had received the punishment which was deemed due him that Blair's joint responsibility was known from her own lips.

This escapade, however, proved a little too much for the elders, and Jacquelin was sent off to school, to the Academy at Brutusville, under the learned Doctor Maule, where, still emulating Steve, who was the leader in most of the mischief that went on at that famous institution of learning, he made more reputation by the way he constructed a trap to catch one of the masters, Mr. Eliphalet Bush, than in construing the ancient language which was that gentleman's particular department.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH TWO STRANGERS VISIT RED ROCK AND
ARE INVITED TO COME AGAIN

EVERYONE knows what a seething ferment there was for some time before the great explosion in the beginning of the Sixties—that strange decade that changed the civilization of the country. Red Rock, like the rest of the land, was turned from a haunt of peace into a forum. Politics were rampant; every meeting was a lyceum; boys became orators; young girls wore partisan badges; children used party-catchwords, which they did not understand—except one thing: that they represented “their side.” There existed an irreconcilable difference between the two sections of the country. It could not be crushed. Hydra-headed, it appeared after every extirpation.

One side held slavery right under the double title of the Bible and of the Constitution. The leader of the other side said, “If it was not

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wrong, then nothing was wrong"; but declared that he would not interfere with it.

"Bosh!" said Major Legaie. "That is not a man to condone what he thinks wrong. If he is elected, it means the end of slavery." And so said many others. Most of them, rather than yield, were for War. To them War was only an episode: a pageant: a threshold to glory. Dr. Cary, who was a Whig, was opposed to it; he had seen it, and he took the stump in opposition to Major Legaie.

"We could whip them with pop-guns," said the fire-eaters. Fordyce Lambly and Hurlbut Bail were two of them.

"But will they fight with that weapon?" asked Dr. Cary, scornfully. He never liked Lambly and Bail; he said they had no convictions. "A man with convictions may be wrong; but you know where to meet him, sir. You never know where to find these men."

"Do you know what War is?" he said in a speech, in reply to a secession-speech by Major Legaie. "War is the most terrible of all disasters, except Dishonor. I do not speak of the dangers. For every brave man must face danger as it comes, and should court glory; and death for one's Country is glorious. I speak

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merely of the change that War inevitably brings. War is the destruction of everything that exists. You may fail or you may win, but what exists passes, and something different takes its place. The plough-share becomes a spear, and the pruning-hook a sword; the poor may become richer, but the rich must become poorer. You are the wealthiest people in the world to-day—not in mere riches, but in wealth. You may become the poorest. No people who enter a war wealthy and content ever come out of war so. I do not say that this is an unanswerable reason for not going to war. For war may be right at any cost. But it is not to be entered on unadvisedly or lightly; but in the fear of God. It should not be undertaken from mere enthusiasm; but deliberately, with a full recognition of its cost, and resolution to support its possible and direst consequences.”

When he had ended, Mr. Hurlbut Bail, a speaker from the city, who had come to the county to stir up the people, said:

“Oh! Dr. Cary is nothing but a Cassandra.”

“Did Troy fall or not?” asked Dr. Cary, calmly.

This, of course, changed no one. In times of high feeling debate only fuses opinions into con-

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victions; only fans the flames and makes the fire a conflagration.

When the war came the old Doctor flung in his lot with his friends, and his gravity, that had grown on him of late, was lighted up by the old fire; he took his place and performed his part with kindling eyes and an erecter mien. Hurlbut Bail became an editor. This, however, was later on.

The constantly increasing public ferment and the ever-enlarging and deepening cloud did not prevent the ordinary course of life from flowing in its accustomed channels: men planned and performed; sowed and reaped; bought and sold, as in ordinary times. And as in the period before that other flood, there was marrying and giving in marriage; so now, with the cloud ever mounting up the sky, men loved and married, and made their homes as the birds paired and built their nests.

Among those who builded in that period in the Red Rock district were a young couple, both of them cousins in some degree of nearly every gentle family in the county, including the Grays and Carys. And after the blessing by old Mr. Langstaff, at St. Ann's, amid the roses and smiles of the whole neighborhood, they spent

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their honeymoon, as the custom was then, in being entertained from house to house, through the neighborhood. In this round of gayety they came in due order to Red Rock, where the entertainment was perhaps to be the greatest of all. The amount of preparation was almost unprecedented, and the gentry of the whole county were invited and expected. As it was a notable occasion and near the holidays, Jacquelin was permitted to come home from Dr. Maule's on the joint application of his mother, his Aunt Thomasia, and Blair Cary; and Blair was allowed to come over with her mother and father and spend the night, and was promised to be allowed to sit up as late as she pleased—a privilege not to be lightly esteemed.

Steve Allen, with a faint mustache curled above his smiling mouth, was home from the University, and so were Morris Cary and the other young fellows; and the office in the yard, blue with tobacco-smoke, was as full of young men and pipes and dogs, as the upstairs chambers in the mansion were of young girls and ribbons and muslin.

What a heaven that outer office was to Jacquelin, and what an angel Steve was to call him "Kid" and let him adore him!

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'Among the company that night there were two guests who "happened in" quite unexpectedly, but who were "all the more welcome on that account," the host said graciously in greeting them. They were two gentlemen from quite another part of the country, or, perhaps, those resident there would have said, of the world; as they came from the North. They had come South on business connected with a sort of traditional claim to mineral lands lying somewhere in the range of mountains which could be seen from the Red Rock plantation. At least, Mr. Welch, the elder of the two, came on that errand. The younger, Mr. Lawrence Middleton, came simply for pleasure, and because Mr. Welch, his cousin, had invited him. He had just spoiled his career at college by engaging, with his chum and crony, Aurelius Thurston, in the awful crime of painting the President's gray horse a brilliant red, and being caught at it. He was suspended for this prank, and now was spending his time, literally rustivating, seeing a little of the world, while he made up his mind whether he should study Law and accept his cousin's offer to go into his office, or whether he should engage in a manufacturing business which his family owned. His preference was

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rather for the latter, which was now being managed by a man named Bolter, who had made it very successful; but Reely Thurston intended to be a lawyer, and wanted Lawrence to go in with him; so he was taking time to consider. This visit South had inclined him to the law.

Mr. Welch and Middleton had concluded their business in the mountains: finding the lands they were seeking to lie partly in the clouds and partly in the possession of those whom they had always heard spoken of as "squatters;" but now found to be a population who had been there since before the Revolution, and had built villages and towns. They were now returning home and were making their way back toward the railroad, half a day's journey farther on. They had expected to reach Brutusville, the county seat, that night; but a rain the day before had washed away the bridges, and compelled them to take a circuitous route by a ford higher up the river. There, not knowing the ford, they had almost been swept away, and would certainly have lost their vehicle but for the timely appearance of a young countryman, who happened to come along on his way home from a political gathering somewhere.

Their deliverer: a certain Mr. Andy Stamper,

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was so small that at a distance he looked like a boy, but on nearer view he might have been anywhere from twenty or twenty-five to thirty, and he proved extraordinarily active and efficient. He swam in and helped Middleton get their buggy out of the river, and then amused Mr. Welch very much and incensed Middleton by his comments. He had just been to a political meeting at the Court House, he said, where he had heard "the finest speech that ever was made," from Major Legaie. "He gave the Yankees sut," and he "just wished he could get every Yankee in that river and drown 'em—every dog-goned one!" This as he was working up to his neck in water.

Mr. Welch could not help laughing at the look on Middleton's ruddy face.

"Now, where'd you find a Yankee'd go in that river like me an' you—or could do it, for that matter?" the little fellow asked of Middleton, confidentially.

"We are Yankees," blurted out Middleton, hotly. "And a plenty of them would." His eye flashed as he turned to his rescuer.

The little countryman's eyes opened wide, and his jaw fell.

"Well, I'm durned!" he said, slowly, staring

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in open astonishment, and Middleton began to look gratified at the impression he had made.

“You know, you’re the first I ever seen as wan’t ashamed to own it. Why, you looks most like we all!”

Middleton flushed; but little Stamper looked so sincerely ingenuous that he suddenly burst out laughing.

After that they became very friendly, and the travellers learned much of the glories of the Grays and Carys, and of the charms of a certain Miss Delia Dove, who, Stamper declared, was as pretty as any young lady that went to the Brick Church. Stamper offered to guide them, but as he refused to take any money for what he had done, and as he said he was going to see Miss Delia Dove and could take a nearer cut through the woods to his home, Mr. Welch declined to accept his offer, and contented himself with getting him to draw a map of the roads from that point to the county seat.

“All you’ve got to do is to follow that map: keep the main plain road and you can’t get out; but I advise you to turn in at the first plantation you come to. If you go to Red Rock you’ll have a good time. They’re givin’ a party thar to-

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night. Major Legaie, he left the meetin' to go thar."

He disappeared at a gallop down a bridle-path through the woods.

Notwithstanding the young countryman's assurances and map, the two strangers had gotten "out." The plantations were large in that section and the roads leading off to them from the highway, in the dark were all alike, so that when night fell the two travellers were in a serious dilemma. They at length came to a gate and were just considering turning in at it when a carriage drove up in front of them. A horseman who had been riding behind the vehicle came forward at a trot, calling out that he would open the gate.

"I thought you fellows would have been there hours ago," he said familiarly to the two strangers as he passed, evidently mistaking them in the dusk for some of his friends. "A laggard in love is a dastard in war."

The rest of his speech was lost in the click of the gate-latch and his apostrophe to his horse. When he found that Mr. Welch was a stranger, he changed instantly. His tone became graver and more gracious.

"I beg your pardon, sir. I thought from your

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vehicle that you were some of these effeminate youngsters who have given up the saddle for that new four-wheeled contrivance, and are ruining both our strains of horses and of men.”

Mr. Welch asked if he knew where they could find a night's lodging.

“Why, at every house in the State, sir, I hope,” said Dr. Cary; for it was he. “Certainly, at the nearest one. Drive right in. We are going to our cousins’, and they will be delighted to have you. You are just in good time; for there is to be quite a company there tonight.” And refusing to listen for a moment to Mr. Welch's suggestion that it might not be convenient to have strangers, Dr. Cary held the gate open for them to pass through.

“Drive in, sir,” he said, in a tone of gracious command. “I never heard of its being inconvenient to have a guest,” and in they drove.

“A gentleman by his voice,” the travellers heard him explaining a little later into the window of the carriage behind them. And then he added, “My only doubt was his vehicle.”

After a half-mile drive through the woods they entered the open fields, and from a hill afar off, on top of which shone a house lit till it

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gleamed like a cluster of brilliants, a chorus of dogs sent them an inquiring greeting.

They passed through a wide gate, and ascended a steep hill through a grove, and Middleton's heart sank at the idea of facing an invited company, with a wardrobe that had been under water within the last two hours. Instantly they were in a group of welcomers, gentlemen, servants, and dogs; negro boys running; dogs frisking and yelping and young men laughing about the door of the newly arrived carriage. While through it all sounded the placid voice of Dr. Cary reassuring the visitors and inviting them in. He brought the host to them, and presented them:

“My friends, Mr. Welch and young Mr. Middleton—my cousin and friend, Mr. Gray.” It was his customary formula in introducing. All men were his friends. And Mr. Welch shortly observed how his manner changed whenever he addressed a lady or a stranger: to one he was always a courtier, to the other always a host.

As they were ushered into the hall, Middleton's blue eyes glistened and opened wide at the scene before him. He found himself facing several score of people clustered about in one of the handsomest halls he ever saw, some of whom

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he took in at the first glance to be remarkably pretty girls in white and pink, and all with their eyes, filled with curiosity, bent on the new comers. If Middleton's ruddiness increased tenfold under these glances, it was only what any other young man's would have done under similar circumstances, and it was not until he had been led off under convoy of a tall and very solemn old servant in a blue coat with brass buttons, and shown into a large room with mahogany furniture and a bed so high that it had a set of steps beside it, that he was able to collect his ideas, and recall some of those to whom he had been introduced. What a terrible fix it was for a fellow to be in! He opened his portmanteau and turned to his cousin in despair.

"Isn't this a mess?"

"What?"

"This! I can never go out there. All those girls! Just look at these clothes! Everything dripping!—some of them awfully pretty, too. That one with the dark eyes!" He was down on his knees, raking in his portmanteau, and dragging the soaking garments out one by one. "Now, look at that."

"You need not go out. I'll make your excuses."

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“What! Of course I’m go——”

Just then there was a knock at the door.

“Come in.” Middleton finished his sentence.

The door opened slowly and the old servant entered, bearing with a solemnity that amounted almost to reverence, a waiter with decanters and an array of glasses and bowls. He was followed by the young boy who had been introduced as their host’s son.

“My father understood that you had a little accident at the river, and he wishes to know if he cannot lend you something,” said Jacquelin.

Mr. Welch spoke first, his eyes twinkling as he glanced at his cousin, who stood a picture of indecision and bewilderment.

“Why yes, my cousin, Mr. Middleton here, would be greatly obliged, I think. He is a little particular about first impressions, and the presence of so many charming——”

Middleton protested.

“Why, certainly, sir,” Jacquelin began, then turned to Middleton—“Steve’s would fit you—Steve’s my cousin—he’s at the University—he’s just six feet. Wait, sir——” And before they could stop him, he was gone, and a few minutes later tapped on the door, with his arms full of clothes.

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“Uncle Daniel’s as slow as a steer, so I fetched ’em myself,” he panted, with boyish impatience, as he dropped the clothes partly on a sofa and partly on the floor. “Aunt Thomasia was afraid you’d catch cold, so she made me bring these flannels. She always is afraid you’ll catch cold. Steve told her if you’d take a good swig out of a bottle ’twould be worth all the flannel in the State—Steve’s always teasing her.” With a boy’s friendliness he had established himself now as the visitors’ ally.

“I’m glad you came to-night. We’re going to have lots of fun. Were you at the speaking to-day? They say the Major made the finest speech ever was heard. Some say he’s better than Calhoun ever was; just gave the Yankees the mischief! I wish they’d come down here and try us once, don’t you?”

Mr. Welch glanced amusedly at Middleton, whose face changed; but fortunately the boy was too much interested in the suit Middleton had just put on to notice the effect.

“I thought Steve’s would fit you,” he said, with that proud satisfaction in his judgment being verified which characterizes the age of thirteen, and some other ages as well.

“Steve’s nineteen, and he’s six feet!—You

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are six feet too? I thought you were about that. I hope I'll be six feet. I like that height, don't you? Steve's at the University, but he don't study much, I reckon. Are you at college?—Where? Oh! I know. I had a cousin who went there. He and two or three other Southern fellows laid outside of the hall for one of those abolition chaps who was making a speech, to cut his ears off when he came out, and they'd have done it if he had come out that way. I reckon it's a good college, but I'm going to the University when I'm sixteen. I'm thirteen now—You thought I was older? I wanted to go to West Point, but my father won't let me. Maybe, Rupert will go there. I go to school at the Academy—Doctor Maule's—everybody knows about him. I tell you, he knows a lot.—You have left college? Was it too hot for you? Were you after somebody's ears too? What! painted the President's horse red! Oh! wasn't that a good one! I wish I'd been there. I'll tell Steve and Blair about that. Steve put a cow up in the Rotunda once. The worst thing I ever did was making Blair jump off the high barn. I don't count flinging old Eliphalet Bush in the creek, because I believe his teeth were false anyhow! But I'll remember painting that horse. I reckon he was an abolitionist too?"

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So the boy rattled on, his guests drawing him out for the pleasure of seeing him.

“What State are you from? Maybe, we are cousins?” he said presently, giving the best evidence of his friendliness.

“What! Mass—a—! I beg your pardon.”

He looked so confused that both Mr. Welch and Middleton took some pains to soothe him.

“Yes, of course I was not talking about you; but I wouldn't have said anything about Massachusetts if I had known you came from there. I wouldn't like anybody to say anything about *my* State. You won't mind what I said, will you? I think Massachusetts the best of the Northern States—anyhow——” And he left them, his cheeks still glowing from embarrassment.

This apology, sincerely given, with a certain stress on the word Northern, amused Mr. Welch, and even Middleton, to whom it presented, however, an entirely new view.

“Aren't they funny?” asked Middleton of his cousin, after their young host had left them. “You know I believe they really think it.”

“Larry, you have understated it. They think they know it.”

Jacquelin employed the few moments, in which he preceded the visitors to the hall, in telling all he had learned, and when Mr. Welch and

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Middleton appeared they found themselves in the position of the most distinguished guests. The fact that they came from the North, and Jacquelin's account of his mistake, had increased the desire to show them honor. "The hospitality of the South knows no latitude," said Dr. Cary, in concluding a gracious half apology to Mr. Welch for Jacquelin's error; and he proceeded deftly to name over a list of great men from Massachusetts, and to link their names with those of the men of the South whom she most delighted to honor. His dearest friend at college, he said, was from New England, and unless he was mistaken, Anson Rockfield would one day be heard of. Nothing could have been more gracious or more delicately done; and when supper was announced, Mr. Welch was taken to the table by the hostess herself, and his health was drunk before the groom's. Middleton meanwhile found himself no less honored. The artistic feat performed on the President's horse had made him a noted personage, and in consequence of this and of the freemasonry which exists among young college-men, he was soon surrounded by all the younger portion of the company, and was exchanging views with Steve Allen and the other young fellows with that ex-

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aggerated man-of-the-world air which characterizes the age and occupation of collegians.

“Where is Blair?” he asked Jacquelin, presently, who was standing by Steve, open-eyed, drinking in their wisdom as only a boy of thirteen can drink in the sapience of men oi' nineteen or twenty.

“Over there.” Jacquelin nodded toward another part of the hall. Middleton looked, but all he saw was a little girl sitting behind a big chair, evidently trying to conceal herself, and shaking her head violently at Jacquelin, who was beckoning to her. Jacquelin ran over to her and caught her by the hand, whereupon there was a little scuffle between them behind the chair, and as Middleton watched it he caught her eye. The next second she rose, smoothed her little white frock with quite an air, and came straight across with Jacquelin to where they stood. “This is Blair, Mr. Middleton,” the boy said to the astonished guest. And Miss Blair held out her hand to him with an odd mixture of the child and the lady.

“How do you do, sir?” She evidently considered him one of the ancients.

“She jump off a high barn!” Middleton's eyes opened wide.

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“Blair is the champion jumper of the family,” said Steve, tall and condescending, catching hold of her half-teasingly, and drawing her up close to him.

“And she is a brick,” added Master Jacquelin, with mingled condescension and admiration, which brought the blushes back to the little girl’s cheeks and made her look very charming. The next moment she was talking to Middleton about the episode of the painted horse; exchanging adventures with him, and asking him questions about his chum, Reely Thurston, and his cousin, Ruth Welch, whom he had mentioned, as if she had known him always.

It was a night that Middleton never forgot. So completely was he adopted by his hosts that he could scarcely believe that he had not been one of them all his life. As Mr. Welch said truly: they had the gift of hospitality. Jacquelin and Blair constituted themselves young Middleton’s especial hosts, and he made an engagement to visit with them all the points which they wished to show him, provided his cousin could accept their invitation to spend several days there.

In the midst of their talk an old mammy in a white apron, with a tall bandanna turban around

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her head, suddenly appeared in a doorway, and dropping a curtsey made her way over to Blair, like a ship bearing down under full sail. There was a colloquy between the two, inaudible, but none the less animated and interesting, the old woman urging something and the little girl arguing against it. Then Blair went across and appealed to her mother, who, after a little demurring, came over and spoke to the mammy, and thereon began further argument. She was evidently taking Blair's side; but she was not commanding, she was rather pleading. Middleton, new to the customs, was equally surprised and amused to hear the tones of the old colored woman's voice:

"Well, jist a little while." Then as she turned on her way out, she said, half audibly:

"You all gwine ruin my chile' looks, meckin' her set up so late. How she gwine have any complexion, settin' up all times o' night?" As she passed out, however, many of the ladies spoke to her, and they must have said pleasant things; for before she reached the door she was smiling and curtseying right and left, and carried her head as high as a princess. As for Blair, her eyes were dancing with joy at her victory, and when the plump figure of the

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mammy disappeared she gave a little frisk of delight.

There were no more speeches that could wound the sensibilities of the guests; but there was plenty of discussion. All the young men were ardent politicians, and Middleton, who was nothing himself, was partly amused and partly horrified at the violence of some of their sentiments. Personally, he agreed with them in the main about Slavery or, at least, about Abolitionism. He thought Slavery rather a fine thing, and recalled that his grandfather or his great-grandfather, he couldn't be certain which, had owned a number of slaves. He was conscious of some pride in this—though his cousin, Patience Welch, who was an extreme abolitionist, was always bemoaning the fact.

But he was thunderstruck to hear a young orator of sixteen or seventeen declaim about breaking up the Union, under certain circumstances, as if it were a worthless old hulk, stuck in the mud. It had never occurred to Middleton that it was possible, and he had always understood that it was not. However, he was reassured by the warmth with which others defended the Union, and the ardor with which toasts were drunk to it. Jacquelin himself was

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a stanch Democrat, like his father. He confided to Middleton that Blair was a Whig, because her father was one; but that a girl did not know any better, and that she really did not know the difference between them.

The entertainment consisted of dancing—quadrilles and “the Lancers,” and after awhile, the old Virginia reel. In the first, all the young people joined, and in the last, some of the old ones as well. Middleton heard Steve urging their host’s sister, Miss Gray—“Cousin Thoma-sia” as Steve called her—a sweet patrician-faced lady, to come and dance with him, and when she smilingly refused, teasing her about Major Legaie. She gave him a little tap with her fan and sent him off with smiling eyes, which, after following the handsome boy across the hall, saddened a second later as she lifted the fan close to her face to arrange the feathers. Steve mischievously whisked Blair off from under Jacquelin’s nose and took her to the far end of the line of laughing girls ranged across the hall, responding to Jacquelin’s earnest protest that he was just going to dance with her himself, with a push—that unanswerable logic of a bigger boy.

“But you did not ask me!” said Miss Blair

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to Jacquelin, readily taking the stronger side against her sworn friend.

“Never mind, I’m not going to dance with you any more,” pouted Jacquelin as he turned off, his head higher than usual, to which Miss Blair promptly replied: “I don’t care if you don’t.” And she held her head higher than his, dancing through her reel apparently with double enjoyment because of his discomfiture. Then when the reel had been danced again and again, with double couples and fours, to ever-quickenning music and ever-increasing mirth, until it was a maze of muslin and radiance and laughter, there was a pause for rest. And someone near the piano struck up a song, and this drew the crowd. Many of the girls, and some of the young men, had pleasant voices, which made up by their natural sweetness and simplicity for want of training, and the choruses drew all the young people, except a few who seemed to find it necessary to seek something—fans or glasses of water, in the most secluded and unlikely corners, and always in couples.

There was one song—a new one which had just been picked up somewhere by someone and brought there, and they were all trying to recall it—about “Dixie-land.” It seemed that Blair

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sang it, and there was a universal request for her to sing it; but the little girl was shy and wanted to run away. Finally, however, she was brought back and, under coaxing from Steve and Jacquelin, was persuaded; and she stood up by the piano and with her cheeks glowing and her child's voice quavering at first at the prominence given her, sang it through. Middleton had heard the song once at a minstrel-show not long before, and had thought it rather a "catchy" thing; but now, when the child sang it, he found its melody. But when the chorus came, he was astonished at the feeling it evoked. It ran:

“Away down south in Dixie, away, away—
In Dixie land, I'll take my stand,
To live and die for Dixie land—
Away, away, away down south in Dixie.”

It was a burst of genuine feeling, universal, enthusiastic, that made the old walls resound. Even the young couples came from their secluded coverts to join in. It was so tremendous that Dr. Cary, who was standing near Mr. Welch, said to him, gravely:

“A gleam of the current that is dammed up?”

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“If the bank ever breaks what will happen?” asked Mr. Welch.

“A flood.”

“Then the right will survive.”

“The strongest,” said Dr. Cary.

The guest saw that there was deep feeling whenever any political subject was touched on, and he turned to a less dangerous theme. The walls of the hall and drawing-room were covered with pictures; scenes from the Mythology; battle-pieces; old portraits: all hung together in a sort of friendly confusion. The portraits were nearly all in rich-colored dresses: men in velvets or uniforms, ladies in satins and crinolines, representing the fashions and faces of many generations of Jacquelin-Grays. But one, the most striking figure of them all, stood alone to itself in a space just over the great fireplace. He was a man still young, clad in a hunter's garb. A dark rock loomed behind him. His rifle lay at his feet, apparently broken, and his face wore an expression of such determination that one knew at once that, whatever he had been, he had been a master. The other paintings were portraits; this was the man. To add to its distinction, while the other pictures were in frames richly gilded and carved, this was in

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straight black boards apparently built into the wall, as if it had been meant to stand him there and cut him off from all the rest of the world. Wherever one turned in the hall those piercing eyes followed him. Mr. Welch had been for some time observing the picture.

“An extraordinary picture. It has a singular fascination for me,” he said, as his host turned to him. “One might almost fancy it allegorical, and yet, it is intensely human. An indubitable portrait? I never saw a stronger face.”

His host smiled.

“Yes. It has a somewhat curious history, though whether it is exactly a portrait or not we do not know. It is, or is supposed to be, the portrait of an ancestor of mine, the first of my name who came to this country. He had been unfortunate on the other side—so the story goes—was a scholar, and had been a soldier under Cromwell and lost all his property. He fell in love with a young lady whose father was on the King’s side, and married her against her parents’ wishes and came over here. He built a house on this very spot when it was the frontier, and his wife was afterward murdered by the Indians, leaving him one child. It is said that he killed the Indian with his naked hands

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just beside a great rock that stands in the graveyard beyond the garden, a short distance from the house. He afterward had that picture painted and placed there. It is reported to be a Lely. It has always been recognized as a fine picture, and in all the successive changes it has been left there. This present house was built around the fireplace of the old one. In this way a story has grown up about the picture, that it is connected with the fortunes of the house. You know how superstitious the negroes are?"

"I am not surprised," said Mr. Welch, examining the picture more closely. "I never saw a lonelier man. That black frame shutting it in seems to have something to do with the effect."

"The tradition has possibly had a good effect. There used to be a recess behind it that was used as a cupboard, perhaps a secret cabinet, because of this very superstition. The picture fell down once a few years ago and I found a number of old papers in there, and put some more in myself.

"Here, you can see the paint on the frame, where it fell. It was in the early summer, and one of the servants was just painting the hearth red, and a sudden gust of wind slammed a door and jarred the picture down, and it fell, getting

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that paint on it. You never saw anyone so frightened as that boy was. And I think my overseer was also," he laughed. "He happened to be present, settling up some matters with which I had entrusted him in the South, and although he is a remarkably sensible man—so sensible that I had given him my bonds for a very considerable amount—one for a very large amount, indeed, in case he should need them in the matter I refer to, and he had managed the affair with the greatest shrewdness, bringing my bonds back—he was as much frightened almost as the boy. You'd have thought that the fall of the picture portended my immediate death. I took advantage of the circumstance to put the papers in the cupboard, and, to ease his mind, made Still nail the picture up, so that it will never come down again, at least, in my lifetime."

"I had no idea the whites were so superstitious," said Major Welch.

"Well, I do not suppose he really believed it. But, do you know, after that they began to say that stain on it was blood? And here again."

He pointed to where three or four little foot-tracks, as of a child's bare foot, were dimly seen on the hard white floor near the hearth.

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“My little boy, Rupert, was playing in the hall at the time I mention, dabbling his feet in the paint, and the same wind that blew down the picture scattered my papers, and he ran across the floor and finally stepped on one. There, you can see just where he caught it: the little heel is there, and the print of the toes is on the bond behind the picture. His mother would never allow the prints to be scoured out, and so they have remained. And now, I understand, they say the tracks are blood.”

“On such slim evidence, perhaps other and weightier superstitions have been built,” said Mr. Welch, smiling.

Next morning, as Mr. Welch wished to see a Southern plantation, he deferred his departure until the afternoon, and rode over the place with Mr. Gray. Middleton was taken by his young hosts to see all the things of interest about the plantation: the high barn from which Blair had jumped into the tree, the bloody rock beside which the “Indian-killer” had been buried, and the very spot where Steve had slept that night; together with many other points, whilst Mr. Welch was taken to see the servants’ quarters, the hands working and singing in the fields, and such things as interested him. The plantation

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surpassed any he had yet seen. It was a little world in itself—a sort of feudal domain: the great house on its lofty hill, surrounded by gardens; the broad fields stretching away in every direction, with waving grain or green pastures dotted with sheep and cattle, and all shut in and bounded by the distant woods.

During this tour Mr. Langstaff, the rector, made to Mr. Welch an observation that he thought there were evidences that the Garden of Eden was situated not far from that spot, and certainly within the limits of the State. Major Welch smiled at the old clergyman's ingenuousness, but was graver when, as they strolled through the negro quarters, he began to speak earnestly of the blessings of Slavery. He pointed out the clean cabins, each surrounded by its little yard and with its garden; the laughing children and smiling mothers curtsying from their doors. The guest remained silent, and the old gentleman took it for assent.

“Why, sir, I have just prepared a paper which my friends think establishes incontrovertibly that Slavery is based on the Scriptures, and is, as it were, a divine institution.” Mr. Welch looked up to see how the other gentlemen took this. They were all grave, except Dr. Cary, usu-

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ally the gravest, around whose mouth a slight smile flickered, and in whose eyes, as they met Major Welch's, there was a little gleam of amusement.

“It is written, ‘A servant of servants shall he be.’ You will not deny that?” asked the old preacher, a little of the smouldering fire of the controversialist sparkling for a moment in his face.

“Well, no, I don't think I will.”

“Then that settles it.”

“Well, perhaps not altogether,” said Mr. Welch. “There may be an economical sin. But I do not wish to engage in a polemical controversy. I will only say that down here you do not seem to me to appreciate fully how strong the feeling of the world at present is against Slavery. It seems to me, that Slavery is doomed as much as the Stage-coach, and the Sailing vessel.”

“My dear sir,” declared Mr. Gray, “I cannot agree with you. We interfere with nobody; all we demand is that they shall not interfere with us.”

“It is precisely that which you cannot enforce,” said Mr. Welch. “I do not wish to engage in a discussion in which neither of us could

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convince the other; but I think I have not defined my position intelligibly. You interfere with everyone—with every nation—and you are only tenants at will of your system—only tenants by sufferance of the world.”

“Oh! my dear sir!” exclaimed his host, his face slightly flushed; and then the subject was politely changed, and Mr. Welch was conscious that it was not to be opened again.

The only additional observation made was by a gentleman who had been introduced to Mr. Welch as the leading lawyer of the county, a portly man with a round face and keen eyes. “Well, as George IV. remarked, it will last my time,” he said.

Before the young people had seen half the interesting places of which Jacquelin had told Middleton, they were recalled to the house. Jacquelin’s face fell.

“School!” he said in disgust.

As they returned on a road leading up to a farmhouse on a hill, they passed a somewhat rickety buggy containing a plain-looking young girl, a little older than Blair, driven by a thin-shouldered youngster of eighteen or nineteen, who returned Jacquelin’s and Blair’s greeting, with a surly air. Middleton thought he checked

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the girl for her pleasant bow. At any rate, he heard his voice in a cross tone, scolding her after they had passed.

“That’s Washy Still and Virgy, the overseer’s children,” explained someone.

“And he’s just as mean to her as he can be. She’s afraid of him. I’ll be bound I wouldn’t be afraid of him!” broke out Blair, her eyes growing suddenly sparkling at the idea of wrong to one of her sex. Middleton looked down at her glowing face and thought it unlikely.

On arrival at the house it proved that Jacquelin’s fears were well-founded. It had been decided that he must go back to school. Jacquelin appealed to his Aunt Thomasia to intercede for him, and she did so, as she always interceded for everyone, but it was in vain. It was an age of law, and the law had to be obeyed.

As Middleton was passing from the room he occupied, to the hall, he came on Blair. She was seated in a window, almost behind the curtain, and he would have passed by without seeing her but for a movement she made to screen herself entirely. Curiosity and mischief prompted the young man to go up and peep at her. She had a book in her hand, which she

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held down as if to keep out of sight, and as he looked at her he thought she had been crying. A glance at the book showed it was "Virgil," and Middleton supposed, from some personal experience, that the tears were connected with the book. So he offered to construe her lesson for her. She let him do it, and he was just congratulating himself that he was doing it tolerably well when she corrected him. At the same moment Jacquelin came in. He too looked unusually downcast, and Blair turned away her face, and then suddenly sprang up and ran away.

"What's the matter?" asked Middleton.
"Can't she read her lesson?"

"No: she can read that well enough. You just ought to hear her read Latin. I wish I could do it as well as she does, that's all! I'd make old Eliphalet open his eyes. She's crying because I've got to go back to school—I wish I were grown up, I bet I wouldn't go to school any more! I hate school, and I hate old Eliphalet, and I hate old Maule—no, I don't quite hate him; but I hate school and I'm going to paint his horse blue, if he licks the life out of me." After which explosion the youngster appeared

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relieved, and went off to prepare for the inevitable.

When he rode away with Doan behind him, his last call back was to Middleton, to be sure and remember his promise to come back again, and to bring Reely Thurston with him.

CHAPTER III

THE VISITORS START SOUTH AGAIN; AND THEIR
FORMER HOSTS GO TO MEET THEM

BOTH Larry Middleton and Mr. Welch were to visit Red Rock again; but under circumstances little anticipated by anyone at the time the invitation to return was given.

When Middleton came of age he turned over the manufacturing business he had inherited, to the family's agent, Mr. Bolter, and, on leaving college, accepted the invitation of his cousin, Mr. Welch, to go in his law-office. He made only one condition: that the same invitation should be extended to his college chum, Reely Thurston, whom Middleton described to Mr. Welch as "at once the roundest and squarest fellow" in his class. This was enough for Mr. Welch, and within a few months the two young men were at adjoining desks, professing to practise law and really practising whatever other young gentlemen of their age and kind are given to doing: a

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combination of loafing, working, and airing themselves for the benefit of the rest of mankind, particularly of that portion that wears bonnets and petticoats.

Both Mr. and Mrs. Welch were glad to have Middleton with them; for Mrs. Welch was fond of him as a near relation, and one who in personal appearance and address was a worthy representative of the old stock from which they had both come. And she had this further reason for wishing to have Middleton near her: that she had long observed his tendency to be affected unduly, as she termed it, by his surroundings, and she meant to counteract this defect of character by her personal influence.

It was enough for Mrs. Welch to see a defect of any kind to wish to correct it, and her wish was usually but a step in advance of her action. One might see this in the broad brow above which the hair was brushed so very smoothly; in the deep gray eyes; in the firm mouth with its fine, even teeth; in the strong chin, almost too strong for a woman; and especially, in the set of her head, and the absolute straightness of her back. She was at heart a missionary: one of those intrepid and unbending spirits who have carried their principles through the world by the

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sheer energy of their belief. She would no more have bowed in the house of Rimmon than she would have committed theft. If she had lived in Rome, she would have died before taking a pinch of incense for Diana, unless, indeed, she had been on the other side, when she would have fed the lions with fervor. If she had been in Spain on Torquemada's side, she could have sung *Te Deums* at an *auto-da-fé*. As someone said of her, she would have burned like a candle. The only difficulty was that she wanted others to burn too—which they were not always so ready to do. As a girl, she had been on the eve of going out as missionary to the Sandwich Islands, when she heard the splendid oratory of one of the new apostles of abolitionism, one evening in company with Mr. Welch, then a young engineer, when her philanthropical direction changed from West to South, and she devoted herself thenceforth to the cause of the negroes—and of the young engineer.

She had great hopes of Lawrence Middleton and deplored the influence on him of the young man whom he had chosen at college as his especial friend; and she grieved over the effect that his visit South, already described, had on him. He had come home much impressed by the

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charm of the life there. Indeed, he had become actually an apologist for Slavery. But Mrs. Welch did not despair. She never despaired. It implied weakness, and so, sin. She was urgent to have Larry Middleton accept her husband's proposal to take a place in his office, and though she would have preferred to separate him from young Thurston, as to whom she had misgivings, yet when he made this condition she yielded; for it brought Middleton where she could influence him, and had, at least, this advantage: that it gave her two persons to work on instead of one.

When her daughter, Ruth Welch, a young Miss with sparkling eyes, came home in her vacations, it was natural that she should be thrown a great deal with her cousin, and the only singular thing was that Mrs. Welch appeared inclined to minimize the importance of the relationship. This, however, made little difference to the gay, fun-loving girl, who, enjoying her emancipation from school, tyrannized over the two young sprigs of the Law to her heart's content. She soon reduced Thurston to a condition of abject slavery which might well have called forth the intervention of so ardent an emancipator as her mother, and did, indeed, excite some solicitude in her maternal bosom. Mrs. Welch

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was beginning to be very anxious about him when events, suddenly crowding on each other, gave her something widely different to think of, and unexpectedly relieved her from this cause of care to give her others far weightier.

Both the young men had become politicians. Middleton was a Whig, though he admitted he did not see how Slavery could be interfered with; while Thurston announced tenets of the opposite party, particularly when Mrs. Welch was present.

The cloud which had been gathering so long above the Country suddenly burst.

Middleton and Thurston were sitting in their office one afternoon when there was a scamper outside; the door was flung open, and a paper thrown in—an extra still wet from the press. Thurston seized it, his seat being nearest the door, and gave a long whistle as his eye fell on the black headlines:

The Flag Fired on: Open Rebellion. The Union Must Be Saved At Any Cost. Etc., etc.

He sank into his seat and read rapidly the whole account, ending with the call for troops to put down the Rebellion; while Middleton lis-

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tened with a set face. When Thurston was through, he flung the paper down and sat back in his chair, thinking intently. The next moment he hammered his fist on his desk and sprang to his feet, his face white with resolve.

“By God! I’ll go.”

With a single inquiring look at Middleton, he turned to the door and walked out. A moment later Middleton locked his desk and followed him. The street was already filling with people, crowding to hear the details, and the buzz of voices was growing louder.

Within a few hours the two young men were both enrolled in a company of volunteers which was being gotten up—Middleton, in right of his stature and family connections, as a Sergeant, and little Thurston as a Corporal, and were at work getting others enrolled.

As they were so engaged, Thurston’s attention was arrested by a man in the crowd who was especially violent in his denunciations, and was urging everybody to enlist. His voice had a peculiar, penetrating whine. As Thurston could not remember the man among those who had signed the roll, he asked him his name.

“Leech, Jonadab Leech,” he said.

When Thurston looked at the roster, the

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name was not on it, and the next time Leech came up in the crowd, the little Corporal called him:

“Here; you have forgotten to put your name down.”

To his surprise, Leech drew back and actually turned pale.

“What’s the matter?” asked Thurston.

“I have a wife.”

The little volunteer gave a sniff.

“All right—send her in your place. I guess she’d do as well.”

“If he has, he’s trying to get rid of her,” said someone standing by, in an undertone.

“Why—ah!—my eyes are bad; I’m too near-sighted.”

“Your eyes be hanged! You can see well enough to read this paper.”

“I—ah!—I cannot see in the dark at all,” stammered Leech as a number of the new volunteers crowded around them.

“Neither can I—neither can anybody but a cat,” declared the little Corporal, and the crowd around cheered him. Leech vanished.

“Who is he?” asked Thurston, as Leech disappeared.

“He is a clerk in old Bolter’s commissary.”

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The crowd was patriotic.

There was great excitement in the town all night: bells rang; crowds marched up and down the streets singing; stopping at the houses of those who had been opposed to ultra measures, and calling on them to put up flags to show their loyalty. The name of Jonadab Leech appeared in the papers next morning as one of the street-orators who made the most blood-thirsty speech.

Next day was Sunday. Sober second thought had succeeded the excitement of the previous day, the faces of the people showed it. The churches were overflowing. The preachers all alluded to the crisis that had come, and the tears of the congregations testified how deeply they were moved. After church, by a common impulse, everyone went to the public square to learn the news. The square was packed. Suddenly on the pole that stood above the old courthouse, someone ran up the flag. At the instant that it broke forth the breeze caught it, and it fluttered out full and straight, pointing to the southward. The effect was electric. A great cheer burst from the crowd below. As it died down, a young man's clear voice struck up "My

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Country, 'Tis of Thee,' and the next moment the whole crowd was singing and weeping.

That flag and that song made more soldiers from the old town than all the newspapers and all the speeches, and Larry Middleton, for having struck up the song, found himself suddenly of more note in his own home than he could have been later if he had stormed a battery.

Loudest among the shouters was the street orator of the evening before, Jonadab Leech, the clerk in Bolter's commissary.

Within a week the two young men were on their way South.

A little later, Mr. Welch, having taken time to settle up his affairs, and also those of his cousin, Larry Middleton, went off to join the first corps of engineers from his State, with abundance of tears from Ruth and a blessing from his wife, whose mouth was never firmer, or her eye clearer, than when she kissed him, and bade him God-speed.

She replied to the astonished query of Mrs. Bolter, "You did not cry?" with another question:

"Why should I cry, when I knew it was his duty? If I had wept it would have been because

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I could not go myself to strike a blow for the freedom of the poor African!"

"You are an unusually strong woman," said Mrs. Bolter, with a shake of her head, and, indeed, Mrs. Welch looked it; for though Bolter had gone to Washington, he had not gone to war, but to see about contracts.

Just at the time that the two young students from Mr. Welch's office were in the street of their town enrolling their names as soldiers to fight for the flag of the Union, the young men, and the elders as well, whom Middleton had met at Red Rock a thousand miles to the southward, were engaged in similar work—enlisting to fight against Invasion, to fight for their State.

There had been much discussion—much dissension in the old county, and all others like it, during the interim since the night when Middleton and Mr. Welch had appeared unexpectedly at Red Rock among the wedding guests. Some were for radical measures, for Secession, for War; others were conservative. Many were for the Union. Matters more than once had reached a white heat in that section, and it had looked for a long time as though an explosion must come. Yet the cooler heads had controlled,

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and when the final elections for the body that was to settle the momentous questions at issue at last came on, the most conservative men in the country had been selected. In our county, Dr. Cary and Mr. Bagby, both strong Union men, had been chosen over Major Legaie and Mr. Gray, both ardent Democrats; and one, the former, a hot Secessionist.

When they arrived at the capital to attend the session of the Convention they found, perhaps, the most distinguished body that had sat in the State in fifty years. In this great crisis both sides had put forward their best men, and in face of the nearing peril the wildest grew conservative. The body declared for Peace.

Affairs moved rapidly, however; excitement grew; feeling changed. Yet the more conservative prevailed.

One morning Dr. Cary received a report of a great public meeting held at the county seat, instructing him to vote for Secession. Many of his old supporters had signed it. He presented the resolutions at the desk, and stated their purport fully and strongly, amid cheers from the other side.

“Now you will vote with us?” said one of the leaders on that side.

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“Not if every man in my county instructed me.”

“Then you must resign?”

“Not if every man in my county demanded it.”

“Are you the only wise man in the county?”

The voice trembled. Feeling was rising.

The Doctor was looking his questioner full in the eyes.

“If they signed such a paper, I should think so.” And there were cheers from his side, and the vote was stayed for that day at least. Dr. Cary made an appeal for the Union that men remembered all their lives. However they disagreed with him, they were moved by him. But the magazine was being stored fuller every moment.

Then the spark fell and the explosion came.

A week after this the call for troops by the President to put down Rebellion appeared in an extra in the city where the Convention sat.

Invasion!

The whole people rose. From the time of Varrus down they had done so. The defences that conservatives like Dr. Cary had laboriously built up were swept away in an instant. The State went out with a rush.

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At the announcement the population poured into the streets and public squares in a great demonstration. It was tremendous—a maelstrom—a tornado—a conflagration. Men were caught up and tossed on platforms, that appeared as if by magic from nowhere, to make speeches; bonfires were lighted and bells were rung; but the crowd shouted louder than the ringing of the bells, for it meant War: none could now withstand it. Suddenly from some public place a gun, which had been found and run out, boomed through the dusk, and the crowd roared louder than before, and made a rush in that direction, cheering as if for a great victory.

Dr. Cary, stalking through the throng, silent and white, was recognized and lifted unresisting to a platform. After a great roar, the tumult hushed down for a moment; for he was waiting with close-shut mouth and blazing eye, and he had the reputation of being, when he chose to exert himself, an orator. Besides, it was not yet known what he would do, and he was a power in his section.

He broke the silence with a calm voice that went everywhere. Without appearing to be strong, his voice was one of those strange in-

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struments that filled every building with its finest tone and reached over every crowd to its farthest limit. With a gesture that, as men said afterward, seemed to sweep the horizon, he began:

“The time has passed for talking. Go home and prepare for War. For it is on us.”

“Oh! there is not going to be any war,” cried someone, and a part of the crowd cheered. Dr. Cary turned on them.

“No war? We are at war now—with the greatest power on earth: the power of universal progress. It is not the North that we shall have to fight, but the world. Go home and make ready. If we have talked like fools, we shall at least fight like men.”

That night Dr. Cary walked into his lodgings alone and seated himself in the dusk. His old body-servant, Tarquin, silent and dark, brought a light and set it conveniently for him. He did not speak a word; but his ministrations were unusually attentive and every movement expressed adherence and sympathy. Suddenly his master broke the silence:

“Tarquin, do you want to be free?”

“Lawd Gawd!” exclaimed Tarquin, stopping

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quite still and gazing in amazement. "Me! Free?"

"If you do I will set you free, and give you money enough to live in Philadelphia."

"No, suh; Marster, you know I don' wan' be free," said Tarquin.

"Pack my trunk. I am going home."

"When, suh?"

"I do not know exactly; but shortly."

Within a week Dr. Cary was back at home, working, along with Major Legaie and the other secessionists, making preparation for equipping the companies that the county was going to send to the war.

What a revolution that week had made in the old county! In the face of the menace of invasion, after but ten days one would scarcely have known it. All division was ended: all parties were one. It was as if the county had declared war by itself and felt the whole burden of the struggle on its shoulders. From having been one of the most quiet, peaceful and conservative corners of the universe, where a fox-hunt or an evening-party was the chief excitement of the year, and where the advent of a stranger was enough to convulse the entire community, it became suddenly a training ground and a camp,

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filled with bustle and preparation and the sound of arms. The haze of dust from men galloping by, hung over the highways all day long, and the cross-roads and the county seat, where the musters used to meet quarterly and where the Fourth of July celebrations were held, became scenes of almost metropolitan activity.

Men appeared to spring from the ground as in the days of Cadmus, ready for war. Red Rock and Birdwood became recruiting-stations and depots of supply. From the big estates men came; from the small homesteads amid their orchards, and from the cabins back among the pines—all eager for war and with a new light in their eyes. Everyone was in the movement. Major Legaie was a colonel and Mr. Gray was a captain; Dr. Cary was surgeon, and even old Mr. Langstaff, under that fire of enthusiasm, doffed his cassock for a uniform, merged his ecclesiastical title of rector in the military one of chaplain, and made amends for the pacific nature of his prescribed prayers in church, by praying before his company outside, prayers as diverse from the benignity of his nature, as the curses of Ezekiel or Jeremiah from the benediction of St. John the Aged.

Miss Thomasia, who was always trying to

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meet some wants which only the sensitiveness of her own spirit apprehended, enlarged her little academy in the office at Red Rock, so as to take in all the children of the men around who had enlisted; made them between their lessons pick lint, and opened her exercises daily with the most martial hymns she could find in the prayer-book, feeling in her simple heart that she could do God no better service than to inculcate an undying patriotism along with undying piety. As for Blair, she had long deserted the anti-war side, horse, foot, and dragoons, and sewed on uniforms and picked lint; wore badges of palmetto, and single stars on little blue flags sewed somewhat crookedly in the front of her frocks, and sang "Dixie," "Maryland," and "The Bonny Blue Flag" all the time.

Steve Allen and Morris Cary, on an hour's notice, had left the University where all the students were flocking into companies, and with pistols and sabres strapped about their slender waists galloped up to the county seat together one afternoon, in a cloud of dust, having outsped their telegrams, and, amid huzzas and the waving of handkerchiefs from the carriages lining the roadside, spurred their sweating horses straight to the end of the line that was drilling

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under Colonel Legaie in the field beside the court-house. And so, with radiant faces and bounding hearts were enlisted for the war. Little Andy Stamper, the rescuer of the two visitors at the ford was already there in line at the far end on one of his father's two farm-horses; and Jacquelin, on a blooded colt, was trying to keep as near in line with him as his excited four-year-old would permit. Even the servants, for whom some on the other side were pledging their blood, were warmly interested, and were acting more like clansmen than slaves.

Hiram Still, Mr. Gray's tall manager, had a sudden return of his old enemy, rheumatism, and was so drawn up that he had to go on crutches; but was as enthusiastic as anyone, and lent money to help equip the companies—lent it not to the county, it is true, but to Mr. Gray and Dr. Cary on their joint security. He and Andy Stamper were not on good terms, yet he even offered to lend money to Andy Stamper to buy a horse with. Jacquelin, however, spared Andy this mortification.

The boy, emancipated from school, partly because his father was going off so shortly to the war, and partly because Dr. Maule himself had

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enlisted and Mr. Eliphalet Bush, his successor, was not considered altogether sound politically, spent his time breaking his colt to stand the excitement of cavalry drill. Jacquelin and Andy were sworn friends, and hearing that Andy had applied to Hiram Still to borrow money to buy a horse with, Jacquelin asked his father's consent to give him his colt, and was rewarded by the pick of the horses on the place, after the carriage horses, his father's own riding horse and Steve's. It was a proud moment for the boy when he rode the high-mettled bay he chose, over to the old Stamper place.

Andy, in a new gray jacket, was sitting on the front steps, polishing his scabbard and accoutrements, old Mrs. Stamper was in her low, split-bottomed chair behind him, knitting a yarn sock for her soldier, and Delia Dove, with her plump cheeks glowing under her calico sun-bonnet, which she had pushed back from her round face, was seated on the bench in the little porch, toying with the wisteria-vine above her, and looking down on Andy with her black eyes softer than usual.

Andy rose to greet Jacquelin as the boy galloped up to the gate.

“Come in, Jack. What's up? Look out or

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he'll git you off him. That's the way to set him! Ah!" as Jacquelin swung himself down.

"Here's a present for you," said Jacquelin.

"What?"

"This horse!"

"What!"

"Yes: he's mine: papa gave him to me this morning and said I might give him to you. I took the pick——"

"Well, by—" Andy was too much dazed to swear.

"Jack—" This also ended. "Now let that Hiram Still ask for s'curity. Delia, I'll lick a regiment." He faced his sweetheart, who suddenly turned and caught Jacquelin and kissed him violently, bringing the red blood to the boy's fresh face.

"If you'll do that to me I'll give him to you right now. D——d 'f I don't!" And the little recruit looked Miss Delia Dove in the eyes and gave a shake of his head for emphasis. The girl looked for one moment as if she were going to accept his offer. Then as Andy squared himself and opened his arms wide she considered, and, with a toss of her head and a sparkle in her eyes, turned away.

That moment the latch clicked and Hiram

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Still's daughter, Virgy, stood beside them, shy and silent, veiled within her sun-bonnet.

"Mr. Stamper, pappy says if you'll come over to see him about that business o' yourn, maybe he can make out to help you out."

She delivered the message automatically, and, with a shy glance at Jacquelin, and another, somewhat different, at Delia Dove, retired once more within the deep recesses of her sun-bonnet.

"Well, you tell your pappy that I say I'm much obliged to him; but I ain't got any business with him that I knows on; 't somebody else's done helped me out." The voice was kind, though the words were sarcastic.

"Yes, sir. Good-even'." And with another shy glance and nod to each one in turn, the girl turned and went off as noiselessly as a hare.

"That girl always gives me the creeps," said Delia, when Virgy had reached a safe distance.

"How about Washy?" asked Andy, at which Delia only sniffed disdainfully.

Jacquelin Gray was not the only one of the youngsters whose patriotic fervor was rewarded. The ladies of the neighborhood made a banner for each of the companies that went forth, and Blair Cary was selected to present the banner to the Red Rock company, which she

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did from the court-house balcony, with her laughing eyes sobered by excitement, her glowing face growing white and pink by turns, and her little tremulous speech, written by her father and carefully conned by heart for days, much swallowed and almost inaudible in face of the large crowd filling all the space around, and of the brave company drawn up in the road below her. But she got through it—that part about “emulating the Spartan youth who came back with his shield or on it,” and all; and at the close she carried everyone away by a natural clasp of her little brown hands over her heart, as she said, “And don’t you let them take it away from you, not ever,” outstretching her arms to her father, who sat with moist eyes at one end of the line a little below her, with Jacquelin close beside him, his eyes like saucers for interest in, and admiration of, Blair.

“Blair, that’s the best speech that ever was made,” cried the boy, enthusiastically, when he saw her; “and Steve says so, too. Don’t you wish I was old enough to go?” The little girl’s cheeks glowed with pleasure.

The evening before Jacquelin’s father went off, he called Jacquelin into his office, and rising, shut the door himself. They were alone, and

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Jacquelin was mystified. He had never before been summoned for an interview with his father unless it were for a lecture, or worse. He hastily ran over in his mind his recent acts, but he could recall nothing that merited even censure, and curiosity took the place of wonderment. Wonder came back, however, when his father, motioning him to a seat, stood before him and began to address him in an entirely new and unknown tone. He talked to him as if he were a man. Jacquelin suddenly felt all his old timidity of his father vanish, and a new spirit, as it were, rise up in his heart. His father told him that now that he was going away to the war, he might never come back; but he left, he said, with the assurance that whatever happened, he would be worthily succeeded; and he said that he was proud of him, and had the fullest confidence in him. He had never said anything like this to Jacquelin before, in all his life, and the boy felt a new sensation. He had no idea that his father had ever been satisfied with him, much less been proud of him. It was like opening the skies and giving him a glimpse beyond them into a new heaven. The boy suddenly rose, and flung his arms about his father's neck, and clung there, pouring out his heart to him. Then he

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sat down again, feeling like a shriven soul, and the father and son understood each other like two school-fellows.

Mr. Gray told Jacquelin of his will. He had left his mother everything; but it would be the same thing as if he had left it to him and Rupert. He, as the oldest, was to have Red Rock, and Rupert the estate in the South. "I leave it to her, and I leave her to you," he said, putting his hand on the boy's shoulder. Jacquelin listened, his mind suddenly sobered and expanded to a man's measure.

"And, Jacquelin," he said, "keep the old place. Make any sacrifice to do that. Landholding is one of the safeguards of a gentry. Our people, for six generations, have never sold an acre, and I never knew a man who sold land that throve."

"I will keep it, father," said the boy, earnestly.

There were some debts, but not enough to amount to anything, his father told him; the principal one was to Hiram Still. Still had wanted him to keep his money, and he had done so. It could be paid any time, if necessary. Still was a better man than he was given credit for. A bad manner made those who did not

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know him well, suspicious of him. But he was the best business man he had ever known, and he believed devoted to his interest. His father, old Mr. Still, had been overseer for Jacquelin's grandfather when Mr. Gray was a boy, and he could not forget him, and though Still was at present in poor health, he had contracted the disease while in their service at the South, and he would be glad to have him kept in his position as long as he treated the negroes well, and cared to remain.

“And, Jacquelin, one other thing: be a father to Rupert. See that he gets an education. It is the one patrimony that no accident—not even war—can take away.”

Jacquelin promised his father that he would remember his injunctions, and try faithfully to keep them, every one; and when the two walked out, it was arm in arm like two brothers, and the old servants, looking at them, nodded their heads, and talked with pride of Jacquelin's growing resemblance to his grandfather.

Next day the companies raised in the county started off to the war, taking almost every man of serviceable age and strength, and many who were not.

When they marched away it was like a trium-

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phal procession. The blue haze of spring lay over the woods, softening the landscape, and filling it with peace. Tears were on some cheeks, no doubt; and many eyes were dimmed; but kerchiefs and scarfs were waved by many who could not see, and fervent prayers went up from many hearts when the lips were too tremulous to speak.

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH A LONG JUMP IS TAKEN

IT is not proposed to attempt any relation of that part of the lives of the people in this record which was covered by the four years of war. That period was too tremendous to be made a mere fragment of any history. "After that the deluge."

What pen could properly tell the story of those four years; what fittingly record the glory of that struggle, hopeless from the beginning, yet ever appearing to pluck success from the very abyss of impossibility, and by the sheer power of unconquerable valor to reverse the laws of nature and create the consummation it desired, in the face of insuperable force?

It was a great formative force in every life that participated in it. It stamped itself on every face. The whole country emptied itself into it. They went into it boys, and came out of it men—striplings, and came out of it heroes.

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But the eye once fastened on that flaming fire would be blinded for any lesser light.

It is what took place after the war rather than what occurred during the struggle that this chronicle is concerned with.

If the part that the men played in the war must be passed over in silence as too large for this history, how much more impossible would it be to describe fitly the part that the women performed. It was a harder part to fill, yet they filled it to the brim, good measure, overflowing. It is no disparagement to the men to say that whatever courage they displayed, it was less than that which the women showed. Wherever a Southern woman stood during those four years, there in her small person was a garrison of the South, impregnable.

Year after year the mills of war ground steadily array after array, and crushed province after province, and still the ranks filled and poured with intrepid daring into the abyss of destruction, to be ground like their predecessors to dust; until at the end there was nothing left to grind. Some day the historian, annalist or novelist, may arise to tell the mighty story, but meantime this pen must pass it by as too great a theme, and deal with the times that come after.

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One or two incidents, however, must be mentioned to fill the break and explain what came afterward.

Colonel Gray, who had been early promoted, fell at the head of his regiment on one of those great days which are the milestones of history.

His body was brought home and buried in the old graveyard at Red Rock among generations of Grays, of whom, as old Mr. Langstaff, who had been bodily haled back to his parish by his congregation, said to the neighbors and servants about the grave, not one was a better or a braver man, or a truer gentleman. Colonel Gray's burial marked one of the steps of the war in that retired neighborhood.

When it was all over, and the neighbors had gone home, and the servants had retired to their quarters, hushed to that vague quietude that follows the last putting away in the earth of those who have been near to us, Jacquelin came out of the office where he had held that last interview with his father, and walked into his mother's room. His shoulders were square and his figure erect. Mrs. Gray rose from her knees as he entered, and stood before him in her black dress, her face deadly white; her eyes, full of fear, fastened on his face.

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“Mamma—.” He stopped as if that were all he had to say, and, perhaps, it was; for Mrs. Gray seated herself calmly.

“Yes, my son.” The fine, sad eyes grew wistful. How like he was to his father!

—“Because, you know, there ought to be one of us in the old company, mamma,” he said, quite as though he had spoken the other sentence.

“Yes, my son, I know.” And the mother sighed, her heart breaking in spite of her resolve to be brave.

“—And I am the only man of the name now—and I am fifteen and a whole head taller than Andy Stamper.”

“Yes, I know, my son.” She had noticed it that day, and had known this would come.

“And he is one of the best soldiers in the army—*He* said so. And if—if anything happens, you have Rupert.” He went on arguing, as though his mother had not agreed with him.

“Yes, my son, I know.” And Mrs. Gray rose suddenly and flung herself into his arms and hugged him and clung to him, and wept on his shoulder, as though he were his father.

So the change comes: the boy in little trousers suddenly stands before the mother a man; the

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little girl who was in her pinafores yesterday, to-day has stepped into full-blown womanhood; and the children have gone; the old has passed; and the new is here.

General Legaie offered to make a place on his staff for Jacquelin; but Jacquelin declined it. He wished to go into the Red Rock troop, of which Steve Allen was now Captain.

“Because, mamma, all the men are in it, and Steve has refused a majority to stay with them, and there must be one of the Grays in the old company,” he said with a rise of his head.

Doan, of course, expected to go with his master; but Mrs. Gray vetoed this; she was afraid Doan might be killed: young men were so rash. She remembered that Doan was his mother’s only son. So, by a compromise, Old Waverley was sent. He had so much judgment, she said.

The year after Jacquelin went away to the army the tide of war rolled nearer to the old county, and the next year, that which had been deemed impossible befell: it swept over it.

When the invading army had passed, the county was scarcely recognizable.

Jacquelin’s career in the army was only that of many others—indeed, of many thousands of others: he went in a boy, but a boy who could

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ride any horse, and all day and all night; sleep on stones or in mud; and if told to go anywhere, would go as firmly and as surely among bayonets or belching guns, as if it were in a garden of roses.

Being the youngest man in his company, he might naturally have been a favorite in any case; but when he was always ready to stand an extra tour of guard-duty, or to do anything else for a comrade, it placed his popularity beyond question. They used to call him "The baby;" but after a sharp cavalry fight on a hill-top one afternoon they stopped this. Legaie's brigade charged, and finding infantry entrenched, were retiring amid smoke and dust and bullets, when Jacquelin, missing Morris Cary, who had been near him but a moment before, suddenly turned and galloped back through the smoke. Two or three men shouted and stopped, and Steve suddenly dashed back after the boy, followed by Andy Stamper and the whole company. There was a rally with the whole Red Rock troop in the lead, Steve Allen, with little Andy Stamper close behind, shouting and sabering like mad, which changed the fortune of the day.

Poor Morris was found under his horse, past help; but they brought his body out of the fray,

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and Jacquelin sent him home, with a letter which was harder to write than any charge he had ever made or was to make—harder even than to tell Dr. Cary, who was at the field hospital and who received the announcement with only a sudden tightening of the mouth and whitening of the face. After that, Andy Stamper “allowed that Jacquelin’s cradle was big enough for him” (Andy), which it certainly was, by linear measurement, at least.

Blair’s letter to Jacquelin in reply was more to him than General Legaie’s mention of his name in his report.

Blair was growing up to be almost a woman now. Women, as well as men, age rapidly amid battles, and nearly every letter Jacquelin received from home contained something about her. “What a pretty girl Blair has grown to be. You have no idea how we all lean on her,” his mother wrote. Or Miss Thomasia would say: “I wish you could have heard Blair sing in church last Sunday. Her voice has developed unspeakable sweetness. It reminded me of her grandmother, when I can first remember her.”

It was not a great while after this that Jacquelin himself went down one day, and had to be fought over, and though he fared better

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than poor Morris Cary, in that the bullet which brought him down only smashed his leg instead of finding his heart, it resulted in Steve getting both himself and his horse shot, and Jacquelin being left in the enemy's hands, along with Andy Stamper, who had fought over him, like the game little bantam that he was, until a big Irish Sergeant knocked him in the head with a carbine-barrel and came near ending the line of the Stampers then and there. Happily, Andy came to after a while, and was taken along with Jacquelin and sent to Point Lookout.

Jacquelin and Andy stayed in prison a long time; Andy because he was a hardy and untamed little warrior, of the kind which was drawn last for exchange; and Jacquelin partly because he was unable to travel on account of his wound and partly because he would not accept an exchange to leave Andy.

One day, however, Andy got a letter which seriously affected him. It told him that Delia Dove was said to be going to marry, Mr. Still. Within a week little Andy, whose constitution had hitherto appeared of iron, was in the hospital. The doctor told Jacquelin that he thought he was seriously ill, and might die.

That night Jacquelin scribbled a line to Andy

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and persuaded a nurse, Miss Bush, a small woman with thin hair, a sharp nose and a complaining voice, but gentle eyes and a kind heart, to get it to him. It ran: "Hold on for Delia's sake. We'll get exchanged before long."

"Who is Delia?" asked the nurse, looking at the paper doubtfully. It was against orders to carry notes.

"His sweetheart."

The nurse took the note.

In a week Andy was ready to be out of the hospital.

The next morning Jacquelin and the doctor had a long talk, and later on, Jacquelin and the nurse; and when the next draft for exchange came, the name of Jacquelin Gray was on it. But Andy Stamper's was not. So the nurse told Jacquelin. Another note was written and conveyed by Miss Bush, and that evening, when the line of prisoners for exchange marched out of the prison yard, Andy Stamper, with his old blanket pulled up around his face and a crutch under his arm, was in it. Jacquelin was watching from a corner of the hospital window while the line was inspected. Andy answered the questions all right—Private in Company A, —th Cavalry; captured at —; wounded in leg; and

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just left hospital. As the last guard filed out behind the ragged line and the big gate swung to, Jacquelin hobbled back to his cot and lay with his face to the wall. The nurse came by presently and, stopping, looked down at him.

“Now you’ve gone and ruined your chance for ever,” she said in the querulous tone habitual with her.

Jacquelin shut his eyes tightly, then opened them and without a word gazed straight at the wall not a foot before him. Suddenly the woman bent close down over him and kissed him.

“You are a dear boy.” The next instant she went back to her duty.

An effort was made to get an exchange for Jacquelin, the principal agents being a nurse in the prison-hospital and a philanthropical friend of hers, a Mrs. Welch, through whom the nurse had secured her position; but the answer was conclusive:

“Jacquelin Gray has already been exchanged.”

As for Andy, when he reached home he found the report about Miss Delia Dove to be at least premature. It was not only Mr. Washington Still, but Hiram as well, who was unpleasantly attentive to her, and Miss Delia, after the first

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burst of genuine delight at Andy's unexpected appearance, proceeded to use the prerogative of her sex and wring her lover's heart by pretending to be pleased by his new rival's attentions. Andy, accordingly, did not stay long at home, but accepting the renewed proffer of a loan from Hiram Still to buy a horse, was soon back with the old company, sadly wasted by this time and only kept up by the new recruits, on whom Andy looked with disdain.

When Wash Still was drafted from the dispensary department of the hospital service it was some consolation that he was at least banished from dangerous proximity to Miss Delia, but it was hard to have to accept him as a comrade, and Andy's sunburned nose was always turned up when Wash was around.

"Washy Still in place of Jacquelin Gray," he sniffed; "a dinged little 'pothecary-shop sweeper for a boy as didn't mind bullets no mo' than flies. I bet he's got pills in that pistol now! And he to be a-settin' up to Delia Dove!"

However, a few months later Andy had his reward.

So it happened, that when the end came, Andy was back with the old company, and Jacquelin was still in prison.

CHAPTER V

DR. CARY RETURNS FROM THE WAR, AND TAKES AN INVENTORY OF STOCK

THE home-coming of the men who went to the war was about the same time of the year that most of them went forth. While the troops of the victorious army were parading amid the acclaims of multitudes, the remnants of that other army that had met and defeated them so often were making their way back to their dismantled homes, with everything they had fought for lost, save honor. They came home singly or in squads from northward, eastward and westward, wherever their commands happened to be when the final collapse came. And but for certain physical landmarks they would scarcely have known the old neighborhood. The blue mountains still stretched across the skyline, with the nearer spurs nestled at their feet; the streams still ran through the little valleys between the hills, under their willows

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and sycamores, as they ran when Steve Allen and Jacquelin and the other boys fished and swam in them; but the bridges were gone, and the fishing-holes were dammed with fallen trees, some of them cut down during the battles that had been fought on their banks. And the roads made by the army-wagons often turned out through the unfenced fields and the pillaged and fire-scorched forests.

Dr. Cary, now known as Major Cary, from his title as surgeon in General Legaie's brigade, and Captain Allen and Sergeant Stamper came home together as they had ridden away together through the April haze four years before. They had started from the place of their surrender with a considerable company, who had dropped off from time to time as they had arrived at the roads which took them their several ways, and these three were the last to separate. When they parted, it was at the forks where the old brick church had stood when they last passed that way. The church had gone down in the track of war. Nothing remained of it now except fragments of the walls, and even these were already half hidden by the thicket which had grown up around them. It brought the whole situation very close home to them; for they all

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had memories of it: Dr. Cary had buried his father and mother there, and Stamper and Delia Dove had been married in it a year before. And they did not have a great many words to speak—perhaps, none at all at the very last—only a “Well—Well!” with a rising inflection, and something like a sigh; and then, after a long pause, from the older officer, a sudden: “Well, good-by, Steve;—good-by, Sergeant. We’ll have to begin over again.—God bless you—Come over and see me. Good-by.” And from each of the other two, “Good-by, Major—I will;—Good-by, Tarquin,” to the Major’s tall, gray-haired body-servant, waiting silently, on his weary horse; then a couple of hard hand-grips and silence; and the horses went plashing off in the mud, slow and sullen, reluctant to leave each other. All turned once to look back; caught each other’s glances and waved their hands; and then rode on through the mud, their heads sunk on their chests, and the officers’ two body-servants, old Tarquin and young Jerry, following silently behind their masters.

The meeting at home was in the dusk.

The little group waiting on the hill-top at Dr. Cary’s for the small cavalcade as they rode up through the waning light had been waiting

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and watching for days ; but there were no words spoken at the meeting. Only, Mrs. Cary walked out from the others and met her husband a part of the way down the hill, and Blair followed her a moment after.

When the doctor reached his door, walking between his wife and daughter, an arm around each, he turned to his old servant, who was holding the horses :

“Tarquin, you are free. I present you the horse you rode home. Take the saddles off, and turn them out.” And he walked into the house, shaking by the hand the servants clustered about the door.

It was only when he was inside, facing the portrait of a young boy with handsome, dark eyes, that he gave way.

The very next day Dr. Cary, to use a commercial phrase, began to “take stock.”

“Taking stock” is always a serious thing to do, and it must come often into every thoughtful man’s life. He is his own ledger. In all cases he must look back and measure himself by himself. Perhaps some hour brings him some question on which all must hinge. It may come unexpectedly, or he may have seen it advancing with inevitable steps. He may have

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brought it on himself, or he may have fought strenuously against it. It is all the same. It comes straight down upon him, a cyclone threatening to overwhelm him, and he must meet it either as a brave man or a craven. It comes, sweeps past or over him and leaves him in its track, unscathed or wounded or slain. But it comes. And this is Life. The ancients called it Fate; we call it Providence or Chance, or the result of natural laws. But by whatever name known, it is inscrutable.

So Dr. Cary felt that soft spring morning as he stood on the front porch of the roomy and rambling old mansion, where the Carys had had their seat and had made the Birdwood hospitality celebrated for more than two hundred years, and looked across the wide lawn, once well trimmed and filled with shrubbery and flowers, now ragged and torn. His eye took in the whole scene. The wide fields, once teeming with life, stretched before him now empty and silent; the fences were broken down or had disappeared altogether. And yet the grass was fresh and green, the trees and bushes were just bursting from bud to leaf; the far-off mountains rose blue and tender across the newly washed sky; the birds were flitting and singing joyously, and

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somewhere, around the house, a young girl's voice was singing sweeter than any of the birds. The look on the old soldier's face was for a moment one of deep gravity, if not of dejection; but it passed away the next instant, as Blair's song reached him and as a step sounded behind him, and a hand was laid lightly on his shoulder, followed by an even softer touch on his arm, as his wife's face rested for a moment against it. At the caressing touch his expression changed, he looked down in her eyes and, when he spoke, it was with a new light in his own eyes and a new tone in his voice.

“Well, Bess, we'll begin all over again. We have each other, and we have Blair, and we have—the land. It is as much as our forefathers began with. At least, I think we have the land—I don't suppose they'll take that away. If they do—why, we have each other and Blair, anyhow. If we only had the boy!” He turned his face away.

“He died for his country,” said the mother, though her voice belied the courage of her words.

“He died like a soldier: with all his wounds before.” He looked down into his wife's eyes.

“Yes.” And she sighed deeply.

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“We have to take care of what’s left. Where is Jim Sherwood? I have not seen him.”

“He has gone.”

“What!” The Doctor gave a whistle of amazement. “I’d almost as soon have expected Mammy Krenda and Tarquin to leave.” Jim was one of the most trusted men about the place, a sort of preacher and leader, and had married, as his third wife, Mammy Krenda’s daughter, Jane.

“Yes, Jim has gone. He went two weeks ago, and I was rather glad he went,” said Mrs. Cary. “He had never been quite the same since the Yankees came through; you know he behaved very badly then. He had changed more than almost anyone of them who remained. He had been preaching a good deal lately, and appeared to be stirring the others up more than I liked. There seemed to have been some influence at work among them that I could not understand. It was said that Mr. Still, Helen’s manager— But I don’t know,”—she broke off. “I heard them one night, at the house, and went out to the church where they were, and found them in a great state of excitement. They quieted down when I appeared. That repulsive creature, Mr. Gray’s Moses, was there, and I ordered him

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home, and gave them a talk, and the next morning Jim Sherwood was missing too, and a few days later Jane said that she had to go also. I told them they were free, but if they remained here they must observe my regulations. I put Gideon in charge and told him you would look to him to keep order till you came. And he has done so to the best of his ability, I believe. I hear that he gave Jim Sherwood to understand that he would have no more of his preaching here for the present, and that if he wanted to preach for Hiram Still he could go to Red Rock and do it, not here. And now you are here, this is the end of my stewardship, and I surrender it into your hands.”

She made her husband, half-mockingly, a profound curtsy—perhaps to turn off the serious thoughts which her words called up. But the Doctor declared that, at least, one of her slaves recognized too well the blessing of servitude to such a mistress to wish for freedom, and that he declined to assume control.

“Why, Bess, we men fought a quarter of the war and you women fought three-quarters. Do you imagine we want to depose you?”

Just then a young girl came around the corner of the house, her dark eyes full of light; her hair

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blown back from her forehead by the morning breeze, and her hands full of jonquils and other early flowers. Her face was glowing with the exercise she had been taking, and her whole person was radiant with youth.

“The morn is breaking. Here comes Aurora,” said her father, gazing at her fondly, at which Miss Blair’s cheeks glowed only the more.

It was proposed by the Doctor that they should invite to dinner such of their friends as had arrived at home and could be reached.

“Our first reunion,” said Mrs. Cary, smiling, and she began to give what she called her *ménu*, in which corn-bread, dried fruit, black-eyed pease, and welcome figured as the principal dishes. She laughed at her husband’s dumb amazement.

“Bess,” said the Doctor, humbly, “I retract what I said a little while ago about our having fought a fourth of the war—it was the speech of a braggart.” And having followed her with his eyes, as she went into the house, he walked around to have a talk with his negroes.

He found a number of them congregated and evidently expecting something of the kind.

“Gideon, tell the men I wish to speak to them.”

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In fifteen minutes they had collected. He called them all up, and standing on the portico of the office where he had been accustomed to speak with them, addressed a few calm words to them.

For a moment he went over the past. They had been faithful servants, he said. And he was glad to be able to say this to them. Now there were to be new relations between them. He told them they were free—on which there was an audible murmur of acquiescence—and they could leave, if they pleased. There was another murmur of satisfaction. But if they remained they would have to work and be subject to his authority.

Upon this many of the older ones signified their assent, while some of the others turned and, looking back, called to some one in the rear of the crowd:

“Come, Brer Sherrod, you done heah de no-ration; now come and gi’ de ’sponse.”

A low, stout negro, of middle age, whom the Doctor had not before noticed, came forward somewhat sheepishly, but with a certain swagger in his gait. It was evidently concerted. The Doctor’s mind acted quickly. At the speaker’s first word, he cut him short.

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“I decline to allow Jim Sherwood to be the spokesman,” he said. “He does not belong here. I left him in a position of trust, and he has failed in it. Fall to the rear; I make no terms with outsiders.”

Taken by surprise at the tone of authority, the exhorter fell or was moved back, in sudden confusion, while the doctor went on:

“Gideon, I appoint you; you have proved trustworthy. This place has supported two hundred souls in the past, and we can make it do so again. Tell them that all those who remain here and work under you, including Sherwood, shall be supported and treated fairly and paid what is proper if it takes every acre I have to do it; the others can go and find homes elsewhere.” He turned on his heel and walked into the house.

The next day there was a good force at work in the fields.

Some of those he had addressed had gone off in the night; but most of them remained, and the Doctor told Mrs. Cary he thought things would work out all right; he was ready to accept present conditions, and matters would adjust themselves.

“Time is the adjuster,” he said.

CHAPTER VI

A BROKEN SOLDIER COMES HOME FROM WAR

IT was a little over two weeks or, perhaps, three, after the Confederate armies had laid down their arms and disbanded, and the rest of the men from the county had turned their faces homeward with, or without, their paroles in their pockets, that a train which had been crawling all night over the shaky track, stopped in the morning near the little station, or what remained of it, on the edge of the county, where persons bound for nearly all that region got off. A passenger was helped down by the conductor and brakeman and was laid, with his crutch and blanket, as gently as might be, on a bank a little way from the track.

“Are you all right now? Do you think you can get on? You are sure someone will come for you?” asked the train men.

“Oh! yes; I feel better already.” And the young fellow stretched out his hands in the gray

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dawn and felt the moist earth on either side of him almost tenderly.

As the railroad men climbed back into the car they were conversing together in low tones.

“Unless his friends come before many hours they won’t find him,” said one of them. “I don’t know but what we ought to ’a’ brought him along, any way.”

But Jacquelin Gray had more staying power than they gave him credit for, and the very touch of the soil he loved did him good. He dragged himself a little way up, stretched himself out under a tree on the grass near where they had laid him, and went to sleep like a baby. The sun came up over the dewy trees and warmed him, and he only turned and slept on, dreaming that he had escaped from prison and reached the old county too weary to go any farther, and so, lay down on a bank and waited for someone to come for him. How often he had dreamed that, and had awaked to find himself in his old cot in the hospital, maybe, with the guard peering down at him with his lantern. Suddenly a shadow fell across his face, and he woke and looked up. Yes, there was the guard, three or four of them, gazing down on him in their blue uniform.

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“Jacquelin Gray. No. —. Ward ten,” he muttered wearily, as he used to do in the hospital, and was closing his eyes again when he awaked fully. Two or three Federal soldiers, one of them an officer, a little fellow with blue eyes, were leaning over him, and a cavalry company was yonder at rest, in the road below him. He was free after all, back in the old county.

The Lieutenant asked him his name and how he came there, and he told them.

“Where are you going?”

“Home!” with a little flash in his eye.

“Where is that?”

“Above here, across the country, in the Red Rock neighborhood—beyond Brutusville.”

“Why, we are going that way ourselves—we were going to give you a decent burial; but maybe we can do you a better turn if you are not ready for immortality; we’ve an ambulance along, and here’s the best substitute for the honor we offered you.”

The little Lieutenant was so cheery as he pressed the canteen to Jacquelin’s lips that the latter could not help feeling better.

The Captain, who had remained with the company, came over, on his handsome horse, picking his way through the débris lying about.

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“So he is alive after all?” he asked as he rode up.

“Alive? Well, if you’d seen the way he took this!” And the Lieutenant shook his canteen up beside his ear, as if to gauge its remaining contents; then held it to Jacquelin again.

“Have another pull? No? All right—when you want it. You aren’t the first reb’s had a swig at it.”

Then he repeated to his superior, a tall, handsome fellow, what Jacquelin had told him as to his name and destination. In an instant the Captain had sprung from his horse.

“Jacquelin Gray! Red Rock!—By Jove! It can’t be!” He stared down at the man on the ground.

“Do you mean to say that you live at a place called ‘Red Rock’—a great plantation, with a big rock by a burial-ground, and a red stain on it, said to be an Indian’s blood?”

Jacquelin nodded.

“Well, by ——! What’s the matter with you? Where have you been? What are you dressed this way for?—I mean an old plantation where there was a wedding—or a wedding-party, about five years ago?” he broke out, as if it were impossible to believe it. “And—a little girl, named Blair Something, sang?”

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Jacquelin nodded.

“Yes, that’s the place—Miss Blair Cary. But who are—? What do you know about——?”

“Well, I’m— Here, Reely, call Sergeant O’Meara; tell him to send the ambulance here directly,” interrupted the Captain. He turned back to Jacquelin.

“Don’t you remember me? I’m Middleton—Lawrence Middleton. Don’t you remember? I happened in that night with Mr. Welch, and you took care of us? I’ve never forgotten it.”

“I remember it—you painted the horse red,” said Jacquelin.

“Yes—it was really this fellow, Reely Thurston. He is the one that got me into all that trouble. And he has got me into a lot more since. But where have you been that you look like this?”

Jacquelin told him.

By this time several of the people from the few houses in the neighborhood of the station, who had at first kept aloof from the troop of soldiers and gazed at them from a distance, had come up, seeing that they had a Confederate with them. They recognized Jacquelin and began to talk about his appearance, and to make cutting speeches as to the treatment he had undergone.

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“We ain’t forgot your Pa,” some of them said.

“Nor you neither,” said one of the women, who added that she was Andy Stamper’s cousin.

They wanted Jacquelin to stay with them and let them take care of him until his mother could send for him. Captain Allen had been down to see about him, and Andy Stamper had been there several times, and had said that if he didn’t hear anything from him next time, he was going North to see about him, if he had to ride his old horse there.

Jacquelin, however, was so anxious to get home that, notwithstanding the pressing invitations of his friends, he accepted the offer of the Federal officers, and, after getting a cup of coffee from Andy’s cousin—who said it was the first she had had in three years—he was helped up in the ambulance and was driven off.

The company, it seemed, had come up from the city the day before and had encamped a little below the station, and was marching to Brutusville, where it was to be posted.

Julius, General Legaie’s old butler, met them near the court-house and plunged out in the mud and wrung Jacquelin’s hand, thanking God for his return.

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The old butler was on the lookout for his master, who had not come home yet, and about whom he was beginning to be very uneasy. The General had gone South somewhere "to keep on fightin'," Julius told Jacquelin, and he invited him to come by and spend the night, and offered to go on himself and let his mother know he had come. The old fellow, in his best clothes—a high hat and an old blue coat with brass buttons—and with his best manners, caused much amusement to the soldiers, and Lieutenant Thurston undertook to tease him.

"You haven't any master now," he said.

The old servant looked at him.

"I ain't? Does you think I'se a free nigger?" he asked, sharply, "'Cause I ain't!"

"Yes, but I mean we've taken your master prisoner."

"You is?" He looked at him again keenly. "Nor, you ain't. It'll teck a bigger man 'n you to teck my master prisoner—And he ain' big as you nuther," he said, with a snap of his eyes. "He ain't de kind dat s'renders."

"We'll have to stand in on this together," said the little Lieutenant across to Jacquelin, as the laugh went round; and then to Julius, with a wave of his hand toward Jacquelin, "Well,

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what do you say to that gentleman's having surrendered?"

The old darky was quick enough, however.

"He was shot, and besides *you* never got him. I know you never got nigh enough to him in battle to shoot him."

"I think you'll have to go this alone," said Jacquelin. The Lieutenant admitted himself routed.

Late that evening Jacquelin's ambulance was toiling up the hill to Red Rock, while the troop of cavalry, sent to keep order in that section, with its tents pitched in the court-house yard under the big trees, were taking a survey of the place they had come to govern. Little Thurston, who, as they rode in, had caught sight of a plump young girl gazing at them from the open door of the old clerk's office, with mingled curiosity and defiance, declared that it was not half as bad as some places he had been in in the South. At that moment, as it happened, Miss Elizabeth Dockett, the young lady in question, daughter of Mr. Dockett, the old County Clerk, was describing to her mother the little Lieutenant as the most ridiculous and odious-looking little person in the world.

It was night when Jacquelin reached home;

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but so keen was the watch in those times, that the ambulance had been heard in the dark, so that when he arrived there was quite a crowd on the lawn ready to receive him, and the next moment he was in his mother's arms.

Sergeant O'Meara, who had been detailed to go on with the ambulance, took back to the courthouse an account of the meeting.

“It was wurruth the drive,” he said, “to see ’um whan we got there. An’ if I’d been th’ Gineral himself, or the Captain, they couldn’t ’a’ made more fuss over me. Bedad! I thought they moust tak’ me for a Gineral at least; but no, ut was me native gintilitee. I was that proud of meself I almost shed tears of j’y. The only thing I lacked was some wan to say me so gran’ that could appreciate me. An ould gintleman—a Dochter Major Cary—a good Oirish naim, bedad!—was there to say wan of the leddies, and ivery toime a leddy cooms in, oop he gits, and bows very gran’, an’ the leddy bows an’ passes by, an’ down he sets, an’ I watches him out o’ the tail of me eye, an’ ivery toime he gits oop, oop I gits too. An’ I says:

“ ‘I always rise for the leddies; me mither was a leddy,’ an’ he says, with a verra gran’ bow: ‘Yis,’ he says, ‘an’ her son is a gintleman,

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too.' What d'ye think o' that? An' I says, 'Yis, I know he is.' "

Next morning Jacquelin was in a very softened mood. The joy of being free and at home again was tempered by memory of the past and realization of the present; but he was filled with a profound feeling which, perhaps, he himself could not have named. As he hobbled out to the front portico and gazed around on the wide fields spread out below him, with that winding ribbon of tender green, where the river ran between its borders of willows and sycamores, he renewed his resolve to follow in his father's footsteps. He would keep the place at all sacrifices. He was in this pleasant frame of mind when Hiram Still came around the house. Still had aged during the war, his voice had become more confidential.

As he came up to Jacquelin, the latter, notwithstanding his outstretched hand and warm words, had a sudden return of his old feeling of suspicion and dislike.

"Mr. Jacquelin, I swan, I am glad to see you, suh—an' to see you lookin' so well. I told yo' Ma you'd come back all right. An' I told that Yankee what brought you up last night that 'twas a shame they treated you as they done,

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and if you hadn't come back all right we'd 'a' come up thar an' cleaned 'em out. Yes, sir, we would that.

“I sent him off this mornin’—saw him acrost the ford myself,” he added, lowering his voice confidentially, “because I don’t like to have ’em prowling around my place—*our* place—too much. Stirs up th’ niggers so you can’t get no work out of ’em. And I didn’t like that fellow’s looks, particularly. Well, I certainly am glad to see you lookin’ so well.”

Jacquelin felt doubly rebuked for his unjust suspicions, and, as a compensation, told Mr. Still of his last conversation with his father, and of what his father had said of him. Still was moved almost to tears.

“Your father was the best friend I ever had in this world, Mr. Jack,” he said. “I’ll never—” he had to turn his face away. “You can’t do no better than your father.”

“No, indeed,” Jacquelin agreed to that. All he wished was to do do just what his father had done—He was not well; and he should leave the management of the place to Mr. Still, just as his father had done—at least, till they knew how things stood, he added.

There was a slight return of a look which had

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been once or twice in Still's downcast eyes, and he raised them to take a covert glance at Jacquelin's face. Jacquelin, however, did not see it. He was really suffering greatly from his wound; and the expression he caught on Still's face was only one of deep concern. He asked after Still's family.

Wash had gone to the city to study medicine, Still said.

"We pore folks as ain't got a fine plantation like this has got to have a trade or something."

Virgy was at home keeping house for him. She was a good big girl now—"most grown like Miss Blair," he added.

There was a slight tone in the manager's voice which somehow grated on Jacquelin a little, he did not know why. And he changed the subject rather shortly.

Some time he wished to talk to Mr. Still about that Deeprun plantation in the South, he said, as he had attended to stocking it and knew more about it than anyone else; but he did not think he was equal to it just then. Still agreed that this was right, also that the first thing for Jacquelin to do now was to take care of himself and get well.

Just then Andy Stamper came round the

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house, with a bucket in one hand and a bunch of flowers in the other. At sight of Jacquelin his face lit up with pleasure. Before Andy could nod to Hiram the latter had gone, with a queer look on his face, and something not unlike a slink in his gait.

The bucket Andy had brought was full of eggs, which Delia Dove, Andy said, had sent Jacquelin, and she had sent the flowers too.

“I never see anyone like her for chickens an’ flowers,” said Andy. “She’s a good friend o’ yours. I thought when I got home I wa’n’t goin’ to get her after all. I thought she’d ‘a’ sent me back to P’int Lookout,” he laughed.

His expression changed after a moment.

“I see Hiram’s been to see you—to wish you well? Don’t know what’s the reason, he kind o’ cuts out whenever I come ‘roun’. Looks almost like he’s got some’n’ ag’inst me; yet he done me a mighty good turn when I was married; he come and insisted on lendin’ me some money, not only to buy a horse with fer the ole woman: but a horse to go back in th’ army with—a whole basketful of money, and he’s been lendin’ all aroun’ the neighborhood; an’ don’t seem to be in no hurry to git it back—If you jest give him a little slip o’ writin’ on yo’ land, that’s all. Yet,

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somehow, he always r'minds me of a mink, kind of slippy-like. He don't do things all at once. He didn't tell me he wanted no deed; but after I was gone, he got one from the old lady—said 'twould be all right, and I could pay him any time; he jest wanted it in case he died, and she didn' know no better than to sign it. I'm goin' to pay him off, first money I git. I never would 'a' borrowed it 'cept I was so anxious to go back in the army—an' to git Delia. Hiram thought he was sure to win." The little soldier's face always lighted up when he referred to his wife.

Jacquelin protested that he thought Still a better fellow than Andy would admit, and added that his father had always esteemed him highly.

"Yes, I know that; but the Colonel didn't know him, Mr. Jack, and he wasn't lookin' out for him. I don't like a man I can't understand. If you know he's a liar, you needn't b'lieve him; but if you ain't found him out yet, he gets aroun' you. Hiram is that sort. I know he us't to be a liar, an' I don't b'lieve folks recovers from that disease. So I'm goin' to pay him off. An' you do the same. I tell you, he's a schemer, an' he's lookin' up."

Just then there was a light step behind them, a shadow fell on the veranda, which, to one of

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them, at least, was followed by an apparition of light—as, with a smothered cry of, “Jacquelin!” a young girl, her hair blowing about her brow, ran forward, and as the wounded soldier rose, threw her arms around his neck. Blair Cary looked like a rose as she drew back in a pretty confusion, her blushes growing deeper every moment.

“Why, Blair, how pretty you’ve grown!” exclaimed Jacquelin, thinking only of her beauty.

“Well, you talk as if you were very much surprised,” and Miss Blair bridled with pretended indignation.

“Oh! no—of course not. I only——”

“Oh! yes, you do,” and she tossed her pretty head with well-feigned disdain. “You are as bold with your compliments as you were with your sword.”

She turned from him to Sergeant Stamper, who was regarding her with open-mouthed admiration.

“How do you do, Sergeant Stamper? How’s Delia? And how are her new chickens? Tell her she isn’t to keep on sending them all to me. I am going to learn to raise them for myself now.”

“I daren’t tell her that,” said the little fellow.

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“You know I can’t do nothin’ with Delia Dove. You’re the only one can do that. If I tell her that, she’d discharge me, an’ sen’ me ’way from the place.”

“I’m glad to see she’s breaking you in so well,” laughed Blair.

In a short time all the soldiers from the old county who were left were back at home, together with some who were not originally from that county, but who, having nowhere better to go, and no means to go with, even if they had had, and finding themselves stranded by the receding tide, pitched their tents permanently where they had only intended to bivouac, and thus, by the simple process of staying there, became permanent residents.

The day after that on which Jacquelin arrived, General Legaie, to the delight of old Julius and of such other servants as yet remained on his place, turned up, dusty, and worn, but still serene and undispirited. He marched into his dismantled mansion with as proud a step as when he left it, and took possession of it as though it had been a castle. With him was an officer to whom the General offered the hospitalities of the house as though it had been a palace,

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and to whom he paid as courtly attention as if he had been a prince.

“This is Julius, Captain, of whom I have spoken to you,” he said, after he had shaken hands with the old butler, and with the score of other negroes who had rushed out and gathered around him on hearing of his arrival. “Julius will attend to you, and unless he has lost some of his art you will confess that I have not exaggerated his abilities.” He faced his guest and made him a low bow. “I hope, Captain, you will consider this your home as long as you wish. Julius, the Captain will stay with us for the present, and I suspect he’d like a julep.” And with a wave of the hand the little General transferred the responsibility of his guest to the old butler, who stood bowing, dividing his glances between those of affection for his master and of shrewd inspection of the visitor.

The latter was a tall, spare man, rather sallow than dark, but with a piercing, black eye, and a closely shut mouth under a long, black, drooping mustache. He acknowledged the General’s speech with a civil word, and Julius’s bow with a nod and a look, short but keen and inquiring, and then, flinging himself into the best seat, leant his head back and half closed his eyes, while the

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General went out and received the negroes, who, with smiling faces, were still gathering on the news of his arrival.

During this absence the guest did not rise from his chair; but turned his head slowly from time to time, until his eyes had rested on every article in the field of his vision. He might have been making an appraisement.

The General, in fact, did not know any more of his guest than Julius knew. He had come on him only that afternoon at a fork in the road, resting, stretched out on a couple of fence-rails, while his horse nibbled and picked at the grass and leaves near by. The gray uniform, somewhat fresher than those the General was accustomed to, attracted the General's attention, and when Captain McRaffle, as the stranger called himself, asked him the nearest way to Brutusville, or to some gentleman's house, the General at once invited him to his home. He had heard, he stated, that a company of Yankees had already been sent to Brutusville; but he could show him the way to a house where gentlemen had lived in the past, and where, if he thought *he* would pass muster, one was about to live again. And with this invitation Captain McRaffle became an inmate of Thornleigh, as the

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General's place was called, and might have stayed there indefinitely had not unforeseen contingencies caused him to remove his quarters.

Just as the General returned from his reception on the veranda, the old butler entered with a waiter and two juleps sparkling in their glasses. At sight of them the General beamed, and even the guest's cold eyes lit up.

"On my soul! he is the most remarkable fellow in the world," declared the General to his visitor. "Where did you get this?"

"Well, you see, suh," said Julius, "de Yankees over yander was givin' out rations, and I thought I'd git a few, so's to be ready for you 'ginst you come."

The General smiled delightedly, and between the sips of his julep proceeded to extract from Julius all the news of the county since his last visit, a year or more before, and to give a running commentary of his own for the enlightenment of his guest, who, it must be said, appeared not quite as much interested in it all as he might have been.

All the people on the place, Julius said, had been over to the court-house already to see the soldiers, but most of them had come back. He had been there himself one day, but had returned

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the same evening, as he would not leave the place unguarded at night.

“The most faithful fellow that ever was on earth; he would die for me!” asserted the General, in a delighted aside to his guest, who received the encomium somewhat coldly, and on the first opportunity that he could do so unobserved, gave the old butler another of those looks that appeared like a flash of cold steel.

Dr. Cary had been down the day before to inquire after the General.—“An old and valued friend of mine, the greatest surgeon in the State—ought to have been made Surgeon-General of the army,” interpolated the General to his guest.

The Doctor had said the ladies were well, and were mighty anxious about the General—“Yes, sir, Miss Thomasia was very well, indeed.”

“Miss Gray—a very old—I mean—ah—*dear* friend of mine—sister of Colonel Gray,” the General explained to his guest. “On my word, I believe her intuitions are infallible. I never knew her at fault in her estimate of a man in my life.”

The Doctor had left word asking if he would not come up to dinner next day, Julius continued:

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“Bless my soul! Of course I will—and I’ll take you too, Captain; they will be delighted to see you—Most charming people in the world!”

So the General annotated old Julius’s bulletin, gilding everyone and everything with the gold of his own ingenuous heart.

The—ah—soldiers had left an order for him as soon as he came, to come to the courthouse to swear to something, said Julius, doubtfully.

“I’ll see the soldiers d—— condemned first!” bristled the General. “I shall go to pay my respects to the ladies at Red Rock and Birdwood to-morrow—the two most beautiful places in all the country, sir.” This to Captain McRaffle, who received even this stirring information without undue warmth; but when their backs were turned, inspected again both the General and old Julius.

Next morning the General invited his guest to accompany him, but Captain McRaffle was not feeling well, he said, and he thought if the General would leave him, he would remain quiet. Or, perhaps, if he felt better, he might ride over to the county seat and reconnoitre a little. He always liked to know the strength of the force before him.

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“A most excellent rule,” the General declared, with admiration.

So the General, having given the Captain one of the two very limp shirts which “the thoughtfulness of a dear friend, Mrs. Cary, of Birdwood,” had provided for him, arrayed himself in the other and set out to pay his respects to his friends in the upper end of the county, leaving his guest stretched out on a lounge.

He had not been gone long when the Captain ordered his horse and rode off in the direction of the court-house.

On arriving at the county seat, the new-comer rode straight to the tavern, and dismounting, gave his horse to a servant and walked in. As he entered he gave one of those swift, keen glances, and then asked for Mrs. Witcher, the landlady. When she arrived, a languid, delicate-looking woman, the Captain was all graciousness, and, in a few moments, Mrs. Witcher was equally complacent. In fact, the new-comer had decided on the first glance that this was good enough for him, at least, till he could do better. The Captain told Mrs. Witcher that he had not had a really square meal in two months, and had not slept in a bed in six months.

“A floor, madam, or a table, so it is long

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enough, is all I desire. Upon my word and honor, I don't think I could sleep in a bed."

But Mrs. Witcher insisted that he should try, and so the Captain condescended to make the experiment, after giving her a somewhat detailed account of his extensive family connection, and of an even larger circle of friends, which included the commanding Generals of all the armies and everybody else of note in the country besides.

"Well, this suits me," he said as he walked into the room assigned him. "Jim, who occupied this room last?" he asked the darky—whose name happened to be Paul.

"Well, I forgits the gent'man's name, he died in dis room."

"Did he? How?"

"Jes' so, suh. He died right in dat bed, 'cause I help' to lay him out."

"Well, maybe I'll die in it myself. See that the sheets are clean," said Captain McRaffle, composedly. "What are you standing there gaping at? Do you suppose I mind a man's dying? I've killed a hundred men."

"Suh!"

"Yes, two hundred—and slept in a coffin myself to boot." And the Captain turned on the

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negro so dark and saturnine a face that "Jim" withdrew in a hurry, and ten minutes later was informing the other negroes that there was a man in the house that had been dead and "done riz agin."

And this was the equipment with which Captain McRaffle began life as a resident of Brutusville.

CHAPTER VII

THE CARY CONFERENCE

THE meeting at Birdwood was a notable occasion. It was, in a way, the outward and visible sign of the return of peace. Someone said it looked like the old St. Ann congregation risen from the dead, to which Miss Thomasia added, that the gentlemen, at least, were now all immortal, and the General, with his hand on his heart, gallantly responded that the ladies had always been so. The speech, however, left some faces grave, for there were a number of vacant places that could not be forgotten.

Jacquelin, under the excitement of his arrival, felt himself sufficiently restored and stimulated to join his mother and Aunt Thomasia, and be driven over to Birdwood, and though he suffered a good deal from the condition of the roads, yet when Blair ran forward and offered her shoulder for "his other crutch," he felt as though a

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bad wound might after all have some compensations.

Steve Allen was the life of the company. He had ridden over on his black horse, "Hotspur," that, like himself, had been wounded several times in the last campaigns, though never seriously. He spent his time teasing Blair. He declared that Jacquelin was holding on to his crutch only to excite sympathy, and that his own greatest cause for hatred of the Yankees now was either that they had not shot him instead of Jack, or had not killed Jack, and he offered to go out and let anyone shoot him immediately for one single pitying glance like those he said Blair was lavishing on Jack.

Jacquelin, with a vivid memory of the morning before, had meant to kiss Blair on his arrival, yet when they met he was seized with a sudden panic, and could hardly look into her eyes. She appeared to have grown taller and older since yesterday, as well as prettier, and when Steve, on arriving, insolently caught and kissed her before them all, on the plea of cousinship, Jacquelin was conscious of a pang of consuming jealousy, and for the first time in his life would gladly have thrashed Steve.

There was one thing that marred the occa-

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sion somewhat, or might have done so under other circumstances. The entire negro population, who could travel, moved by some idea that the arrival of the Federal soldiers concerned them, were flocking to the county seat, leaving the fields deserted and the cabins empty.

The visitors had found the roads lined with them as they came along. They were all civil, but what could it mean? Some of the young men, like Steve and Jacquelin, were much stirred up about it, and talked of organizing quietly so as to be ready if the need should arise. Dr. Cary, however, and the older ones, opposed anything of the kind. Any organization whatever would be viewed with great suspicion by the authorities, and might be regarded as a breach of their parole, and was not needed. They were already organized simply by being what they were. And, indeed, though gaunt and weather-beaten, in their old worn uniforms they were a martial-looking set. There was not a man there who had not looked Death in the eyes many a time, and the stare had left something notable in every face.

It was a lovely day, and the early flowers were peeping out as if to be sure before they came too

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far that winter had gone for good. The soft haze of Spring was over the landscape.

The one person who was wanting, to make the company complete, was the little General. They were just discussing him, and were wondering if he had gone to Mexico; and Steve, seated at Miss Thomasia's side, was teasing her about him, declaring that, in his opinion, it was a pretty widow, whose husband had been in the General's brigade and had been shot, that the General had gone South after; when a horseman was seen riding rapidly across the open field far below, taking the ditches as he came to them. When he drew nearer he was recognized to be none other than the gallant little General himself. As he came trotting across the lawn, among the great trees, he presented a martial figure, and handkerchiefs were waved to him, and many cheers were given, so that he was quite overcome when he dismounted in the midst of a number of his old soldiers, and found himself literally taken in the arms of both the men and the ladies.

The General beamed, as he gazed around with a look that showed that he thought life might still be worth living if only he could meet occasionally such a reception as had just been given

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him. Others smiled too; for it was known that the General had been an almost life-long lover and suitor of Miss Thomasia Gray, whose twenty years' failure to smile on him had in no way damped his ardor or dimmed his hope. In fact, the old soldier, in his faded gray, with his bronzed, worn, highbred face, was nearer achieving the object of his life at that moment than he had ever been in the whole twenty years of his pursuit. Had the occasion come fifteen or even ten years earlier, he might have done so; but Miss Thomasia had reached the point when to marry appeared to her ridiculous, and the only successful rival of the shaft of Cupid is the shaft of Ridicule.

At such a meeting as this there were necessarily many serious things to be considered. One was the question of bread; another of existence. None could look around on the wide, deserted fields and fail to take in this. Everything like civil government had disappeared. There was not a civil officer left in the State. From Governor to justices of the peace, every office had been vacated. The Birdwood meeting was the first in the county at which was had any discussion of a plan for the preservation of order. Even this was informal and unpremedi-

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tated; but when it reached the ears of Colonel Krafton, the new commander of that district, who had just arrived, it had taken on quite another complexion, and the "Cary Conference," as it came to be called, was productive of some very far-reaching consequences to certain of those who participated in it, and to the county itself.

As to some matters broached at Birdwood that day, there was wide diversity of opinion among those present.

Dr. Cary was in favor of accepting the issues as settled by the war; of making friends with the high authorities—as had already been done by some in other parts of the State, and of other States.

"Never! never!" declared General Legaie, with whom were most of the others. "They have done their worst; they have invaded us, and taken our negroes from us. Let them bear the responsibilities they have assumed."

It was easy to see, from the enthusiasm which greeted the General, on which side the sympathy lay.

"The worst! General Legaie?" exclaimed Dr. Cary. "The worst will be coming for years. 'After the sword comes the cankerworm.' Mark

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my words: the first terms offered are always the best. I should not be surprised if you were to live to see negroes invested with the elective franchise.”

“Impossible! Preposterous! Incredible!” declared General Legaie, his words being echoed by most of those present.

“It seems almost impossible and quite incredible, yet to an old man many things appear possible that are incredible,” said Dr. Cary.

“We will die before such an infamy should be perpetrated!” protested General Legaie, with spirit.

“The only trouble is, that dying would do no good; only those who know how to live can now save the Country,” said the Doctor, gravely.

The old Whig looked so earnest—so imposing, as he stood, tall and white, his eyes flashing under their beetling brows, that though, perhaps, few agreed with him, all were impressed, and by a common and tacit consent their position was not pressed, at least for the present. The little General even agreed to accompany Dr. Cary at some near date, to give his views, along with Dr. Cary’s, to the new Commander of the district, Colonel Krafton, in order, the General stated,

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that the Commander might understand precisely the attitude of all persons in their county.

Steve Allen, and the other young soldiers who were there, found themselves sufficiently entertained, fighting over their battles, as though they had been the commanding generals, and laying off new campaigns in a fresh and different field; meantime, getting their hands in, adoring and teasing their young hostess, who was related to, or connected with, most of them. They had left Blair Cary, a dimple-faced, tangle-haired romp of thirteen or fourteen, with saucy eyes, which even then, as they danced behind their dark lashes, promised the best substitute for beauty. They now found her sprung up to a slender young lady of "quite seventeen," whose demureness and new-born dignity were the more bewitching, because they were belied by her laughing glances. Mars has ever been the captive of Venus as well as her conqueror, and more than Steve Allen and Jacquelin Gray fell victims at the first fire from those "deadly batteries," as Steve afterward characterized Blair Cary's eyes, in his first poem to Belinda—published in the *Brutusville Guardian*. But they all declared they saw at once that they stood no chance with Jack Gray, whose face wore "that sickly look,"

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as Steve called it, which, he said, "every woman thought interesting and none could resist." Over all of which nonsense, Miss Blair's dark eyes twinkled with the pleasure of a girl who is too young to comprehend it quite fully, but yet finds it wonderfully delightful. As for Jacqueline, to him she was no longer mortal: he had robed her in radiance and lifted her among the stars.

The older people found not less pleasure in the reunion than their juniors, and appeared to have grown young again. And while the youngsters were out on the grass at Miss Blair's feet, in more senses than one, the General and Dr. Cary and the other seniors were on the vine-covered portico, discussing grave questions of state-craft, showing precisely how and when the Confederacy might have been saved and made the greatest power on earth—together with other serious matters. The General teased himself as of old about Miss Thomasia, and the Doctor teased them both. The General had been noted formerly as a great precisionist in matters of dress, as well as in all other matters, and now, when he stalked about the veranda, with his old uniform-coat buttoned to the chin as jauntily as ever, and with a limp bit of white showing above

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the collar and at the wrists, in which he evidently took much pride, the Doctor, who knew where the shirt came from, and that, like the one which he himself had on, it was made from an undergarment of one of the ladies, could not help rallying him a little. The Doctor wisely took advantage of Mrs. Cary's absence from the room to do this, but had got no farther than to congratulate the General on the luxury of fresh linen and to receive from him the gallant assurance that he had felt, on putting it on that morning, as a knight of old might have felt when he donned his armor prepared by virgin hands, when Mrs. Cary entered and, recognizing instantly from her husband's look of suspicious innocence and Miss Thomasia's expression, that some mischief was going on, pounced on him promptly and bore him off. When he returned from the "judgment chamber," as he called it, he was under a solemn pledge not to open the subject again to the General, which he observed to the best of his ability, though he kept Miss Thomasia on thorns, by coming as near to it as he dared with a due regard to himself in view of his wife's watchfulness.

In fact, these men were thoroughly enjoying home life after the long interval of hardship

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and deprivation, and neither the sorrow of the past nor the gloom of the present could wholly depress them. The future, fortunately, they could not know. Then, among young people there must be joy, if there be not death; and fun is as natural as grass or flowers in spring or any other outbudding of a new and bounding life.

So, even amid the ruins, the flowers bloomed and there were fun and gayety. Hope was easily worth all the other spirits in Pandora's box put together.

Before the company separated they began to talk even of a party, and, to meet the objections of old Mr. Langstaff and some others, it was agreed that it should be a contribution-entertainment and that the proceeds should go to the wounded soldiers and soldiers' widows of the county. This Steve declared was a deep-laid scheme on the part of Jacquelin Gray. It was already decided on when the Doctor returned to the sitting-room, after Mrs. Cary had summoned him thence, and the question under advisement was whether the Yankee officers at the courthouse should be invited. Steve Allen had started it. The ladies were a unit.

“No, indeed; not one of them should set his foot inside the door; not a girl would dance with

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one of them.” On this point Miss Blair was very emphatic, and her laughing eyes lost their gleam of sunlight and flashed forth a sudden spark which showed deeper depths behind those dark lashes than had appeared at any time before.

“I’ll bet you do,” said Steve. He stretched out his long legs, settled himself, and looked at Blair with that patronizing air which always exasperated her.

“I’ll bet I don’t!”—with her head up, and her color deepening a little at the bravado of using such a word.

“I’ll bet my horse you’ll break a set with Jack for the Yankee captain,” declared Steve.

“Don’t want your old horse, he’s too full of lead,” said Blair.

“Then I’ll bet you his horse.”

“It’s a good one,” said Jacquelin from his place on the lounge. “Blood-bay, with three white feet and a blaze on his nose.”

“He’s mine,” asserted Steve with a nod of his head.

“How will you get it?” asked Blair.

“Steve knows several ways of getting horses,” laughed one of the other young men.

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“Shut up, you fool,” telegraphed Steve with his lips, glancing quickly at Miss Thomasia, who was beaming on him with kindly eyes.

It is surprising what little things have influence. That sudden flash, with the firmer lines which came for a second in the young girl’s face, did more to bind the young men to her footstool than all the fun and gayety she had shown.

The men were not so unanimous on the point touching the exclusion of the officers. Most of them agreed with the ladies, but one or two were inclined to the other side.

“Men like to fancy themselves broader and more judicial than women,” said Miss Thomasia, placidly.

Jacquelin mentioned casually that Middleton was not only quite a gentlemanly fellow, but a strikingly handsome one.

“A Yankee soldier good-looking! I’ll not believe that!” declared Miss Blair, promptly.

This debate created a diversion in their favor, and it was suggested and agreed to, as a compromise, that they should “wait until after a St. Ann Sunday, and see what the officers looked like. No doubt some of them would come to

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church, and then they could determine what they would do.”

This idea was feminine, and, to offset it, it was re-declared that at present they were “unanimously opposed to regarding them in any other light than that of bitter enemies.”

CHAPTER VIII

MR. HIRAM STILL TELLS HOW TO BRIDLE A SHY HORSE, AND CAPTAIN ALLEN LAYS DOWN HIS HOE

SO Peace spread her white wings, extending her serenity and shedding her sweetness even in those regions where war had passed along.

Without wasting time or repining about the past, Dr. Cary and General Legaie and the other men began to pick up such of the tangled and broken threads of the old life as could be found, and to form with them the new. They mended the worn vehicles, patched up the old harness and gear, broke their war-horses to drive, and set in to live bravely and cheerfully, in as nearly the old manner as they could. They had, they believed, made the greatest fight on record. They had not only maintained, but had increased, the renown of their race for military achievement—the reputation which they most highly valued. They had been overwhelmed,

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not whipped; cast down, but not destroyed. They still had the old spirit, the unconquerable spirit of their race, and, above all, they had the South.

Dr. Cary determined to use every effort to restore at once the old state of affairs, and, to this end, to offer homes and employment to all his old servants.

Accordingly, he rode down to the county seat one day to have an interview with the officers there. He went alone, because he did not know precisely how he would be received, and, besides, there was by no means general approval of his course among his friends.

He found that the ranking officer, Captain Middleton, had been summoned that morning to the city by Colonel Krafton, the provost in command there. The next in command, however, Lieutenant Thurston, was very civil and obliging to the Doctor, and, on learning of his plans, took steps to further them.

The officer summoned all the negroes who were hanging around the village, to assemble on the court-green, told them of the Doctor's offer, and, after a short talk to them, ordered all the Doctor's old servants who were present, and had not secured employment elsewhere, to return

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home and go to work on the wages he had agreed the Doctor should pay. For, as he said to Middleton when he returned:

“By Gad! Larry, I was not sure whether I was talking to Don Quixote or old Dr. Filgrave—I know he is cousin to them both, for he told me so—he is a cousin to everybody in the United States. And, besides, I was so bored with those niggers hanging around, looking pitiful, and that tall, whispering fellow, Still, who tells about the way he had to act during the war to keep the people from knowing he was on our side, that I would have ordered every nigger in the country to go with the old gentleman if he had wanted them. By the way, he is the father of the girl they say is so devilishly pretty, and he asked after you most particularly. Ah! Larry, I am a diplomat. I have missed my calling.” And, as he looked at his tall, good-looking superior, the little Lieutenant’s eyes twinkled above the bowl of his pipe, which was much the shape of himself.

The engagement to furnish his negroes rations Dr. Cary was enabled to make, because on his arrival at the county seat he had fallen in with Hiram Still, who had offered to lend him a sum of money, which he said he happened to

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have by him. Hiram had been down to take the oath of allegiance, he told the Doctor.

“I been wonderin’ to myself what I was to do with that money—and what I turned all them Confed. notes into gold and greenbacks for,” he said. “Fact is, I thought myself a plum fool for doin’ it; but I says, ‘Well, gold’s gold, whichever way it goes.’ So I either bought land or gold. But ’t does look ’s if Providence had somethin’ to do with it, sure ’nough. I ain’t got a bit o’ use for it—you can take it and pay me just when it’s convenient.”

Still had never been a favorite with Dr. Cary, though the latter confessed that he could cite no positive ground for his dislike. When he thought of his antipathy at all, he always traced it back to two things—one that Legaie always disliked Still, the other that when Still had his attack of inflammatory rheumatism at the outbreak of the war, the symptoms were such as to baffle the Doctor’s science. “That’s a pretty ground for a reasonable man to found an antipathy on,” reflected the Doctor.

As the Doctor and Hiram rode back together toward home, Still was so bitter in his denunciation of the Federals and of their action touching the negroes, that the Doctor actually felt it his

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duty to lecture him. They were all one country now, he said, and they should accept the result as determined. But Still said, "Never!" He had only taken the oath of allegiance, he declared, because he had heard he would be arrested unless he did. But he had taken it with a mental reservation. This shocked the Doctor so much that he rebuked him with sternness, on which Still explained that he did not mean exactly that, but that he had heard that if a man took an oath under threats he was absolved from it.

"There was some such legal quibble," the Doctor admitted, with a sniff, but he was "very sure that no brave man would ever take an oath for such a reason, and no honest one would ever break one." He rode off with his head very high.

When Still reached home that evening he was in uncommonly good spirits. He was pleasanter than usual to his daughter, who appeared the plainer because of the contrast that her shabby clothes presented to the showy suit which her brother wore. It was to his son, however, that Mr. Still showed his particular good-humor. Wash had just come home for a little visit from the city, where he had been ever since his return

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from the army, and where he was now studying medicine. He was a tall, slim fellow, very much like his father in appearance, though in place of the rather good-tempered expression which usually sat on the latter's face, Wash's look was usually sour and discontented.

"Ah, Wash, my son, I did a good stroke of business for you to-day," said the father that evening at supper.

"What was it? Did you buy another farm? You'll break, buying so much land," replied his son, pleasantly.

Still put aside the ungraciousness of the reply. He was accustomed to his son's slurs.

"Yes and no." He winked at Virgy, to whom he had already confided something of his stroke of business. He glanced at the door to see that no one was listening, and dropped his voice to his confidential pitch. "I lent the Doctor a leetle money." He nodded with satisfaction.

Wash became interested; but the next instant attempted to appear indifferent.

"How much? What security did he give?"

"More than he'll be able to pay for some time, and the security's all right. Aha! I thought that would wake you up. I'll lend him some more one of these days and then we'll get the

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pay—with interest.” He winked at his son knowingly. “When you’re tryin’ to ketch a shy horse, don’t show him the bridle; when you’ve got him, then—!” He made a gesture of slipping on a halter. This piece of philosophy appeared to satisfy the young man and to atone for the apparent unwisdom of his father’s action. He got into such a good-humor that he began to talk pleasantly with his sister and to ask her about the young men in the neighborhood.

It was striking to see how she changed at the notice her brother took of her. The listless look disappeared, and her eyes brightened and made her face appear really interesting.

Presently the young man said:

“How’s Lord Jacquelin?” At the unexpected question the blood mounted to the girl’s face, and after an appealing look she dropped her eyes quickly.

When the end of the month came, Dr. Cary summoned his hands and paid them their wages one by one, according to his contract with Thurston, checking each name, as he paid them, on a pay-roll he had prepared. Their reception of the payment varied with the spirit of the men; some being gay and facetious; others taking it

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with exaggerated gravity. It was the first time they had ever received stipulated wages for their services, and it was an event.

The Doctor was well satisfied with the result, and went in to make the same settlement with the house-servants. The first he met was Mammy Krenda, and he handed her the amount he had agreed on with Thurston as a woman's wages. The old woman took it quietly. This was a relief. Mrs. Cary had been opposed to his paying her anything; she had felt sure that the mammy would feel offended. "Why, she is a member of the family," she said. "We can't pay her wages." The Doctor, however, deemed himself bound by his engagement with Thurston. He had said he would pay all wages, and he would do so. So when the mammy took the money with her usual curtsy, in one way the Doctor's spirits rose, though he was conscious of a little tug at his heart, as if the old ties had somehow been loosened. He rallied, however, at the reflection that he could satisfy his wife, at last, that he knew human nature more profoundly than she did—a doctrine he had secretly cherished, but had never been entirely successful in establishing.

In this satisfactory state of mind, not wishing

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to sever entirely the tie with the mammy, as the old woman still stood waiting, he, after a moment, said kindly and with great dignity:

“Those are your wages, mammy.”

“My what, sir?” The Doctor was conscious of a certain chilling of the atmosphere. He looked out of the window to avoid her gaze.

“Your wages—I—ah—have determined—I—think it better from this time to—ah—.” He had no idea it was so difficult. Why had he not got Mrs. Cary to attend to this—why had he, indeed, not taken her advice? Pshaw!— He had to face the facts; so he would do it. He summoned courage and turned and looked at the old woman. She was in the act of putting the money carefully on the corner of the table by her, and if the Doctor had difficulty in meeting her gaze, she had none in looking at him. Her eyes were fastened on him like two little shining beads. They stuck him like pins. The Doctor felt as he used to feel when, a young man, he went to pay his addresses to his wife—he was conscious that whenever he met Krenda she was inspecting him, searching his inmost soul—looking through and through him. He had to assert himself.

“You see, I promised the Federal officer at

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the court-house to pay everyone wages," he began with an effort, looking at the old woman.

"How much does you pay *Miss Bessie*?"

"How much what?"

"*Wages.*" He had no idea one word could convey so much contempt.

"Why, nothing—of course——"

Old Krenda lifted her head.

"I'm gwine 'way."

"What!"

"I'm feared you'll charge me *bode!*" She had expanded. "I ken git a little house somewheres, I reckon—or I ken go to th' city and nuss—chillun."

"Mammy—you don't understand—" The Doctor was never in such a dilemma. If his wife would only come in! What a fool he was, not to have known that his wife knew more about it than he did.

"Won't you accept the money as a gift from me?" he said at last, desperately.

"Nor—I ain' gwine *tetch* it!" The gesture was even more final than the tone. With a sniff, she turned and walked out, leaving the Doctor feeling like a school-boy.

He rose after a few minutes and went to his wife's room to get her to make his peace. The

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door was shut, but he opened it. The scene within was one that remained with him through life. His wife was weeping, and the mammy and Blair were in each other's arms. The only words he heard were from the mammy.

“Ef jest my *ole marster* could come back. He'd know I didn' do it for no wages.”

“Oh! mammy, *he* knows it too!”

The Doctor was never conscious of being so much alone in his life, and it took some time to make his peace.

In the same way that the old planters and landowners set in to restore the old places, the younger men also went to work. Necessity is a good spur and pride is another.

Stamper, with Delia Dove “for overseer,” as he said, was already beginning to make an impression on his little place. As he had “kept her from having an overseer,” he said, the best thing he could do was to “let her be one.”

“Talk about th' slaves bein' free, Mr. Jack! they won't all be free long's Delia Dove's got me on her place.” The little Sergeant's chuckle showed how truly he enjoyed that servitude. “She owns me, but she treats me well,” he laughed.

The Stamper place, amid its locusts and apple-

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trees, with its hipped roof and dormer-windows, small as it was, was as old as Red Rock—at least as the new mansion, with its imposing porticoes and extended wings, built around the big fireplace of the old house—and little Andy, though being somewhat taciturn he never said anything about it, was as proud of this fact as he was of being himself rather than Hiram Still. He had got an old army wagon from somewhere and was now beginning his farming operations in earnest. It had had “U. S.” on it, but though Andy insisted that the letters stood for “*US*,” not for the United States, Delia Dove had declined to ride in the vehicle as long as it had such characters stamped on it. As Mrs. Stamper was obdurate, Andy finally was forced to save her sensibilities, which he did by substituting “D” for “U.” This, he said, would stand either for “Delia Stamper,” or “D—d States.”

Jacquelin Gray was almost the only one of the men who was not able to go to work. His wound showed a tendency to break out afresh.

Steve Allen intended to practise law as soon as matters settled themselves. As yet, however, he could not engage in any profession. He had not yet determined to take the oath of allegiance. Meantime, to the great happiness of his

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cousins, especially of Miss Thomasia, he deferred going to the county seat and, moved by the grassy appearance of the once beautifully cultivated fields of Red Rock, began farming. Perhaps, it was sheer pride and dislike of meeting Middleton at the court-house under circumstances so different from those under which they had met last; perhaps it was the pleasure of being near Birdwood that kept him. It was very pleasant when his day's work was done, to don his old gray jacket, play gentleman once more, and ride across the river of an evening; lounge on the grass under the big trees at Birdwood, and tease Blair Cary about Jacquelin, until her eyes flashed, and she let out at him, as he used to say, "like a newly bridled filly." So he hitched his war-horses, Hotspur and Kate, to ploughs and ploughed day by day, while he made his boy, Jerry, plough furrow for furrow near him, under promise of half of his share of their crop if he kept up, and of the worst "lambing" he had ever had in his life if he did not. Jerry was a long, slim, young negro, as black as tar. He was the grandson of old Peggy, Steve's mammy, and had come from the far South. Where Steve had got him during the war no one knew except Steve and Jerry themselves. Steve said he

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found him hanging to a tree and cut him down because he wanted the rope; but that if he had known Jerry as well then as he did afterward, he would have left him hanging. At this explanation, Jerry always grinned, exhibiting two rows of white teeth which looked like corn from a full ear. Jerry was a drunkard, a liar, and a thief. But one thing was certain: he adored Steve, who in return for that virtue bore delinquencies which no one else in the world would have tolerated. Jerry had one other trait which recommended him to his master: he was as brave as a lion; he would not have been afraid of the devil himself unless he had taken on the shape of Mr. Stevenson Allen, of whom alone Jerry stood in wholesome awe.

Steve's bucolic operations came somewhat suddenly to an end. One evening, after a hard day's work, he met Wash Still dressed up and driving a new buggy, turning in at Dr. Cary's gate. He was "going to consult Dr. Cary about a case," he said. Next day, as Steve was working in the field, he saw Wash driving down the hill from the manager's house with the same well-appointed rig. Steve stopped in the row and looked at him as he drove past. Just then Jerry came up. His eye followed his

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master's and his face took on an expression of scorn.

“Umph! things is tunned sort o’ upside down,” he grunted. “Overseer’s son drivin’ buggy, and gent’mens in de fiel’.” Steve smiled at Jerry’s use of the plural. The next moment Hiram Still rode down the hill, and turning his horse in Steve’s direction came across the field.

“He sutney don’ like you, Cun’l,” said Jerry, “an’ he don’ like the Cap’n neider;” by which last, he designated Jacquelin. Jerry always gave military titles to those he liked—the highest to Steve, of course. “He say it do him good to see you wuckin’ in the fiel’ like a nigger, and some day he hope to set in de gret-house and see you doin’ it.”

Still passed quite close to Captain Allen, and as he did so, reined in his horse, and sat looking down at Steve, as he came to the end of his row.

“We all have to come to it, at last, Captain,” he said.

Whether it was his words, and the look on his face, or whether Steve had intended anyhow to do what he did, he straightened up, and shot a glance at the Manager.

“You think so? Well, you are mistaken.”

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He raised his hoe and stuck it in the ground up to the eye.

“There,” he said to Still, in a tone of command, “take that home. That’s the last time I’ll ever touch a hoe as long as I live. I’ve brains enough to make my living by them, and if I haven’t, I mean to starve!” He walked past the overseer with his head so straight, that Still began to explain that he had meant no offence. But Steve took no further notice of him.

“Jerry, you can keep on; I’ll see that you get your part of the crop.”

“Nor—I ain’t gwine to hit anur lick, nurr—I’ll starve wid yer.” And Jerry lifted his hoe and drove it into the ground; looked at Still superciliously, and followed his master with as near an imitation of his manner and gait as he could achieve.

It was only when Steve was out of hearing, that Still’s look changed. He clenched his fist, and shook it after the young man.

“I’ll bring you to it yet,” he growled.

That evening Steve announced his intention of beginning immediately the practice of his profession.

CHAPTER IX

MR. JONADAB LEECH TURNS UP WITH A CARPET-BAG
AND OPENS HIS BUREAU

THE young officers at the court-house meantime had fared very well. It is true that most of the residents treated them coldly, if civilly, and that the girls of the place, of whom there were quite a number, turned aside whenever they met them, and passed by with their heads held high, and their eyes straight to the front, flashing daggers. But this the young men were from experience more or less used to.

Reely Thurston told Middleton that if he would leave matters to him, he would engineer him through the campaign, and before it was over would be warbling ditties with all the pretty girls in a way to make his cousin, Miss Ruth Welch, green with envy. The lieutenant began by parading up and down on his very fine horse; but the only result he attained was to hear a plump young girl ask another in a clear voice,

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evidently meant for him to hear, "What poor Southerner," she supposed, "that little Yankee stole that horse from!" He recognized the speaker as the young lady he had seen looking at them from the door of the clerk's office the morning of their arrival.

Brutusville, the county seat where they were posted, was a pretty little straggling country village of old-fashioned houses amid groves of fine old trees, lying along the main road of the county, where it wound among shady slopes, with the blue mountain range in the distance. Most of the houses were hip-roofed and gray with age. The river—the same stream that divided Red Rock from Birdwood—passed near the village, broadening as it reached the more level country and received the waters of one or two other streams. Before the war there had been talk of establishing deep-water connections with the lower country, as the last rapids of any extent were not far below Brutusville. Dr. Cary, however, had humorously suggested that they would find it easier to macadamize the river than to make it navigable.

The county seat had suffered, like the rest of the county, during the war; but as it happened, the main body of the enemy had been kept out

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of the place by high water, and the fine old trees did much to conceal the scars that had been made.

The old, brick court-house in the middle of the green, peeping out from among the trees, with its great, classical portico, was esteemed by the residents of the village to be, perhaps, the most imposing structure in the world. Mr. Dockett, the clerk—who had filled this position for nearly forty years, with the exception of the brief period when, fired by martial enthusiasm, he had gone off with Captain Gray's company—told Lieutenant Thurston a day or two after the latter's arrival, that while he had never been to Greece or, indeed, out of the State, he had been informed by those who had been there that the court-house was, perhaps, in some respects, more perfect than any building in Athens. Lieutenant Thurston said he had never been to Greece either, but he was quite sure it was. He also added that he considered Mr. Dockett's own house a very beautiful one, and thought that it showed evidences, in its embellishments, of that same classical taste that Mr. Dockett admired so much. Mr. Dockett, while accepting the compliment with due modesty, answered that if the lieutenant wished to see a beautiful house he

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should see Red Rock. And thereupon began new matter, the young officer gently leading the old gentleman to talk of all the people and affairs of the neighborhood, including the charms of the girls.

From this, it will be seen that the little Lieutenant was already laying his mines, and preparing to make good his promise to Middleton to engineer him through the campaign.

The compliment to the Dockett mansion was not without its effect on the genius who presided in that classic and comfortable abode, and, at length, Mrs. Dockett, a plump and energetic woman, had, with some prevision, though in a manner to make her beneficiaries sensible of her condescension, acceded to the young men's request to take them as boarders, and allow them to occupy a wing-room in her house.

Thus Middleton and Thurston were able to write Ruth Welch a glowing account of their "headquarters in an old colonial mansion," and of the "beautiful maiden" who sang them "songs of the South."

The songs, however, that Miss Dockett sang, though as Thurston said truly, they were in one sense sung for them, were not sung in the sense Lieutenant Thurston implied. They were

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hardly just the sort that Miss Ruth Welch would have approved of, and were certainly not what Mrs. Welch would have tolerated. For they were all of the most ultra-Southern spirit and tendency, and breathed the deadliest defiance to everyone and everything Northern. Miss Dockett was not pretty, except as youth and wholesomeness give beauty; but she was a cheery maiden, with blue eyes, white teeth, rosy cheeks, and a profusion of hair, and though she had no training, she possessed a pleasant voice and sang naturally and agreeably—at least to one who, like Thurston, had not too much ear for music. Thurston once had the temerity to ask for a song—for which he received a merited rebuff. Of course she would not sing for a Yankee, said the young lady, with a toss of her head and an increased elevation of her little nose, and immediately she left the room. When, however, the young officers were in their rooms, she sang all the Southern songs she knew. One, in particular, she rendered with great spirit. It had just been written. It began:

“Oh! I’m a good old rebel,
Now, that’s just what I am;
For this ‘Fair land of freedom,’
I do not care a-t all.”

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Another verse ran :

“Three hundred thousand Yankees
Lays dead in Southern dus’,
We got three hundred thousand
Before they conquered us;
They died of Southern fever,
Of Southern steel and shot;
I wish they were three million,
Instead of what we got.”

The continued iteration of this sanguinary melody floating in at the open window finally induced the little Lieutenant, in his own room one afternoon, to raise, in opposition, his own voice, which was none of the most melodious, in the strains of “The Star-Spangled Banner.” But he had got no further than the second invocation to “the land of the free and the home of the brave,” when there was a rush of footsteps outside, followed by a pounding on his door, and on his opening the door Mrs. Dockett bore down on him with so much fire in her eye that Reely was quite overwhelmed. And when she gave him notice that she would have no Yankee songs sung in her house, and that he must either “quit the house or quit howling,” little Thurston, partly amused and partly daunted, and with the wide difference between Mrs. Dockett’s fried chicken

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and beat-biscuit and the mess-table "truck" before his eyes, promised to adopt the latter course—"generally."

Fortunately the young officers were too much accustomed to such defiances to feel very serious about them, and they went on ingratiating themselves with Miss Dockett—Thurston by his fun and good-humor, and Middleton by his gentlemanly bearing and his firm management of the negroes who hung around the camp.

The peace and comfort of the young men, however, were suddenly much threatened by the arrival of a new official, not under their jurisdiction, though under Colonel Krafton, who had sent him up, specially charged with all matters relating to the negroes.

He arrived one afternoon with only a carpet-bag; took a room in the hotel, and, as if already familiar with the ground, immediately dispatched a note to Mrs. Dockett asking quarters in her house. Even had the new-comer preferred his application as a request it might have been rejected; but he demanded it quite as a right; the line which he sent up by a negro servant being rather in the nature of an order than a petition to Mrs. Dockett to prepare the best room in her house for his head-quarters. It was

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signed "Jonadab Leech, Provost-Marshal, commanding," etc., etc. But the new official did not know Mrs. Dockett. The order raised a breeze which came near blowing the two officers, whom she had accepted and domiciled in her house, out of the quarters she had vouchsafed them. She sailed down upon them with the letter in her hand; and, as Thurston said, with colors flying and guns ready for action. But, fortunately, little Thurston was equal to the emergency. He glanced at the paper the enraged lady showed him and requested to be allowed possession of it for a moment. When he had apparently studied it attentively, he looked up.

"I do not know that I quite comprehend. Do I understand you to insist on taking this man in?" He was never so innocent-looking. Mrs. Dockett gasped:

"What!! Ta—ke in the man that wrote *that!*" She visibly expanded.

"—Because if you do, Captain Middleton and I shall have to move our quarters. I happen to know this man personally—slightly—that is, I once had a transaction with him as an officer which resulted unpleasantly. His functions are entirely different from ours; he being charged with matters relating to the freedmen, their care

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and support; while ours are military and relate to the government of the county and the maintenance of peace. (He glanced at Mrs. Dockett, who was sniffing ominously.) While we shall uphold him in all proper exercise of his power, and recognize his authority as an officer within the scope of his own jurisdiction, I must say that for personal reasons his presence would be distasteful to me, and I think I can speak for Captain Middleton (here he looked over at his friend inquiringly), and if you contemplate taking him in, I should prefer to remove my own quarters back to camp.”

The little Lieutenant had gathered dignity as he proceeded, and he delivered the close of his oration with quite the manner of an orator. He had spoken so rapidly that Mrs. Dockett had not had a moment to get in a word. He closed with a most impressive bow, while Middleton gazed at him with mingled amusement and admiration.

Mrs. Dockett discovered the wind taken completely out of her sails, and found herself actually forced into the position of making a tack and having rather to offer an apology to the ruffled little officer.

She had never dreamed of preferring this new-comer to them, she declared. She could not

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but say that they had always acted in a most gentlemanly way, so far as she was concerned. She had, indeed, been most agreeably surprised. She had never, for a moment, dreamed of permitting this impudent upstart, whoever he was, to come into her house. Let him go to some of his colored friends. Of course, if they wished to leave her house—they must do so. Her head was rising again. Thurston hastened to interpose.

Not at all—they were most charmed, etc. Only he didn't know but she might not care to have them remain—and they could not do so if this man came.

“He's not coming. Let him try it.” And the irate lady sailed out to deliver her broadside to the new enemy that had borne down on her.

She had no sooner disappeared than the Lieutenant's face fell.

“Gad! Larry, we are undone. It's that Leech who used to live with old Bolter, and about whom they told the story of his trying to persuade his wife to let him get a divorce, and who shirked all through the war. Unless we can get rid of him it's all up. We're ruined.”

“Freeze him out,” Middleton said, briefly. “You've begun well.”

“Freeze ——? Freeze a snow-bank! That's

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his climate. He'd freeze in ——!" The little Lieutenant named a very hot place.

Thurston had not been too soon in placing the line of discrimination clearly between themselves and the Provost-Marshal, for the arrival of the latter in the county at once caused a change of conditions.

On receipt of Mrs. Dockett's decisive and stinging reply Leech immediately made application to Captain Middleton to enforce his requisition, but, to his indignation, he was informed that they were the only boarders, and that Mrs. Dockett managed her own domestic affairs: which, indeed, was no more than the truth. To revenge himself, the Provost took possession of Mr. Dockett's office, and opened his bureau in it, crowding the old official into a back room of the building. Here, too, however, he was doomed to disappointment and mortification; for, on the old clerk's representation of the danger to his records, and of their value, enforced by Mrs. Dockett's persuasive arguments, Leech was required by Middleton to surrender possession and take up his quarters in an unoccupied building on the other side of the road. Here he opened his office under a flaring sign bearing the words, "FREEDMEN'S BUREAU."

So the Provost, being baffled here, had to con-

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tent himself, as he might, at the court-house tavern, where he soon laid off a new campaign. His principal trouble there, lay in the presence of the dark, sallow Captain McRaffle, whose saturnine face scowled at him from the upper end of the table, and kept him in a state of constant irritation. The only speech the Captain ever addressed to him was to ask if he played cards, and on his saying he "never played games," he appeared to take no further interest in him. The Provost, however, kept his eye on him.

The effect of the Provost's appearance was felt immediately. The news of his arrival seemed to have spread in a night, and the next day the roads were filled with negroes.

"De wud had come for 'em," they said. They "had to go to de Cap'n to git de papers out o' de buro." Only the old house-servants were left, and even they were somewhat excited.

This time those who left their homes did not return so quickly. Immediately after the news of the surrender came, a good many of the negroes had gone off and established settlements to themselves. The chief settlement in the Red Rock neighborhood was known as "The Bend," from the fact that it was in a section half surrounded by a curve of the river. It was accessi-

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ble from both sides of the river, and in the past had been much associated with runaway negroes.

It had always been an unsavory spot in the county, and now, the negroes congregating there, it had come into greater ill repute than ever. It was dubbed with some derision, "Africa." Here Jim Sherwood and Moses had built cabins, and shortly many others gathered about them. This, however, might not have amounted to much had not another matter come to light.

The Provost was summoning the negroes and enrolling them by hundreds, exciting them with stories of what the Government proposed to do for them, and telling them the most pernicious lies: that they need not work, and that the Government was going to feed them and give them all "forty acres and a mule apiece."

Even the older negroes were somewhat excited by these tales, and, finally, Mammy Krenda asked Dr. Cary if it was true that the Government was going to give them all land.

"Of course not. Who says so?" asked the Doctor.

"I heah so," said the old woman. Even she was beginning to be afraid to tell what she had heard.

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Contemporaneously with this, an unprecedented amount of lawlessness suddenly appeared: chicken-houses were robbed; sheep and pigs and even cattle were stolen, without there being any authority to take cognizance of the thefts or any power to punish.

Andy Stamper and several others of the neighbors came over to see Dr. Cary about the matter. They had been to the courthouse the day before "to see about things," Andy said, and "had found every nigger in the county piled up in front of that Leech's door."

"They're talkin' about everyone of 'em git-
tin' forty acres and a mule, Doctor," said little Andy, with a twinkle in his eye; but a grim look about his mouth. "The biggest men down thar are that Jim Sherwood of yours; that trick-doc-
tor nigger of Miss Gray's, Moses Swift, and a tall, black nigger of General Legaie's, named Nicholas Ash. They're doin' most of the talkin'. Well, I ain't got but eighty acres—jest about enough for two of 'em," added Andy, the grim lines deepening about his mouth; "but I'm mighty sorry for them two as tries to git 'em—I told Hiram so." The twinkle had disappeared from his blue eyes, like the flash on a ripple, and

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the eyes were as quiet and gray as the water after the ripple had passed.

“Hiram, he’s the chief adviser and friend of the new man. I thought he was hatchin’ something. He was down there inside of the office—looked like a shot cat when I come in—said he was tryin’ to git some hands. You watch him. He’s a goin’ over. He was at the nigger meetin’-house th’ other night. I heard some white man was there; but I couldn’t git at who ’twas till old Weev’ly let it out.”

Dr. Cary told of his conversation with Still a few days before; but the little Sergeant was not convinced.

“Whenever he talks, that’s the time you know he ain’t goin’ to do it,” he said.

Still’s attentions to Miss Delia Dove had not only quickened Andy’s jealousy, but had sharpened his suspicion generally, and he had followed his movements closely.

Still had quickly become assured that the two young soldiers in command at the county seat were not the kind for him to impress. And when the new officer came he had at once proceeded to inspect him.

Leech was expecting him; for though they had never met, Still had already secretly placed him-

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self in communication with Krafton, the Provost-Marshal in the city.

The new Provost was not pleasing to look on. He was a man spare in figure and with a slight stoop in his shoulders—consequent perhaps on a habit he had of keeping his gaze on the ground. He had mild blue eyes, and a long, sallow face, with a thin nose, bad teeth, and a chin that ended almost in a point. He rarely showed temper. He posed rather as a good-natured, easy-going fellow, cracking jokes with anyone who would listen to him, and indulging in laughter which made up in loudness what it lacked in merriment. When he walked, it was with a peculiar, sinuous motion. The lines in his face gave him so sour an expression that Steve Allen, just after he moved to the court-house to practise law, said that Leech, from his look, must be as great a stench in his own nostrils as in those of other people. This speech brought Steve Leech's undying hatred, though he veiled it well enough at the moment and simply bided his time.

The Provost-Marshal was not a prepossessing person even to Still; but Mrs. Gray's manager had large schemes in his mind, and the newcomer appeared a likely person to aid him in

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carrying them out. They soon became advisers for each other.

“You can’t do nothin’ with them two young men,” the overseer told the Provost. “I’ve done gauged ’em. I know ’em as soon as I see ’em, and I tell you they don’t think no more of folks like you and me than of the dirt under their feet. They’re for the aristocrats.”

He shortly gauged the Provost.

“When I know what a man wants, I know how to git at him,” he said to his son Wash, afterward. “He wants to get up—but first he wants money—and we must let him see it. I lent him a leetle too—just to grease the skillet. When you’ve lent a man money you’ve got a halter on him.”

“You’re a mighty big fool to lend your money to a man you don’t know anything about. You’ll never get it back,” observed Wash, surlily.

“Ah! Won’t I? Trust me; I never lend money that I don’t get it back in one shape or another—with interest too. I don’t expect to get that back.” He dropped his voice. “That’s what I call a purchase—not a loan. Don’t try to fry your chicken till you’ve greased the pan, my son.”

“Something in that,” admitted the young

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medical student. They were sitting on the little front porch of the overseer's house, and Hiram Still's eye took in the scene about him—the wide fields, the rich, low grounds, the chimneys of the mansion-house peeping from the grove of great trees on its high hill a half mile away. His face lit up.

“Ah! Wash, if you trust your old pappy, you'll see some mighty changes in this here county. What'd you say if you was to see yourself some day settin' up in that big hall yonder, with, say, a pretty young lady from acrost the river, and that Steve and Mr. Jacquelin plough-in' in the furrer?”

“By G—d! I'd love it,” declared Wash, decisively, his good-humor thoroughly restored.

CHAPTER X

THE PROVOST MAKES HIS FIRST MOVE

LEECH shortly determined to give the neighborhood an illustration of his power, and, striking, he struck high.

A few days after the Provost's arrival Dr. Cary received a summons to appear before him at the court-house next day. It was issued on the complaint of "the Rev. James Sherwood," and was signed, "Jonadab Leech, Provost commanding," etc.

General Legaie, who was at Birdwood when the soldier who served the summons arrived, was urgent that Dr. Cary should refuse to obey it; but the Doctor said he would go. He would obey the law. He would not, however, report to Leech, but to Captain Middleton, the ranking officer. The General said if the Doctor would persist in going, he would go with him to represent him. So next morning the two old officers rode down to the court-house together, the General very martial, and Dr. Cary very calm.

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When they reached the county seat they found "the street," or road in front of "the green," which was occupied by the camp of the soldiers, filled with negroes, men and women. They had made booths of boughs in the fence-corners, where they were living like children at play, and were all in the gayest spirits, laughing and shouting and "larking" among themselves, presenting in this regard a very different state of mind from that of the two gentlemen. They were, however, respectful enough to them, and when the riders inquired where the commanding officer was, there were plenty of offers to show them, and more than enough to hold their horses. Some of them indicated that the commander was in the old store on the roadside, which appeared from the throng about it to be the centre of interest to the crowd.

"Dat ain't nuttin' but the buro, sir; the ones you wants to see is up yonder at Miss' Dockett's; I knows de ones you wants to see," said Tom, one of the Doctor's old servants, with great pride.

To settle the question, the Doctor dismounted and walked in, giving his horse to the old man to hold.

The front of the store was full of negroes,

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packed together as thick as they could stand, and simply waiting. They made way for the Doctor and he passed through to the rear, where there was a little partition walling off a back room. The door was ajar, and inside were seated two men, one a stranger in uniform, the other, a man who sat with his back to the door, and who, at the moment that the Doctor approached, was leaning forward, talking to the Provost in a low, earnest half-whisper. As the visitor knocked the official glanced up and the other man turned quickly and looked over his shoulder. Seeing Dr. Cary, he sprang to his feet. It was Hiram Still.

“I wish to see the officer in command,” announced the Doctor. “Good-morning, Mr. Still.” His tone expressed surprise.

“I am the officer in command,” said the official, shortly.

“Ah! you are not Captain Middleton? I believe he is in command.”

“No, I guess not. I’m Captain *Leech*, head of the Freedmen’s Bureau.” His voice was thin but assertive, and he spoke as if he had been contradicted.

“Ah! It is the regular officer I wish to see.”

“I’m regular enough, I guess, and if it’s any-

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thing about the freedmen you'll find, I guess, I'm the one to see." He turned from the Doctor with studied indifference and motioned to his companion to resume his seat. The latter, however, came forward. He had apparently recovered somewhat from his confusion.

"This is Dr. Cary, one of the finest gentlemen in our county," he said to the officer, as if he were making a speech, and then turned to the Doctor: "Captain Leech is the gentleman to see about getting our hands back. Fact is, I am just down here about that now."

Leech had been looking at the Doctor with new interest. "So you're Dr. Cary?" he said. "Well, I'm the one for you to see. I summoned you to appear before me to know why you turned the Rev. Mr. Sherwood out of his home." His manner was growing more and more insolent, and the Doctor stiffened. The only notice he took was to look over Leech's head.

"Ah! I believe I will go and see Captain Middleton," he said, with dignity. "Good-morning," and he walked out, his head held somewhat higher than when he went in, leaving Leech fuming in impotent rage, and Still to give the Head of the Bureau behind his back a very

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different estimate of him from that which he had just declared so loudly in his presence.

“He’s one of that same sort with your young men,” said the manager, “only more so. What did I tell you? See, he won’t talk to *you!* He wants to talk to Captain Middleton. You trust me, I’ll keep you informed. I know ’em all. Not that he ain’t better than most, because he’s naturally kind-hearted and would do well enough if let alone, but he can’t help it. It’s bred in the bone. But I’m too smart for ’em. I was too smart for ’em durin’ the war, and I am still.” He gave the Provost a confidential wink.

“Well, he’ll find out who I am before he gets through,” said Leech. “I guess he’ll find I’m about as big a man as Captain Middleton.” He squared back his thin shoulders and puffed out his chest. “I’ll show him.” He turned to the door.

“That’s it—that’s it,” smiled Still, delightedly.

Meantime Dr. Cary had joined General Le-gaie, and with the single remark that it was “the commanding officer, not the commissary,” that they wanted to see, they rode up the hill.

When the two gentlemen arrived at Mrs.

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Dockett's they found that energetic lady, trowel in hand, among her flowers, and were received by her with so much distinction that it produced immediately a great impression on her two lodgers, who, unseen, were observing them from their window.

“Gad! Larry, there's Don Quixote, and he's brought his cousin, Dr. Filgrave, along with him. He must be a lieutenant-general at least. See the way the old lady is smiling! I must learn his secret.” And the little Lieutenant sprang to the mirror and rattled on as Middleton got ready for the interview which he anticipated, and the two gentlemen came slowly up the walk, bareheaded, with Mrs. Dockett, talking energetically, between them.

The next moment there was a tramp outside the door, and with that rap, which Thurston said was a model for the last trump, Mrs. Dockett herself flung open the door and announced, with a wave of her hand:

“General Legaie and Major Cary.”

The two visitors were received with great respect. Middleton was at his best, and in the face of a somewhat depressing gravity on the two old officers' part, tried to give the interview a friendly turn by recalling pleasantly his visit

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to Red Rock before the war, and his recollection of Dr. Cary and his daughter. He ventured even to inquire after her. He supposed she was a good big girl now?

“Yes, she was almost quite grown and was enjoying very good health,” said the Doctor, bowing civilly, and he proceeded forthwith to state the cause of their visit, while Thurston introduced to the General, somewhat irrelevantly, the subject of fishing.

Captain Middleton listened respectfully to all the two gentlemen had to say. He agreed with them as to the necessity of establishing some form of civil government in the counties, and believed that steps would be taken to do so as soon as possible. Meantime he should preserve order. Matters relating to the negroes, except in the line of preserving order, were, however, rather beyond his province, and properly under the control of an entirely distinct branch, which was just being organized, with headquarters for the State, in the city. He said he would go with Dr. Cary before the Provost and see that he was not annoyed by any frivolous charge. So he accompanied the two gentlemen back to Leech's office and attended the trial. It was galling enough to the two gentlemen as it was; and but

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for the presence of Middleton might have been much more so. Leech's blue eyes snapped with pleasure at the reappearance of the old officers, but were filled with a vague disquiet at the presence of their companion. However, he immediately proceeded with much importance to take up the case. The "trial" was held in the courthouse, and the Provost sat in the judge's seat. The negroes around took in quickly that something unusual was happening, and the courtroom was thronged with them, all filled with curiosity, and many of the older ones wearing on their faces a preternatural solemnity. Sherwood was present, in a black coat, his countenance expressive of comical self-importance. Dr. Cary and General Legaie sat behind the bar, the Doctor, somewhat paler than usual, his head up, his mouth compressed, and his thin nostrils dilating; the General's eyes glowing with the fire that smouldered beneath. Middleton sat off to one side, a little in front of the bar, a silent but observant spectator.

The case was stated by Leech, and without the useless formality of examining the complainant, who had already given his story, Dr. Cary was asked by the Provost, why he had driven Sherwood off.

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The Doctor rose and made his statement. When he first stood up the compression of his lips showed the feeling under which he labored; but the next second he had mastered himself, and when he spoke it was with as much respect as if he were addressing the Chief Justice. The land was his, and he claimed that he would have had the right to drive the man off had he wished to do so; but as a matter of fact, he had not done so—he had not done so on account of Sherwood's wife, who was the daughter of the old mammy in his family, and a valued servant. He had only deposed him from being the manager.

The Provost was manifestly a little disconcerted by this announcement. He glanced about him. The Doctor had evidently made an impression.

“Can you prove this?” he asked, sharply. The General wriggled in his chair, his hands clutching the sides, and the Doctor for a second looked a trifle more grim. He drew in a long breath.

“Well, my word has usually been taken as proof of a fact I stated,” he said, slowly. “But if you desire further proof, there are several of my old servants present who will corroborate what I state. Perhaps you might be willing

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to accept their testimony?" He looked the Provost in the eyes, and then glanced around half humorously. "Tom!" he called to the old man who had held his horse, and who was now standing in the front row. "Will you state what occurred, to this—ah—officer?"

"Yas, sub—I'll groberate ev'y wud you say—'cus' I wuz dyah," asserted Tom, with manifest pride.

"Dat's so," called out one or two others, not to be outdone by Tom, and the tide set in for the Doctor.

The Provost, in this state of the case, declared that the charge was not sustained, and he felt it his duty to dismiss the complaint. He, however, would take this occasion to state his views on the duties of the former owners to their slaves; and he delivered a long and somewhat rambling discourse on the subject, manifestly designed for the sable part of his audience. When he concluded, and just as he started to rise, the General sprang to his feet. The Doctor looked at him with some curiosity, perhaps not unmingled with anxiety, for the General's eyes were blazing. With an effort, however, the General controlled himself.

"Permit me to say, Mr. Provost, that your

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views, like those of a good many people of your class, are more valuable to yourself than to others." He bowed low.

"Dat's so, too!" called out Tom, who was still in a corroborative mood, on which there was a guffaw from the negroes. And with this shot, the General, after looking the Provost steadily in the eyes, turned on his heel and stalked out of the court-house, leaving Leech trying ineffectually to look as if he, as well as others, appreciated the humor of Tom's speech.

As they came out, Middleton took occasion to reopen their former conversation as to the necessity of establishing some form of civil government in the counties. He believed, he said, that the two gentlemen might find it better to apply to the head of the bureau in this section—Colonel Krafton—rather than to attempt to secure any co-operation from Leech, who, he said, was only a subordinate, and really had little authority.

Middleton and Thurston quickly felt the beneficial effect of their civility to the old officers, in the increasing cordiality shown them by their landlady. Mrs. Dockett gave them a full account of both visitors, their pedigrees and position, not omitting a glowing picture of the

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beauty and charms of the daughter of Dr. Cary, and a hint that she was bound to marry either Jacquelin Gray, the owner of Red Rock, or her cousin, Captain Stevenson Allen, who, Mrs. Dockett declared, was the finest young man in the world, and had applied to her for table-board that very day.

This was interesting, at least to Thurston, who declared that now that he was succeeding so well with Miss Dockett, it was necessary to utilize Middleton's figure. Events, however, were moving without Thurston's agency.

An order came to Middleton from headquarters a day or two later to go to the upper end of the county and investigate certain "mysterious meetings" which, it was reported, were being held in that section.

The list given of those who participated in such meetings made Middleton whistle. It contained the names of Dr. Cary, General Legaie, Captain Allen, and nearly every man of prominence in the county.

The name given him, as that of the person who could furnish him with information, was Hiram Still; and the order contained explicit directions where to meet him. He would find

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him at a certain hour at the house of a colored man, named Nicholas Ash.

So the Captain rode up to a small cabin situated in a little valley near the Red Rock place, and had an interview with Still, who appeared to Middleton far more mysterious than anything else he discovered on his trip. The meetings referred to, seemed to be only those social gatherings which Dr. Cary had already spoken of to the young officer. When Middleton prepared to leave, Mr. Still offered to show him a nearer way back by the ford below the old bridge that had been destroyed during the war, and as it was late in the afternoon, Middleton accepted his offer.

They were almost at the ford when an old carriage came out of the road which led down from the Red Rock plantation, and turned into the main road just before them. Still pulled up his horse, and, excusing himself from going any farther, on the ground that if Middleton followed the carriage he would be all right, turned back. All anyone had to do, he said, was to keep down the river a little, so as not to hit the sunken timbers; but not to go too far down or he would get over a ledge of rock and into deep water.

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As the road was narrow and Middleton supposed that the driver knew the ford, he kept behind the carriage, and let it cross before him. One of the horses appeared to be afraid of the water, and the driver had to whip him to force him in. So when he entered the stream he was plunging, and, continuing to plunge, he got among the sunken timbers and fell.

Middleton was so close behind the carriage that he could hear the voices of two ladies inside, one of whom was apparently much alarmed, whilst the other was soothing her, and encouraging the driver. He heard her say:

“There’s no danger, Cousin Thomasia. Gideon can manage them.” But there was some danger, and “Cousin Thomasia” appeared to know it. The danger was that the frightened horses might turn and pull the vehicle around, upsetting it in the deep water below, and as the fallen horse struggled, Middleton dashed in on the lower side, and catching the near horse, steadied him whilst the other got up. Then, springing from his own horse, he caught the other just as he got to his feet, and held to him until they reached the farther bank, where he assisted the driver in bringing them to a stand-

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still, and enabled the ladies to get out and see what damage had been done.

He had taken in, even as he passed the carriage in the water, that the two occupants were an elderly lady and a young lady, the latter of whom appeared to be holding the former; but it was after he reached the bank that he observed that the younger of the two ladies was one of the prettiest girls he had ever seen. And the next second he recognized her as Miss Cary. She evidently recognized him too. As she turned to thank him, after she had helped her companion from the carriage, the color rose to her face, appearing the deeper and more charming because of the white which had just preceded it, and which it so rapidly followed; and there was a look in her eyes which was part shy embarrassment and part merriment. He saw that she knew him, but she did not admit it.

He began to examine busily the harness, which was old, and had been broken in several places. He had some straps on his saddle, he said, which he would get. The girl thanked him, with quiet dignity, but declined firmly.

They would not trouble him. Gideon could mend it, and she could hold the horses. She bowed to him, with grave eyes, and made a

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movement toward the horse, holding out her ungloved hand to catch the bridle, and saying, "Whoa, boy," in a voice which Middleton thought might have tamed Bucephalus. Miss Thomasia, however, mildly but firmly interposed.

"No, indeed, my dear, I'll never get into that carriage again behind those dreadful horses, unless this—this—gentleman (the word was a little difficult) stays right by their heads. I am the greatest coward in the world," she said to Middleton in the most confiding and friendly manner; "I am afraid of everything." (Then to her companion again, in a lower tone:) "It is very hard to be beholden to a Yankee; but it is much better than having your neck broken. And we are very much obliged to you, sir, I assure you. Blair, my dear, let the—" She paused and took breath.

"*Yankee,*" said Middleton, in a clear voice, much amused, as he worked diligently at a strap.

"—*Gentleman* help us. Don't be too obstinate. Nothing distinguishes a lady more than her manner of giving in."

So, as Middleton was already at work, the girl could do nothing but yield. He got his straps, and soon had the breaks repaired, and,

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having, at Miss Thomasia's request, held the horses while the ladies re-entered the vehicle, and then having started them off, he stood aside and saluted as they passed, catching, accidentally, Miss Cary's eyes, which were once more grave. The only remark she had volunteered to him outside of the subject of the broken harness was in praise of his horse, which was, indeed, a magnificent animal.

A few minutes later, the young Captain galloped by the carriage, but he did not glance in, he simply saluted as he passed, with eyes straight to the front.

When he reached home that night Larry Middleton was graver than usual; but little Thurston, after hearing of the adventure, was in better spirits than he had shown for some time. He glanced at Middleton's half-discontented face, and burst out:

“‘Oh! cast that shadow from thy brow.’ It was clearly Providence. Why, Larry, after that they are obliged to invite us to dinner.”

“Why, she didn't even speak to me,” growled Middleton, puffing away at his pipe. “And I know she recognized me, just as clearly as I did her.”

“Of course, she recognized you—recognized

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you as one of the enemies of her country—a hated oppressor—a despicable Yankee. Did you expect her to fall on your neck and weep? On my soul! she's a girl of spirit! Like my own adorable Elizabeth! All the same, we're as good for invitations to whatever they give as a dollar is for a doughnut."

And when a day or two later a note from Dr. Cary, in a formal handwriting and equally formal words, was brought to Captain Middleton, thanking him for his "opportune and courteous aid" to his daughter and cousin, Lieutenant Thurston declared that it was an invitation to Middleton's wedding.

CHAPTER XI

THE PROVOST CATCHES A TARTAR, AND CAPTAIN MID-
DLETON SEEKS THE CONSOLATIONS OF RELIGION

STEVE ALLEN on his removal to the county seat after his sudden abandonment of farming, had taken up his quarters in an old building, fronting on the court-green near the Clerk's office, and with its rear opening on a little lane which led to two of the principal roads in the county. From the evening of his arrival Steve took possession of the entire village. He wore his old cavalry uniform, the only suit he possessed, and, with his slouched hat set on one side of his handsome head, carried himself so independently that he was regarded with some disfavor by the two young officers, whom he on his side treated with just that manner which appeared to him most exasperating to each of them. He was immediately the most popular man in the place. He played cards with the men, and marbles with the boys; made love to the

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girls, and teased the old women; joked with the soldiers, especially with the big Irish Sergeant, Dennis O'Meara, and fought the war over with the officers. He boldly asserted that the Confederates had been victorious in every battle they had ever fought, and had, as someone said, simply "worn themselves out whipping the Yankees," a line of tactics which exasperated even little Thurston, until he one day surprised a gleam of such amused satisfaction in Steve's gray eyes that he afterward avoided the ambuscade and enjoyed the diversion of seeing Leech, and even Middleton, caught.

Leech had been warned in advance by Mr. Still of Steve Allen's intention to settle at the county seat, and immediately on Steve's arrival had notified him to appear before him as Provost and exhibit his parole. From that time Steve had taken Leech as his prey. Knowing that the Provost was not the proper officer, he did not obey the order, and repaid Leech's insolence with burning contempt, never failing, on occasion, to fire some shafts at him which penetrated and stung.

General Legaie and Dr. Cary, after their experience with Leech, determined to lose no more time than was necessary in adopting the sugges-

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tion of Captain Middleton and going to see the Commandant of the Freedmen's Bureau in the city. The General, however, stipulated that he should not be expected to do more than state his views to the officer in command. This he was willing to do, as he was going with Dr. Cary to the city, where the Doctor was to see Mr. Ledger and conclude the negotiation for a loan to restock his plantation.

It happened, however, that when General Le-gaie and Dr. Cary called on Colonel Krafton, two other visitors from their county had been to see that officer: Hiram Still and Leech.

The two gentlemen were kept waiting for some time after their names had been taken in by the sentinel before they were admitted to the Chief Provost's presence, and every minute of that period the General grew hotter and hotter, and walked up and down the little ante-room with more and more dignity.

"Dr. Johnson before Lord Chesterfield," said the Doctor, laughing at his friend's impatience and indignation.

"Dr. Johnson before a dog!" was the little General's retort. "Why, sir, I never treated a negro in my life as he has treated us."

At last, however, they were admitted.

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The officer, a stout man with closely cropped iron-gray hair, a lowering brow and a heavy jaw, was seated at his desk writing. He did not look up when they entered, but said, "Sit down," and wrote on. When he was through, he called out, and a sentinel entered.

"Send that off at once—or—wait where you are. I may have another to send." He turned to the two visitors, who were still standing.

"Well?"

"I am Major Cary," that gentleman said, advancing, "And this is General Legaie." He bowed gravely.

"Oh! I know you," said the officer. He turned to his desk and searched for something.

"Oh!—I was not aware that I had had the pleasure of meeting you before," said the Doctor, brightening. "Where was it, sir? I regret that my memory has not served me better." He seated himself.

"I did not say I had met you—I said I knew you, and I do. I know you both."

"Oh! I thought I should not have forgotten," said the Doctor.

"No, nor you won't. I have a report of you, and know why you've come." He shook his head as he turned to them. "I'm Colonel Kraf-

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ton, Provost of this district, and I mean to be the Provost, and you might as well understand it now as hereafter.”

“Oh!” said the Doctor, rising slowly from the seat he had taken.

“I know about your conferences, and your meetings, and the terms you propose to dictate to me; but I will show you that I am in authority here and I don't propose to be dictated to, either; do you understand? I don't want any of your advice. When I want you I'll send for you; do you understand?”

The Doctor, who had waited in a sort of maze for the Provost to pause, turned to his friend, whose face was perfectly white and whose usually pleasant eyes had a red rim around the irises.

“I beg your pardon, General Legaié, I thought we should find a gentleman, but——”

“I never did, Major,” said the little General. “But I had no idea we should find such a dog as this.” He turned to the Provost, and, with a bow, fixed his eyes on him. But that officer looked at the sentry and said:

“Open the door.”

The General looked out of it, expecting a file of soldiers to arrest them, and straightened him-

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self for the ordeal. There was none there, however. The General's countenance fell.

"I said 'dog,' but I apologize to that animal, and say—*worm!*" He turned his eyes once more on the Provost.

"I shall be at the Brandon tavern until the evening. Do you understand that?" he said, addressing the Provost. He stalked out, his nose high in the air, his heels ringing on the floor.

As soon as they were outside, the Doctor began to apologize to the General again; but the latter, having blown off his steam, and fully appreciating his friend's mortification, was very handsome about it. He had at heart a sly hope that the Provost officer might consult some friend who would insist on his taking up the insult, and so give him a satisfaction which he was at that moment very eager for. None came that evening, however, and as the next day none had come, the General was forced to return home unsatisfied.

The effect of Dr. Cary's and General Legaie's interview with Colonel Krafton was shortly felt in the county.

A few days later an order came for an inquisition to be made from house to house for arms. The labor this required was so great that it was

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divided up. In the part of the county where General Legaie lived, the investigation was made by Middleton, who conducted himself throughout with due propriety, even declaring it, as General Legaie reported, "an unpleasant duty," and "taking in every case a gentleman's word," never touching a thing except, perhaps, where there would be an army musket or pistol. General Legaie's old duelling-pistols, which his butler, Julius, had hidden and taken care of all during the war, were left unmolested, and the young officer went so far as to express, the General stated, a "somewhat critical admiration for them," observing that they were the first genuine duelling-pistols he had ever seen. On this the General—though, as he declared, it required all his politeness to do so—could not but make the offer that in case Captain Middleton should ever have occasion to use a pair they were entirely at his service.

In the Red Rock and Birdwood neighborhood, the people were not so fortunate. There the inquisition was conducted by Leech—partly, perhaps, because the two young officers did not wish to pay their first visit to Dr. Cary's on such an errand, and partly because Leech requested to be allowed to assist in the work.

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Though the other officers knew nothing of it, Leech had two reasons for wishing to conduct the search for arms at Dr. Cary's. He had not forgotten Dr. Cary's action and look the day of the trial. The other reason was hatred of Steve Allen. "I'll show him what I can smell," he said to Still, who smiled contentedly.

"It won't do to fool with him too much, personally," Still warned him. "He's a dangerous man. They're all of 'em dangerous, you hear me."

"I'll show 'em who I am, before I'm through with 'em," said Leech.

Thus the inquisition for arms was peculiarly grateful to Leech.

Leech had a squad of men under his command, which made him feel as if he were really an officer, and he gave them orders as though he were leading them to a battle. He intimated that they might be met with force, and asserted that, if so, he should act promptly. On riding up to the Doctor's a Sabbatic stillness reigned over everything.

The Doctor was not at home that day, having gone to the city to see the General in command there about the appointment of magistrates and other civil officers for the county, and, as Mrs.

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Cary had a sick headache, the blinds were closed, and Blair and old Mammy Krenda were keeping every sound hushed. It was a soft, balmy afternoon, when all nature seemed to doze. The sunlight lay on the fields and grass, and the trees and shrubbery rustled softly in the summer breeze.

Flinging himself from his horse, the Provost banged on the door loudly and, without waiting for anyone to answer his summons, stalked noisily into the house with his men behind him. Both Blair and Mammy Krenda protested against his invading one particular apartment. Blair planted herself in front of the door. She was dressed in a simple white dress, and her face was almost as white as the dress.

“What’s in there?” asked Leech.

“Nothing. My mother is in there with a sick headache.”

“Ah-h-h!” said Leech, derisively. He caught Blair by the arm roughly. Blair drew back, the color flaming in her cheeks, and the old negro woman stepped up in her place, bristling with anger.

The flash in the young girl’s eyes as she drew herself up abashed the Provost. But he recovered himself and, pushing old Krenda roughly

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aside, opened the door. There he flung open the blinds and rummaged in the drawers, turning everything out on the floor, and carried off in triumph a pair of old, horseman's pistols which had belonged to the Doctor's grandfather in the Revolutionary War, and had been changed from flintlock to percussion at the outbreak of the recent hostilities.

Leech had just come out of this room when Jacquelin Gray drove up. He stopped outside for a moment to ask what the presence of the soldiers meant, and then came hobbling on his crutches into the house.

As he entered, Blair turned to him with a gesture, partly of relief and partly of apprehension.

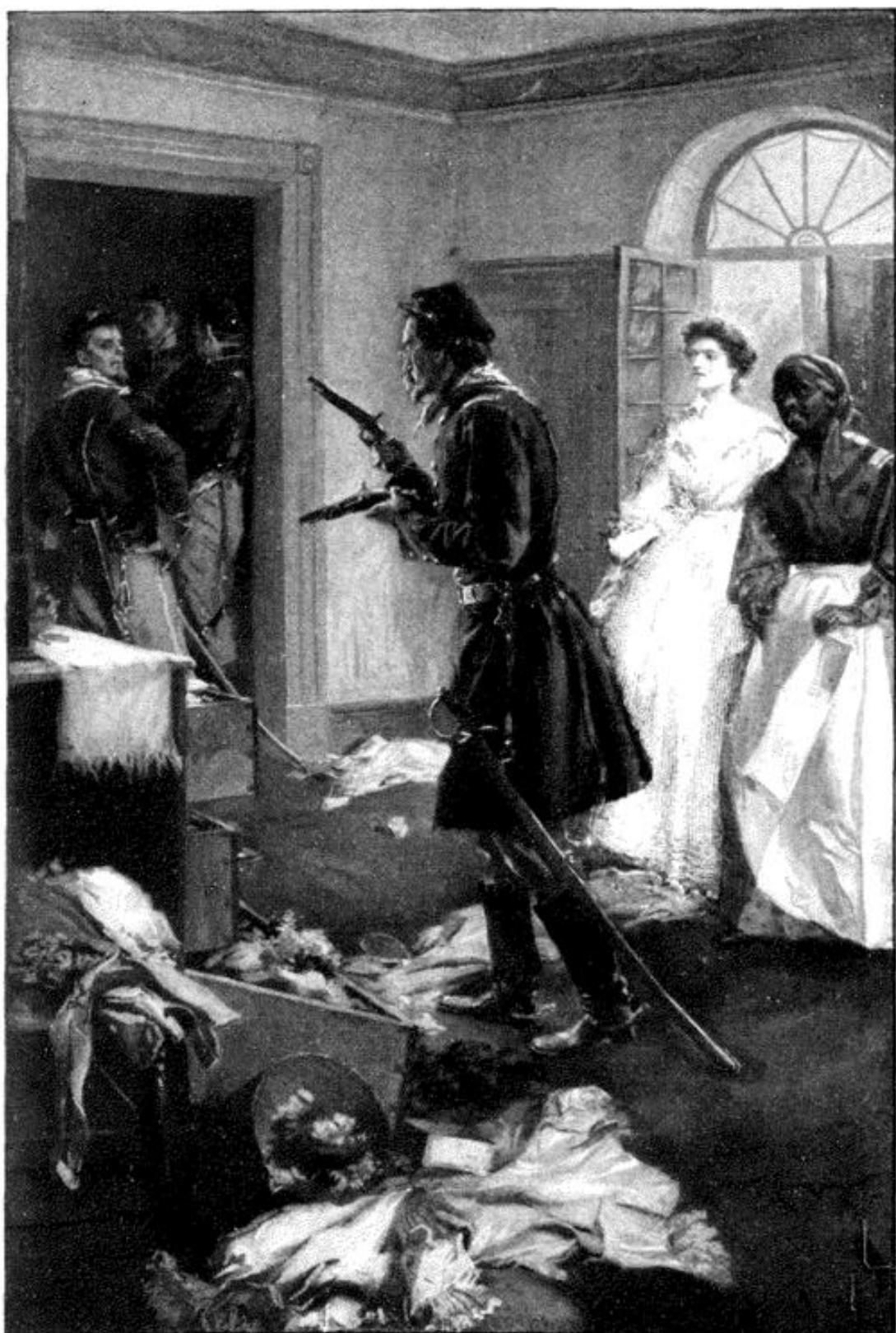
"Oh, Jacquelin!" The rest was only a sob. The blood flushed Jacquelin's pale face, and he passed by her.

"By what authority do you commit this outrage?" he asked Leech.

"By authority enough for you. By what authority do you dare to interfere with an officer in the discharge of his duty, you limping, rebel dog? If you know what is good for you, you'll take yourself off pretty quick." Leech took in his squad with a wave of his hand, and encoun-

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He carried off in triumph a pair of old horse-pistols.

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tering Jacquelin's blazing eyes and a certain motion of his crutch, moved a little nearer to his men, laying his hand on his pistol as he did so.

Blair made a gesture to stop Jacquelin; but he took no heed of it. He moved on his crutches nearer to the Provost.

"I demand to know your authority, dog," he said, ignoring both Leech's threat and Blair's imploring look.

"I'll show you. Seize him and search him," said Leech, falling behind his squad and adding an epithet not necessary to be repeated.

"I am not armed; if I were—" said Jacquelin. At Blair's gesture he stopped.

"Well, what would you do?" Leech asked after waiting a moment for Jacquelin to proceed. "You hear what he says, Sergeant?" He addressed the bluff, red-haired Irishman who wore a sergeant's chevrons.

"Sames to me he says nothin' at tall," said the Sergeant, who was the same man that had had charge of the ambulance in which Jacquelin had been brought home the day he arrived, and who had been a little grumpy ever since he had been put under Leech's command.

"Arrest him and if he offers any resistance,

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tie him securely to a tree outside," ordered Leech.

"Does Captain Middleton know of this?" Jacquelin asked the Sergeant.

"Well, you see, it's arders from headquarters, an' I guess the Cap'n thaught bayin' a fer-rut was a little more in *his* line." The Sergeant nodded his head in the direction of Leech, who had called the other men and gone on ostentatiously with his search.

Just then, however, the Provost encountered a fresh enemy. If Mrs. Cary and Miss Blair deemed it more dignified and ladylike to preserve absolute silence during this invasion, Mammy Krenda had no such inconvenient views. The old woman had nursed both Mrs. Cary and her daughter. She was, indeed, what her title implied, and had all her life held the position of a member of the family. In her master's absence she considered herself responsible, and she had followed Leech from room to room, dogging his every step, and now, emboldened by Jacquelin's presence, she burst forth, pouring out on the Provost the vials of her wrath which, instead of being exhausted by use, gathered volume and virulence with every minute.

"Yaas, I know jest what sort you is," she said,

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mockingly: "you is the sort o' houn'-dog that ain't got sperit enough to fight even a ole hyah, let alone a coon; but comes sneakin' into folks' kitchen, tryin' to steal a scrap from chillern's mouths when folks' backs air turned! I ain't talkin' to you all," she explained, with ready tact, to the squad of privates who showed in their countenances some appreciation of her homely, but apt illustration; "I know you all's got to do it if you' marsters tells you to. Nor, I'm talkin' to him. I declare I'm right glad my marster ain't at home; I'm feared he'd sile his shoe kickin' yer dutty body out de do'." She stood with her arms akimbo, and her eyes half-closed in derision.

This touch, with an ill-suppressed snicker from one of the men behind, proved too much for the leader's self-control, and he turned in a rage:

"Shut up, you black hag," he snarled, angrily, "or I'll—I'll—" He paused, hunting for a threat which would appall her. "I'll tie you to a tree outside and wear out a hickory on you."

If he thought to quell the old woman by this, however, he was mistaken. He only infuriated her the more.

"You will, will you!" she hissed, straighten-

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ing herself up and walking up close to him. "Do you know what would happen if you did? My marster would cut your heart out o' you; but I wouldn't lef' you for him to do it! You ain't fitten for him to tetch. Dey ain' nobody uver tetched me since my mammy whipped me last; and she died when I was twelve years ole; an' ef you lay your hand 'pon me I'll wear you out tell you ain't got a piece o' skin on you as big as dat!—see?" She walked up close to him and indicating the long, pink nail on her claw-like little-finger, poked a black and sinewy little fist close up under the Provost's very nose.

"Now—" she panted: "Heah me; tetch me!"

But Leech had recovered himself. He quailed before the two blazing coals of fire that appeared ready to dart at him, and recognizing the fact that even his men were against him and, like Jacquelin, were secretly enjoying his discomfiture, he angrily ordered them out of the house and concealed as best he could his consuming inward rage.

Incensed by Jacquelin's look of satisfaction at the old mammy's attack, Leech took him along with him, threatening him with dire punishment for interfering with a Union officer in the discharge of his duty; but learning from the Ser-

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geant that Jacquelin was "a friend of the Captain's," he released him, assuring him of the fortunate escape he had, and promising him very different treatment "next time." Jacquelin returned no answer whatever until at the end, when he said, looking him deep in the eyes, "It may not be next time, you dog; but some time will be my time."

When Dr. Cary reached home that evening, both Mrs. Cary and Blair congratulated themselves afresh that he had been absent during the Provost's visit. The first mention of the man's conduct had such an effect on him that Mrs. Cary, who had already interviewed both her daughter and the mammy on the propriety of giving a somewhat modified account of the visitation, felt it necessary to make even yet lighter of it than she had intended. The Doctor grew very quiet, and his usually pleasant mouth shut close, bringing his chin out strongly and giving him an uncommonly stern appearance. Mrs. Cary whipped around suddenly and gave the matter a humorous turn. But the Doctor was not to be diverted; the insolence of Leech's action to Blair, and of penetrating into his wife's chamber, had sunk in deeply, and a little later, having left his wife's sick-room, he called up the

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mammy. If Mrs. Cary possessed instincts and powers of self-control which enabled her to efface her sense of injury in presence of a greater danger, the old servant had no such cultivated faculty. At the first mention of the matter by the Doctor, her sense of injury rose again, her outraged pride came to the surface once more, and in the presence of him to whom she had always looked for protection her self-control gave out.

She started to tell the story lightly, as she knew her mistress wished done, but, at the first word, broke down and suddenly began to whimper and rock.

When it had all come out between sobs of rage and mortification, her master sent her away soothed with a sense of his sympathy and of the coming retribution which he would exact.

When the Doctor saw Mrs. Cary again, he was as placid as a May-morning, perhaps more placid than usual. He thought himself very clever indeed. But no man is clever enough to deceive his wife if she suspects him, and Mrs. Cary read him as though he had been an open book. As a result, before he left her room she had exacted a promise from him not under any circumstances to seek a personal interview with

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Leech, or even to go to the court-house for some time.

The story of the old negro woman's terrible tongue-lashing of the Provost got abroad. He had attempted to use both command and persuasion to prevent his men from telling it, but even the bribery of a free treat at a store on the roadside, which was a liberality he had never been known to display before, failed to secure the desired secrecy, and the story reached the court-house almost as quickly as he. Sergeant O'Meara related it to the camp with great gusto.

"Bedad!" said he, "the ould woman looked like wan of theyse little black game-burruds whan a dog comes around her chicks, with her fithers all oop on her back and her wings spraid, and the Liftenant—if he is a Liftenant, which I don't say he is, moind—he looked as red as a turkey-cock and didn't show much moor courage. She was a very discriminatin' person, bedad! She picked me out for a gintleman and the sutler for a dog, and bedad! she wasn't far wrong in ayether. Only you're not to say I towld you, for whan a gintleman drinks a man's whiskey it doesn't become him to tell tales on him."

Perhaps it was well for Mr. Jonadab Leech

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that the matter got abroad, for it gave the incident a lighter turn than it otherwise would have had. As it was, there was a storm of indignation in the county, and next day there were more of the old Confederate soldiers in the village than had been there since the war closed. In their gray uniforms, faded as they were, they looked imposing. Leech spent the day in the precincts of the camp. A deputation, with Steve Allen at their head, waited on Middleton and had a short interview with him, in which they told him that they proposed to obey the laws, but they did not propose to permit ladies to be insulted.

“For I tell you now, Captain Middleton,” said Steve, “before we will allow our women to be insulted, we will kill every man of you. We are not afraid to do it.” He spoke as quietly as though he were saying the most ordinary thing in the world. Middleton faced him calmly. The two men looked in each other’s eyes, and recognized each other’s courage.

“Your threat has no effect on me,” said Middleton; “but I wish to say that before I will allow any woman to be insulted, I will kill every man in my command. Lieutenant Leech is not in my command, though in a measure subject to

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my authority; but the matter shall be investigated immediately.”

What occurred in the interview which took place between Middleton and Leech was not known at the time, but that night Leech sent for Still to advise him. Even the negroes were looking on him more coldly.

“I knows if he lays his han’ ’pon me, I’m gwine to cut his heart out’n him,” said a tall, black young negro in the crowd as Leech passed, on his way to his office. It was evidently intended for Leech to hear. Leech had not then learned to distinguish black countenances and he did not yet know Jerry.

Still was equal to the emergency. “These quality-niggers ain’t used to bein’ talked to so,” he explained to Leech; “and they won’t stand it from nobody but quality. They’re just as stuck up as their masters, and you can’t talk to ’em that way. You got to humor ’em. The way to manage ’em is through their preachers. Git Sherrod and give him a place in the commissary. He’s that old hag’s son-in-law, and he’s a preacher. I always manage ’em through their preachers.”

The result of taking Still’s advice, in one way, so far surpassed Leech’s highest expectation,

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that he could not but admit that Still was a genius. One other appointment Still suggested, and that was of a negro who had belonged to the Grays and who was believed to have as much influence with the devil as Sherwood had in the other direction. "And," as Still said, "with Jim Sherrod to attend to Heaven and Doctor Moses to manage t'other place, I think me and you can sorter manage to git along on earth.

"You've got to do with them," he added, sinking his voice almost to a whisper. "For, as I told you, you've got to work your triggers up that a-way." He waved his hand toward the North. "If you can git the money you say you can, I can make it over and over fer you faster than nigger-tradin'. You jest git Krafton to stand by you and that old feller Bolter to stake us, and we're all right.

"You've got to git rid of this young Captain. One of you's got to go some time, and the one as holds out longest will win. 'Twon't do to let him get too strong a hold down here.—Now this party they're gittin' up? If they invite your young men—you might work that string. But you can't quarrel with him now. You say he's in with your Mrs. Welch. Better work the nigger racket. That's the strong card now. Git

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some more boxes from Mrs. Welch and let me put 'em where they'll do most good. Niggers loves clo'es mo' than money. Don't fall out with your young man yet—keep in with a man till you have got under-holt, then you can fling him."

Meantime, while this conference was going on, Middleton was in a far less complacent frame of mind. He had just left the camp that afternoon and was on his way to his quarters, when, at a turn in the street, he came on a group of young gentlemen surrounding a young lady who was dressed in a riding-habit, and was giving an animated account of some occurrence. As soon as he turned the corner, he was too close on them to turn back; so he had to pass. He instantly recognized Miss Cary, though her back was toward him: the trim figure, abundant hair, and musical voice were not to be forgotten.

"I don't think you need any guard, so long as you have Mammy Krenda," laughed one of the young men.

"No, with her for the rank and file, I am just waiting for Captain M— I mean to meet him some day, and——"

"Hush—here he is now."

"I don't care." She tossed her head.

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Middleton could not help hearing what she said, or seeing the gesture that stopped her.

He passed on, touching his cap to one or two of the young men, who returned the salute. But Miss Cary took no more notice of him than if he had been a dog.

Thurston had reached their room a little before Middleton arrived. He was in unusually good spirits, having just relieved his mind by cursing Leech heartily to Miss Dockett, and thus re-establishing himself with that young lady, who had been turning her back on him ever since she had heard of the incident at Birdwood. In reward for this act of reparation, the young lady had condescended to tell Lieutenant Thurston of the entertainment which the young people proposed to get up; and the little officer had made up his mind that, if possible, he and Middleton should be invited. He had just lit his pipe and was, as he said, laying out his campaign, when Middleton entered and, tossing his sword in a corner, without a word, lit a cigar, flung himself in an armchair and gazed moodily out of the window. The Lieutenant watched his friend in silence, with a more serious look on his face than usually found lodgment on that cheerful countenance. The cloud remained on Mid-

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dleton's brow, but the Lieutenant's face cleared up, and presently, between the puffs of his pipe, he said:

“Larry, you need the consolations of religion.”

Middleton, without taking his eyes from the distance, turned his cigar in his mouth and remained silent.

“And I'm going to make you sit under the ministrations of the pious Mr. Langstuff——”

“Foolstuff!” growled Middleton, turning his eye on him.

“—For your soul's good and your eyes' comfort,” continued the Lieutenant placidly. “For they do say, Larry, that he preaches to the prettiest lot of unrepentant, stony-hearted, fair rebels that ever combined the love of Heaven with the hatred of their fellow-mortals. You are running to waste, Larry, and I must utilize you.”

“Jackass!” muttered Middleton, but he looked at Thurston, who smoked solemnly.

“For they say, Larry, there's going to be a dancing-party, and we must be there, you know.”

Middleton's face, which had begun to clear up, clouded again.

“What's the good of it? Not one of 'em

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would speak to us. I met one just now—and she looked at me—they all look at me, or *by* me—as if I were a snake!”

“As you are, Larry—a snake in the grass,” interjected the little Lieutenant. “Pretty?”

“As a peach—Can’t you be serious a minute?”—for Thurston’s eyes were twinkling. “Every one looks as if she hated me.”

“As they ought to, Larry; for you’re their enemy.” Thurston settled back with his pipe between his lips, and chuckled to himself. “You ought to see the way they look at me, Larry. I know you, Alexander. You’re not satisfied with your success with Miss Ruth, and Miss Rockfield, and every other girl in the North, but you must conquer other worlds; and you sigh because they don’t capitulate as soon as they see your advance-guard.”

“Don’t be an ass, Thurs!” Middleton interrupted. “You know as well as I, that I never said a word to Ruth Welch in my life—or thought of doing so. When her father was wounded so badly, it happened that I had a scratch too, and I saw something more of her than I otherwise should have done, and that is all there is about it. Besides, we are cousins, and you know how that is. Her mother would

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have seen me in perdition before she would have consented to anything between us; and as to Edith Rockfield——”

But the little Lieutenant did not care about Miss Rockfield. It was Miss Welch he was interested in. So he cut in, breaking into a snatch of a song:

“Sure, Kate Riley she’s me cousin.
Harry, I have cousins too;
If ye like such close relations,
I have cousins close as you.”

He slipped down farther in his chair, his heels up on the table, and his hands clasped above his curly head.

“If you don’t stop that howling, old Mrs. Dockett will come and turn you out again,” growled Middleton.

“Not me, Larry, my dear. I can warble all I like now. I’m promoted.”

“Promoted! How?”

“Don’t you see I sit next to the butter, now?”

“Fool!—But I’m used to being treated with a reasonable degree of civility,” Middleton went on, as if he had not been interrupted, “and I’ve put myself out more to be polite here than I ever did in my life, and yet, by Jove! these little

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vixens turn up their noses at me as if—as if—
Why, they look as if they felt about me precisely
as I feel about Leech!”

He looked out of the window gloomily, and his
friend watched him for a moment with an
amused expression in his blue eyes.

“Larry, they don’t know what great men we
are, do they? You know that’s one of the things
that has always struck me? I wonder how girls
can have such a good time when they don’t know
me. I suppose it’s the ignorance of the poor
young things! But they shall know me and you,
too. We’ll give the girls a treat next Sunday;
we’ll go to church, and later to the ball.”

“Church! You go to church!”

The Captain turned his head and looked at his
friend with such blank amazement that the Lieu-
tenant actually colored.

“Yes,” he nodded. “You d——d Pharisee!
—you think you are the only one that knows
anything about church, because that little gir—
cousin of yours—converted you; you’re nothing
but a Dissenter anyhow. But I’m a churchman,
I am. I’ve got a prayer-book—somewhere—
and I’ve found out all about the church here.
There’s an old preacher in the county, named
Longstuff or Langstuff or something, and he

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preaches once a month at the old church eight or ten miles above here, where they say all the pretty girls in the country congregate to pray for the salvation of Jeff Davis and the d—— nation of the Yankees—poor misguided, lovely creatures that they are!—as if we weren't certain enough of it anyhow, without their making it a subject of their special petition. I'm going to have a look at 'em. We'll have our trappings rubbed up, and I'll coach your dissenting, condemned soul on the proper church tactics, and we'll have the handsomest pair of horses in the county and show 'em as fine a pair of true-riding, pious young Yanks as ever charged into a pretty girl's heart. We'll dodge Leech and go in as churchmen. That's one place he's not likely to follow us. What do you say? Oh, I've got a great head on me! I'll be a general some day!"

“If you don't get it knocked off for your impudence,” suggested Middleton.

So the equipments were burnished up; the horses were carefully groomed; the uniforms were brushed and pressed afresh, and when Sunday morning came, the two young officers, having dodged Leech, who had been trying all the week to find out what was on foot, rode off,

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in full and dazzling panoply, like conquering young heroes, to impress, at least, the fairer portion of their "subjects," as Thurston called them. They were, in fact, a showy pair as they rode along, for both men were capital horsemen, little Thurston looking at least a foot higher on his tall bay than when lifted only by his own short, plump legs; and on their arrival at church, which they purposely timed to occur after the services should have begun, they felt that they could not have been more effective.

The contrast between them and the rest of the assemblage was striking. The grove about the church was well filled with animals and vehicles; but all having a worn and shabby appearance: thin horses and mules, and rickety wagons, with here and there an old carriage standing out among them, like old gentlemen at a county gathering. A group of men under one of the trees turned and gazed curiously at the pair as they rode up and tied their showy horses to "swinging limbs," and then strode silently toward the church, where the sound of a chant, not badly rendered, told that the services were already begun.

The entrance of the blue-coats created quite as much of a sensation as they could have ex-

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pected, even if the signs of it were, perhaps, not quite as apparent as they had anticipated, and they marched to a vacant seat, feeling very hot and by no means as effective as they had proposed to do. Little Thurston dropped down on his knees and bowed his head, and Middleton, with a new feeling of Thurston's superior genius, followed his "tactics."

This was good generalship, for no one could know that the two young reprobates were mopping their perspiring faces and setting every button straight, instead of being bowed in reverential devotion. No one entered their pew, and they were left alone. Several who came in the church after them, and might have turned to their pew, on seeing the blue uniforms, passed by with what looked very like a toss of the head. But what Thurston called his "straight flush" was when he drew out his prayer-book—which he had found "somewhere"—and began to follow the service, in a distinctly reverential voice.

As many eyes were bent on them at this as had been directed to them when they first appeared, and Miss Thomasia, adjusting her spectacles to satisfy herself beyond doubt if her eyes were not deceiving her, dropped them on the floor and cracked one of the glasses. For the idea of

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a Yankee soldier using a prayer-book had never occurred to any female member of that congregation any more than it had that a certain distinguished being used it, popularly supposed to be also clad in blue uniform, of sulphurous flame. The favorable impression made by this move was apparent to the young men, and Middleton stepped on Thurston's toe, so heavily as almost to make him swear with pain, trying at once to convey his admiration and to call Thurston's attention to a very pretty young girl in the choir, whose eyes happened to fall that way, and whom he indicated as Miss Cary. Steve Allen was with her now, singing out of the same book with her, as if he had never thrown a card or taken a drink in his life.

The self-gratulation of the two officers was, however, of brief duration. The next moment there was a heavy tread and a sabre-clatter behind them, and turning with the rest of the congregation to look, there was Leech stalking up the aisle. He made directly toward the officers, and had Middleton been at the entrance of the pew he might, perhaps, in the frame of mind into which the sight threw him, have openly refused the new-comer admittance. Thurston, however, was nearer the entrance, and nothing

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of the kind occurred. He simply moved down to the door of the pew, and was so deeply immersed in his devotions at that particular instant, that even the actual pressure of Leech's hand on his arm failed to arouse him, and the Provost, after standing a moment waiting for him to move, stepped into a pew behind, and sat down in the corner by himself.

The change in sentiment created by the Provost's appearance was strong enough actually to be felt by the young men, and Middleton looked in Thurston's eyes with such helpless rage in his own that the little Lieutenant almost burst out laughing, and had to drop his prayer-book and stoop for it to compose himself.

Still the congregation was mystified. It was pretty generally supposed that it was not mere piety which brought the young officers there. Some thought it was to insult them; some to show off their fine horses—some suggested that it was to watch and report on their old rector, the Rev. Mr. Langstaff, one of the best and Godliest of men, whose ardor as a Confederate was only equalled by his zeal as a Christian. But Steve Allen—speaking with the oracular wisdom of a seer, who, in addition to his prophetic power, has also been behind the scenes—declared that

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they had come to look at the pretty girls, and further avowed that he didn't blame them, because there were the prettiest girls in the world, right in that church, and, as for him, he was ready to walk right up, on the spot, with anyone of them, from Miss Thomasia to Miss Blair, and Mr. Langstaff could settle the whole matter for them, in five minutes. Though, of course, he added, if General Legaie had any preference, he himself would waive his privilege (as having spoken first) and let the General lead the way, as he had often done before on occasion. To which proposal, made in the aisle after church, when the weekly levee was held, the General responded that he was "quite ready to lead so gallant a subaltern, if Miss—" his eye sought Miss Thomasia's placid face—"ah! if—any lady could be found," etc.

Steve was right—he very often was, though frequently he concealed his wisdom in an envelope of nonsense.

It was conceded after the young officers had ridden away, that they had "acted decently enough, but for those odious blue uniforms," and had showed no sign beyond nudging each other when Mr. Langstaff prayed for the President of the Confederate States, with an unction

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only equalled by the fervor with which the entire congregation had responded "Amen"—at least, that the first two of them had showed no sign. The third, however, had proved what they were. To be sure, he had come after the others, and they had evidently tried to make it appear as if they wished to avoid recognizing him, and had gone away alone. But what did that prove? Were they not all alike? And even if the Provost *had* sat in a pew by himself, and did not have a uniform exactly like the others, he had never even bowed during the prayers, but had sat bolt upright throughout the whole service, staring around. And when the President was prayed for, had he not scowled and endeavored to touch his companions? What if they had appeared to ignore him? Might not this be all a part of their scheme? And, as someone said, "when the hounds were all in a huddle, you could not tell a good dog from a bad one." This simile was considered good by most of the male members of the congregation; but there were dissenters. Mrs. Gray remembered that those two young men sent Jacquelin home the day he arrived; and the General remembered the civility of one of them in the performance of a most disagreeable duty; Miss Thomasia recalled the

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closely followed prayer-book, and some of the other ladies objected to hunting similes at church.

However, when, after service, the two young officers left the church and marched straight to their horses, even without the presence of Leech to offend them—for they had clearly told him they did not wish his company—they were far less composed than their martial mien and jingling spurs might have appeared to indicate.

CHAPTER XII

CAPTAIN ALLEN TAKES THE OATH OF ALLEGIANCE
AND JACQUELIN GRAY LOSES HIS BUTTONS AND
SOME OLD PAPERS

THE absence of all civil government and the disorganization of the plantations were producing great inconvenience. Much thieving was going on everywhere, and there was beginning to be an unwonted amount of lawlessness: sheep and hogs were being stolen, and even horses and cattle. Dr. Cary and Mr. Bagby united with some others of the more conciliatory men in the State, to request the establishment of some form of government, and a sort of provisional civil government was shortly established in the country. Mr. Dockett was appointed Clerk of the county, Dr. Cary was commissioned a magistrate in his district, and, at his solicitation, Andy Stamper was appointed constable.

Meanwhile, Steve Allen had become the most prominent citizen of the county seat. He had

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taken an old building in one corner of the court-green, and his office soon became the most popular place of resort in the village, for the young men. It was rumored that something other than law was practised in Steve's office, and the lights often burned till daybreak, and shouts of laughter came through the open windows. Stories got abroad of poker-parties held there in the late hours of the summer nights. Neither Middleton nor Thurston had ever been invited there, for Steve still held himself stiffly with the two officers, but an incident occurred which suddenly broke down the barrier.

Steve had never taken the oath of allegiance. This was not known at the time of his arrival at the court-house, and he had started in to practise law, and had gone on without any question as to it ever being raised, until Still notified Leech. "If you could git up a row between him and your young man, Middleton," said he, "you might get rid of one enemy, maybe two; for, I tell you, he won't stand no foolin'. Make Middleton make him take the oath. I don't believe he'll do it—I b'lieve he'll go away first." Leech summoned Steve to exhibit his parole; and on his failing to obey, laid the matter before Middleton.

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When Leech disclosed the object of his visit, Thurston was lounging in an armchair, with his pipe. He started up. Was it possible that such a flagrant violation of the law had been going on? He gazed at the Provost blandly.

“It was and is,” said Leech, sententiously. “This man never misses an opportunity to treat the Government and its representatives with contempt.”

“I have heard so,” said Thurston, adopting Leech’s tone. “I have heard that he has even said that some of the representatives of the Government were a stench in their own nostrils.”

Leech winced and glanced at Thurston; but he was as innocent as a dove.

“It is time to make an example of him,” proceeded the Lieutenant, still apparently arguing with his superior. “And I think it would be well to have him brought up at once and the most rigid oath administered to him. Why should not Lieutenant Leech administer it? I should like to see him do it, and he might take occasion to read Captain Allen a sound homily on his duties as a citizen of this great Republic and his cause for gratitude. It might lead him to mend the error of his ways.”

Nothing could have been more pleasing to

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Leech. He jumped at the proposal, and said he would give this young rebel a lecture that he would not soon forget, and if he refused to take the oath would clap him in jail. Middleton assented and that evening was set for the ceremony, and Middleton and Thurston said they would go down and see the oath administered.

That evening Steve was surprised to find his office-door suddenly darkened by a squad of soldiers who had come to arrest him and take him before the Provost.

“What is it for?” Arrests by the Provost were not uncommon.

“To take the oath.”

There was a laugh at Steve’s expense; for it was known by his friends that he prided himself on not having yet sworn allegiance to the Government.

“Go and take your medicine, and pay me that little fiver you bet you would not take it this month,” said McRaffle, with a half sneer.

“I’ll credit it on one of your I O U’s,” said Steve, dryly.

He was marched across to the Provost’s office, his friends following to see the issue. Just as they arrived, Middleton and Thurston came in, looking a little sheepish when they found, as the result of their conspiracy, Steve guarded

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by a file of men. Leech took out a box of good cigars and offered them to the officers. He did not offer them to anyone else, but laid them on the table, and with a rap for silence, began his homily. He made it strong and long. He dwelt with particular emphasis on the beneficence of a Government that, after a wicked rebellion, permitted rebels to return to their allegiance and receive again all the benefits of the Union — becoming, indeed, one with her other citizens. This concluded, he tendered Steve the oath. Everyone present, perhaps, expected Steve to refuse to take it. Instead of which, he took it without a word. There was a moment of breathless silence.

“I understand then that we are, so to speak, now one?” said Steve, drawlingly.

“Ah! yes,” said Leech, turning away to try to hide his surprise from Thurston.

“Then, gentlemen, have some of *our* cigars?” Steve took up the box, lit a cigar himself and coolly handed them around.

As he offered them to Thurston the little Lieutenant said:

“Captain, the honors are yours.”

The next moment Steve tossed his cigar contemptuously out of the door.

“Come over to my office, gentlemen; I have

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a box that a *gentleman* has sent me. I think they will have a better flavor than these. Good-evening, Lieutenant Leech. Will you join us, gentlemen?" This was to Middleton and Thurston, and the invitation was accepted.

They adjourned to Steve's "law-office," where they proceeded to while away the hours in a manner which has sweetened, if not made, many an armistice. Fortune from the start perched herself on Steve's side as if to try and compensate him for other and greater reverses; and at last little Thurston, having lost the best part of a month's pay, said that if Leech's cigars were not as good as Steve's, they were, at least, less expensive.

"You fellows don't know any more about poker than you do about joking," said Steve, imperturbably, as he raked in a pot. "If I'd known about this before, I wouldn't have taken that oath. I'd have done like McRaffle there. This is too easy."

"You play just as much as I do," said McRaffle, quickly.

"Yes; but in more select company," Steve said quietly. "Not with boys."

McRaffle's cold face flushed slightly, and he started to reply, but glanced quickly round the

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table and reconsidered. Steve was placidly shuffling the cards.

No man likes to have his poker-game assailed, and Middleton and Thurston were no exceptions.

“You’re outclassed, Captain,” said Steve. “I’d be riding that whitefoot bay of yours in a week, if you played with me.”

“Make a jackpot and I’ll give you a chance,” said Middleton, firing up.

Steve, as the winner, was not in a position to stop. The others had warmed up.

“Yes—make it a jackpot, and let that decide which is the biggest blower,” laughed someone.

Steve dealt and Middleton looked pleased, as he well might. None of the others had more than a pair, and they passed out. Steve had three hearts and a pair. He was about to throw the cards down when he caught Middleton’s look of content, and hesitated.

“Come in,” laughed Middleton.

Steve’s fingers tightened on his cards, and Middleton discarded two, showing that he held three of a kind.

“I’ve got you beat,” he said.

“Beat? I tell you, you don’t know the game,” said Steve, airily. He coolly discarded his pair.

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“I don’t? I’ll bet you a hundred dollars, I’ve got you beat.”

Steve picked up two cards. “I’ll see you and raise you,” said he. “I bet you five hundred against your whitefoot horse you haven’t.”

“Done,” said Middleton.

“Keep your horse, boy,” said Steve. “I was the best poker player in my brigade.” He leaned over to put his cards down. But Middleton was game and was ahead of him.

“It’s a bet,” he said, laying his hand on the table. There was a sigh from the others: he had three aces.

Steve laid his beside them, and there was a shout. He had drawn a flush.

“Now I’ll buy the horse back from you, if you wish it?” said Middleton.

“Thank you. I’ve promised him to a lady,” said Steve.

Next day Steve rode his new horse to Birdwood and, with a twinkle in his eyes, offered him to Blair.

“How did you get him?” asked the girl.

“Captured him,” laughed Steve. “Tell your friend not to play poker with me—or McRaffle,” he added.

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Blair's eyes flashed and she attacked Steve vigorously. She would not have him offering to present her a part of his gaming-winnings. He was becoming a scandal to the neighborhood; leading the young men off.

"Young Larry, for instance?" smiled Steve. "Or Captain McRaffle?"

"No. You know very well whom I mean," declared Blair. "Rupert thinks it fine to imitate you." The smile was still on Steve's face, and Blair paused to take breath; then half-closing her eyes as if she were sighting carefully—"And couples your name with Captain McRaffle's," she added.

A light of satisfaction came into her eyes as she saw the shaft go home. A deeper hue reddened Steve's sun-browned face.

"Who was the young lady who bet me not long ago, against that very horse, that she would not dance with a certain Yankee Captain? Where's her pious example?"

Blair's face flushed. "I did wrong. But I did not expect you, Captain Allen who prides himself on his chivalry, to shelter himself behind a girl." She bowed low, and turned away in apparent disdain, enjoying the success of her shot.

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Just at that moment Miss Thomasia joined them.

“What are you two quarrelling about?” The next moment she glanced at Steve and a troubled look came into her eyes.

“Nothing. We aren’t quarrelling, are we, Blair?” Steve held out his hand in sign of peace.

“Yes. Steve has just charged——”

Steve began to make signs to Blair.

“—Steve has just charged,” proceeded Miss Blair, ignoring his efforts to stop her, “that all his shortcomings are due to the example set him by a woman.”

“They all do it, my dear, from Adam down,” said Miss Thomasia, placidly.

Her sex was to be defended even against her idol.

“There,” said Blair, triumphantly to Steve.

“It’s a stock phrase,” said Steve. “And what I’d like to know is, did not Adam tell the truth?”

“Yes, the coward! he did. And I’ve no doubt he tried to keep poor Eve between him and the angel’s sword. Now you, at least be as brave as he, and tell Cousin Thomasia the truth and see what she says.”

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Once more Steve began to signal Blair. But Miss Thomasia herself came to his rescue. Perhaps, she wanted to save him. She began to ask about Rupert. She was evidently anxious about the boy.

Whether it was because of what Blair said about Rupert, or because of the look of distress that came in Miss Thomasia's eyes at the mention of the story of Steve's playing, Steve had an interview with Captain Middleton shortly afterward, and, as a result, when he told him the dilemma in which he found himself, the horse went back into Middleton's possession, until Middleton left the county, when he became Steve's by purchase.

As time went on, a shadow began to fall between Jacquelin and the sun. Steve was in love with Blair. Steve was always with her; his name was always on her lips, and hers frequently on his. She rode his horse: and he often came to Red Rock with her. And as Jacquelin watched, he knew he had no chance. It cut deeper than anyone ever knew; but Jacquelin fought it out and won. He would not let it come between him and Steve. Steve had always been like a brother. He would still love Blair. This was not forbidden him.

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Not every knight always won his great love. It was the loyalty, not the success, that was knightly. If she loved Steve, he could make her happier than Jacquelin himself ever could have done. And Jacquelin, if God gave him power, would rejoice with them in time.

The preparations for the contemplated entertainment for the benefit of the poor wounded Confederate soldiers in the county were already begun. It was to be given at Red Rock, and the managers waited only for Jacquelin to recover somewhat from a set-back he had had after his meeting with Leech at Dr. Cary's. Blair Cary had offers from at least a dozen escorts; but Steve was the fortunate contestant. Miss Dockett was so much interested in her preparations that the two lodgers caught the fever, and found themselves in the position of admirers and part advisers as to a costume for an entertainment to which they were not considered good enough to be invited. Little Thurston had to purchase a part of it in the city, where he went on a visit, and, truth to tell, finding that the small amount entrusted to him—which was all that could be got together even by Mrs. Dockett's diligence, stimulated by her nat-

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ural pride in her daughter's first ball—was not sufficient to purchase material as fine as he thought suited to adorn the plump person of a young lady who had condescended to warble with him, he added to it a small sum from his own by no means over-plethoric pocket, and then lied about it afterward like a trooper and a gentleman.

“Well, I always heard a Yankee was a good hand at a bargain,” declared Mrs. Dockett; “but you are the best I ever knew.” And this was Thurston's reward.

The officers had given up hope of being invited to the assembly, when one evening two formal notes, requesting their company, were brought by Steve's boy Jerry. They were signed simply, “The Committee.”

“And now,” said Middleton, “we're in a bigger hole than before; for it's for the benefit of the rebels; and if that gets out— But, perhaps it will not?”

“Gets out? Of course it will get out. Everything one doesn't want to get out, gets out; but yet we must go. Does not our high sense of duty require us to sacrifice our personal prejudices so far as to keep an eye on this first large assemblage of rebels?”

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“Reely, you’re a genius,” said Middleton, in open admiration.

“Of course I am,” was the Lieutenant’s modest reply.

Formal notes of acceptance were sent, and the two young officers were soon as busy as anyone making their preparations for their “summer campaign,” as Thurston called it. Both ordered new boots, and Thurston a whole suit, for the occasion. Thurston, in the seclusion of their room, drilled Middleton sedulously in the Old Virginia reel, so as to astonish the native and, as he profanely termed it, “make sure of the capture of the fish Middleton had found in the ford.”

An evening or two later, the mail was brought in, and in it were two official letters for Middleton. As he read them, his face fell, and he flung them across to Thurston, who, as he glanced at them, gave an ejaculation hardly consistent with the high-church principles he so proudly vaunted.

One was an order forbidding, for the present, all public gatherings at night, under any guise whatever, except in churches; the other forbade the wearing of any Confederate uniform or garment forming part of a uniform, or, at

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least (as persons might not have any other clothes whatever), brass buttons, braid, chevrons, etc., which were the insignia of a uniform. These were to be cut off or covered. These were general orders, and the officers in command stationed throughout the country were directed to see them enforced.

“This comes of having a d—d tailor for President,” said the little Lieutenant. “I always did hate ’em; and to think I’ve ordered a new uniform for it too! Your wedding, Larry, will not come off as soon as I anticipated. Well, there’s one consolation; one tailor will have to wait some time.”

This view appeared to please the Lieutenant so much that, as he glanced over the orders again, he began to whistle, while the Captain looked on despondently. The whistling grew louder as Thurston read on, and he suddenly bounced up.

“I’ve got it, Larry. Are you a Mason?”

“No. Why?”

“Oh! Nothing—I was just thinking of that old Masonic lodge where the chaplain preached and Leech led in prayer. You issue your orders—and leave me to manage it: this tailoring part is what’s going to play the deuce. I can settle

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the other—I'm a churchman—I ought to have been a bishop."

As Thurston foresaw, it was the order touching the uniforms which gave the greatest offence, and in the indignation which this aroused, the other was almost lost sight of. It was intended to show the negroes, the old residents said, that the Southerners were completely in subjection to the Federal authorities. Which view gained some ground from the fact that the orders were issued by Leech, who appeared to be charged with their enforcement.

The next day there was a storm in the county.

The little General made old Julius burnish up his buttons until they shone like gold, and then rode into the village to interview the officer in command. He was stopped on the street by Leech, and was ordered to cut them off immediately if he did not wish him to do it for him, on which the gallant old Confederate stated to that functionary as placidly as he might have returned an answer to Miss Thomasia on the subject of roses, that if Leech so much as attempted to lay his hand on him, he would kill him immediately; and the look in his eyes was so resolute and so piercing that Leech, who supposed from this that he was fully armed, slunk

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away to secure a squad of soldiers to enforce his order. The General rode serenely on to find Middleton. No one was present at the interview. But it became known afterward that the General had begun by an intimation that he was ready to renew his polite offer of the pair of duelling pistols to Captain Middleton, if the Captain wished to give a gentleman who found himself temporarily in a somewhat embarrassing position, a gentleman's satisfaction; and that he had come away, not, indeed, with this satisfaction, but, at least, with renewed esteem for the young men, whom he continued to speak of as "most gentlemanly young fellows"; and he covered his buttons with cloth.

Steve Allen let Miss Thomasia cover his with crêpe, and having led Leech into questioning him as to the reason for this, said that it was mourning because a certain cowardly hound had only barked at Mammy Krenda one day, instead of attempting to touch her, and giving her the opportunity to cut the skin from him. Dr. Cary found his buttons cut off by Mrs. Cary and Miss Blair—"to prevent," Blair said, "their being defiled by sacrilegious hands."

Jacquelin Gray was at this time confined to his lounge, by his wound; but it had this drop

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of consolation for his mother and Aunt Thoma-sia, that so long as he stayed there he could not be subjected to what others underwent. They reckoned, however, without their host.

One afternoon Leech rode into the Red Rock yard with a squad of soldiers at his back, and riding across the grass to the very door, dismounted and stamped up the steps, and, without waiting for an answer to his loud rap, stalked into the hall, with his men behind him. Where he had come from no one knew; for he had ridden in the back way. It transpired afterwards that he had stopped for a minute at the overseer's house.

At the moment Leech appeared in the hall, Jacquelin was lying on his lounge, with Blair Cary and Rupert sitting beside him, and the first he knew of the Provost's presence was when Blair, with an exclamation, sprang to her feet. He turned and faced Leech as he entered the hall. The Provost appeared dazed by the scene before him; for scores of eyes were fastened on him from the walls, and he stood for a moment rooted to the spot, with his gaze fixed on the face of the "Indian-killer" over the big fireplace. That strange embodiment of fierce resolve seemed almost to appal him. The next

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instant, with a gesture, he came forward to where Jacquelin lay. At the same moment Blair retired to seek Mrs. Gray and Miss Thomasia. Leech's eyes followed her as she went out.

"Well, sir, what do you want?" Jacquelin asked, haughtily.

"Take off your coat."

It was the form of order given to negroes when they were to be thrashed. Jacquelin's face flushed.

"What for?"

"Because if you don't, I'll take it off for you. I mean to cut these buttons off."

"You can cut them off." Jacquelin had grown quiet, and his face was white. Rupert drew nearer to him, his cheeks flushed and his breath coming quickly.

"I guess I can," sneered the Provost. He came up to the lounge, pushing Rupert aside, who interposed between them. He leaned over and cut the buttons from the jacket, one by one.

"I'll send these to my girl," he said, tauntingly—"Unless you want them for yours," he added, with a meaning laugh. Jacquelin controlled himself to speak quietly.

"Tell your master that some day I will call him to account for this outrage."

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“Young puppies bark, but don't bite,” sneered the Provost.

In an instant Rupert was on him, and, boy as he was, he struck the Provost a blow which, taking him unawares, staggered him. Leech recovered himself, however, and seizing the boy, slapped him furiously several times. Jacquelin was on his feet in a moment. He sprang toward the Provost, but the men interposed, and he sank back on his lounge, breathless and white.

“Hound, for that I will some day make a negro whip you within an inch of your life,” he said, beside himself.

Leech grinned in triumph and, walking up, leant over him officiously, as though to see if there were still any buttons left.

As he did so, Jacquelin raised himself and slapped him across the face. Leech with an oath sprang back and jerked out a pistol; and possibly but for an accident which gave time for the intervention of his men, Jacquelin Gray's career would have ended then.

He looked so cool, however, and withal so handsome and intrepid as he lay back and gazed into Leech's eyes, denouncing him fiercely and daring him to shoot, that Leech hesitated and turned toward his men for encouragement. As

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he did so, the door opened hastily and a curious thing happened. The great full-length portrait over the big fireplace, loosened, perhaps, by the scuffle with Rupert, or by the jar of the door as Mrs. Gray and Miss Thomasia entered, slipped in its frame and at the moment that Leech turned, fell forward, sending the Provost staggering back among his startled men. When Leech recovered, his men interfered. They were not ready to see a man murdered before his mother. Baffled in this, the Provost determined on another revenge. He swore he would have Jacquelin hanged, and made his men take him out and put him on a horse. Jacquelin was unable to sit in the saddle, and fell off in a faint. At this moment Hiram Still, whom Mrs. Gray had summoned, came up and interposed. At first, the Provost was not amenable even to Still's expostulations; but at length he pressed a wagon and had Jacquelin put in it, and hauled him off to the court-house, to jail, still swearing he would have him hanged. Mrs. Gray, having sent off by Blair in hot haste for Dr. Cary to follow her, directed Still to replace the picture, ordered her carriage, and, without waiting, set out for the court-house, accompanied by Miss Thomasia and Rupert.

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They had hardly left when Still went into the house to set the picture back in its place. It was surrounded by a group of curious, half-frightened servants who, with awe, alternately gazed on it and on the yawning hole in the wall, making comments, full of foreboding. Still sent them all off except Doan, whom he kept to help him set the picture back in place. It was necessary to get up on a chair and lean half way in the hole and examine the sides where the nails were to be driven, and this Still did himself, making an examination of the entire recess, even moving a number of bundles of old papers.

“Ah!” he said, with a deep inspiration, as he ran his eye over one bundle, which he laid off to one side. He sent Doan out to get him some long nails, for, as he explained, he meant now to nail the picture up to stand till judgment day. The negro went with a mutter, half timid, half jest, that he wouldn't stay in that hole by himself not for the whole Red Rock plantation and every mule on it. While he was absent Still was not idle. Doan had no sooner disappeared than the manager seized the bundle of papers he had laid to one side, and, hastily cutting the string which bound it, extracted several papers.

“I thought I remembered which one it was

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in," he murmured. "I didn't know when it was put in here as I'd ever git hold of it again." He held the papers up so as to get the light over his shoulder on them.

"Yes, that's the big bond with the paint on it, payable to me. I thought 'twa'n't cancelled."

He was so busy with the papers that he did not see the faces, outside the window, pressed against the pane, or hear Doan enter, and did not know he had returned until his shadow fell across the hearth. He slipped the papers in his pocket so hastily that one of them fell out and would have fluttered down on the floor had he not caught it. He turned on the negro:

"How did you come in, fool?" he asked, with a start, as he rammed the paper back in his pocket.

"I come in by de do'," said Doan, sullenly.

The portrait was soon nailed back, this time still driving the nails in to make sure they wouldn't come out again.

Meanwhile the ladies were making their way to the court-house. It was quite dusk when they reached the county seat and, to their surprise, the wagon had not yet arrived. Miss Thomasia was in great distress over it, and was sure that Leech had executed his threat against Jacquelin.

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But Mrs. Cary, though much disturbed, thought that more probably they had taken another road and had travelled more slowly. This, indeed, proved to be the case, and some hours later, Leech and his prisoner turned up.

Mrs. Gray had not been idle. On reaching the court-house she sent at once for General Legaie, and drove to Mrs. Dockett's, where she knew the commanding officer had his quarters. There she found the family at supper, and it may be safely asserted that no meal was ever more unceremoniously interrupted. Mrs. Dockett no sooner heard Mrs. Gray's name, than she left the table and went to receive her, and having in the first two minutes learned the cause of her visit, she swept back into the dining-room and swooped down on the two young officers, with a volubility which, at least, terminated the meal, and looked for a little while as if it would also terminate the relation of hostess and guest. She announced that Leech had broken into Mrs. Gray's house, assaulted her son, and finally dragged him from his dying bed and, no doubt, had murdered him in the woods. And she summoned the two officers to assert immediately their authority and execute summary justice on the Provost, if they ever wished to eat an-

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other meal under her roof. Not that Mrs. Dockett really took the view that Miss Thomasia took, for outside, she had already reassured Mrs. Gray, giving her calmly most excellent reasons to show that Leech would never dare to injure her son. But she felt that she had a warrant for this lurid picture in Miss Thomasia's forebodings, and she could not resist the pleasure of presenting it in all its blackness. Fortunately, Middleton, with his quiet manner, could, when he chose, be impressive enough. He listened to Mrs. Gray's statement calmly; was very grave, but very polite to her, and though he did not promise to release her son, or indicate what would be done in the matter, he assured her that Jacquelin should have proper treatment on his arrival, and promised that she should have access to him.

Suddenly Rupert, who had been crying on the way down whenever he could do so unobserved, stepped forward from behind his mother, where he had been standing.

"I struck him first, and I am the one to hang, not my brother." His face, which had been red when he began, paled suddenly, and his lip quivered a little; but his head was held straight and his eyes were steady and were filled with light.

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Mrs. Gray started to speak; but her voice trembled and failed her, and she could only hold out her hand to the boy. Middleton's eyes softened.

"No one will be hanged," he said. Then added, gravely: "But you shouldn't have struck him."

"He called my brother a puppy," said the boy, defiantly, his eyes flashing, "and I'll let no one do that—not you, nor anyone."

That night Thurston said to Middleton:

"Gad, Larry, I said I ought to be a bishop, but you ought to be one—the way you preached to that boy, and I'd give a thousand dollars for him."

"I wish you were Captain," growled Middleton.

"He looked like a little game-cock, didn't he?"

When the prisoner arrived, about midnight, under his guard, everything was found ready for his reception, and his mother was detailed to nurse him, to which, probably, was due the failure of Leech's and one other's plan.

CHAPTER XIII

STEVE ALLEN LEARNS MISS THOMASIA'S SECRET AND FORSWEARS CARDS

THE roughness of the treatment Jacquelin had received at Leech's hands caused his wound to break out afresh, and for a time he was seriously ill. But he had some compensations. Every girl in the neighborhood deemed him her especial favorite and charge. And from time to time, in the door walked, floated, or entered somehow, a goddess; and with her came heaven. Her entrance was always a miracle; she lit up the room, radiance took the place of gloom; the racked nerves found a sudden anodyne, and in the mere joy of her presence, Jacquelin forgot that he was crippled. She read to him, sat by him, soothed him, talked with him, sympathized with him, turned darkness into light, and pain, at least, into fortitude. How divinely tender her eyes could grow as some sudden paroxysm wrung his nerves, and brought a flush to his wan

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cheek! How solicitous was her voice! How soft her touch! And how much she knew! As much as Aunt 'Thomasia! How could a young girl have read so much! It stimulated Jacquelin, and he began to emulate her, as in old days, until reading became a habit.

Under these influences Jacquelin actually began to get well.

Middleton passed by one evening and saw the young girl sitting on the rose-bowered veranda, by Jacquelin's lounge, reading to him. The soft cadences of a charming voice were borne to him murmurously. A strange pang of loneliness shot through him. That far-away visit in the past seemed to rise up before him, and the long years were suddenly obliterated. He was back, a visitor at a beautiful old country-place, where joy and hospitality reigned. Jacquelin was a handsome, bright-faced boy again, and Blair was a little girl, with those wonderful eyes and confiding ways. Middleton wondered if he should suddenly turn and walk in on them, with a reminder of that old time, how they would receive him. He was half-minded to do it, and actually paused. He would go in and say, "Here, the war is over—let's be friends." But suddenly a

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man passed him and glanced up in his face and saluted. It was Leech, and Middleton saw him look across to where the invalid and his fair young nurse sat on the shaded veranda, and knew what his thoughts were. The spell was broken. Middleton stepped down from romance to the hard ground of reality, and passed on to give his orders for the evening.

Jacquelin's arrest and illness had come near breaking up the entertainment (a name which had been substituted for ball, to meet the scruples of Miss Thomasia and some other pious ladies). But this Jacquelin would on no account hear of. Besides, after the order forbidding public gatherings at night, it would look like truckling. As, however, in the family's absence, the assembly could not be held at Red Rock, it was decided to have it at the court-house, where Jacquelin now was. This concession was made; the largest and best building there for such an entertainment was one used as a Masonic hall, and occasionally as a place for religious services. This hall was selected. Who was responsible for its selection was not actually known. Thurston told Middleton that when he said he ought to have been a bishop, he placed his abilities far too low—that really he ought to have been a pope. But he did

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not appear in the matter at all except to meet the objections raised by Leech, and to silence that official by an allusion to his recent pious ministrations in that building. Steve Allen was the chief advocate of the hall, and took the lead in its selection and also in its defence; for some objection was made by others than Leech to having a party in this building, and on very different grounds. Miss Thomasia and some others who were not entirely satisfied anyhow about dancing, thought that it was certainly more likely to be wrong in a room which had been sometimes used, however rarely, for religious services, and it took some skill to overrule their objections. Thurston said to Mrs. Dockett that it had never been consecrated. "So far from it," said Mrs. Dockett, "it has been desecrated." (The last service held in it had been held by a Union chaplain, who had come up from town and preached in it to the soldiers, with Leech on the front bench.)

Miss Thomasia, being for once in accord with both Thurston and Steve, gave in, and actually lent her aid and counsel, at least so far as related to the embellishment of the hall, and of some who were to attend there. She ventured her advice to Steve in only one matter relating to

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the outside. Having found him at work one evening, making a short rustic bench to be placed under one of the trees in the yard, she said she hoped he did not intend that for two people, and that young man scandalously replied that he was making it short on purpose for her and the General; and, in the face of her offended dignity, impudently added that the General had engaged him to do it, and had given him the measurements.

“Steve Allen, I am too old for you to talk to me so,” said Miss Thomasia.

“’Tain’t me, Cousin Thomasia; ’tis the General,” persisted Steve, and then, as the little faded lady still remained grave and dignified, he straightened up and glanced at her. Stepping to her side, he slipped his arm round her, like a big stalwart son, and, looking down in her face with kindly eyes, said, tenderly:

“Cousin Thomasia, there aren’t any of ’em like you nowadays. They don’t make ’em so any more. The mould’s broken.” He seated the little lady gently on the bench, pleased and mollified, and flung himself on the grass at her feet, and the two had a long, confidential talk, from which both derived much comfort, and Steve much profit (he said). At least, he

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learned something new, and when as the dew began to fall Miss Thomasia rose, it was with a better insight into the nature of the reckless young fellow; and Steve, on his part, had a new feeling for Miss Thomasia, and led her in with a new tenderness. For Miss Thomasia had told the young man, what she had never admitted to a soul in all her life—that the reason the General, or anyone else, had never won her was that long ago her heart had been given to another—“the handsomest, most brilliant man I ever saw,” she said—who had loved her, she believed, with all his soul, but had not been strong enough to resist, even for her sake, the temptation of two besetting sins—drink and gambling—and she had obeyed her father, and given him up.

Steve was lying full length on his back at her feet, his face turned to her, and his clasped hands under his head.

“Cousin Thomasia, who was he, and what became of him?” he asked, gently.

“He was your father, Steve, and you might have been—” The voice was so low that the young man did not catch the last word. He unclasped his hands, and placed one forearm quickly across his face, and lay quite still for a

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minute or two. Then he moved it. Miss Thomasia was sitting quite motionless, her eyes in her lap, and with the fading light of the evening sky slanting under the trees and resting on her face and soft, silvered hair. She sighed so softly it might have been only breathing.

“I never knew it,” said Steve, gently; “but I might have known.”

He rose slowly, and leaning over her, kissed her tenderly, and she laid her head on his shoulder.

“Yes, Steve, now you know.”

And Steve said, yes, and kissed her again like a son.

“Cousin Thomasia,” he said, presently, “I will not say I will never drink again; but I will promise you not to gamble again, and I will not drink to excess any more.”

“Oh! Steve, if you knew how I have prayed for you!” said the little lady, softly.

“Well, maybe, Cousin Thomasia, this is in answer to it,” said Steve, half seriously.

There was as much preparation for the entertainment as there had ever been in the old times for the greatest ball given at Red Rock or Birdwood. Some of the guests from distant neighborhoods came several days beforehand to be in

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time, or to help superintend, and stayed at the houses of their friends near the county seat. Even the General's bachelor establishment was transformed for the occasion into a nest of doves, who, it was said, put up more little knick-knacks than he had ever seen, and made the old fellow more comfortable than he had ever been before in all his life.

Thus the little village, which for some time had been hardly more than a camp, overrun with negro camp-followers, suddenly took on a new air and freshened up, with young girls in cool dresses and big hats on the streets, or making pleasant groups under the trees in the yards on the slopes outside the hamlet, from which laughter and singing to the music of guitars floated down to the village below. The negroes themselves joined in, and readily fell into old habits, putting themselves in the way of the visitors, whom they overwhelmed with compliments, and claims, and offers of service.

Amid this, Middleton and Thurston went in and out quietly, attending to their duties, drilling and inspecting and keeping their eyes open, less for treason than for the pretty girls who had come suddenly upon them like flowers after a spring rain. They met a few of them casually,

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either through Steve Allen or Mrs. Dockett, whose house was filled with them; but the newcomers treated them with such undeniable coolness that there was little encouragement to prosecute the acquaintance. Even plump Miss Dockett stiffened perceptibly, and treated Lieutenant Thurston with more severity than she had ever exhibited since he had made those wonderful bargains.

Only one man in the whole village appeared absolutely out of humor over the stir and preparations, and that was Leech. The plan which he and Still had laid down to prevent the assembly having failed, Leech determined to break it up, at all hazards. Still was in constant, if secret, conference with him. They had told Sherwood and Moses that they could prevent it. If it were held in spite of them, it would prove that they were less powerful than they pretended to be.

Leech would go to town and obtain a peremptory order forbidding this very meeting.

“Have it made out so you can give it, yourself,” counselled Still. “Wait till the last minute and then spring it on ’em. We’ll show ’em we’re not to be treated as they please. They don’t know me yet, but they soon will. I’ve got

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that as will make some of 'em wince. I'll show 'em who Hiram Still is." He tapped his pocket significantly.

So it was decided, and Leech went off to the city to use his influence with Colonel Krafton, while Still was to prepare a foundation for his interference, through the negro leaders, Sherwood, Moses, and Nicholas Ash.

That evening there was a little more stir among the negroes about the court-house than had been observed before. Sherwood and Moses were there, sent down by Still, and that night they held a meeting—a religious meeting it was called—at which there was some singing and praying, and much speaking or preaching—the two preachers being Sherwood and Moses. They could be heard all over the village, and at length their shouting and excitement reached such a pitch and attracted so much attention that some of the residents walked down to the place where they were congregated, to look into the matter. Moses was speaking at the moment, mounted on an impromptu platform, swaying his body back and forth, and pouring forth a doctrine as voluble in words as it was violent in sound and gesture, whilst his audience surged around him, swaying and shouting, and

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exciting themselves into a sort of wild frenzy. The white men who had gathered, listened silently and sullenly to the sounds rising in unison with the speaker's voice. Some were of the opinion that he ought to be stopped at once and the meeting broken up, and there were plenty of offers to do it. A more prudent head, however, had adopted another course. Dr. Cary, who happened to be in the village that night, hearing what was going on, and knowing what might occur at any moment, called on the officer in command, and stated to him the danger of a collision. Captain Middleton walked down to the meeting with him to make his own observation. Only a few moments sufficed. The violence of the speaker, who was now dancing back and forth; the excitement of the dusky crowd pressing about him; the gathering of white men on the edge of the throng, speaking in low, earnest tones, their eyes turned to the speaker, suggested prompt measures.

“Don't de Book say, as we shall inherit the uth?” cried the speaker, and his audience moaned and swayed and shouted in assent.

“An' ain't de harvest white fur de laborer?”

“Yas—yas,” shouted the audience. “White fur de laborer!”

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“Unless you stop them, Captain, we shall; for we know that it is necessary and that it will be a kindness to them,” said the Doctor, quietly; and the officer recognizing the necessity, though he little understood the Doctor’s full meaning, assented promptly. He pushed his way through the throng, followed by the Doctor. He stopped the speaker and mounted the platform, and in a few words forbade any further speaking and ordered the crowd to disperse, which it did almost immediately, dissolving like magic before the officer’s order. Then he turned to the speaker, and with a sharp reprimand for his action commanded him to leave the village. The trick-doctor cringed, and with a whine of acquiescence bowed himself off.

CHAPTER XIV

LEECH SECURES AN ORDER AND LOSES IT

WHEN Leech returned from the city, next day, he was in such good spirits that Steve and Thurston both arrived at a similar conclusion, and decided that there was some mischief brewing. Steve called Jerry and had a talk with him.

About sunset Leech mounted his horse at his stable and rode out of the village through a back lane. He was to meet Still that night at Nicholas Ash's. Still and his son met him according to appointment, and the details of their plan were arranged.

Leech found that he had an ally stronger than he had dreamed of. Still showed him that he was a much richer man than he had ever admitted. He not only held the bonds of Dr. Cary, given for the money he had lent the Doctor, and a bond of his late employer, Mr. Gray, of which Leech already knew; but he held another bond

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of Mr. Gray for an amount large enough to swallow up his entire estate. Leech could scarcely believe his eyes. Mrs. Gray did not know of its existence; but the bond was undoubtedly genuine. Mrs. Gray herself, Still said, would admit that. He had a satisfactory explanation for her ignorance, as well as for the fact that he had never before mentioned to Leech that he held so large a claim against the Gray estate. He had made the money by negro-trading quietly, before the war, and had lent it to Mr. Gray to stock a plantation, which he, as Mr. Gray's agent, had bought for him in the far South. And he had not mentioned it to Mrs. Gray or anyone else for a very simple reason. He had promised Mr. Gray that he would never trouble Mrs. Gray about the bonds during her life.

Leech did not believe this; but there were the bonds—one a small one, and one a very big one, and Still had of late hinted several times at something that he was storing up for the proper moment.

“I told you I didn't care if you killed that young Jacquelin that night,” he laughed. “Why didn't you do it? I must say I never allowed that he'd git thar alive.”

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“Neither did I,” suggested Leech. “And I believe it did him good.”

“I don’t know about that,” said Still, enigmatically; “but I wouldn’t ’a’ shed no tears over him. But if you do as I tell you, we’ll git even and have a leetle somethin’ to spare. You just work Krafton and get your friends to back you, and you and me’ll own this county. I’ll see that Moses is there on time, if he don’t have an inch of skin left on him.”

A rumor had meantime got abroad at the county seat that an order had been secured by Leech forbidding the assembly, and that though Middleton knew nothing of it as yet, Leech would spring it at the proper time and try to prevent the assembly. There was much excitement over it. A number of young men dropped in at Steve Allen’s office to ascertain the truth of the report, and there was a rather general expression of opinion that the ball would take place whether Leech had such an order or not.

“Go and ask Middleton, directly,” advised Jacquelin, and Steve did so. Middleton said he had no knowledge on the subject, and knew of no one to whom such an order should be addressed except himself.

Jerry, who was lounging sleepily not far from

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Leech's office, was called in by Steve and interrogated again with sundry forcible intimations of what would happen in case he should be deceiving him. But Jerry was firm. He reiterated again and again his fervent wish for a speedy dissolution and a perpetual condemnation of the most lurid character, if every word he had spoken were not more than true. Leech, he declared, had the paper in his pocket, and had read it to Sherwood and Moses and Nicholas in his back office, and was going to deliver it to Captain Middleton next day, the day set for the entertainment.

"I lies to urrers; but the Cun'l knows I wouldn' lie to him," protested Jerry, in final asseveration.

"That's so—he knows better," said Steve; and Jerry, with a grin, went back to his post in sight of Leech's back door.

Steve, with a new light in his face, went up to Mrs. Dockett's and had a little talk with Miss Dockett and one or two of the young ladies there, and in ten minutes, with locked doors, they were busy sewing for life. It must have been something very amusing they were engaged in, to judge from the laughter that floated down from their windows.

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That night Hiram Still, with his son, was on his way back to Red Rock from his meeting with Leech, while Leech was riding back to the courthouse.

It was about ten o'clock and the moon was covered by clouds; Leech was riding along, thinking of the plans he had formed and the manner of publishing his order, and of the effect it would have in establishing his position in the county. He had got within a mile or two of the village when, in a little "bottom" in a lonely piece of woods, just before reaching a fork in the road, there was an owl-hoot behind him, and another, as if in response, a little ahead of him. The next moment his horse started violently, as a dark object which Leech had noticed when still at a distance from it, but thought merely a bush, moved out into the road immediately before him. His heart jumped into his throat, for it was not like anything earthly. In the darkness, it looked as much like a small elephant with a howdah on it, as anything else; but he did not have time to think much about it, for the next instant it was close on him right across the road, a huge muffled figure on a high, shapeless beast. Leech's horse snorted and wheeled. Another figure was behind him, closing in on him. Leech pulled in

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his frightened horse; for somewhere about the middle of the dark figure lowering above him there was a momentary flash of steel. Leech thought of his own pistol, but the great figure moved closer to him, very close to him, and stopped. Not a word was said. The figure simply sat in front of him, silent and motionless, while the other moved up on the other side and did the same. Leech's tongue was sticking to his mouth. The stillness and silence were more awful than any words could have been. He tried to speak, but his lips could scarcely frame the words. Presently he managed to falter:

“What do you want?”

There was no answer, and again the silence became worse than ever. The voices of the katydids sounded far and near.

“Who are you?”

There was not a word. Only the figures pressed closer to him.

“What—what do you want?”

Silence and the katydids in the woods.

“Let me go by. I have no money.”

There was no answer, and for a moment no motion, only the gleam of steel again. Then the two figures, pressing close against the Provost, silently turned his horse around and moved

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slowly off into the woods, without a word, with him between them.

He tried to pull up his reins; they were held on either side, and an arm was thrown around him.

“Where are you going?” faltered Leech.

They moved on without a word.

“Wait—I will—I will give——”

A bag or something was suddenly thrown over his head and pressed down to his elbows, which at the same moment were pinioned to his side, and his pistol was taken. He was afraid to cry out, and perhaps could not have done so even had he tried.

The next instant a hand was put into his breast pocket and his pocket-book and all his papers were taken out; he was conscious of a match being struck and a light made, and that his papers were being looked over. He thought he heard one of his captors say, “Ah!” and the next moment the papers and pocket-book were put back in his pocket, and the light was extinguished; the bag was drawn from over his head, and his captors rode off through the woods. When he tried to move he discovered that his horse was tied to a bush and he had to dismount to untie him. His pistol was lying at the foot of

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the sapling. Long before he had finished loosening his horse, the sound of his two waylayers had died out.

As the Provost entered the village the sour expression on his face deepened. The clouds had disappeared and the summer night was perfect; the village lay before him, a picture of peace; the glint of white beneath the court-house trees being just enough to suggest that the tents there were hidden. The streets were filled with a careless throng, and all the sounds were those of merriment; laughter and shouting, and the twang of banjos. There was never an unlikelier field for such a plan as the Provost had in mind.

He rode through like a shadow, silencing the negroes and scowling at the whites, and as soon as he had put up his horse, he called on Captain Middleton. It was not a long interview, but it was a stormy one, and when the Provost came out of the Captain's office he had thrown down the gauntlet and there was an open breach between them. He had complained to Middleton of being beset by highwaymen and robbed of his order, and Middleton had told him plainly he did not believe a word he said.

“How did you get such an order? If there

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was such an order, why was it not addressed to me?" he asked.

Leech said that he declined to be interrogated, but he would soon show him that he had authority.

"Then you will have to bring some better evidence than your own word," said Middleton, coldly.

Leech fired up and attempted a bolder tone than he had ever dared use before with Middleton, and actually forbade the meeting the following night. The young Captain, however, gave him to understand that he himself was the commandant there and that for another word, order or no order, he would place him under arrest, which step at that moment would have so interfered with Leech's plans that he had not ventured to push the matter further.

Next night the long-talked-of entertainment came off duly, and Miss Blair Cary and Miss Elizabeth Dockett and the other girls who had waited so long, showed their little plain, sweet, white and pink dresses which they had made themselves, and their prettier white throats and pink faces, and lovely flashing eyes which God had made; and danced with their gray-jacketed escorts, their little feet slipped in their little

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slippers, many of which were high-heeled and faded with age, having belonged to their mothers, and grandmothers—even great-grandmothers—and enjoyed it all as much as ever the former wearers of the slippers did in their full glory of satin and lace. For of such is the Kingdom of Youth.

The Yankee officers attended, very dignified, and were treated politely, but not warmly, of course, only just so civilly as to show that Southerners knew what was due to guests even when they were enemies; but not so warmly as to let them forget that they were foes.

This, however, made little difference to the young men, for the civility which it was felt was “their due as guests” was sufficient to make a marked contrast with a past in which not a soul in petticoats had noticed them, and the girls were pretty enough to satisfy them at first, even if there was no other privilege conferred than merely that primal right of the cat in the proverb. Everyone, however, meant to be civil, and for the time, at least, at peace.

But there was more than this; the night was perfect; the breath of flowers and shrubbery came in through the open windows; the moon was almost at her full, and her soft light was

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lying on the grass, mantling the trees, and filling the night with that amber mellowness which sometimes comes in summer, and seems to bring a special peacefulness.

The camp lay hidden in the distance, and the throng in the streets hung on the fences, listening to the music, or laughed and danced in full sympathy with the occasion.

Steve Allen constituted himself the especial host of the two officers. It was by him that Middleton and Thurston were introduced to most of the girls, and to the older ladies, who sat at the end of the room farthest from the music, their eyes, filled with light, following their daughters or others whose success was near to their hearts, or, like Miss Thomasia, beaming a benediction on the whole throng of happy dancers.

Still, an hour after the dancing began, the one person whom Middleton particularly wished to meet had not appeared, and Middleton, who had been planning for a week what he should say to Miss Cary, found himself with a vague feeling of dissatisfaction. Little Thurston was capering around as if to the manner born; perspiring at every pore; paying attention to half the girls in the room, and casting glances at Miss Dockett languishing enough, as Middleton said, to lay the

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foundation for a breach of promise suit. But Middleton could not get into the spirit of the occasion. He asked a number of girls to dance, but they were all "engaged," and politely showed their cards. So Middleton fell back. General Legaie and the other older gentlemen courteously drew him into their conversation, and the General rallied him, with an old bachelor's license, on not dancing, declaring that the sight of such girls was the true fountain of youth; but the young Captain was not in the mood for fun. A vague feeling of unrest was on him. The order that Leech had mentioned; the Provost's positive manner; the warning that he had given; the covert threat he had dared to employ, all began to recur to Middleton and worry him. He felt that he would be responsible if any trouble should occur. He went out and walked through the village. A light was shining under the door of Leech's office; but all was as it had been: good-humor everywhere. The moonlight soothed him and the pleasant greetings as he passed served to restore his good-humor, and he returned to the ball. As he did so an old high-backed carriage, which he thought he recognized, made its way slowly past him. The driver was explaining to some-

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one who walked beside him the cause of his delay.

“Dat fool hoss—you can’t git him in de water to save your life. He’ll breck ev’ything to pieces fust. But my young Mistis, she’s dyah now, an’ she’s de queen on ’em all, I tell you. You go dyah an’ look at her th’oo de winder,” he wound up with a proud laugh.

As Middleton re-entered the ball-room there was quite a group near the door surrounding someone who was the centre of attraction, and whom Captain Allen was teasing.

“Oh! You’ll dance with him. He left because you had not come, but I have sent for him. He’s saved a set expressly for you.”

“I won’t. He has done no such thing, and I won’t dance with you either, unless you go away and let me alone.” The voice was a charming one.

“I’ll bet you do. I understand why you made old Gideon drive you up the stream that evening; but you can’t expect him to be mooning on the bank of every creek in the county, you know——”

“That settles it for you, Steve,” said the voice over behind the heads. “Jack, I have the seventh dance with you as well as the first and

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fourth," she called to Jacquelin who was seated against the wall, his crutches beside him.

"Jack never was any hand at arithmetic, and besides he can't dance," declared Allen, as his friend professed his gratitude.

Just then Allen caught sight of Middleton, over the heads of the others.

"Ah! here—Captain Middleton, I want to present you to my cousin, Miss Blair Cary, who wishes to know how you happened not to be—" He caught his cousin's eye, and changed his speech "—who has a question to ask you. Captain Middleton—Miss Cary." The others made way for Middleton, and he stepped forward and bowed low.

She was all in white, and was blazing with brass buttons. They were her only ornaments, except a single old jewel consisting of a ruby surrounded by diamonds. She wore bracelets of the buttons on her arms, and a necklace of larger ones on a band around her white throat. A broad belt of them girdled her little waist.

As Middleton bowed, he caught her eye and the same look of mingled defiance and amusement which he remembered so well at the ford. He hardly knew whether to laugh or be grave, and was conscious that he was growing red, as

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her look changed into one of triumph. He remained grave, however, and rallied enough to ask her for a dance. She bowed. They were all engaged.

“ I have the seventh—to sit out, I believe?” said Jacquelin Gray maliciously, from his seat, for Steve’s benefit. Miss Blair looked at her card;—then to Jacquelin:

“ You only *believe*? As you have forgotten so far as to have a doubt about it, the seventh is *not* engaged,” said the young coquette, with a curtsey. She turned. “ I will give it to you, Captain Middleton.” She looked at Jacquelin and with a little—only the least little toss of the head, took the arm of a young man who had just claimed his set, and bowing to Middleton moved off, leaving both Steve and Jacquelin looking a trifle blank.

“ That girl’s the most unaccountable creature that ever was on earth,” growled Jacquelin. “ I’ll be hanged if I’ll be treated so!” He looked across the room after her floating form.

“ Go slow, old man, go slow,” said Steve. “ You’ll be treated that way and come again for more. And you know you will.”

Jacquelin growled. He knew in his heart it was true.

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Middleton thought that the seventh set would never come, but, like everything else in life, it came at last, and though there were three claimants for it, the one who was the final judge decided for Middleton and walked off with him, calmly leaving both the other aspirants fuming and scowling.

“You can’t fight him, Jack,” said Steve with a laugh to his cousin, who was muttering to himself, “because I’d first have to fight you, you know.”

Having thus punished both her admirers, Miss Cary declined to dance—whether to keep her word; to avoid pleasing too much the young Federal Captain, or to soothe the ruffled spirits of his unsuccessful competitors, who may tell? For no one can thread the mazes of a girl’s caprice.

But this made little difference to Middleton. They strolled outside and found a seat. The moonlight appeared to Middleton more charming than he ever remembered it, and he discovered something which he had never known before. He wanted to please this girl as he never recalled having wanted to please any other, and he was conscious that it was a difficult, if not an impossible task. It was as though

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he lay in face of a foe, one who appeared at the outset stronger than he. Yet she did not appear to be attempting anything. She was simply in opposition to him, that was all. She appeared so unaffected and simple that, remembering what he had just seen of her coquetry, he wondered if she could be as natural as she seemed to be. Her gaze was so direct, her voice so placid, her manner so self-possessed, that he felt she had the advantage of him. And all the time he wanted to please her.

In the course of their conversation she spoke of her brother.

Middleton had not remembered that she had a brother.

“Where is he?” he asked.

“He was killed.” She spoke very quietly.

“Oh!” he said, softly. “I beg your pardon.”

“He was killed at Jacquelin Gray’s side, and Jacquelin brought his body out under fire—just as Steve afterward tried to bring Jack.” She sighed deeply, and her eyes seemed to say, “You can understand now?”

Middleton had a strange sensation. He had never before looked in the eyes of a woman whose brother had been killed, possibly by his command. He hated Jacquelin, but in a way

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he was grateful to him too; for it was the first time Miss Cary had softened at all.

“ I believe that all your men went in the army,” he said, feeling about for a new subject.

“ Of course.”

“ And some of your ladies?” he smiled.

“ All of them.” Up went her head again.

“ I wonder that you were ever conquered?”

“ Conquered! We were not conquered.”

She looked it, as she stood there in the moonlight. Middleton had a sudden thrill that it would be worth his life to win such a girl, and she had never given him even one friendly glance. He could not help thinking,

“ What would Thurston say?”

A partner came and claimed his set, and Middleton was left outside. He sat for a moment thinking how lonely her departure had made the place. He had never felt this way about any other girl. Just then a strange sound, like distant shouting, came through the stillness. Middleton rose and strolled down to the gate. There were fewer people in the street. A man came hurrying along and spoke to another. His voice was so excited that it arrested Middleton's attention, and he caught the last of his sentence.

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“ It ought to be broke up at once. Go in there and call Captain Allen and McRaffle out.”

“ What’s that?” asked Middleton, walking out of the gate, and up to him.

“ A nigger-meetin’ down yonder,” answered the man, sullenly. “ If it ain’t broken up there’ll be trouble. Leech started it by reading a paper he had, tellin’ ’em the Gov’ment wants the party broke up, and then he put Sherrod up, and now that yaller nigger, Dr. Moses, is up. Leech’s been givin’ ’em liquor, and unless it’s stopped there’ll be the devil to pay.”

“ I’ll see about it,” said Middleton. He walked rapidly down in the direction the man had indicated. He was sensible, as he passed along, of some change, and, presently, the distant sound of a man speaking at the top of his voice came to him, followed shortly by a roar of applause. He hurried on and passed a group of half a dozen white men, some of whom were advocating sending for “ reinforcements,” as they said, while others were insisting that they should go right in on them at once. All were united as to one thing: that the meeting ought to be stopped.

“ If we don’t,” said one, “ there’ll be

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trouble, and we might's well do it at once. I can do it by myself."

Some one said something about "the Yankee officers."

"Yankees be blanked!" said the other. "Wasn't it that scoundrel Leech as started it all? He's been workin' it up all day. I got wind of it up at home;—that's the reason I come down. We've got to do it ourselves." It was Andy Stamper.

Just then they saw Middleton and followed him, offering their advice and services. All they wanted was authority.

When Middleton arrived, he agreed with them that the speaking ought to be stopped at once. He had never seen such a sight. The entire negro population of the place appeared to be packed there, moaning and singing, hugging each other and shouting, whilst Moses, the negro he had ordered to leave town, was on the platform, crossing his arms in a sort of frenzy and calling on them to rise and prove they were the chosen people. God had brought their enemies all together in one place, he cried, and all that was needed was for Samson to arise and prove his strength. Their deliverer was at hand. "Ain't you heah dat de wud done

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come from de New Jerusalem, an' ain't my name Moses—Moses? Moses is my name!" he shouted, intoning the words in a sort of wild frenzy. The shout that greeted him proved the danger of his course.

"D—n him, I'll stop his mouth," said one of the young men, pushing his way through the throng, but Middleton was before him. He forced his way, followed by the others, through the crowd which gave way before him at his command, and, when still some yards away from the platform, he ordered the speaker to cease. But Moses was either too drunk or too excited to heed, and went on shouting his singsong.

"I'll lead you to de burnin' bush," he cried. "I'll give you de promise lan'." As it happened, a man standing in the crowd had a carriage-whip in his hand. The Captain snatched it from him and sprang on the platform, and the next instant was raining on the would-be prophet and leader such a thrashing as he had never had in his life. The effect was miraculous. The first lash of the heavy whip took the preacher by surprise and dazed him; the second recalled him to himself and stripped his prophetic character from him, leaving him nothing but a whining, miserable creature, who was try-

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ing to deceive and mislead others as miserable and more ignorant than himself.

As the Captain laid the blows on fast and thick, Moses cringed and finally broke and fled from the platform, followed by the jeers and shouts of the crowd who had just been ready to follow him in any violence, if, indeed, he would have had the courage to lead them. And when the irate officer appeared ready to turn his whip on them, and did accompany his peremptory order that they should disperse at once, with a few contemptuous lashes at those nearest him, they broke and ran with as much good-humor as they had shown an hour previously, when they were dancing and shuffling in the street, before Leech and his agents got hold of them.

CHAPTER XV

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON HAS A TEST OF PEACE, AND IS
ORDERED WEST

THE next day there was much stir in the county, at least about the court-house, and it was known that Middleton had summoned Leech before him and had had an interview with him, which rumor said was stormy, and that it had ended by the Provost being sent to his room, it was said, under arrest.

So much was certain, Middleton after this took charge of matters which up to this time Leech had been attending to, and Leech remained out of sight until he left the place, which he did two days later. One of the first steps Middleton took was to summon the negroes before him and give them a talk. And he closed his speech by a warning that they should keep order wherever they were, declaring that if there were any repetition of Moses's performance of the previous night the offender would not escape so easily.

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The effect of his act was admirable. By nightfall nearly every negro who was not employed about the county seat had left, and within two days many of them were at work, back at their old homes.

Middleton found himself suddenly as popular as he had formerly been unpopular, receiving visits and invitations from half the gentlemen in the place, so that Thurston said it was just the old story: he set the triggers and worked everything, and Middleton just walked in and took the game.

“Here I have been working like a nigger,” he said to Middleton, “watching around and following that fellow Leech in all his rascality; displaying the most consummate qualities of leadership, and singing my head off, and you happen to come along, pick up a driver’s whip and let into a drunken rascal, talk a lot of rot next morning, and in five minutes do what I with all my genius haven’t been able to do in as many months. It’s the old story, Larry, it’s fate! What did I tell you? Long legs are worth more to a man than a long head. But, Larry, look out for Leech. He’s a blood-sucker. Tra-la; I have an engagement. Might as well get some of the good of your glory, old man, while it

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON ORDERED WEST lasts, you know. Beauty fadeth as a flower." And leaving Middleton over his report, the cheery little Lieutenant went off to have a ride with Miss Dockett, who, in view of certain professions of his and proceedings of his Captain's the night before, had honored him so far as to vouchsafe him that privilege.

Reely Thurston's half humorous warning to his friend was not without foundation, as both he and Middleton knew, and within a week the Captain was up to his ears in reports and correspondence relative to his conduct in the county.

The quietness of everything around him was a fact to which he pointed with pride; the restoration of order throughout the county was a proof of the wisdom of his course. Crime had diminished; order had been restored; good feeling had grown up; the negroes had returned to work, and were getting regular wages. They were already beginning to save a little and some were buying land. The whites had accepted the status of affairs in good faith and were, he believed, turning all their energies to meet the exigencies of the time in the best way they could. In a word, peace was fully restored in the territory under his command. He con-

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gratulated himself that he was able to state a condition of affairs so entirely in accord with the observation of the commander-in-chief of the armies, who about that time visited the State and made a similar report on it. Even Reely Thurston commended Middleton's report, and confided to Miss Dockett, who was beginning to receive such confidences more graciously of late, that "Larry had somewhere, in that high head of his, a deuced lot of brains," a compliment which the young Captain would have taken more gratefully from him than from any other soul on earth.

Another cause of content was just then beginning to have its effect on Middleton. Miss Cary was beginning to treat him with some degree of Christian charity, and actually condescended to take a ride with him on horseback, and when he proved himself sufficiently appreciative of this honor, took another.

So things went, and before the summer evenings were over, the young Captain had ridden to the point where he had given Blair Cary all the confidences which a young man in his twenties is likely to give the prettiest girl in his circle of acquaintance, especially when she is the only one whose eyes soften a little at the recital, and

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who responds a bit by giving just a little of her own. Not that Miss Cary for a moment allowed Middleton to forget that on the one great subject always present, the world stretched between them. They were enemies. Between them there was never more than a truce. She would be his friend while it lasted; but never more. That was all! Her skirmish-line, so to speak, exchanged courtesies with his; but, on the first suggestion of a signal, sprang to her rifle-pits.

She always wore, when she rode, a gray cap, which Middleton, without asking any questions, knew had been her brother's. It was a badge, and the young man recognized it as such. She still wore her brass buttons, and would never give him one of them. One afternoon, as they were returning from a ride in which he had told her all about Ruth Welch, dwelling somewhat on their cousinship, they stopped at the ford where he had gone to Blair's rescue the day her horse fell, and he asked her casually if she would give him one of the buttons to save his life. She quietly said "No," and he believed her. Yet this made little difference to the young man. He was not in love with her, he was sure. He only enjoyed her. And the summer evenings which he spent at Birdwood, or riding with her

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through the arching woods, were the pleasantest he had ever known. As they watered their horses at the ford that afternoon no less than four other couples came riding up on their way home, and there was quite a little levee held in the limpid stream, Middleton finding himself taken into the talk and raillery quite as a member of the circle. The far-off call of ploughmen to their teams in the low-grounds of Red Rock and the distant lowing of cattle in the pastures came muffled on the soft air, while a woodlark in the woods along the waterside sang its brilliant song to its tardy mate with a triumph born only of security and peace. As Captain Middleton looked at the faded gray coats and his blue one, the numbers doubled by the reflection in the placid stream, and listened to the laughter about him, he could not but think what a picture and proof of peace it was. And Miss Cary was the prettiest girl in the party.

Suddenly one of the horses became restive, and slashed away at the nearest horse to him. Blair, in pulling her horse out of the way, got under an overhanging bough and her cap was knocked from her head into the water. She gave a little cry of dismay as it floated down the stream, and at her call more than one of the

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young men turned his horse to recover the cap; but Middleton was nearest, and he spurred straight into the deep water below the ledge and swam for the cap, reaching it just before the others got it. He was pleased at the applause he received when he returned.

Miss Cary only said "Thank you," as she might have said it if he had picked the cap from the floor.

Not all the county people, however, acquiesced so entirely in receiving Middleton on so friendly a basis; some did not see why a Yankee officer should be taken up as a friend.

There was one young man who did not appreciate at least Middleton's mode of exhibiting his friendliness. Steve and Middleton had become very good friends; but Jacquelin Gray, as jealous as Othello, grew more and more reserved toward the young officer, and began to give himself many airs about his attentions to Blair Cary. If anything, this only incited Blair to show Middleton greater favor, and at last the young lady gave Jacquelin to understand that she intended to do just as she pleased and did not propose to be held accountable by him for anything whatever.

The evening of the ride on which Blair lost

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her cap and Middleton recovered it for her, Jacquelin had driven over "to see the doctor," he said, and found her gone off with Middleton. As Dr. Cary was away, visiting his patients, which Jacquelin might have known, and Mrs. Cary was confined to her room that day, Jacquelin was left to himself and had plenty of time as he sat on the porch all alone, to chew the cud of bitter fancy, and reflect on the caprices of a part of the human race. He was not much consoled when Mammy Krenda came out and, with kindly sympathy, said:

"You too late—you better make haste an' git off dem crutches, honey, and git 'pon horseback. Crutches can't keep up with horses." She disappeared within and Jacquelin was left in a flame of jealousy. By the time Blair arrived he was in just the state of mind to make a fool of himself. When Jacquelin began the interview, he, perhaps, had no idea of going as far as his heat carried him; but unhappily he lost his head—or as much of a head as a man can have who is deeply in love and, having gone to see his sweetheart, finds her off riding with a rival.

It was quite dusk when the riders rode slowly up the avenue. They stopped at the gate, and Jacquelin could hear Blair's cordial invitation

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON ORDERED WEST to her companion to come in and take supper with them. Middleton declined.

“But I’m afraid you will catch cold, riding so far in wet clothes,” she urged. He, however, had to return immediately, he declared, and after a few more words he galloped off, while Blair came on to the house.

“Why, Jacquelin! You here all by yourself!” she exclaimed. She bent over him quickly to prevent his rising for her. Had Jacquelin been cool enough to note her voice it might have saved him; but he was not even looking at her. His manner hauled her up short, and the next instant hers had changed. She seated herself and tried for a few moments to be light and divert him. She told of the episode at the ford. Jacquelin, however, was not to be diverted, and, taking the silence which presently fell on her for a confession, he began to assume a bolder tone, and proceeded to take her to task for her conduct.

“It was an outrage—an outrage on—Steve. It was shameful,” he said, “that with such a man as Steve offering his heart to her, she should be boldly encouraging a Yankee officer, so that everybody in the county was talking about it.” It was when he said it was an outrage on Steve

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that the explosion came. Blair was on her feet in a second.

“Jacquelin!” she exclaimed, with a gasp. The next second she had found her voice. He had never seen her as she became. It was a new Blair standing above him, tall and straight in the dusk, her frame trembling, her voice vibrating. She positively flamed with indignation, not because of the charge, but against him for making it.

“Whose business is it?” she asked him, with glowing cheeks and flashing eyes. If her father and mother did not object, had he a right to interfere? If Steve were not satisfied, could not he take care of himself? Who had given him such a right? And before Jacquelin could recover from his surprise, she had burst into tears and rushed into the house.

Jacquelin drove home in black despair. He had been put wholly in the wrong, and yet he felt that he had had right originally on his side. His whole past appeared suddenly rooted up; his whole future destroyed by this new-comer, this hostile interloper. How he would love to have some cause of personal quarrel with him! How gladly he would put it all to the test of one meeting. Yet what had Middleton done but win

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON ORDERED WEST fairly! and he had been a gentleman always. Jacquelin was forced to admit this. But oh! if he only had a just cause of quarrel! Let him look out hereafter. But—if he were to meet him and he should fall, what would be the consequence? He would only have ruined Blair's happiness and have destroyed his only hope. He almost ground his teeth at his helplessness as he drove home through the dusk. He did not know that at that moment Blair Cary, with locked door, was sobbing in her little white-curtained room, her anger no longer turned against him, but against herself.

When Jacquelin awoke the next morning it was with a sinking at the heart. Blair was lost to him forever. Daylight, however, is a great restorer of courage, and, little by little, his spirits revived, until by evening he began to consider himself a most ill-used person, and to fancy Blair suing for pardon. He even found himself nursing an idea that she would write a note; but instead of that, he heard that Middleton had been up to see her again, and once more his heart sank and his anger rose. He would show her that he was not to be trampled on and insulted as she had done.

When Middleton arrived at the court-

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house the afternoon of his ride, he found an order transferring his company to a frontier post in the far Northwest. They were to leave immediately.

The same train by which the old company was to go was to bring its successor.

The afternoon before his company left, Middleton rode up to Birdwood. He had given no one any notice, and he arrived unexpectedly. No one was in sight. The lawn appeared as deserted as if it were in the heart of a wilderness. The trees were as quiet as if Nature herself were asleep, and the sound of a dove cooing far down in the grove only intensified the quietude. Tying his horse, Middleton walked up through the grove. As he passed along he happened to cast his eyes in the direction of the little double building, which was off to one side at some distance back of the dwelling, and seeing the old mammy enter one of the doors he turned that way, thinking that she might come out, and he would ask if the family were at home. He stopped in front of the nearest door and looked in. It was the kitchen, and he was facing, not the mammy—who as a matter of fact, had entered another door—but Miss Cary herself. She was dressed in a white dress, and her skirt was

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON ORDERED WEST turned back and pinned about her slender waist; her sleeves were rolled up, showing her round, white arms. She was busy with a bread-tray. Middleton would have drawn back, but Blair looked up and their eyes met. There was a moment of half-embarrassment, and Middleton was about to draw back and apologize for his intrusion, but before he could do so she came forward, smiling.

“Won’t you come in?” she said, “or will you walk into the house?” The color had mounted to her cheeks, and the half mocking smile had still a little embarrassment in it; but Middleton thought she had never looked so charming. His heart gave a bound.

“Can you doubt what I will do?” He stepped over the high threshold. “Even if I be but scullion——”

“You must have been taking lessons from the General. Here—no one was ever allowed in here who would not work.” She gave him a rolling-pin, and he set to work with it industriously.

“This comes of your doing,” she said, still smiling. “I am the only cook left. Why don’t you detail me one? If you were worth a button you would.”

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“How would I do?” hazarded Middleton.
“I’m a pretty good cook.”

“Aunt Betty wouldn’t have let you come into the kitchen if you handled your rolling-pin that way. Let me show you.”

“Which is the best argument yet for the change of cooks,” said Middleton, guilefully holding the rolling-pin more and more awkwardly, for the very pleasure of being set right by her. “Now, don’t you think I am worth a button?”

“No, but you may learn.”

“Unfortunately, I am going away.”

“Are you?—When are you coming back?”—
A polite little tone coming into her voice.

“Never.” He tried to say it as indifferently as he had said it in practising when he rode up, which he liked better than the tragic “NEVER!” which he had first proposed to himself; and all the time he was watching her out of the tail of his eye. She said nothing, and he felt a little disappointed.

“We are ordered away—” he began. She was busying herself about something. But he was sure she had heard. “—to the Northwest to keep the Indians down,” he proceeded.

“Oh!” She turned quickly toward him, and their eyes met.

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“Well, I hope you’ll be as successful and find your task as pleasant there as you have here.” Her head had gone up, as it did on the veranda the night of the ball.

“I do not appear to have been particularly successful here,” Middleton began, banteringly, then walked over to her side. “Miss Cary, do you think I have really enjoyed my task here?”

“Why—yes,” she began; then she glanced up and found him grave. “I don’t know—I thought ——”

“No,” said Middleton, “you did not.”

Just at that moment a shadow fell across the light, and Mammy Krenda stood in the door.

“Well—I declare!” she exclaimed, with well-feigned astonishment. “What in the worl’ air you doin’ in this kitchen?”

They both thought she was addressing Middleton, and he began to stammer a reply; but it was her young mistress whose presence there appeared to scandalize the old woman.

“Don’t you know you ain’ got no business in heah? I can’t turn my back to git nothin’, but what you come interferin’ wid my things. Go right in de house dis minute and put yo’ nice clo’es on. I air really ashamed o’ you to let a gent—a—anybody see you dat way.” She was pushing Blair out gently. “I don’ know what

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she air doin' in heah," she said to Middleton, addressing him for the first time, and with some disdain in her manner, as if she wished him to understand that he had no business there either.

As Blair passed him on her way out she said to him in a whisper, with a low laugh:

"That's a yarn. I do nearly all the cooking since our cook went off, but she thinks it's beneath my dignity to be caught at it."

They did not go into the house, but walked over through the grove and sat down on the grass on the farther slope overlooking the rolling lands, with the blue spurs in the distance. There Middleton threw himself at Blair's feet. He had made up his mind to stake all before he left. As the old mammy passed from the kitchen to the house she made a little detour and cast a glance through the grove. The glint of a white dress through the trees caught her eye, and she gave a little sniff as she went on.

An hour later, Middleton, his face as grave as it had ever been in battle, mounted his horse and rode away without returning to the house, and Blair Cary walked back through the grove alone. She turned across to the smaller house which the old mammy occupied. It was empty,

CAPTAIN MIDDLETON ORDERED WEST and she entered and flung herself on the snowy counterpaned bed.

The old woman came in a moment later. She gave the girl a swift glance, and, turning to the window, dropped the white curtain to shut out the slanting afternoon sun.

“’Tain’t no use to ’sturb yo’self, honey; he ain’ gone,” she said, sympathizingly. “He comin’ back jest so sho’ as I live.”

“He *has* gone,” said Blair, suddenly, with some vehemence. “I have sent him away. I wish he had never come.” But was she thinking of Middleton?

The old woman had turned and was looking down at her from where she stood.

“An’ I glad you is,” she said. “I ain’t like Yankees, no way. Dat deah Leech man—”

“Mammy,” said Blair, rising, “I do not wish you to speak so of a gentleman—who—who has been our guest.”

“Yes, honey, dat’s so,” said the old woman, simply, without the least surprise. “Mammy won’t say no more about him. What I got to do wid abusin’ a gent’man, nohow!”

“Oh! Mammy!” said the girl, throwing her arms about her, and the old woman only said:

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“Yes, honey—yes—yes. But don’t you pester yoreself. ’T’ll all come right.”

Next evening the news that Middleton and his company were ordered away was known. Jacquelin was conscious of his heart giving a bound of joy. He would be only cool and chilling to Blair and show her by his manner how disapprovingly he regarded her conduct. After a little, this mood changed and he began to think it would be more manly to be only very dignified and yet show her that he was above harboring little feelings. He would be generous and forgive her. When, however, he met Blair, she was so far from showing any contrition, that she was actually savage to him; so that instead of having an opportunity to display his lofty feelings, Jacquelin found himself thrown into a situation of the strongest hostility to her, and after a lifetime of friendship they scarcely spoke. Their friends tried to patch up the quarrel, but in vain. Jacquelin felt himself now really aggrieved, and Blair declined to allow even the mention of him. Her severity toward him was almost incomprehensible.

CHAPTER XVI

THE NEW TROOP MEETS THE ENEMY

THE difference between the old company and the new one which came in its place, was marked in many ways besides color, and the latter had not been in the county an hour before the people knew that the struggle was on, and set themselves to prepare for it.

The evening of the arrival of the new company, Jerry entered Captain Allen's office somewhat hastily, and busied himself with suspicious industry. Presently Steve looked at him amusedly.

“Well, what do you want now?—grandmother dead again? If you get drunk I'll thrash you within an inch of your life.”

Jerry giggled.

“Done sent a company o' niggers heah,” he announced, with something very like a grin as he cut his eyes at his master.

“Negroes—hey?” Steve's expression did not

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change a particle, and Jerry looked disappointed. If anything, there was a little more light in Steve's eyes, but they were gazing out of the window, and Jerry could not see them.

"Leech back?" asked Mr. Allen, indifferently.

"Don' know, suh—I'll fine out." The look on Jerry's face once more became pleasant.

Just then the sound of a distant bugle came in at the window, and Steve rose and walked to the door of his office. The doors of several other offices were filled about the same moment. Steve walked down to the fence in front of the court green, and stood leaning against it listlessly, watching as the company came up the road, with bugle blowing, dust rising, and a crowd of young negroes running beside them.

"Halt!" The Captain, a stout, red-faced man, turned his horse, and waved his sword to the negroes in the road. "Pull that fence down." He indicated the panel where Steve stood, adding a string of oaths to stir the negroes from their dulness. A dozen men jumped toward the fence. Steve never budged an inch. With his arms resting on the rail, he looked the Captain in the eye calmly, then looked at the negroes before him, and kept his place. Except for a slight dilatation of the nostrils he might not

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have known that there was a soldier within a hundred miles. The men hesitated a second, then, just as the Captain began to swear again, ran to the next panel and tore it down even with the ground, dragging the posts out of their holes, and making a wide breach through which the company passed into the court-yard to the old camp which Middleton's company had occupied.

As Steve turned away he said to a man near him:

“Seventy-nine negroes, and three white men. We can manage them. Jerry, saddle my horse, and find out when Leech is coming back—and where Captain McRaffle is.”

“Yes, suh,” and Jerry, with a shrewd look, disappeared.

When Jerry returned, his master was writing, and as he did not look up, Jerry went into the inner room, and shortly brought out a pair of saddle-bags, and a pair of pistols.

Steve had just finished his letters, and was sealing them. Jerry gave his report.

“Nor, suh, he ain' come yet; but dey's 'spect-in' of him, de Cap'n says. Cap'n McRaffle, he's away, too.”

“I thought as much. Take this letter over

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to the General. These two are for Mr. Hurley and Mr. Garden. If I'm not here, come up to Dr. Cary's to-morrow morning."

"Yes, suh—yo' horse is in de stable. I'll take de saddle-bags over dyah."

Steve buckled one pistol on under his coat, put the other in his saddle-bags, and went out. He sauntered across to where the company was pitching camp. The throng of negroes was already increasing. A tall, black sergeant, with great pompousness, was superintending the placing of the lines, cursing and damning his men, with much importance, for the benefit of the crowd around. Sweeping the crowd aside, Steve walked right up to him.

"Boy, where's your Captain?" The Sergeant turned and faced him. Perhaps, had Steve been ten feet off the soldier might have been insolent; but Captain Allen was close up to him, and there was that about him, and the tone of command in which he spoke, which demanded obedience. The Sergeant instinctively pointed to the other side of the camp.

"Go and tell him that Captain Allen wishes to speak to him. Go on." Impelled by the tone of authority, the imperative gesture, and the

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evident impression made on the crowd, the Sergeant moved off, with Steve at his heels.

“Dat’s one o’ my young marsters—he wuz a gret soldier,” said one of the old negroes just outside the camp to a squad near him.

Steve and the Sergeant found the Captain sitting against a tree smoking. He was a heavy-looking man, with a red face. Steve took in the familiarity with which the Sergeant addressed him, and governed himself accordingly.

“Here, boy—” Steve gave the negro a five-dollar note, not the less coolly because it was his last; thanked him as he would have done any other servant, only, perhaps, with a little more condescension, and addressed himself to the officer.

“Captain, I am Captain Allen, and I have come to have an understanding with you at the outset.”

Perhaps his very assurance stood him in stead. Had he been a victor dictating terms he could not have done it more coolly.

“You have seventy-nine men and three officers—I have ten times as many.”

“Major Leech—told me—” began the Captain.

“Your Major Leech is a liar, and a coward,

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and you will find it so. We propose to obey the laws, but we do not mean to be governed by negroes, and if you attempt it you will commit a great mistake." He walked back through the camp inspecting the horses, leaving the other to wonder who and what he could be.

Ten minutes later the officer had called a guard, but Steve was already riding out the back lane toward the upper part of the county.

Leech arrived on the next train after that which brought the new troops. He opened a law office in a part of the building occupied by his commissary, and announced himself as a practitioner of the law, as well as the Provost of the county.

He had evidently strengthened his hands during his absence. Krafton, who appeared now to be the chief authority in the State, was in constant communication with him.

Leech boasted openly that he had had Middleton's company removed, and he began to exercise new functions. The new company seemed to be under his authority.

Within a few weeks Dr. Cary and the other civil officers in the county received notices from Leech vacating their commissions on the ground, among others, that they had exceeded their pow-

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ers. Still was appointed Justice of the Peace in place of Dr. Cary, and Nicholas Ash was made Constable. Their services were not in immediate requisition, however, as, for the time being, Leech appeared to prefer to exercise his military, rather than his civil, powers. He began, forthwith, to send out the soldiers in squads on tours throughout the county, partly to distribute rations, and partly to patrol the country.

They had not been at this business long when they began bullying and tyrannizing over the people and terrorizing them as far as possible. At first, they devoted their energies principally to the whites, and the negroes were both impressed and affected by their power and insolence. But after more than one of the marauders were shot, they began to go in large parties, and soon turned their energies against the negroes as well as against the former masters, and were quickly almost as obnoxious to the blacks as to the whites. Their action caused intense excitement in the county.

Steve Allen had almost abandoned his law practice, or at least his office, and spent his time visiting about in the adjoining counties. Leech took it as a sign of timidity and breathed the freer that the insolent young lawyer was away.

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“I mean to drive him and that Jacquelin Gray out of the county,” he boasted to Still. “I’ll make it too hot for him.”

“Wish you could,” answered Still, devoutly. “But don’t you go too fast. They ain’t the sort to drive easy. They was taken up late. And if you push ’em too hard there’ll be trouble.”

Leech sneered. He wished Allen would do something so he might get his hand on him.

“You don’t mean nothin’ to *you*? ’Cause if he got his hand on you first——”

“No—I ain’t afraid of him. He ain’t such a fool as to do anything to me. I am the Government of the United States!” The Provost puffed out his bosom, and with a look of satisfaction glanced at himself in a mirror.

“He ain’t afeard of the Gov’ment or nothin’ else. I wish he was,” declared Still, sincerely.

“Well, he’d better be,” asserted Leech. “As soon as I get things straight, I mean to make him give an account of himself.”

Someone soon gave an account of himself. A considerable party of the men of the negro troop, under command of a sergeant, was “raiding,” one afternoon, in the upper end of the county, when an incident occurred which had a signal effect on both the company and the

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county. They had already "raided" several places on their tour and were on their way home, their saddle-bows ornamented with the trophies of their rapacity: from sheep to ladies' bonnets, when toward sunset they stopped near the edge of the Red Rock plantation, at a roadside store, of which Mr. Andy Stamper had recently become the owner. Mr. Stamper was absent, and the store was in charge of his agent, an old soldier named Michael.

The men demanded liquor. They took all they wanted, and called in a number of negroes and made them drunk also. Old Waverley, who had come to the store to make some little purchases, was sitting on a block, smoking. Him they tried to induce to drink too, and when he declined, they hustled him a good deal and finally kicked him out into the road. He was a "worthless old fool who didn't deserve to be free," they said. Then in their drunken folly they began to talk of going to Red Rock and ordering supper before returning to camp. It would be a fine thing to take possession of that big house and have supper, and they would raid Stamper's also on the way. They knew all about both places, and declared that they ought both to be burnt down. Meantime, they demanded more liquor, which

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the storekeeper seemed suddenly ready to furnish. He made a sign to old Waverley, and the latter slipped off and took a path through the woods. The nearest place was a little homestead on the roadside, belonging to a man named Deals; but there was no one there but a woman; her husband had gone up to Mr. Stamper's, she told Waverley. So warning her as to the squad of negroes, the old man set out as hard as he could for home. Before he was through the woods, however, he met Rupert, riding down to the store on his colt, a handsome gray, and to him he gave notice, telling him that the storekeeper was doing what he could to hold the men there. Rupert wheeled his horse, and was off like a shot, and when Waverley emerged from the woods, he saw the boy a half mile away, dashing up—not to Red Rock; but to the Stamper place, which stood out, off to one side, clear on its little hill, a straight column of smoke going up in the still evening air. It seemed to the old man that there were a number of horses standing about in the yard, and it occurred to him to wonder if the soldiers could possibly have gotten there already. If so, his young master would be in danger of being hurt. But if the horsemen were soldiers they did not re-

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main long; for in a few minutes Waverley saw a number of men mount and the whole party ride rapidly away down the hill, with Rupert on his gray colt among them. Waverley caught one more glimpse of the riders as they disappeared at a gallop in the wood, going in the direction of the store, and then he hurried on to Red Rock, where he found everything quiet.

Jacquelin was ill in bed that day, and Steve Allen had left the house about noon. Rupert had gone to the store for the mail. Waverley did not tell anything about having seen Rupert go off with the men from Stamper's; but he turned and hurried back to the store, thinking now only of Rupert. He had not gone far when he heard a shot or two fired, and then on a sudden a dozen or more. The old fellow broke into a run. When he reached the edge of the woods from which he could see the Deals's homestead he stopped appalled.

A half dozen negroes lay on the ground dead or dying, and a half dozen young white men, among them Captain McRaffle, were engaged either reloading their pistols or talking. Rupert was sitting on his horse at a little distance.

The little company of men Waverley had seen were a few who had gathered together on hearing

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of the raid that was taking place in the neighborhood that day. They too had heard of the contemplated visit to Red Rock and the Stamper place; for Jerry had got from someone that morning a hint that a descent was to be made on these places.

Shortly after Waverley had left the store the squad of soldiers had started for Red Rock; but, thinking to make a clean sweep as they went, they had stopped at the little house on the way, where Waverley had warned the woman and where there was a well, to take another drink. They were engaged in the pleasant amusement of looting this place, shooting chickens, etc., when the company that Waverley had seen ride off from Stamper's came upon them. It was well for Mrs. Deals that the young men arrived when they did, for the troopers were tired of merely destroying property, and just as the white men rode up they had seized her. Her scream hastened the rescuing party. No one knew for a long time who composed the party; for in five minutes every one of the raiders was stretched on the ground, and the two or three neighborhood-negroes who were with them were sworn to secrecy under threats which they feared too much to wish to break their oaths.

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There was excitement enough in the county that night, and when the news reached the court-house, which, owing to the picketing of the roads, it did not do till next morning, the citizens were prepared for the consequences. The comrades of the dead men swore they would burn the village and carry fire and sword through the county; but it was too grave a matter to be carried through too heedlessly. The officers suddenly awoke to the gravity of the situation, which was well for them. They were, no doubt, aided in doing so by the appearance of two or three hundred grave-looking men who were riding into town by every road that led to it, silent and dusty and grim. They were of every age and condition, and they lacked just order enough not to appear marching troops; but showed enough to seem one body. They were all serious and silent, and with that something in their deliberate movements which, whether it be mere resolution or desperation, impresses all who behold it. The negroes about the village who had been in a flurry of excitement since the news came and had been crowding about the camp shouting and yelling, suddenly settled down and melted out of sight, and even the soldiers quieted at the appearance of

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that steadily increasing force of resolute and orderly men gathered along the fences, facing the camp. General Legaie and Dr. Cary were their spokesmen, and they held an interview with the Captain, in which they gave him to understand certain things: They would obey his orders, they said, if he sent them by a single messenger; but if armed bodies of negroes continued to ravage the country they would not be responsible for the consequences.

Leech was not to be found that afternoon. He had "gone to the city." Jerry learned afterward and told Captain Allen that he did not go until that night, and that when the crowd was there he was hidden at Hiram Still's.

An investigation of the outbreak was held, and as a consequence Captain McRaffle and several young men left the county, among them Rupert Gray, who was sent off to school to an academy which was not known to the neighbors generally. Another result was that the old county got a bad name with those who were controlling the destiny of the State, which clung to it for many years. Andy Stamper was arrested for the affair, and was taken, hand-cuffed, by Leech and thrown in jail. Fortunately for him, however, it was shown that he was ab-

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sent from the county that day, and he was discharged. All of these things, however, at the time were little cared for by the residents there, for the negro troop was removed and two white companies were sent in its place. The disorder breaking out wherever negro troops were stationed had attracted attention and caused the substitution of white soldiers.

CHAPTER XVII

JACQUELIN GRAY GOES ON A LONG VOYAGE AND RED ROCK PASSES OUT OF HIS HANDS

JACQUELIN had never recovered from the rough handling which he had received that night from Leech. His wound had broken out afresh and he was now confined to his bed all the time. There was one cause which, perhaps, more than all the rest, weighed him down, and that, certainly, Dr. Cary did not know, though, no doubt, Mrs. Cary and Mrs. Gray knew. It was a secret wound, deeper than that which Dr. Cary was treating. He had never been the same since the evening of his misunderstanding with Blair Cary. The affair in which the negro soldiers were killed, and Rupert's and Steve's part in it, with the necessity of sending Rupert away, and the consequences which followed, seemed to be the finishing stroke, and it appeared to be only a question of a few months with Jacquelin.

One other reason for his anxiety Dr. Cary

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had. Reports of threats made by Leech came to the Doctor.

“Another arrest, and he will go,” said Dr. Cary. “We must get him away. Send him first to a city where he can have better surgical treatment than he is able to receive in the country. Then, when he is fit for it, put him on a sailing vessel and send him around the world.” How cleverly he had managed it, thought the Doctor!

Mrs. Gray also had her own reasons for wishing to get Jacquelin away, though they were not mainly what Dr. Cary thought. With a keener insight than the good Doctor had, she had seen Blair Cary’s change and its effect on Jacquelin. And she eagerly sought to carry out the Doctor’s suggestions. The chief difficulty in the way was want of funds. The demands of the plantation, according to Mr. Still’s account, had been enough of late to consume everything that was made on it. The negroes had to be supported whether they worked or not, and the estate was running behind.

The Doctor felt certain he could manage the matter of means. Hiram Still had just offered to lend him a further sum. Indeed, Still had himself brought up the matter of Jacquelin’s health, and had even asked the Doctor if he did

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not think a long visit somewhere might do Jacquelin good.

“He is a strange mixture, that man Still. He is undoubtedly a very kind-hearted man,” asserted the Doctor.

Mrs. Gray did not altogether agree with her cousin in his estimate of Still; she had her own opinion of him; but she was somewhat mollified by hearing of his interest in Jacquelin’s welfare. She could not, however, allow her cousin to borrow money in his own name on her account, but, in the face of Jacquelin’s steady decline, she finally yielded and bowed her pride so far as to permit the Doctor to borrow it for her, only stipulating that the plate and pictures in the house should be pledged to secure it. This would relieve her partly from personal obligations to Still. One other stipulation she made: that Jacquelin was not to know of the loan.

When the Doctor applied to Still he obtained the loan without difficulty, and Still, having taken an assignment of the plate and pictures, agreed without hesitation to his condition of silence, even expressing the deepest interest in Jacquelin’s welfare, and reiterating his protestations of friendship for him and Mrs. Gray.

“It is the most curious thing,” said the Doc-

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tor to Mrs. Cary, afterward: "I never apply to that man without his doing what I ask. I always expect to be refused. I am always surprised—and yet my suspicion is not relieved—I do not know why it is. I think I must be a very suspicious man."

Mrs. Cary's mouth shut closely. But she would not add to her husband's worries by a suggestion, the very idea of which she thought was an indignity.

"I wish you had not applied to him," she said. "I do not want to be under any obligations to him whatever. I do not think Helen should have asked it of you."

"Oh! my dear!" said the Doctor. "She didn't ask it of me, I offered it to her."

"I cannot bear him," declared Mrs. Cary, with the tone of one who delivers a convincing argument. "And the son is more intolerable than the father. It requires all my politeness to prevent my asking him out of the house whenever he comes. He comes here entirely too often."

"My dear, he is a young doctor who is trying to practise his profession, and needs advice," expostulated the old doctor, but Mrs. Cary was not to be convinced.

"A young doctor, indeed! a young—" The

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rest of the sentence was lost as she went out with her head in the air.

When the matter of removing Jacquelin was broached to him, a new and unexpected difficulty arose. He refused to go. The idea of his getting better treatment than Dr. Cary was able to give was, he said, all nonsense, and they could not stand the expense of such a plan as was proposed. In this emergency his mother was forced to bow her pride. She summoned Blair Cary as an ally. Blair yielded so far as to add an expression of her views to the mother's, because she did not know how to refuse; but, with a woman's finesse, she kept herself within limitations, which Jacquelin, at least, would understand. She came over on a visit, and went in to see him, and took occasion to say that she thought he ought to go to the city. It was a very prim and stiff little speech that she made. Jacquelin's face showed the first tinge of color that had been on it for months, as he turned his eyes to her almost eagerly. So impassive, though, was she, that the tinge faded out.

“Do you ask me to go?”

“No—I have nothing to do with it. I only think you ought to do what your mother wishes.” The mouth was closer than usual.

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There was a little deeper color in her face now.

“Oh! it was only a moral idea you wished to inculcate?”

“If you choose to call it so.” The mouth drew closer.

“Well—will you ask me?”

“I don't mind doing it—for your mother.”

It was no accident that a woman was chosen to be the oracle at Delphi. Jacquelin could make no more of the face before him than if he had never seen it before, and he had studied it for years.

Jacquelin agreed to go to the hospital. So he was sent off to the city, where an operation was performed to remove some of the splintered bone and relieve him. And as soon as he was well enough he was sent off on a sailing vessel trading to China. He thus escaped the increasing afflictions that were coming on the county, and his mother, who would have torn out her heart for him, for fear he would come home if he knew the state of affairs, kept everything from him, and bore her burdens alone.

The burdens were heavy.

The next few years which passed brought more changes to the old county than any years

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of the war. The war had destroyed the Institution of slavery; the years of the carpet-bagger's domination well-nigh destroyed the South. As Miss Thomasia said, sighing, it was the fulfilment of the old prophecy: "After the sword shall come the canker-worm." And the Doctor's speech was recalled by some: "You ask for war, but you do not know what it is. A fool can start a conflagration, but the Sanhedrim cannot stop it. War is never done. It leaves its baleful seed for generations."

Dr. Cary, when he uttered this statement, had little idea how true it was.

Events had proved that although the people were impoverished, their spirit was not broken. Unhappily, the power was in the hands of those who did not understand them, and Leech and his fellows had their ear. It was deemed proper to put them in absolute control. Leech wrote the authorities that he and his party must have power to preserve the Union; he wrote to Mrs. Welch that they must have it to preserve the poor freedmen. The authorities promised it, and kept the promise. It was insanity.

One provision gave the ballot to the former slave, just as it was taken from the former master. An act was so shrewdly framed that

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while it appeared simply to be intended to secure loyalty to the Union, it was aimed to strike from the rolls of citizenship almost the entire white population of the South; that is, all who would not swear they had never given aid or comfort to the Confederacy. It was so all-embracing that it came to be known as the "iron-clad" oath.

"It is the greatest Revolution since the time of Poland," said Dr. Cary, his nostrils dilating with ire. "They have thrown down the man of intelligence, character, and property, and have set up the slave and the miscreant. 'Syria is confederate with Ephraim.' More is yet to come."

"It is the salvation of the Union," wrote Leech to Mrs. Welch, who was the head of an organization that sent boxes of clothes to the negroes through Leech. Leech was beginning to think himself the Union.

While General Legaie and Steve Allen were discussing constitutional rights and privileges, and declaring that they would never yield assent to any measures of the kind proposed, a more arbitrary act than these was committed: the State itself was suddenly swept out of existence, and a military government was substituted in

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its place; the very name of the State on which those gentlemen and their ancestors had prided themselves for generations was extinguished and lost in that of "Military District, Number——." The old State, with all others like it, ceased to be.

Colonel Krafton was the chief authority in that part of the State, and Major Leech, as he was now called, was his representative in the county. And between them they had the enforcement of all the measures that were adopted.

When their hands were deemed strong enough, it was determined to give them the form of popular government.

It was an easy process; for the whites had been disfranchised, and only the negroes and those who had taken the ironclad oath could vote.

At the first election that was held under the new system, the spectacle was a curious one. Krafton was the candidate for governor. Most of the disfranchised whites stayed away, haughtily or sullenly, from the polls, where ballots were cast under a guard of soldiers. But others went to see the strange sight, and to vent their derision on the detested officials who were in charge. Dr. Cary and General Legaie, with

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most men of their age and stamp, remained at home in haughty and impotent indignation.

“Why should I go to see my former wagon-driver standing for the seat my grandfather resigned from the United States Senate to take?” asked General Legaie, proudly.

Steve Allen and Andy Stamper, however, and many of the young men were on hand.

Leech and Nicholas Ash were the candidates for the Legislature, and Steve went to the poll where he thought it likely Leech would be. Steve had become a leader among the whites. Both men knew that it was now a fight to the finish between them, and both always acted in full consciousness of the fact. Leech counted on his power, and the force he could always summon to his aid, to hold Steve in check until he should have committed some rashness which would enable him to destroy him. Steve was conscious that Leech was personally afraid of him, and he relied on this fact—taking every occasion to assert himself—as the master of a treacherous animal keeps ever facing him, holding him with the spell of an unflinching eye.

The negroes were led in lines to cast their votes.

It was a notable thing that in all the county

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there was not an angry word that day between a white man and a negro. Leech, in a letter to Mrs. Welch describing the occasion, declared that the quietness with which the election passed off was due wholly to the presence of the soldiery, and he was very eloquent in his denunciation of the desperadoes who surrounded him, and who were held at bay only by fear of the bayonets about them. But this was not true. The situation was too novel not to be interesting, and there was feeling, but it was suppressed. It was a strange sight, the polls guarded by soldiers; the men who had controlled the country standing by, disfranchised, and the lines of blacks who had just been slaves, and not one in one hundred of whom could read their ballots, voting on questions which were to decide the fate of the State. There were many gibes flung at the new voters by the disfranchised spectators, but they were mainly good-natured.

“Whom are you voting for, Uncle Gideon?” asked Steve of one of the old Red Rock negroes.

“Marse Steve, you know who I votin’ for better’n I does myself.”

To another:

“Whom are you voting for?”

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“Gi’ me a little tobacker, Marse Steve, an’ I’ll tell you.” And when it was given, he turned to the crowd: “Who is I votin’ for? I done forgit. Oh! yes—old Mr. Linkum—ain’ dat he name?”

“Well, he’s a good one to vote for—he’s dead,” said Steve.

“Hi! is he? When did he die?” protested the old man in unfeigned astonishment.

“You ain’ votin’ for him—you’s votin’ for Mist’ Grant,” explained another younger negro, indignant at the old man’s ignorance.

“Is I? Who’s he? He’s one I ain’ never heard on. Marse Steve, I don’ know who I votin’ for—I jis know I votin’, dat’s all.”

This raised a laugh at Steve’s expense which was led by Leech, and to atone for it the old servant added:

“I done forgit de gent’man’s name.”

“The gentlemen you are voting for are Leech and Nicholas Ash,” said Steve.

“Marse Steve, you know dey ain’ no gentmens,” said the old fellow, undisturbed by the fact that Leech was present.

“Uncle Tom, you know something, anyhow,” said Steve, enjoying the Provost’s discomfiture.

The only white man of any note in the upper

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end of the county who took the new "ironclad" oath was Hiram Still. Andy Stamper met him after Hiram had voted. Still tried to dodge him.

"Don't run, Hiram," said the little Sergeant, contemptuously, "I ain't a going to hurt ye. The war's over. If I had known at the time you was givin' the Yanks information, I might 'a' done it once—and I would advise you, Hiram, never to give 'em too much information about *me* now. You've already giv' 'em too much once about me. See there?" He stretched out his arm and showed a purple mark on his wrist. It was the scar that had been left by the handcuff when he was arrested for the riot at Deals's. "It won't come out. You understand?" The little fellow's eyes shot at the renegade so piercing a glance that Still cowered and muttered that he had nothing to do with him one way or another.

"Maybe, if you didn't give no aid and comfort to the rebels you'd like to give me back that little piece of paper you took from my old mother to secure the price of that horse you let me have to go back in the army?" drawled Stamper, while one or two onlookers laughed.

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The renegade made his escape as quickly as possible.

Still's reply to the contempt that was visited on him was to bring suit on the bonds he held. Leech was his counsel. One of the first suits was against Andy Stamper. Andy was promptly sold out under the deed which had been given during the war; the place was bought by Still, and Andy and Delia rented another little house. This was only the beginning, however.

When Still flung away his mask, he went as far as he dared. It was now open war, and he had thrown in his fortune with the other side.

Dr. Cary received a note one morning from Mrs. Gray asking him to come and see her immediately. He found her in a state of agitation very unusual with her. She had the night before received a letter from Still, stating that he was a creditor of her husband's estate and held his bonds for over fifty thousand dollars. Mrs. Gray had known that there were some outstanding debts of her husband due him, though she had supposed they were nearly paid off—but fifty thousand dollars! It would take the whole estate!

“Why, it is incredible,” declared the Doctor.

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“Quite incredible! The man is crazy. You need give yourself no uneasiness whatever about it. I will see him and clear up the whole matter.”

Yet, even as the Doctor spoke, he recalled certain hints of Still's, dropped from time to time, recently, as to balances due by his former employer on old accounts connected with his Southern estate, and Mr. Gray was a very easy man, thought the Doctor, who believed himself one of the keenest and most methodical of men.

Women love to have encouragement from men, even though they may feel the reverse of what they are told to believe. So Mrs. Gray and Miss Thomasia were more comforted than they could have found ground for.

When Dr. Cary did look into the matter, to his amazement he found that the bonds were in existence. Still gave the account of them which he had already given to Leech, and produced some corroborative evidence in the shape of letters relating to the transaction of buying and stocking the sugar plantation. There was hope for a while that the writers of the letters might be able to throw some light on the matter, but, on investigation, it turned out that they were without exception dead, and Mrs. Gray herself,

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on seeing the big bond, pronounced it genuine, and declared that she remembered her husband once spoke of it, though she thought he had told her it was all settled. She hunted all through his papers, but though she found other bonds of his which he had taken in she could find no record of this big one. Jacquelin was written to, but in his reply he said that no matter what the cost, he wanted his father's debts paid. So no defence was made to the suit which Still had instituted by Leech as his counsel, and judgment was obtained by default. And soon afterward the Red Rock place, with everything on it, was sold under this judgment and was bought in by Still for less than the amount of his claim.

Jacquelin was still abroad and Mrs. Gray purposely kept him in ignorance of what was going on; for her chief anxiety at this time was to prevent Jacquelin from returning home until all this matter was ended. He had written that his health was steadily improving.

Mrs. Gray did not remain at Red Rock twenty-four hours after Still became its owner. She and Miss Thomasia moved next day to Dr. Cary's, where they were offered a home. She congratulated herself anew that morning that Jacquelin was yet absent.

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Mrs. Gray and Miss Thomasia walked out with their heads up, bidding good-by to their old servants, who had assembled outside of the house, their faces full of concern and sorrow.

There was hardly a negro on the place who was not there. However they might follow Still in politics, they had not yet learned to forget the old ties that bound them in other matters to their old masters, and they were profoundly affected by this step, which they could all appreciate.

“I drives you away, my mistis,” said the driver, old Waverley. “I prays Gord I may live to drive you back.”

“Not me, Waverley; but, maybe, this boy,” said Mrs. Gray, laying her hand on Rupert’s shoulder.

“Yes’m, we heah him say he comin’ back,” said the old driver, with pride. “Gord knows we hopes so.”

Just then Hiram Still, accompanied by Leech, rode up into the yard. He had evidently kept himself informed as to Mrs. Gray’s movements. He rode across the grass and gave orders to the negroes to clear away. Mrs. Gray took not the least notice of him, but, outraged by his insolence, Rupert suddenly sprang forward and de-

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nounced him passionately. His mother checked him: "Rupert, my son." But the boy was wild with anger. "We are coming back some day," he cried to Still. "You have robbed us; but wait till my brother returns."

Both Still and Leech laughed, and Still ostentatiously ordered the negroes off. Still moved in that afternoon.

Before Still had been installed in his new mansion twenty-four hours he repented of his indiscretion, if not of his insolence. He was absent a part of the evening, and on his return he heard that Captain Allen had been to see him. The face of the servant who gave the message told more than the words he delivered.

"What did he want?" Still asked, sharply.

"He say he want to see you, and he want to see you pussonally." The negro looked significant.

"Well, he knows where to find me."

"Yes, he say he *gwine* fine you—dat's huc-come he come, an' he *gwine keep on* till he do fine you." Still's heart sank.

"I don't know what he wants with me," he growled, as he turned away and went into the house. The great hall filled with pictures had never looked so big or so dark. The eyes fas-

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tened on him from the walls seemed to search him. Those of the "Indian-killer" pierced him wherever he went.

"Curse them; they are all alike," he growled. "I wish I had let them have the d—d rubbish. I would, but for having to take that one down."

Poor Virgy, who had been given the room that had formerly been Jacquelin's, came toward him. She was scared and lonely in her new surroundings, and had been crying. This increased her father's ill-humor. He inquired if she had seen Captain Allen. She had, but he had only bowed to her; all he had said was to the servant.

"Did he seem excited?" Still asked.

"No, he only looked quiet. He looked like one of those pictures up there." It was an unlucky illustration. Her father broke out on her so severely that she ran to her own room weeping. It was only of late that he had begun to be so harsh.

Still, left alone, sat down and without delay wrote a letter to Captain Allen, expressing regret that he had been away when he called. He also wrote a letter to Dr. Cary, which he sent out that night, apologizing to Mrs. Gray and calling heaven to witness that he had not

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meant to offend her, and did not even know she was on the place when he rode up. He did not wait for replies. The next morning before daylight he left for the city.

“I would not mind one of them,” he complained to his counsel, Leech. “I’m as good a man as any one of ’em; but you don’t know ’em. They stick together like Indians, and if one of ’em got hurt, the whole tribe would come down on me like hornets.”

“Wait till we get ready for ’em,” counselled Leech. “We’ll bring their pride down. We’ll be more than a match for the whole tribe. Wait till I get in the Legislature; I’ll pass some laws that will settle ’em.” His blue eyes were glistening and he was opening his hands and shutting them tightly in a way he had, as if he were crushing something in his palms.

“That’s it—that’s it,” said Still, eagerly.

CHAPTER XVIII

LEECH AS A STATESMAN AND DR. CARY AS A COLLECTOR OF BILLS

WHEN Leech arrived at the capital in the capacity of statesman he found the field even better than he had anticipated. It was a strange assembly that was gathered together to reconstruct and make laws for a great State after years of revolution. The large majority were negroes who, a few years before, had been barbers, porters in hotels, cart-drivers, or body-servants, with a few new-comers to the State, like Leech himself: nomadic adventurers, who, on account of the smallness of their personal belongings, were termed "carpet-baggers." Besides these, a few whites who, in hope of gain, had allied themselves with the new-comers; and a small sprinkling of the old residents, who had either been Union men or had had their disabilities removed, and represented constituencies where there were few negroes. They were as

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distinguishable as statues in the midst of a mob. But the multitude of negroes who crowded the Assembly halls gave the majority an appearance of being overwhelming. They filled the porticos and vestibules, and thronged the corridors and galleries in a dense mass, reveling in their newly acquired privileges. The air was heavy with the smoke of bad cigars, which, however, was not wholly without use, as the scent of the tobacco served at least one good purpose; the floors were slippery with tobacco-juice. The crowd was loud, pompous, and good-natured. Leech looked with curiosity on the curious spectacle. He had had no idea what a useful band of coadjutors he would have. He took a survey of the field and made his calculations quickly and with shrewdness. He would be a leader.

“Looks like a corn-shuckin’,” said Still, who had accompanied his friend to the capital to see him take his seat. “A good head-man could get a heap of corn shucked.”

“Does look a little like a checker-board,” assented Leech, “and I mean to be one of the kings. It’s keep ahead or get run over in this crowd, and I’m smart as any of ’em. There’s a good cow to milk, and the one as milks her first

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will get the cream.” His metaphors were becoming bucolic, as befitted a man who was beginning to set up as a planter.

“The cream’s in the drippin’s,” corrected Still.

“Not of this cow,” said Leech.

Leech soon came to be regarded as quite a financier. He talked learnedly of bonds and debentures, of per cents. and guarantees, and dividends, of which more than half the body did not even know the meaning. Once, when he was speaking of the thousands of “bonds” he would put on a railway to the mile, one of his confrères asked what he would put in so many barns.

“Ain’t you heah him say he’s gwine have a million o’ stock?” asked another colored statesman, contemptuously. The answer was satisfactory.

The amount of spoil which in time was found to be divided was something of which not even Leech himself, at first, had any idea. The railways, the public printing, insurance, and all internal improvements, were fertile fields for the exercise of his genius. He was shortly an undisputed power. He followed his simple rule: he led. When someone offered a resolution to put down new matting in the Assembly hall,

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Leech amended to substitute Brussels carpet. To prove his liberality he added mahogany furniture, and handsome pier-glasses. The bills went up into the scores of thousands; but that was nothing. As Leech said, *they* did not pay them. If rumors were true, not only did Leech not pay the bills, he partly received their proceeds. His aspirations were growing every day. He had no trouble in carrying his measures through. He turned his committee-room—or one of his rooms, for he had several—into a saloon, where he kept whiskey, champagne, and cigars always free for those who were on his side. “Leech’s bar” became a State institution. It was open night and day for the whole eight years of his service. He said he found it cheaper than direct payment, and then he lumped all the costs in one item and had them paid by one appropriation bill, as “sundries.” Why should he pay, he asked, for expenditures which were for the public benefit? And, indeed, why? As for himself, he boasted with great pride when the matter came up at a later time, that he never touched a drop.

He had “found the very field for his genius.” He boasted to Still: “I always knew I had sense. Old Krafton thinks he’s running the party. But

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I'm a doin' it. Some day he'll wake up and find I'm not only a doin' that, but a runnin' the State too. I mean to be governor." His blue eyes twinkled pleasantly.

"Don't wake him up too soon," counselled Still.

One of the statesman's acts was to obtain a charter for a railway to run from the capital up through his county to the mountains. Among the incorporators were himself, Hiram Still, Still's son, and Mr. Bolter.

"How will you build this road?" asked Mr. Haskelton, an old gentleman who had been a Union man always—one of the few old residents of the State in the body.

"Oh! we'll manage that," declared Leech, lightly. "We are going to teach you old moss-backs a few things." And they did. He had an act passed making the State guarantee the bonds. The old resident raised a question as to the danger to the credit of the State if it should go into the business of endorsing private enterprises.

"The credit of the State!" Leech exclaimed. "What is the credit of the State to us? As long as the bonds sell she has credit, hasn't she?"

This argument was unanswerable.

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“But how will you pay these bonds?” urged Mr. Haskelton.

“I will tell you how we will pay them; we will pay them by taxes,” replied Leech.

“Ay-yi! Dat’s it!” shouted the dusky throng about him.

“Someone has to pay those taxes.”

“Yes, but who?” Leech turned to his associates who were hanging on his words. “Do you pay them?”

“Nor, dat we don’t,” shouted Nicholas Ash.

“No, the white people pay them—and we mean to make them pay them,” declared Leech.

This declaration was received with an outburst of applause, not unmingled with laughter, for his audience had some appreciation of humor.

“Lands will only stand so much tax,” insisted his interlocutor; “if you raise taxes beyond this point you will defeat your own purpose, for the lands will be forfeited. We cannot pay them. We are already flat on our backs.”

“That’s where we want you,” retorted Leech, and there was a roar of approval.

The old gentleman remained calm.

“Then what will you do?” he persisted.

“Then we will take them ourselves,” asserted

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Leech, boldly. He looked around on the dusky throng behind him, and up at the gallery, black with faces. "We will make the State give them as homes to the people who are really entitled to them. They know how to work them." A great shout of applause went up from floor and gallery. Only the old gentleman, gray and pallid, with burning eyes stood unmoved amid the tumult.

"You cannot do this. It will be robbery."

The crowd, somewhat disturbed by his earnestness, looked at Leech to hear how he would meet this fact. He was equal to the emergency.

"Robbery, is it?" he shouted, waving his arms, and advancing down the aisle. "Then it is only paying robbery for robbery. You have been the robbers! You robbed the Indians of these lands, to start with. You went to Africa and stole these free colored people from their happy homes and made them slaves. You robbed them of their freedom, and you have robbed them ever since of their wages. Now you say we cannot pay them a little of what we owe them? We will do it, and do it by law. We have the majority and by—! we will make the laws. If you white gentlemen cannot pay the taxes on your homes, we'll put some colored

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ones there to get the benefit." He shook his hand violently in the vehemence of his speech. And again the crowd roared.

"Don't shake your finger in my face," said the old man so quietly that only Leech heard it. He backed off.

He became an undisputed leader. "By — ! I had no idea I was such an orator," he said to Still, smiling.

"I haven't made such a speech as that since just before the war. I made that old coon admit he was flat on his back."

"A coon fights better on his back 'n' any other way," warned Still.

"I'll put some hunters on this coon that will keep him quiet enough," said Leech. "I'll arm a hundred thousand niggers."

Leech made good his promises. The expenditures went up beyond belief. But to meet the expenses taxes were laid until they rose to double, quadruple, and, in some parts of the State, ten times what they had been. Meantime he had been in communication with Mr. Bolter, who had come down and paid him and Still a flying visit, and a part of the bonds of his railroad were "placed."

The taxes, as was predicted, went far beyond

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the ability of the landowners to pay them, and vast numbers of plantations throughout the State were forfeited. To meet this exigency, Leech was as good as his word. A measure was introduced and a Land Commission was appointed to take charge of such forfeited lands and sell them to his followers on long terms, of fifteen to twenty years. Leech was a member of the general Commission and Still was appointed agent of the Board in his section of the State. Still was a very active commissioner—"efficient," the Commission called him.

Several places were sold which shortly were resold to Leech and Still. Leech added to a place he bought on the edge of Brutusville, adjoining General Legaie's, the plantations of two old gentlemen near him. Sherwood had bought one and Moses the other. Leech gave them "a fair advance." He said it was "all square." He was now waiting for General Legaie's place.

Leech built himself a large house, and furnished it with furniture richer than that in any other house in the county. It was rumored that he was preparing his house for Virgy Still.

Nicholas Ash bought a plantation and a buggy and began to drive fast horses. Many of their

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fellow-lawmakers bloomed out in the same way. They were the only ones who now rode in carriages. Their proceedings did not affect themselves only. They reached Dr. Cary and General Legaie and the old proprietors on their plantations, quite as directly, though in the opposite way. The spoils that Leech, Still, Governor Krafton and their followers received, someone else paid. And just when they were needed most, the negroes abandoned the fields. No one could expect statesmen to work. Cattle, jewels, and plate were sold as long as they lasted, to meet the piled-up taxes; but in time there was nothing left to sell, and the plantations began to go. In the Red Rock neighborhood, rumors were abroad as to the destiny of the various places. A deeper gravity settled on Dr. Cary's serious face, and General Legaie's lively countenance was taking on an expression not far from grim. It was less the financial ruin that was overwhelming them than the dishonor to the State. It was a stab in their bosoms.

Mr. Ledger was making inquiries as to the possibility of their reducing shortly their indebtedness to him, and the Doctor was forced to write him a frank statement of affairs. He had never worked so hard in his life, he wrote; he

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had never had so much practice; but he could collect nothing, and it was all he could do to meet his taxes.

“Why don’t you collect your bills?” naturally inquired Mr. Ledger.

“Collect my bills?” replied the Doctor. “How can I press my neighbors who are as poor, and poorer, than I am?”

However, inspired by Mr. Ledger’s application, the Doctor did try to collect some of the money due him. He did not send out his bills. He had never done that in his life. Instead, he rode around on a collecting-tour. He was successful in getting some money; for he applied first to such of his debtors as were thriftiest. Andy Stamper, who had just returned from town where he had been selling sumac, chickens, and other produce, paid him with thanks the whole of his bill, and only expressed surprise that it was so small. “Why, I thought, Doctor, ’twould be three or four times that?” said Andy. “I’ve kept a sort of account of the times you’ve been to my house, and seems to me ’t ought to be?”

“No, sir, that’s all I have against you,” said the Doctor, placidly; replying earnestly to Andy’s voluble thanks, “I am very much

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obliged to you." He did not tell Andy that he had divided his accounts by three and had had hard work to bring himself to apply for anything.

This and one or two other instances in the beginning of his tour quite relieved the Doctor; for they showed that, at least, some of his neighbors had some money. So he rode on. He soon found, however, that he had gleaned the richest places first. On his way home he applied to others of his patients with far different results. Not only was the account he received very sorrowful; but the tale of poverty that several of them told was so moving that the Doctor, instead of receiving anything from them, distributed amongst them what he had already collected, saying they were poorer than himself. So when he reached home that evening he had no more than when he rode away.

"Well, Bess," he said, "it is the first time I ever dunned a debtor, and it is the last." Mrs. Cary looked at him with the expression in her eyes with which a mother looks at a child.

"I think it is just as well," she said, smiling.

"You must go and see old Mrs. Bellows," he said. "She is in great trouble for fear they'll sell her place."

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Blair Cary, like her mother, watched with constant anxiety the change in her father. His hair was becoming white, and his face was growing more worn.

At length, a plan which she had been forming for some time took definite shape. She announced her intention of applying for one of the common schools which had been opened in the neighborhood. When she first proposed the plan, it was received as if she were crazy—but her father and mother soon found that they no longer had a child to deal with, but a woman of sense and force of character. The reasons she gave were so clear and unanswerable that at length she overcame all objections and obtained the consent of all the members of the family except Mammy Krenda. The only point which her father stood out for was that she should not apply for one of the schools under the new county-managers. A compromise was effected and she became the teacher of the school that had been built by the old residents. The Mammy still stood out. The idea of “her child” teaching a common school outraged the old woman’s sense of propriety, and threw her into a state of violent agitation. She finally yielded, but only

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on condition that she might accompany her mistress to the school every day.

This she did, and when Miss Blair secured the little school at the fork in the road not far from their big gate, the old mammy was to be seen every day, sitting in a corner grim and a little supercilious, knitting busily, while her eyes ever and anon wandered over the classes before her, transfixing the individual who was receiving her mistress's attention with so sharp a glance that the luckless wight was often disconcerted thereby.

As old Mr. Haskelton had said, the old residents were flat on their backs. Leech was of this opinion when he passed his measures. But remembering Still's warning, to make sure, as the troops had been withdrawn from the county, he put through a bill to organize a State militia, under which large numbers of the negroes in the old county and throughout the State were formed in companies.

He had other plans hatching which he thought they would subserve.

CHAPTER XIX

HIRAM STILL COLLECTS HIS DEBTS

THE old Doctor had become the general adviser of his neighbors. There was that in his calm face and quiet manner which somehow soothed and sent them away with a feeling of being sympathized with, even when no practical aid was rendered. "I believe more people consults the old Doctor than does Mr. Bagby and General Legaie together," said Andy Stamper; "and he don't know any more about the way to do business these days than my baby. To be sure, they all seem to be helped somehow by goin'."

It was soon a problem whether the Doctor could keep his own place from falling into the hands of the Commission. He had often wondered why it had not been listed, for he had not been able to keep the taxes down. Though he did not know, however, Hiram Still did.

All this while Blair had some secret on her

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mind. She was always working. She would be up before sunrise, looking after her chickens; and in the afternoons, when she came from school, and all day in the summer, she would be busy about the kitchen or in some shaded spot, back among the fruit trees, where kettles were hung over fires, and Mrs. Cary at times gave advice, and Mammy Krenda moved about with her arms full of dry wood, in a mist of blue smoke. Sometimes Steve Allen lounged in the shade, at the edge of the cloud, giving Blair what he termed his legal advice, and teasing Mammy Krenda into threats of setting him on fire "before his time." "Making preserves and pickles," was all the answer the Doctor got to his inquiries. Yet for all Miss Blair's work there did not seem to be any increase in the preserves that came to the table, and when her father inquired once if all her preserves and pickles were spoilt, though she went with a laugh and a blush and brought him some, he saw no increase in them afterward. She appeared suddenly to have a great many dealings with Mr. and Mrs. Stamper, and several times Andy Stamper's wagon came in the Doctor's absence and took away loads of jars which were transported to the railroad, and when the Doctor ac-

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identally met Andy and inquired of him as to his load and its destination, Andy gave a very shuffling and cloudy reply about some preserves his wife and some of her friends were sending to town. Indeed, when the Doctor reached home on that occasion, he spoke of it, declaring that Mrs. Stamper was a very remarkable young woman; she actually sent off wagon-loads of preserves. He asked Blair teasingly how it was that Mrs. Stamper could do this while they could hardly get enough for the table. Blair only laughed and made a warning sign to Mammy Krenda, who was sniffing ominously and had to leave the room.

At length the secret came out. One day the Doctor came home worn out. The taxes were due again. Blair left the room, and returning, placed a roll of money in his hands. It was her salary which she had saved, together with the proceeds of the kettle in the orchard.

“That will help you, papa,” she said, as she threw her arms round his neck. “These are my preserves.”

The old gentleman was too moved to speak before she had run out of the room. After a little he went to find his wife. That was the sanctuary he always sought, in joy and sorrow.

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“I reckon now he know de Stampers ain’ de on’ies’ ones kin meck preserves,” said Mammy Krenda, with a sniff.

That very evening old Mrs. Bellows came to see the Doctor. Mrs. Bellows was the aunt of Delia Dove. Her husband had been a blacksmith, and had died the year after the war. They owned a little place near the fork in the road, just on the edge of the Birdwood plantation, where her husband had in old times made a good living. The house was a little cottage set back amid apple and peach trees some hundreds of yards from the shop. Since her husband’s death, Andy Stamper and Delia Dove had helped her; but now, since Andy had been turned out of his old home and was paying for another, the times had grown so hard that it was not a great deal they could do. Andy thought they’d better let this place go and that she should come and live with them, but the old woman had refused, and now her place among many others had been forfeited and was on the list of those advertised for sale. And Mrs. Bellows came to Dr. Cary. Still had his eye on her home, and intended to buy it for the Commission. Andy had heard that Nicholas Ash wanted it, and that Still had promised it to him—“just out of spite to Andy and

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Delia," the old woman said. She was in a great state of excitement.

"I been tellin' Andy 'twant no use to be fightin' Still," she wailed; "he's too smart for him. If he could git hold o' Red Rock, Andy might 'a' known he could beat *him*."

Dr. Cary sat in deep reflection for a moment. He had a pang as he thought of the money he had made Andy pay. The sum saved by Blair was only a small part of the taxes due on Birdwood, but was enough to pay all the back taxes and redemption fees on Mrs. Bellows's place. It looked like Providence. The Doctor sent her away comforted. Still's plans with regard to the Bellows place soon became an assured fact. He boasted of what he would do. He would show Andy Stamper who he was. The fact that it would be Delia Dove's was enough for him, and it became known throughout the county that the Commission would take it. When the day of sale came, little Andy was on hand at the county seat. Still was there too, and so was Nicholas Ash. Still tried to find out why Andy came. He knew he did not have the money to redeem the place. He thought it was to pick a quarrel with him; but Andy's face was inscrutable.

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Under the formality of the law, a party interested could redeem the land at any time before it was sold, paying the amount due to the clerk, with interest and fees. Still examined the list just before the crying began. The Bellows place was still on it. So the auction began. Andy was closeted with old Mr. Dockett, whose duty it was, as clerk, to receive the redemption money; but when the sale started, he came out and sauntered up into the crowd. Several places belonging to persons whose names began with A, were put up and knocked down to "Hiram Still, Commissioner," and as each one went to him there were groans and hoots, and counterbalancing cheers from the negroes. At length the Bellows place was reached. The amount of taxes for the several years for which it was delinquent was stated, and the sheriff, a creature of Leech's, offered the place. There was a dead silence throughout the crowd, for it was known that it was between Still and Stamper. Still was the only bidder. The crowd looked at Stamper, but he never stirred. He looked the most indifferent man on the ground. Still, on the other side of the crowd, whispered with Ash and made a sign to the sheriff, and the latter, having made his preliminary notice, announced:

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“And there being no other bid than that of the Commissioner, I knock this place also down to——”

There was a movement, and a voice interrupted him.

“No, you don’t. That place has been redeemed.” Andy spoke quietly, but with a sudden blaze in his eyes. He held up the certificate of payment, gripped in his hand, and looked across at Hiram Still.

There was a moment’s pause, and then cheer after cheer broke out from the crowd of whites; and the long, pent-up feeling against Still burst forth so vehemently that he turned and pushed deep into the middle of the throng of blacks about him, and soon left the ground.

The excitement and anxiety, however, proved too much for old Mrs. Bellows, and she died suddenly a few nights later.

“One more notch on the score against Hiram and Major Leech,” said Andy Stamper, grimly, as he turned the key in the door of the empty house, and, taking it out, put it in his pocket.

Andy’s wife, as the old woman’s heir, was the owner of the place; but a few days after Mrs. Bellows’s death Andy rode up to Dr. Cary’s door.

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Delia had sent him over, he said (he always laid the credit of such things on Delia, he was simply clay in the potter's hands).—Delia had sent him to say that the place belonged to Miss Blair. “She had found out where the money came from which bought it back, and she wan't goin' to take it. She couldn't take care of the place anyhow—'twas all she could do to keep the place they had now; and she would not have this one if she was to pay taxes on it. All she wanted, was to beat Hiram. So if Miss Blair wouldn't take it, she s'posed Nicholas Ash would git it next year, after all.”

Andy pulled out a deed, made in due form to Miss Blair Cary, and delivered it to the Doctor, meeting every objection which the Doctor raised, with a reason so cogent that it really looked as if he were simply trying to shield Delia Dove from some overwhelming calamity. So the Doctor finally agreed to hold the place for his daughter, though only as security for the sum advanced, and with a stipulation that Andy should at any time have the privilege of redeeming it. It was well for Dr. Cary that he had placed his money as he did.

A few days after this sale at the county seat, Dr. Cary received a letter from Mr. Ledger, tell-

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ing him that the condition of affairs had become so gloomy that his correspondents in the North were notifying him that they could not continue their advances to him at present, and as the notes given him by Dr. Cary and General Legaie, which had already been renewed several times, were about to fall due again, he found himself under the disagreeable necessity of asking that they would arrange to pay them at their next maturity. General Legaie, who had received a similar letter, rode up to see Dr. Cary next morning, and the following day they went to the city together. They rode on horseback, as they had no money to pay even the small sum necessary for the railway fares.

When the Doctor and General Legaie called on Mr. Ledger he was at the moment talking to a youngish, vigorous-looking man, whose new clothes and alert speech gave him almost a foreign air beside the stately manner of the two old gentlemen. Mr. Clough, the stranger, rose to go, but both Dr. Cary and General Legaie begged him to remain, declaring that they had "no secrets to discuss," and that they should themselves leave if he did so, as he had been there first.

They had exhausted every resource in their

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power to raise the means to pay Mr. Ledger, they said. And now they had come to him with a proposition. They looked at each other for support. It manifestly cost an effort to make it. They proposed that he should take, at a proper valuation, so much of their lands as would meet his debt. A sigh followed the proposal. It was evidently a relief to have got it out.

“It is good land, and not an acre has ever been sold from the original grant,” said Dr. Cary. It manifestly added to the value of the terms offered.

“My dear sirs, what would I do with your lands?” said Mr. Ledger. “I already have the security of the lands in addition to your personal obligation. My advice to you is to try and sell them—or, at least, so much of them as will enable you to discharge your debts. There are one or two men up in your section who have plenty of money.—This man Leech—and that man Still—they are land-buyers. Why don’t you sell to them?”

“What!” exclaimed both Dr. Cary and General Legaie, in one breath. “Sell our old family places to that man Leech?”

“My dear sirs, it will come to this, I fear—

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or worse. My correspondents are all calling in their loans. I know that Mr. Still would not be averse to buying a part of your place or, indeed, all of it, Doctor; and I think Leech would like to have yours, General.”

The two old gentlemen stiffened.

“Why, that man Leech is a thief!” said the little General, with the air of one making a revelation. “He could not pay me a dollar that had not been stolen, and that fellow Still, he’s a harpy, sir.”

“Yes, I know, but I tell you frankly, gentlemen, it is your only chance. They mean to tax your land until you will find it impossible to hold on to it.”

“In that case we should not wish to put it off even on those men,” said the Doctor with dignity, rising. “I shall see if I cannot raise the money elsewhere to relieve you. Meantime I shall hold on to the old place as long as I can. I must make one more effort.” And the two old gentlemen bowed themselves out!

“A very striking-looking pair,” said the stranger, “but they don’t seem to have much business in them.”

“No,” said Mr. Ledger, “they haven’t. They are about as able to cope with the present as two

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babies.” He sat in deep abstraction for a minute and then broke out suddenly: “But I’ll tell you what: if you up yonder would just hold off they could clean up that pen on the hill in fifteen minutes. And I believe it would be the best thing for you to have them do it.” His eyes blazed with a light that gave his visitor a new idea of him.

In consequence of this talk, Mr. Clough, when he had concluded his business, went for amusement to observe the proceedings of the State Legislature which was in session. It was undoubtedly strange to see laws being enacted by a body composed of blacks who but a few years before had been slaves, and he went away with a curious sense of the incongruity of the thing. But it was only amusing to him. They appeared good-natured and rather like big children playing at something which grown people do. His only trouble was the two old gentlemen.

“Of course it is all nonsense, those slaves being legislators,” he admitted to Major Welch, on his arrival at home, and to his father-in-law, Senator Rockfield. “But they are led by white men who know their business. The fact is, they appear to know it so well that I advise calling in all the debts at once.”

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What simply amused this casual visitor, however, was a stab in the heart of the two old gentlemen he had met.

Dr. Cary and General Legaie returned home without being able to raise anywhere the money that was due.

In reply to the letter announcing this, Dr. Cary received a letter from Mr. Ledger, informing him that he had just had an offer from someone to take up the Doctor's notes, and he had felt it his duty to notify him before he assigned them. The person who had made the offer had insisted that his name should not be known at present, but he had intimated that it was with friendly intentions toward Dr. Cary, though Mr. Ledger stated, he would not like the Doctor to rely too much on this intimation. He would much prefer that Dr. Cary should take up the notes himself, and he would not for a moment urge him if it were not that he himself was absolutely obliged to have the money to meet his obligations.

To this letter the Doctor replied promptly. Mr. Ledger must accept the offer from his unnamed correspondent if it were a mere business transaction, and the Doctor only asked that he would do so without in any way laying him

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under any obligation to the person referred to, for a pretended kindness.

“The old Doctor evidently knows his man,” was Mr. Ledger’s reflection.

The next day Hiram Still held Dr. Cary’s notes secured by deed of trust on the whole Birdwood estate.

Still was sitting in the big hall at Red Rock on his return home, and he took out the notes and laid them on the table before his son.

“Ah! Dr. Wash,” he said, with a gleam in his eyes; “things is comin’ roun’. Now you’ve got it all your own way. With them cards in your hand if you can’t win the game, you ain’t as good a player as yer pappy. I don’t want nothin’ for myself, I just want ’em to know who I am—that’s all. And with you over yonder at the old Doctor’s, and Virgy in Congress or maybe even in the Governor’s house down yonder, I reckon they’ll begin to find out who Hiram Still is.”

The son was evidently pleased at the prospect spread out before him, and his countenance relaxed.

“ ’Twon’t do to let Leech get too far ahead—I’m always telling you so.” Young Still was

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beginning to show some jealousy of Leech of late.

“Ahead? He ain’t ahead. He just thinks he is.” The speaker’s voice changed. “What’s the matter with Virgy these days? I’ve done set her up in the biggest house in the county, and brought the man who’s goin’ to be one of the biggest men in the State to want her to marry him, and she won’t have nothin’ to do with him. It clean beats my time. I don’t know what’s got into her. She ain’t never been the same since I brought her here. Looks like these pictures round here sort o’ freezes her up.”

As he glanced around Hiram Still looked as if he were freezing up a little himself.

“She’s a fool,” said the brother, amiably.

“I thought maybe she’s been kind o’ ailin’ an’ I’d git the old Doctor to come and see her. Say what you please, he have a kind o’ way with him women folks seems to like. But she won’t hear of it.”

“She’s just a fool. Let her alone for a while, anyhow.”

His father looked at him keenly.

“Well, you go ahead—and as soon as you’ve got your filly safe, we’ll take up t’other horse

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—time enough. 'Thar's the bridle.'" He touched the notes on the table and winked at his son.

Dr. Still, armed with the assurance which the possession of Dr. Cary's notes gave, drove over to Birdwood the very next evening in a double buggy. He was met by Dr. Cary, who treated him with his usual graciousness, and who so promptly assumed that the visit was merely a professional one that the caller never found the opportunity to undeceive him.

When Washington Still arrived at home that night his father was watching for him with eagerness. He met him as the buggy drove up into the yard; but Wash's face was sphinx-like. It was not until nearly bedtime, when the father had reinforced his courage with several drinks of whiskey, that he got courage to open the subject directly.

"Well, what news?" he asked, with an attempt at joviality.

"None," said Wash, shortly.

"How'd you come out?"

"Same way I went in." This was not encouraging, but another glass added to Mr. Still's spirit.

"How was she lookin'?"

"Didn't see her.—Didn't see anybody but the

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old Doctor; never do see anybody but him—and the old nigger that opens the door. He thought I'd come over to consult him about that sick nigger down at the mill, so I let him think so. I wish the d—d nigger would die.”

“And you didn't even ask for her?”

The young man shifted in his chair.

“What's the use! That old fool's got a way with him. You know how it is. If he wa'n't so d—d polite!”

“Ah! Washy, you're skeered,” said the father, fondly. “You can't bridle a filly if you're afeard to go in, boy. If you don't git up the grit I'll go over thar myself, first thing you know. Why don't you write her a letter?”

“What's the good! I know'm. She wouldn't look at me. She's for *Lord* Jacquelin or Captain Steve Allen.”

“She wouldn't!” Still rose from his chair in the intensity of his feeling. “By — she shall! I'll make her.”

“Make her! You think she's Virgy? She ain't.”

A day or two later a letter from Dr. Still was brought to Birdwood by a messenger. Dr. Cary received it. It was on tinted paper and was for Blair. That afternoon another messenger

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bore back the same letter unopened, together with one from Dr. Cary, to the effect that his daughter was not accustomed to receive letters from young men, and that such a correspondence would not be agreeable to him.

Dr. Still was waiting with impatience for a reply to his missive. He was not especially sanguine. Even his father's hope could not reassure him. When he looked at the letter his countenance fell. He had not expected this. It was a complete overthrow. It not only was a total destruction of his hopes respecting Miss Cary, but it appeared to expose a great gulf fixed between him and all his social hopes. He had not known till then how much he had built on them. In an instant his feeling changed. He was enraged with Blair, enraged with Dr. Cary, enraged with Jacquelin Gray and Captain Allen, and enraged with his father who had counselled him to take the step. He took the letter to his father, and threw it on the table before him.

“Read that.”

Hiram Still took up the letter and, putting on his glasses, read it laboriously. His face turned as red as his son's had turned white. He

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slammed the letter on the table and hammered his clenched fist down on it.

“You ain’t good enough for ’em! Well, I’ll show ’em. I’ll turn ’em out in the road and make their place a nigger settlement. I’ll show ’em who they’re turnin’ their noses up at. I’ll show ’em who Hiram Still is. I’ll make Leech Governor, and turn him loose on ’em, if it takes every cent I’ve got in the world.” He filled his glass. “We’ll show ’em yet who we are. When I’m settin’ up here and you’re settin’ up thar they’ll begin to think maybe after all they’ve made a little mistake.”

Still was as good as his word. Within a day or two, Dr. Cary received a letter from him asking the payment of his obligations which he held. He assigned the necessity he was under to raise a large sum of money himself.

The Doctor wrote in reply that it was quite impossible for him to raise the money to pay the debts, and begged that Still would without delay take the necessary steps to close the matter up, assuring him that he should not only not throw any obstacle in his way, but would further his object as far as lay in his power.

Steve urged the Doctor to make a fight, declaring that he could defer the sale for at least

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two years, maybe more, and times might change; but Dr. Cary declined.

“What can I do? I owe a debt and I cannot pay it. I might as well save the man the mortification of telling a multitude of unnecessary lies.”

So in a little while Still, through Leech, his counsel, had subjected the Doctor's property to his debts and was in possession of Birdwood as well as Red Rock.

Mrs. Cary and Blair left their roses and jonquils and with the Doctor moved to the old Bellows place, where they were as happy as they had ever been in the days of their greatest prosperity. Old Tarquin, who accompanied them, observed his master closely and followed his example, carrying his head as high as if he still walked the big halls and polished floors of Birdwood. Mammy Krenda alone was unhappy. She could not reconcile herself to the change. The idea of “dat nigger-trader an' overseer ownin' her old marster's place, an' o' her young mistis havin' to live in de blacksmiff' house,” was more than the old woman could bear.

CHAPTER XX

LEECH LOOKS HIGHER AND GETS A FALL

MAJOR LEECH was now one of the leading men in the State. No one had been so successful in his measures. He boasted openly that he owned his own county. Carried it in his breeches pocket, he said.

Hiram Still had become the largest property-holder in the county. "I don't know so much about these here paper stocks," he said to his son. "But I know good land, and when you've got land you've got it, and everybody knows you've got it."

It was understood now that Leech was courting Still's daughter, and it began to be rumored that reinforced by this alliance, after the next election he would probably be the leader in the State. He was spoken of as a possible candidate for the Governorship, the election for which was to come off the following year.

The people were now as flat on their backs as even Leech could wish.

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Fortunately there is a law by which conditions through their very excess are sometimes rectified. Absolute success often bears in it the seeds of its own destruction. With the power to make such laws as they wanted, and to gild all their acts with the tinsel of apparent authority, Leech and his associates had been so successful that they had lost all reckoning of opposition, and in their security had begun to quarrel among themselves.

The present Governor, Krafton, was a candidate for re-election, and his city organ declared that Leech was pledged to him. He had "made Leech," it said. "Leech was bound to him by every tie of gratitude and honor." Leech in private sneered at the idea. "Does he think I'm bound to him for life? Ain't he rich enough? Does he want to keep all the pie for himself? Why don't he pay that rent to the State for the railroad him and his crowd leased? He talk about beatin' me! I'll show him. You wait until after next session and all h—l can't beat me," he said to Hiram Still. He did not say this to the Governor. But perhaps even counting this, Leech did not count all the forces against him. Emboldened by the quietude which had existed so long, Leech

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moved more openly. He believed he was strong enough now for anything. Success was at length turning even Still's head.

"You got to keep yourself before the people, and do it all the time. If you don't they'll forgit you, and somebody else will reap your harvest," Still explained to his ally.

"Anybody as reaps for me is welcome to all he gets," said Leech.

The campaign opened, and soon Leech was as prominent as he could have wished. However prostrate the people were, they were not ready to have Leech for the Governor of the State, and they so declared. At a public meeting that was held, Steve Allen in a speech declared that "Krafton is a robber; but Leech is a thief."

Both Leech and Still were sensible of the stir; but they did not heed it. Leech was daily strengthening himself.

When the rumor started that the whites were rousing up and were beginning to think of organizing in opposition, Leech only laughed.

"Kick, will they?" said he. "I want 'em to kick. I'm fixed for 'em now. I've got the power I want behind me now, and the more they kick the more they'll git the rowels. I guess you're beginning to find out I'm pretty

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well seated?" he added triumphantly to Still. Still could not but admit that it was so.

"Fact is, things're goin' almost too smooth," he said.

"You're hard to please," growled Leech.

"No; but you know, sometimes I'm most afeered I'll wake up and find it a dream. Here I am settin' up, a gentleman here in this big house that I used to stand over yonder on the hill in the blazin' sun and just look at, and wonder if I ever would have one even as good as the one I was then in as my own; and yonder are you, one of the big men in the State, and maybe will be Governor some day, who knows?" Leech accepted the compliment with becoming condescension.

"That was a great stroke of yours to git the State to endorse the bonds and then git your man Bolter down here to put up that money. If this thing keeps up we soon won't have to ask nobody any odds," pursued Still.

"I don't ask any of 'em any odds now. When I get my militia fully organized, I'm going to make a move that will make things crack. And old Krafton will come down too. He thinks he's driving, and he's just holding the end of the reins."

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“I don’t count so much on your militia as I do on your friends. I know these people, and I tell you, you can’t keep ’em down with niggers. If you try that you’ll have a bust up ’t will blow you—somewhere you won’t want to be,” cautioned Still. “I never was so much in favor of that militia business as you was. Comes to a fight, the whites will beat every time—and it costs too much. My taxes this year’ll be——”

Leech frowned.

“Your taxes! If it hadn’t been for high taxes I’d like to know where you’d been. You’re always talkin’ about knowin’ these people. You’re afraid of ’em. I’m not. I suppose it’s natural; we’ve whipped you.”

There was a sudden lower in Still’s eye at the sneer.

“You’re always talkin’ about havin’ whipped us. *You* ain’t whipped us so much,” he growled. “If you ain’t afraid of ’em, whyn’t you take up what Steve Allen said to you t’other day when he told you he’d be Governor before you was, and called you—ur worse than Krafton? He’s given you chances enough.”

“You wait, and you’ll see how I’ll take it up. I’ll take him up. I’ve got the government

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behind me, and when I'm Governor and get a judge such as I want, you'll see things working even enough."

"Well, 'twon't do for us to quarrel, Major. We're like two steers yoked together," Still said, conciliatorily. "Only don't go too fast at first—or you may break your team down before you git anywhere near where you want to go."

When Still was alone with his son after this interview he told him that Leech was in danger of ruining everything.

"He's gittin' sp'iled. We must keep the brakes on him or he'll bust the wagon all to pieces. If he gits up too fast he won't remember me and you," observed Mr. Still. "Where would I be now if I hadn't gone a little keerful?"

"Careful," corrected his son, superciliously.

"Well, *careful*, then; I can't keep up with your book learnin'. But I know a few things, and he's about to make a fool of himself. He wants to break with old Krafton before it's time, and I ain't sure he's strong enough yet to do it. We may have to call on Krafton yet, and 'twon't do to let him go till we get Leech settled. He's goin' too fast with his

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niggers. We've got to keep the brakes on him."

Leech soon perfected the organization of his negroes. The League furnished the nucleus. He had quite an army enrolled. At first they drilled without arms, or with only the old muskets which had come down from the war; but in a little time a consignment of new rifles came from somewhere, and at their next drill the bands appeared armed and equipped with new army muskets and ammunition. Nicholas Ash was captain of one company, and another was under command of Sherwood. Leech was Colonel and commanding officer in the county. Under the law, Krafton, as Governor, had the power to accept or refuse any company that organized and offered itself. The effect of the new organization on the negroes was immediately felt. They became insolent and swaggering. The fields were absolutely abandoned. Should they handle hoes when they could carry guns! Should they plough when they were the State guard!

When Leech's new companies drilled, the roadsides were lined with their admirers. They filled the streets and took possession of the sidewalks, yelling, and hustling out of their way

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any who might be on them. Ladies walking on the street were met and shoved off into the mud. In a little while, whenever the militia were out, the whites disappeared almost wholly from the streets. But the men were to be found gathered together at some central place, quiet, and apparently without any object, but grim and earnest. Steve Allen was likely to be among them.

Steve organized a company and offered its services to the Governor, asking to be commissioned and armed. Only negro companies were being commissioned. The Governor referred him to Leech, who was, he said, the Commandant in that section. The next time Steve met Leech he said:

“Major Leech, your man Krafton says if you’ll recommend it he’ll commission a company I have.” Leech hemmed and stammered a little.

“No need to be in a hurry about it, Major,” said Steve, enjoying his embarrassment. “When you want ’em let me know. I’ll have ’em ready,” and he passed on with cheery insolence, leaving the carpet-bagger with an ugly look in his pale blue eyes.

Leech conferred with Still, who counselled that they should move with deliberation. Leech

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had grown impatient. He thought himself strong enough now to overawe the whites. Night meetings were being held everywhere, at which Leech addressed his followers. Their response was almost an outbreak.

A number of acts were committed that incensed the people greatly. Andy Stamper, with his wagon full of chickens and eggs, was coming along the road when he met one of the companies, followed by the crowd of negroes that usually attended the drills. In a few minutes the wagon was thrown down a bank and upset, the eggs were all smashed, and little Andy, fighting desperately with his whip, was knocked senseless and left on the roadside, unconscious. He said afterward it served him right for being such a fool as to go without his pistol, and that if he had had it he would have whipped the whole company. Mrs. Cary and Blair and Miss Thomasia came near having a similar experience. They were stopped on the road in their old carriage, and nothing but Mrs. Cary's spirit and old Gideon's presence of mind saved them perhaps from worse usage. Mrs. Cary, however, stepped out and stood beside her horses commanding that they should not be touched, while the old driver, standing up in the boot

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of the carriage, talked so defiantly and looked so belligerent that he preserved his mistresses from anything worse than being turned out rudely into the woods and very much frightened.

These things caused much excitement.

The first movement in the campaign was a great meeting that was held at the county seat. The negroes were summoned from several counties round, and there was to be a great muster of Leech's "new militia." It was a grave time in the county. All such assemblages were serious now, more for what might happen than for anything that had ever happened yet. But this one was especially serious. It was rumored that Leech would launch himself as a candidate for Governor, and would outline his policy. The presence of his militia was held to be a part of his plan to overawe any opposition that might arise. So strong was the tension that many of the women and children were sent out of the village, and those that remained kept their houses.

When the day for the meeting at the county seat came, nearly the entire male population of the county, white and colored, were present, and the negro companies were out in force,

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marching and parading up and down in the same field in which the white troops had paraded just before going off to the war. Many remarked on it that day. It served to emphasize the change that a few years had brought. When the parade was over, the companies took possession of the court green, and were allowed to break ranks preparatory to being called under arms again, when they were to be addressed on the issues of the campaign. The negroes, with a few white men among them—so few as not to make the slightest impression in the great dusky throng—were assembled on the court green. The whites were outside.

There was gravity, but good-humor.

Steve Allen, particularly, appeared to be in high spirits. To see the way the crowd was divided it might have looked as if they were hostile troops. Only, the whites apparently had no arms. But they had almost the formation of soldiery waiting at rest. Steve sauntered up into the crowd of negroes and made his way to where Leech stood well surrounded, talking to some of the leaders.

“Well, Colonel, how goes it? You seem to have a good many troops to-day. We heard

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you were going to have a muster, and we came down to see the drill.”

The speech was received good-temperedly by the negroes, many of whom Steve spoke to by name good-humoredly.

Leech did not appreciate the jest, and moved off with a scowl. The young man, however, was not to be shaken off so. He followed the other to the edge of the crowd, and there his manner changed.

“Mr. Leech,” he said, slowly, with sudden seriousness and with that deep intonation which always called up to Leech that night in the woods when he had been waylaid and kidnaped. “Mr. Leech, you are on trial to-day. Don’t make a false step. You are the controlling spirit of these negroes. They await but your word. So do we. If a hand is lifted you will never be Governor. We have stood all we propose to stand. You are standing on a powder magazine. I give you warning.”

He turned off and walked back to his own crowd.

It was the boldest speech that had been made to Leech in a long time. His whole battalion of guards were on the grounds, and a sign from him would have lodged Steve in the jail, which

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frowned behind the old brick clerk's office. He had a mind to order his arrest; but as he glanced at him there was a gleam in Steve's gray eyes which restrained him. They were fixed on him steadily, and the men behind him suddenly seemed to have taken on something like order. Until that moment Leech had no idea what a force it was. There were men of all classes in the ranks. He seemed suddenly the focus of all eyes. They were fastened on him with a cold hostility that made him shiver. He had a sudden catching at the heart. He sent for Still and had a conference with him. Still advised a pacific course. "Too many of 'em," he said. "And they are ready for you."

Leech adopted Still's advice. In the face of Steve's menace and that crowd of grim-looking men he quailed. His name was put forward, and many promises were made for him, revolutionary enough, but it was not by himself. Nicholas Ash, after a long conference with Leech and Still, was the chief speaker of the occasion, and Leech kept himself in the background all day.

The policy laid down by Nicholas Ash, even after his caution from Leech and Still, was bad enough. "They say the taxes are too high,"

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declared the negro statesman. "I tell you, and Colonel Leech tells you, they ain't high enough, and when he's Governor they'll be higher yet. We are goin' to raise 'em—yes, we are goin' to raise 'em till we bankrupt 'em every one, and then the land will go to the ones as ought to have it, and if anybody interferes with you, you've got guns and you know how to use 'em." Tumultuous applause greeted this exposition of Leech's principles. Only the earnest counsel of Dr. Cary and some of the older and cooler heads kept the younger men quiet. But the day passed off quietly. The only exception was an altercation between Captain McRaffle and a negro. Leech's name had been suggested for the Governorship, and had taken well. So he was satisfied. That night the negroes paraded in companies through the village, keeping step to a sort of chant about raising taxes and getting the lands and driving out the whites.

As Dr. Cary rode home that evening on his old horse, Still and Leech passed him in a new buggy drawn by a pair of fine horses which young Dr. Still had just got. Both men spoke to Dr. Cary, but the Doctor had turned his head away so as not to see them. It was the

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nearest his heart would let him come to cutting a man direct.

Next night after dark there was a meeting, at which were present nearly all the men whose names have appeared in this chronicle, except Dr. Cary and one or two of the older gentlemen, and a number more besides.

The place selected for the meeting was the old hospital, a rambling, stone house with wings, and extensive cellars under it. It was in a cleft between two hills, surrounded by a dense grove, which made it at all times somewhat gloomy. It had been used as a field-hospital in a battle fought near by, and on this account had always borne a bad name among the negroes, who told grewsome tales of the legs and arms hacked off there and flung out of the windows, and of the ghostly scenes enacted there now after nightfall, and gave it a wide berth.

After the war, a cyclone had blown down or twisted off many of the trees around the mansion, and had taken the roof off a part of the building and blown in one of the wings, killing several persons who then occupied it, which casualty the superstition of the negroes readily set down to avenging wrath. The rest of the house had stood the storm; but since that time

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the building had never been repaired and had sunk into a state of mournful dilapidation, and few negroes in the county could have been induced to go there even in daylight. The fields had sprung up in dense pines, and the roads leading out to the highways had grown up and were now hardly distinguishable. It had escaped even the rapacious clutch of Land Commissioner Still.

The night after the speaking at the courthouse there was a meeting of ghostly riders at this old place, which had any of the negroes around seen, they would have had some grounds for thinking the tales told of the dead coming back from their graves true.

Pickets, with men and horses heavily shrouded, were posted at every outlet from the plantation, and the riders rode for some distance in the beds of streams, so that when the hoof-tracks reached certain points, they seemed suddenly to disappear from the earth.

Rumors had already come from other sections of a new force that had arisen, a force composed of ghostly night-riders. It was known as the "Invisible Empire," and the negroes had already been in a tremor of subdued excitement; but up to this time this county had

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been so quiet, and Leech had been so supreme, that they had not taken in that the Ku Klux might reach there.

After the muster of Leech's militia at the county seat the companies had been dismissed and the members had straggled to their homes, taking with them their arms and accoutrements, with all the pride and pomp of newly decorated children. But their triumph was short-lived.

In the dead of night, when the cabins and settlements were wrapped in slumber, came a visitation, passing through the county from settlement to settlement and from cabin to cabin, in silence, but with a thoroughness that showed the most perfect organization. When morning dawned every gun and every round of ammunition which had been issued throughout the county, except those at the county seat, and some few score that had been conveyed to other places than the homes of the men who had them, had been taken away.

In most cases the seizure was accomplished quietly, the surprise being so complete as to prevent wholly any resistance. All that the dejected warriors could tell next day was that there had been a noise outside, the door had been opened; the yard had been found full of

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awful forms wrapped like ghosts in winding-sheets, some of whom had entered the houses, picked up the guns and ammunition, and without a word walked out and disappeared.

In other instances, the seizure had not been so easily effected, and in some few places there had been force exerted and violence used. But in every case the guns had been taken either peaceably or by force, and the man who had resisted had only called down on his head severity. One man only had been seriously hurt. It was the man with whom McRaffle had had the difficulty.

The whites had not been wholly exempt.

Leech had spent the night at Hiram Still's. They had talked over the events of the meeting and the whole situation. Ash's speech proposing Leech for Governor had taken well with the negroes, and for the whites they did not care. The whites had evidently been overawed. This was Leech's interpretation of their quietude. Leech was triumphant. It was the justification of his plan in arming his followers. He laid off his future plans when he should have fuller powers. His only regret was that he had not had Steve Allen arrested for threatening him. But that would come before long.

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“D—n him! I wish he was dead,” he growled.

“Go slow, Colonel; if wishes could kill, he’d ’a’ been dead long ago—and maybe so would you,” laughed Still.

“What a — unpleasant laugh you have,” frowned Leech. He did not often allow himself the luxury of a frown; but he found it effective with Still.

Next morning Leech was aroused by his host calling to him hastily to get up. Still was as white as death.

“What is it?” demanded Leech.

“Get up and come out quick. Hell’s broke loose.”

When Leech came out, Still pointed him to a picture drawn with red chalk on the floor of the portico, a fairly good representation of the “Indian-killer.” There were also three crosses cut in the bark of one of the trees in front of the door.

“What does that mean?”

“Means some rascals are trying to scare you: we’ll scare them.”

But Still was not reassured. Anything relating to the “Indian-killer” always discomposed him. He had to take several drinks to bring

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back his courage—and when about breakfast-time the news began to come to them of the visitation that had been made through the county during the night, Leech, too, began to look pale.

By mid-day they knew the full extent and completeness of the stroke. A new and unknown force had suddenly arisen. The negroes were paralyzed with terror. Many of them believed that the riders were really supernatural, and they told, with ashy faces, of the marvellous things they had done. Some of them had said that they had just come from hell to warn them, and they had drunk bucketfuls of water, which the negroes could hear “sizzling” as it ran down their throats.

By dusk both Leech and Still had disappeared. They saw that the organization of the negroes was wholly destroyed, and unless something were done, and done immediately, they would be stampeded beyond hope. They hurried off to the city to lay their grievances before the Governor, and claim the aid of the full power of the Executive.

They found the Governor much exercised, indeed, about the attack on his militia; but to their consternation he was even more enraged against themselves by the announcement of Leech's

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prospective candidacy in opposition to him. He declared that he had aided Leech in all his schemes, with the express understanding that the latter should give him his unqualified support for re-election, and he flatly charged him with treachery in announcing himself a candidate in opposition to him, and declined to interfere unless Leech at once retired.

In this dilemma Leech promptly denied that he had ever announced himself as a candidate.

Well, he allowed Nicholas Ash to do it, which amounted to the same thing, the Governor asserted.

Leech repudiated any responsibility for Ash's action, and denied absolutely that he had any idea whatever of running against the Governor, for whom he asseverated the greatest friendship.

Thus the matter was ostensibly patched up, and Leech and Still received some assurance that action would be taken. When, however, they left the presence of the Governor, it was to take a room and hold a private conference at which it was decided that their only hope lay in securing immediately the backing of those powers on whose support the Governor himself relied to be sustained.

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“I know him,” whispered Still. “You didn’t fool him. He ain’t never goin’ to help you. May look like he’s standin’ by you; but he ain’t. We’ve got to go up yonder. Bolter’s obliged to stand by us. He’s too deep in.” He chucked his thumb over his shoulder in the direction in which his noon-shadow was pointing. Leech agreed with him, and instead of returning home, the two paid a somewhat extended visit to the seat of Government, where they posed as patriots and advocates of law and order, and were admitted to conferences with the most potent men in the councils of the nation, before whom they laid their case.

CHAPTER XXI

DR. CARY MEETS AN OLD COLLEGE MATE AND LEARNS
THAT THE ATHENIANS ALSO PRACTISE HOSPI-
TALITY

THE Ku Klux raid, as it was called, created a great commotion, not only in our county but in other quarters as well. There had been in other sections growlings and threatenings, altercations, collisions, and outbreaks of more or less magnitude, but no outbreak so systematic, so extensive, and so threatening as this had hitherto occurred, and it caused a sensation. It was talked about as "a new rebellion," calling for the suspension of the writs of privilege and the exercise of the strongest powers of the Government.

When therefore Leech and Still appeared at the national capital, as suitors appealing for aid to maintain the laws and even to secure their lives, they found open ears and ready sympathizers. They were met by Mr. Bolter, who

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mainly had taken the bonds of their new railway, which was not yet built, and who was known as a wealthy capitalist. Thus they appeared as men of substance and standing, well introduced, and as they spoke with doubtful endorsement of the Governor they were even regarded as more than commonly conservative, and their tale was given unbounded credit.

When they returned home it was with the conviction that their mission had been completely successful; they had not only secured the immediate object of their visit, and obtained the promise of the strongest backing that could be given against their enemies, but they had gained even a more important victory. They had instilled doubts as to both the sincerity and the wisdom of the Governor; had, as Still said, "loosed a lynch-pin for him," and had established themselves as the true and proper persons to be consulted and supported. Thus they had secured, as they hoped, the future control of the State. They were in an ecstasy, and when a little later the new judge was appointed, and proved to be Hurlbut Bail, the man Bolter had recommended against one the Governor had backed, they felt themselves to be masters of the situation.

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When the mission of Leech and Still became known in the old county it created grave concern. A meeting was held and Dr. Cary and General Legaie, with one or two others of the highest standing, were appointed a committee to go on and lay their side of the case before the authorities and see what they could do to counteract the effect of the work of Leech and his associates.

It was the first time Dr. Cary and General Legaie had been to the national capital or, indeed, out of the State, since the war, and they were astonished to see what progress had been made in that brief period.

They found themselves, on merely crossing a river, suddenly landed in a city as wholly different from anything they had seen since the war as if it had been a foreign capital. The handsome streets and busy thoroughfares filled with well-dressed throngs, gay with flashing equipages, and all the insignia of wealth, appeared all the more brilliant from the sudden contrast. As the party walked through the city they appeared to themselves to be almost the poorest persons they saw, at least among the whites. The city was full of negroes at this time. These seemed to represent mainly the

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two extremes of prosperity and poverty. The gentlemen could not walk on the street without being applied to by some old man or woman who was in want, and who, as long as the visitors had anything to give, needed only to ask to be assisted.

“We are like lost souls on the banks of the Styx,” said Dr. Cary. “I feel as much a stranger as if I were on another planet. And to think that our grandfathers helped to make this nation!”

“To think that we ever surrendered!” exclaimed General Legaie, with a flash in his eye.

They took lodgings at a little boarding-house, and called next day in a body on the Head of the Nation, but were unable to see him; then they waited on one after another of several high officers of the Government whom they believed to be dominant in the national councils. Some they failed to get access to; others heard them civilly, but with undisguised coldness. At one place they were treated rudely by a negro door-keeper, whose manner was so insolent that the General turned on him sharply with a word and a gesture that sent him bouncing inside the door. After this interview, as Dr. Cary was making his way back to his boarding-house, he

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met one of his old servants. The negro was undisguisedly glad to see him. He wrung his hand again and again.

“You’s de fust frien’, master, I’s seen since I been heah!” he said.

“You are the first friend, John, I have seen,” said the Doctor, smiling. He put his hand in his pocket and gave the old man a bank-note.

As the Doctor was engaged in this colloquy he was observed with kindly interest or amusement by many passers-by—among them, by an elderly and handsomely dressed couple, accompanied by a very pretty girl, who were strolling along, and loitered for a moment within earshot to observe the two strangers.

“What a picturesque figure!” said the lady as they passed on.

“Which one?”

“Well, both. I almost thought of them as one. I wish, Alice, you could have got a sketch of them as they stood.”

“He is a Southerner—from his voice,” said her husband, who was Judge Rockfield, one of the ablest and most noted men at that time in public life; one of the wisest in council, and who, though his conservatism in that period of fierce passion kept him from being as prominent as

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some who were more violent and more radical, yet was esteemed one of the ablest and soundest men in the country. He was a Senator from his State, and the owner of one of the leading and most powerful journals in the country.

Dr. Cary, having given the old negro his address, took a street-car to try to overhaul his friends. It was quite full, and the Doctor secured the last vacant seat. A few blocks farther on, several persons boarded the car, among them the elderly gentleman and his wife and daughter, already mentioned, and another lady. The Doctor rose instantly.

“Will you take my seat, madam?” he said to the nearest lady, with a bow. The other ladies were still left standing, though there were many men seated; but the next second a young fellow farther down the car rose, and gave up his seat. As he took his stand the Doctor caught his eye.

“‘The Athenians praise hospitality, the Lacedemonians practise it,’ ” he said in a distinct voice that went through the car, and with a bow to the young fellow which brought a blush of pride to his pleasant face.

The next moment the gentleman who had en-

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tered with his wife touched the Doctor on his arm.

“I beg your pardon: is your name Cary?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Can this be John Cary of Birdwood?”

“Yes, sir.”

“Don't you remember Anson Rockfield?”

“Why, Rockfield, my old college-mate!” exclaimed the Doctor. The two men grasped each other's hands with a warmth which drew to them the attention and interest of the whole car. “Rockfield, you see I am still quoting Plutarch,” said the Doctor.

“And still practising his principles,” said the Senator, smiling, as he presented him to his wife.

“My dear, this is the man to whom you are indebted for whatever is good in me. But for him I should have gone to the d—l years before you knew me.”

“He gives me far too much credit, madam, and himself far too little,” said the Doctor. “I am sure that ever to have been able to win the prizes he has won he must have been always worthy, as worthy as a man can be of a woman.” He bowed low to Mrs. Rockfield.

Senator Rockfield urged the Doctor to come

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at once to his house and be his guest while in the city, an invitation which his wife promptly seconded with much graciousness.

“Let us show you that some of the Athenians practise as well as praise hospitality,” she said, smiling.

Thanking them, the Doctor excused himself from accepting the invitation, but said that with Mrs. Rockfield’s permission he would call and pay his respects, and he did so that evening.

As a result of this meeting an audience was arranged for him and his friends next day with the President, who heard them with great civility, though he gave them no assurance that he would accept their views, and furnished no clew to lead them to think they had made any impression at all. They came away, therefore, somewhat downcast.

Before the Southerners left for home, Senator Rockfield called on Dr. Cary and, taking him aside, had a long talk with him, explaining somewhat the situation and the part he had felt himself compelled to take. He wound up, however, with an appeal that Dr. Cary would not permit political differences to divide them and would allow him to render him personally any assistance that his situation might call for.

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“I am rich now, Cary,” he said; “while you have suffered reverses and may have found your means impaired and yourself at times even cramped.” (The Doctor thought how little he knew of the real facts.) “It is the fortune of war, and I want you to allow me to help you. I suppose you must have lost a good deal?” he said, interrogatively.

A change passed over the old Doctor’s face. Reminiscence, pain, resolution were all at work, and the pleasant light which had been there did not return, but in its place was rather the shade of deepened fortitude.

“No,” he said, quietly. “‘War cannot plunder Virtue.’ I have learned that a quiet mind is richer than a crown.”

“Still, I know that the war must have injured you some,” urged the Senator. “We were chums in old times and I want it to be so now. I have never forgotten what you were to me, and what I told my wife of your influence on me was less than the fact. Why, Cary, I even learnt my politics from you,” he said, with a twinkle in his eye.

Dr. Cary thanked him, but was firm. He could think of nothing he could do for him.

“Except this: think of us as men. Come down and see for yourself.”

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“Still practising Plutarch,” said the Senator. “Well, the time may come, even if it has not come yet, and I want you to promise me that when it does, you will call on me—either for yourself or any friend of yours. It will be a favor to me, Cary,” he added, with a new tone in his voice, seeing the look on the Doctor’s face. “Somehow, you have turned back the dial, and taken me back to the time when we were young and fresh, and full of high hopes and—yes—ambitions, and I had not found out how d—d mean and sordid the world is. It will be a favor to me.”

“All right, I will,” said the Doctor, “if my friends need it.” And the two friends shook hands.

So the Commission from the old county returned home.

Captain Allen of late spent more and more of his time at Dr. Cary’s. His attitude toward Blair was one of gallantry mingled with protection and homage; but that was his attitude toward every girl; so Blair was under no delusion about it, and between them was always waged a warfare that was half pleasantry. To Mammy Krenda, however, the young man’s relation to her mistress meant much more. No one ever looked at Blair that the old mammy

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did not instantly interpret it as a confession and a declaration, and having done this she instantly formed her judgment, and took her stand. She had divined the ambition of Dr. Still long before that aspiring young man dispatched to Miss Blair that tinted note which was the real if not the immediate cause of the Carys' removal from Birdwood to the Bellows cottage. And during those preliminary visits which the young physician had made to the old one, the old woman had with her sharp eyes penetrated his assumed disguise and made him shiver. Dr. Still knew that though Dr. Cary was taking him at his word and believed he really came so often to talk of medicine and seek advice, yet the old mammy discerned his real object, and despised him.

In Captain Allen's case it was different. Though the old woman and he were ostensibly always at war and never were together without his teasing her and her firing a shot in return at him, yet, at heart, she adored him. His distinguished appearance and his leading position, taken with his cordial and real friendliness toward herself, made him a favorite with her—and the speech he had made to Middleton on her account and his hostility to Leech made her his slave.

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Her manner to him was always capricious and fault-finding, as became the jealous guardian of Miss Blair; but "old Argos," as Captain Allen called her, was his warm ally and he knew it. She took too many occasions to promote his and Blair's wishes, as she understood them, for him to doubt it, and, possibly, it was as much due to her misapprehension as to anything else, that Steve was drawn on to do what, but for Blair's good sense, might have imperilled both his happiness and hers.

Since the stir created by the Ku Klux raid, Captain Allen had exercised more precaution than he was accustomed to do. All sorts of rumors were afloat as to what the Government had promised on the instigation of Leech and Still. Captain Allen's name was mentioned in all of them. Steve, in consequence, had of late been at the court-house less continuously than usual. And from equally natural causes, he had been much more at Dr. Cary's. To Mammy Krenda's innuendoes, he laughingly replied that it was healthier near the mountains—to which the old woman retorted that she knew what mountains he was trying to climb.

One afternoon he rode up to Dr. Cary's a little earlier than usual, and, finding the family

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absent, turned his horse out in the yard and lounged on the porch, awaiting their arrival. He had not been there long when Mammy Krenda appeared. Steve watched her for a moment with amusement. He knew she had come out to talk to him.

“What are you prowling about here for, you old Ku Klux witch, you?” he asked, with a twinkle in his eye.

Mammy Krenda gave a sniff.

“Ku Klux! Ku Klux!! If prowlin’ mecks Ku Klux, I wonder what you wuz doin’ last night? An’ what you doin’ now?”

“Jerry’s been around, the drunken rascal!” thought Steve to himself. He knew Jerry was courting a granddaughter of old Krenda’s.

“How’s Jerry coming on with his courting?” he asked, irrelevantly.

“N’em mind about Jerry,” said the old mammy. “Jerry know mo’ ’bout co’tin’ than some other folks.”

This was interesting, and Steve, seeing that she had something on her mind, gave her a lead. He learned that the old woman thought her “chile” was not well—that she was “pesterin’ herself mightily” about something, and, what was more astonishing, that Mammy Krenda

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held that he himself was in a measure responsible for it.

A little deft handling and a delicate cross-examination soon satisfied Steve that Jacquelin stood no chance. He hinted as to Middleton. Mammy Krenda threw up her head. "She ain' gwine marry no Yankee come pokin' in folks' kitchen."

That disposed of it so far as Middleton was concerned.

"How about McRaffle? He's always hanging around?" laughed Steve.

Krenda gave a sniff and started on.

"Dat man what been in a coffin! Jes' soon marry a lizard! You know she ain' go' marry dat man! She wouldn' look at him!"

"Well, who is it?" demanded Steve.

The old woman turned and faced him; gave him a penetrating glance, and, with a toss of her turbaned head, walked into the house.

Steve sat on the porch for some time in deep reflection, and then rising, walked across the grass, saddled his horse and rode quietly away. All the past came before him and all the present too. Could it be possible that he had been the cause of Middleton's repulse and of Jacquelin's failure? It had never occurred to him. Yet,

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this was undoubtedly the old mammy's theory. She had as good as told him that he was the cause of Blair's disquietude, and in the light of her revelation it all seemed reasonable enough. This was the secret of her attitude toward Jacquelin. If she cared for him, it was his duty to marry her. And where could he ever find her superior? Who was so good and fine? Such were his reflections.

So one evening when he was with Blair, he suddenly began to speak to her as he had never done before. Blair was not looking at him, and she answered lightly. But Steve did not respond so. He had grown serious. Blair looked at him quickly; her smile died out, and the color flushed her face. Could Steve be in earnest? She gazed at him curiously, but unhesitatingly; only a look almost of sorrow came into her eyes. Steve went on and said all he had planned. When he had finished, Blair suddenly sat down by him and put her hand over his. She was perfectly composed and her eyes looked frankly into his.

"No, Steve—you are mistaken," she said, quietly. "You have misunderstood your feelings. You do not love me—at least, you are not in love with me. You love me, I believe, de-

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votedly, and I thank God for it every day of my life; as I love you as a sister—but you are not in love with me. You would help me, relieve me, spare me trouble and anxiety, save me from Captain—M—Middleton—and you see no reason why we should not marry. But there is one reason. You are not in love with me and I am not in love with you.” She was speaking so gravely and her eyes were looking into his so frankly and with such true friendliness that Steve, though feeling somewhat flat at his repulse, could not deny what she said.

“I know the difference,” she went on, quietly. She paused and reflected and, to Steve’s surprise, suddenly changed and choked up. “I have had men in love with me—and—” Her voice faltered. She looked down, put her hand to her eyes and with a cry of, “Oh! Steve!” buried her face against his shoulder. “I seem to curse everyone that loves me.”

In an instant Steve’s strong arm was around her and he was comforting her like an older brother. His sympathy opened the girl’s heart, and drew out the secret of her unhappiness as nothing else could have done. Blair had revealed her feelings to him as she had hardly before revealed them even to herself. It was the

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old story of misunderstanding, and high spirit; stung pride, hot words, and vain regret—regret not for herself; but only for others. Her unhappiness was that she had brought sorrow to others. It was because of her that Jacquelin had left home, and that his mother was dying of a broken heart. Steve tried to comfort her. She was all wrong, he assured her—she took a wholly erroneous view of the matter. But it was not a success. Jacquelin, she knew, had incurred Leech's personal hatred on her account, and that was the primary cause of his exile. All the other trouble had flowed from it; his mother's decline was owing to her repining for Jacquelin and her anxiety about Rupert, who, cut off from his mother's care and influence, was beginning to show symptoms of wildness. All these Blair traced back to her folly.

Steve, having failed in his effort to comfort her by argument, took another method and boldly assailed her whole idea as unreasonable and morbid. He threatened to write to Jacquelin and fetch him home, and he would have Rupert back at once, and keep him straight too, and if Leech molested him, he would have him to settle with.

The effect of this was just what Steve had an-

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ticipated. Blair suddenly took the opposite tack; but in the battle that ensued she showed that she had recovered at least a part of her spirit.

Steve that evening sent Jacquelin a letter intended to meet him on the arrival of his vessel, telling him of his mother's declining health and urging him to hasten home. He also wrote to the head of the school where Rupert was.

CHAPTER XXII

JACQUELIN GRAY COMES HOME AND CLAIMS A GRAVEYARD

WHEN Jacquelin Gray returned home, his arrival was wholly unexpected. His ship had reached port only a few days before and he had planned to take his friends by surprise, and, without giving any notice, had at once started for home. He would hardly have been known for the same man: in place of the pallid and almost bed-ridden invalid who had been borne away on a stretcher a year or two back, appeared a vigorous, weather-browned man, almost as stalwart as Steve himself. The first to recognize him was Waverley, who had been sent to the railroad by Mrs. Gray to try and get news of him.

“Well, b’fo’ de Lord!” exclaimed the old man, “ef dat ain’t!—” He paused and took another scrutinizing look, and, with a bound forward, broke out again. “Marse Jack, you done

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riz f'um de dead. Ef I didn' think 'twas my ole marster—er de Injun-killer. Bless de Lord!—you's jest in time. My mistis sen' me down fur a letter—she say she 'bleeged to have a letter to-day. But dis de bes' letter could 'a' come in dis wull fur her. Yas, suh, she'll git well now." He took in the whole crowd confidentially. He was wringing Jacquelin's hand in an ecstasy of joy, and the welcome of the others was not less warm, if less voluble. Under it all, however, was something that struck Jacquelin and went to his heart—something plaintive—different from what he had expected. The negroes too had changed. The hearty laughter had given place to something that had the sound of bravado in it. The shining teeth were not seen as of old. Old Waverley's words sent a chill through him. What could they mean?

How was his mother? And aunt—and all the others?—at Birdwood and everywhere? he asked.

His mistress had been "mighty po'ly, mighty po'ly indeed," the old servant said. "Been jes' pinin' fur you to git back. What meck you stay so long, Marse Jack? Hit must be a long ways 'roun' de wull? But she'll be all right now.

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De Doctor say you de bes' physic she could git. All de others is well."

"And all at Birdwood?" asked Jacquelin.

"'Tain't Budwood you's axin' 'bout. Washy Still, he's at Budwood. Dem you want know 'bout is at Mis' Bellers! Washy Still thought he wuz gwine git one o' dem whar wuz at Budwood; but he ain't do it. Rich or no rich, dee tun up dey nose at him—and all he git wuz de nest arter de bud done fly. Dee look higher'n him, I knows. But I mighty glad you come. Marse Steve, he's dyah. He's a big man now. You's done stay away too long. He's one o' de leaders."

What could this mean?

As Jacquelin drove homeward with the old man he discovered what it meant; for Waverley was not one to take the edge from a blow. He had a sympathetic heart and he made the most of it.

"Marse Jack, de debble is done broke loose, sho!" he wound up. "De overseer is in de gret house, and de gent'man's in de blacksmiff shop. I wonders sometimes dat old Injun-killer don' come down out de picture sho 'nough—like so many o' dem dead folks what comin' out dey graves."

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“What’s that?” asked Jacquelin.

“Dat’s what dee tells me,” protested Waverley. “De woods and roads is full on ’em at night. An’ you can’t git a nigger to stir out by hisself arter dark. I b’lieves it, and so does plenty o’ urrs.” He gave a little nervous laugh.

“What nonsense is this?” demanded Jacquelin.

“’Tain’ no nonsense, Marse Jack. ’Tis de fatal truf— Since sich doin’s been goin’ on, de graves won’ hole ’em. De’s some knows ’tain’ no nonsense. Dee done been to de house o’ several o’ dese sarsy niggers whar done got dee heads turned and gin ’em warnin’ an’ a leetle tetch o’ what’s comin’ to ’em. Dee went to Moses’ house turr night an’ gin him warnin’. Moses wa’nt dyah; but dee done lef him de wud—cut three cross marks in de tree right side he do’; an’ he wife say dee leetle mo’ drink de well dry. One on ’em say he shot in de battle nigh heah and was cut up in the old horspittle, and dat he jes come from torment to gi’ Moses an’ Sherrod an’ Nicholas Ash warnin’. Dee say he drink six water-bucketfuls and hit run down he guzzle sizzlin’ jes like po’in’ ’t on hot stove. Moses say he don’ mine ’em; but I tell

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you be better!" A sudden gleam of shrewdness crossed the old fellow's face.

"Things had done got pretty bad, Marse Jack, the old man went on, confidentially. "Hiram Still and Cun'l Leech, dee owned ev'y thing, and ef you didn't do what dee say you couldn' turn roun'. Hiram, he turn' me out my shop jes soon as he got our place; an' soon as he fine he couldn't git my young mistis, he turn' de Doctor out. Look like he and dat urr man, Leech, sutney is got a grudge 'ginst all o' we all. Dee done put dee cross marks 'ginst Hiram too. Some say 'twas de Injun-killer. Leech say he don' mine 'em—he's gwine to be gov'ner an' he say he'll know how to settle 'em; but Hiram, sence he fine dat mark on de porch and on de tree, he walks right smart lighter'n he did."

As they neared the county seat they met a body of negroes marching. The officers yelled at them to get out of the way, and old Waverley pulled out to one side. "What are they?" asked Jacquelin.

"Dem's Cun'l Leech's soldiers," said Waverley—"dem's de mellish. When you meets dem you got to git out 'n de way, I tell you."

The change in the aspect of the county in the few years of his absence impressed Jacquelin.

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It seemed to him greater even than that which had taken place during the war. The fields were more grown up; the houses more dilapidated. But as much as these warned him, Jacquelin was not prepared for the change which on his arrival at Dr. Cary's he found had taken place.

His mother's appearance struck a chill to his heart. His mother had become an old woman. She had kept everything from him that could disturb him. He was shocked at the change which illness had made in her, and all he could do was to try and conceal his anguish.

He sought Dr. Cary and had a long talk with him; but the Doctor could not hold out any hope. It was simply a general breakdown, he told him: the effect of years of anxiety. "You cannot transplant old trees," he said, sadly. Jacquelin ground his teeth in speechless self-reproach.

"Ah! my dear Jacquelin, there are some things that even you could not have changed," said the Doctor, with a deep sigh.

As Jacquelin looked at him the expression on the old physician's face went to his heart.

"Yes, I know," he said, softly. "Ah! well, we'll pull through."

"You young men, perhaps; not we old ones.

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We are too broken to weather the storm. Your father was the fortunate one.”

As the young man went out from this interview he met Blair. She had just come in from her school; her cheeks were all aglow and she gave him a warm handclasp—and her eyes, after the first glance into his, fell. He was sure from what he had heard that she was engaged to Steve, and he had rehearsed a hundred times how he should meet her. Now like a puff of wind went all his strong resolutions. It was as though he had opened a door toward the sunrise. A fresh sense of her charm came over him as though he had just discovered her. Her presence appeared to him to fill all the place. She had grown in beauty since he went away. She was blushing and laughing and running away from Steve, who had met her outside and told her of Jacquelin’s arrival, and was calling to her through the door to come back; but after shaking hands with Jacquelin she sped on upstairs, with a little side glance at him as she ran up. She had never appeared so beautiful to Jacquelin, and his heart leaped up in him at her charm. It was the vision that had gone with him all around the globe. He followed her with his eyes. As she turned at the top of the

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stairs his heart sank; for, leaning down over the banisters, she gave Steve a glance so full of meaning that Jacquelin took it all in in an instant.

“I’m going to tell him,” called Steve, teasingly.

“No, you promised me you would not, Steve,” and she was gone.

Jacquelin turned to the door.

Steve called him:

“Jack, Jack, come here.”

But Jacquelin could not stand seeing him at that moment. He wanted to be alone, and he went out to meet the full realization of it all by himself.

Jacquelin made up his mind at once. Although Doctor and Mrs. Cary pressed him to stay with them, he felt that he could not live in the house with Blair. How could he sit by and see her and Steve day by day! Steve was as a brother to him, and Blair, from her manner, meant to be a sister; but he could not endure it. He declared his intention of starting at once to practise law. Steve offered him a partnership, meeting Jacquelin’s objection that it would not be fair, with the statement that he would make Jacquelin do

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all the work, as he proposed to be a statesman.

So, as the Doctor had said that a change and occupation in household duties might possibly do Mrs. Gray good, Jacquelin rented a small farm between the Carys' and the old hospital-place on the river, and they moved there. His mother and Miss Thomasia furnished it with the assistance of Mrs. Cary, and Blair, and other neighbors; the old pieces of furniture and other odds and ends giving, as Miss Thomasia said, "a distinction which even the meanness of the structure itself could not impair. For, my dear," she said to Blair, who was visiting them the evening after they had made their exodus from Dr. Cary's to their new home, "I have often heard my grandfather say that nothing characterized gentle-people more than dignity under misfortune." And she smoothed down her faded dress and resumed her knitting with an air which Blair in vain tried to reproduce to her father on her return.

Jacquelin was vaguely conscious that a change had come, not only over the old county since he left it, but over his friends also. Not merely had the places gone down, but the people themselves were somewhat changed. They looked down-

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cast; their tone, formerly jovial and cheery, had a tinge of bitterness. In those few years a difference between him and them had grown up. He did not analyze it, but it was enough to disquiet him. Had his point of view changed? He saw defects which he thought he could remedy. Those he was with, apparently saw none. They simply plodded on, as though oblivious of the facts. It made him unhappy. He determined to use his enlarged view, as he deemed it, to instruct and aid those who lacked his advantages. It seemed to him that, in his travels, his horizon had widened. On the high seas or in a foreign land, it had been the flag of the nation that he wanted to see. He had begun to realize the idea of a great nation that should be known and respected wherever a ship could sail or a traveller could penetrate; of a re-united country in which the people of both sides, retaining all the best of both sides, should vie with each other in building up the nation, and should equally receive all its benefits. He had pondered much on this, and he thought he had discovered the way to accomplish it, in a complete acceptance of the new situation.

It was a great blow to Jacquelin to find on his return what extraordinary changes had taken

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place in the county: Still, occupying not only his old home, but Dr. Cary's; Leech the supreme power in all public matters in the county; Nicholas Ash driving a carriage, with money that must have been stolen; and almost the entire gentry of the State either turned out of their homes or just holding on, while those whom he had left half-amused children playing at the game of freedmen, were parading around the country in all the bravery and insolence of an armed mob. All this was a shock to him. He spoke of his views to Dr. Cary. The Doctor was the person who had first suggested the idea to his mind, and was the one who, he felt, was the soundest and safest guide to follow. In the little that he had seen of him since his return he had found him, as he knew he would be, precisely the same he had always been, absolutely calm and unruffled. To his astonishment the Doctor shook his head.

“It is Utopian. I thought so myself formerly, and, as you may remember, incurred much animadversion and some obloquy. I did not care a button about that. But I am not sure that General Legaie and those who agreed with him, whose action I at that time thought the height of folly, were not nearer right than I was. I am

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sure my principle was correct, and, perhaps, had they yielded and gone in with us at the beginning it might have been different; but I am not certain as to it now." He bowed his head in deep and painful reflection.

"It is now *vae victis*, and the only hope is in resistance," he proceeded, sadly. "Yielding is esteemed simply a confession of cowardice. The miscreants who rule us know no restraint except fear. You will be astonished when I tell you that the last few years have almost overthrown the views I have held for a lifetime. I am nearer agreeing with Legaie than I ever was in my whole life." The old fellow shook his head in deep despondency over this fatal declension.

Jacquelin did not agree with him. He had all a young man's confidence. He determined that he would effect his ends by law. He shortly had an illustration of what the Doctor meant.

Mrs. Gray was failing steadily. The strain she had undergone had been too much for her. She had lived only until Jacquelin's return.

To the end, all her heart was on her old home. In those last days she went back constantly to the time when she had come as a bride to her home adorned with all that love and forethought

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could devise. The war and the long years of struggle seemed to have been blotted out and her memory appeared only to retain and to dwell on every scene of the old life. One of her constant thoughts was: If she could only have lain at the old home, at her husband's side! So, she passed quietly away. In the watches of the last night, when no one was with her but Jacquelin, after she had talked to him of Rupert and confided him to his care, she asked Jacquelin if he thought she might ever be taken home. His father and she had picked out the spot under one of the great trees.

"Mother," said Jacquelin, kneeling beside her and holding one of her thin, transparent hands in his, "if I live and God is good to me, you shall lie there."

He had consulted General Legaie and Steve on the subject, and they both had thought that the burying-ground had not been conveyed in the deed to Still, though Leech, to whom, as counsel for Still, they had broached the matter, asserted that it had been included.

The day Mrs. Gray died, Dr. Cary wrote a note to Still on Jacquelin's behalf, though without his knowledge, indicating his cousin's wish to bury his mother beside his father, and saying

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that it would not be held to affect any question of ownership at issue between them.

To this Still replied that while he should be "very glad to do anything that Dr. Cary or *any member of his family* asked for *themselves*," he would not permit any *outsider* to be buried on his place, especially one who had insulted him; that he did not acknowledge that any question existed as to his title; and that he was prepared to show that, if so, it was unfounded. He added that he was "going to remove the tomb-stones, cut down the trees, clear up the place, and get rid of the old grave-yard altogether."

A part of the letter was evidently written by a lawyer.

Dr. Cary felt that he could not withhold this notification from Jacquelin. Before doing so, however, he consulted General Legaie. The little General's eyes snapped as he read the letter. "Ah! if he were only a gentleman!" he sighed. The next moment he broke out, "I'll lay my riding-whip across the dog's shoulders! That's what I'll do." The Doctor tried to soothe him. He would show the letter to Jacquelin, he said. The General protested. "My dear sir, if you do, there will be trouble. Young men are so rash.

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They have not the calm deliberation that we have." The Doctor, recalling his conversation with Jacquelin, said he thought he could rely on his wisdom. "If he sees that letter there will be trouble," asserted the General, "or he is not the nephew of his—ahem! not the son of his father." However, the Doctor was firm. So he broke the matter to Jacquelin. To their surprise, Jacquelin took it very quietly; he did not say anything nor appear to mind it a great deal. The General's countenance fell. "Young men have changed since my day," he said, sadly.

So Mrs. Gray was buried in what had been a part of the church-yard of the old brick-church, and Jacquelin, walking with his arm around Rupert, was as quiet as Miss Thomasia.

That afternoon he excused himself from the further attendance of his friends, left his aunt and Rupert and walked out alone. He went first to the house of his neighbor, Stamper. Him Jacquelin told of his purpose. Stamper wished to accompany him; but he would not permit that. "Have you got a pistol?" asked Stamper. No, he was not armed, he said; he only wanted his friend to know, "in case anything should happen." Then he walked away in the direction

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of Red Rock, leaving little Stamper leaning on the bars looking after him rather wistfully until he had disappeared.

He had not been gone long when Stamper started after him. "If he gets hold of him, I'm afeared he'll kill him," he muttered as he hurried along.

It was after sunset, and Hiram Still was sitting alone in the hall at Red Rock, by a table in the drawers of which he kept his papers. He never liked to sit in the dark, and had just called for a light. He was waiting for it. He was not in a good humor, for he had had something of a quarrel with Leech, and his son Wash had taken the latter's side. The young doctor was always taking sides against him these days. They had made him write Dr. Cary that he was going to clear up the grave-yard, and he was not at all sure that it was a good thing to do; he had always heard that it was bad luck to break up a grave-yard, and now they had left him alone in the house. Even the drink of whiskey he had taken had not restored his good spirits.

Why did not the light come? He roared an oath toward the open door. "D—n the lazy niggers!"

Suddenly there was a step, or something like

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a step, near him—he was not sure about it, for he must have been dozing—and he looked up. His heart jumped into his throat. Before him in the hall stood, tall and gray, the “Indian-killer,” his eyes blazing like coals of fire.

“Good God!” he gasped.

No, it was speaking—it was a man. But it was almost as bad. Still had not seen Jacquelin before in two years. And he had never noticed how like the “Indian-killer” he was. What did he want?

“I have come to see you about the graveyard,” said Jacquelin. The voice was his father’s. It smote Still like a voice from the dead.

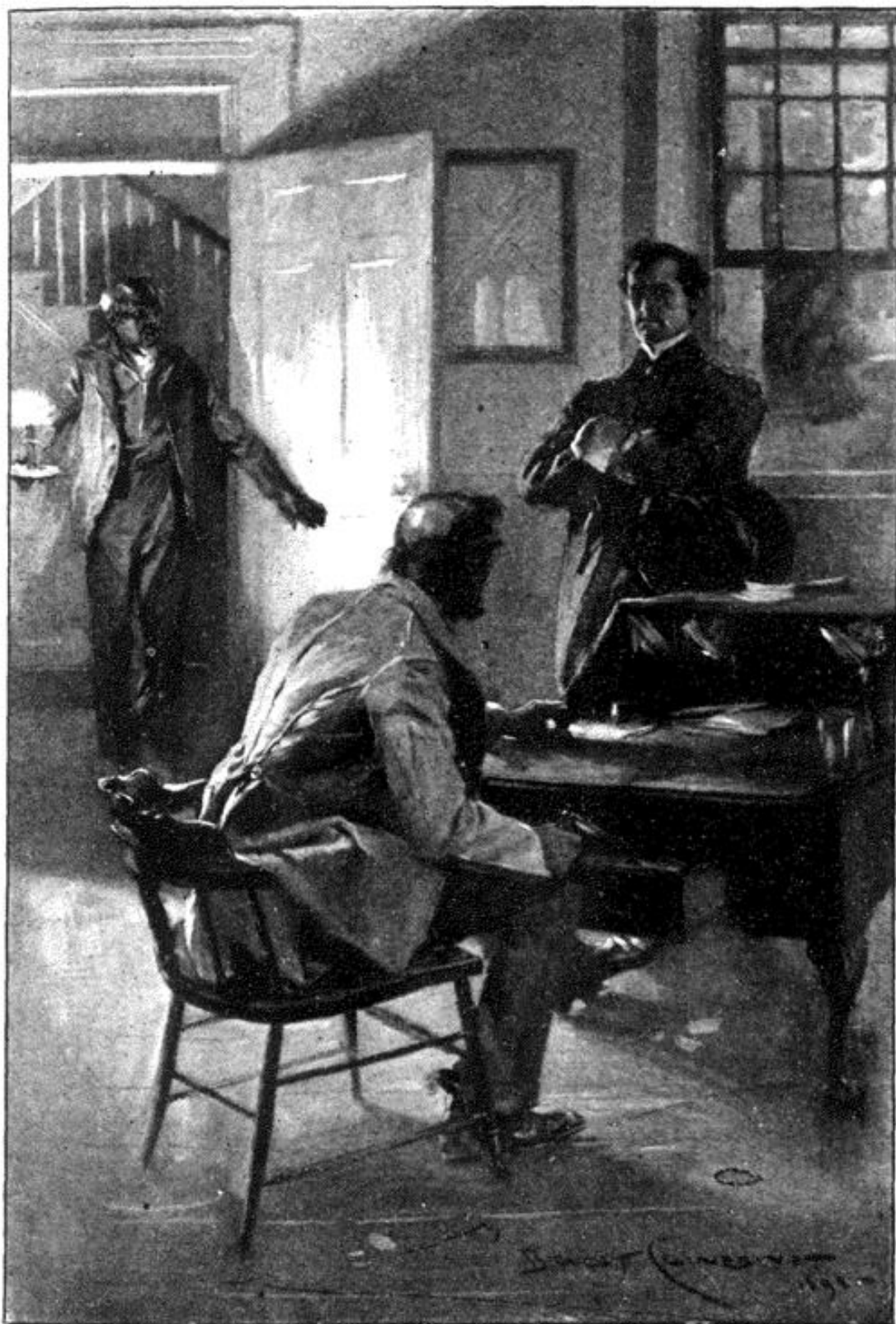
Still wanted to apologize to him; but he could not speak, his throat was dry. There was a pistol in the drawer before him and he pulled the drawer open and put his hand on it. The cold steel recalled him to himself and he drew it toward him, his courage reviving. Jacquelin must have heard the sound; he was right over him.

“If you attempt to draw that pistol on me,” he said, quietly, “I will kill you right where you sit.”

Whether it was the man’s unstrung condition, or whether it was Jacquelin’s resemblance to

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Before him stood, tall and gray, the Indian-killer.

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the fierce Indian-killer, as he stood there in the dusk with his eyes burning, his strong hands twitching, or whether it was his unexpected stalwartness and fierceness as he towered above the overseer, the latter sank back with a whine.

A negro entered at a side door with a light, but stood still, amazed at the scene, muttering to himself: "Good Lordy!"

Jacquelin went on speaking. He told Still that if he cut down so much as a bush in that grave-yard until he had a decision of court authorizing him to do so, he would kill him, even if he had the whole Government of the United States around him.

"Now, I have come here to tell you this," he said, in the same quiet, strange voice, "and I have come to tell you one thing more, that you will not be in this place always. We are coming back here, the living and the dead."

Still turned even more livid than before. "What do you mean?" he gasped.

"What I say, we are coming back." He swept his eye around the hall, turned on his heel, and walked toward the picture over the fireplace. Just then a gust of wind blew out the lamp the negro held, leaving the hall in gloom. When the servant came back with a light, according to

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the story that he told, Still was raving like a madman, and he drank whiskey and raved all night.

Neither Still nor Jacquelin ever spoke of the interview; but a story got abroad in the neighborhood that the old Indian-killer had appeared to Still the night of Mrs. Gray's burial and threatened him with death if he should ever touch the grave-yard. Still said he had never meant to touch it anyhow, and that Leech had made him put it in the letter for a joke. It was, however, a dear joke.

For a time there was quite a coolness between the friends; but they had too much in common to be able to afford to quarrel, so it was made up.

CHAPTER XXIII

TWO NEW RESIDENTS COME TO THE COUNTY

OTHER changes than those already recorded had taken place in the years that had passed since the day when Middleton and Thurston, on their way to take command of a part of the conquered land, had found Jacquelin Gray outstretched under a tree at the little country station in the Red Rock County. In this period Middleton had won promotion in the West, and a wound which had necessitated a long leave of absence and a tour abroad; and finally, his retirement from the service. Reely Thurston, who was now a Captain himself, declared that Middleton's wound was received in the South and not in the West, and that if such wounds were to be recognized, he himself ought to have been sent abroad. The jolly little officer, however, if he wished to boast of wounds of this nature, might have cited a later one; for he had for some time been a devoted admirer of Miss Ruth

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Welch, who had grown from a romping girl to a lively and very handsome young lady, and had, as Reely said of her, the warmest heart toward all mankind, except a man in love with her, and the coldest toward him, of any girl in the world. However this might be, she had turned a very stony heart toward Thurston in common with a number of others, and after a season or two at fashionable summer-resorts was finding, or thinking she was finding, all men insipid and life very commonplace and hollow. She declared that she liked Thurston better than any other man except her father and a half dozen or more others, all of whom labored under the sole disadvantage of being married, and she finally, as the price of the continuance of this somewhat measurable state of feeling, bound the Captain by the most solemn pledges never to so much as hint at any desire on his part for a higher degree of affection.

The little soldier would have sworn by all the gods, higher and lower, to anything that Ruth Welch proposed, for the privilege of being her slave; but he could no more have stopped bringing up the forbidden subject when in her presence, than he could have sealed up the breath in his plump and manly bosom. He was always

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like a cat that in sight of cream, though knowing he is on his good behavior, yet, with invincible longing, licks his chops.

No doubt the game had additional zest for Captain Thurston from the disapproval with which Mrs. Welch always regarded him. He never approached Miss Ruth without that lady fluttering around with the semi-comical distress of an anxious hen that cannot see even the house-dog approach her chick, without ruffling her feathers and showing fight.

This had thrown Thurston into a state of rather chronic opposition to the good lady, and he revenged himself for the loss of the daughter, by a habit of apparently espousing whatever the mother disapproved of, who on her part, lived in a constant effort to prove him in the wrong.

He had even ventured to express open skepticism as to the wisdom of the steps Mrs. Welch and her Aid Society had been taking in their philanthropic efforts on behalf of the freedmen; giving expression to the heretical doctrine that in the main the negroes had been humanely treated before the war, and that the question should be dealt with now from an economical rather than from a sentimental standpoint. He

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gave it as his opinion that the people down there knew more about the Negro, and the questions arising out of the new conditions, than those who were undertaking to settle those questions, from a distance, and that, if let alone, the questions would settle themselves. While as to Leech, the correspondent of Mrs. Welch's society, he declared that he would not believe anything he said.

Nothing could have scandalized Mrs. Welch more than such an utterance. And it is probable that this attitude on Thurston's part did as much as her real philanthropy to establish her in the extreme views she held.

For some time past there had been appearing in the *Censor*, the chief paper in the city where the Welches lived, a series of letters giving a dreadful, and, what Mrs. Welch considered, a powerful account of the outrages that were taking place in the South. According to the writer, the entire native white population were engaged in nothing but the systematic murder and mutilation of unoffending negroes and Northern settlers, who on their side were wholly without blame and received this persecution with the most Christian and uncomplaining humility.

The author's name was not given, because,

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it was stated in the letters, if it were known, he would at once be murdered. Indeed, it was declared that the letters were not written for publication at all, but were sent to a philanthropic organization composed of the best and most benevolent ladies in the country, who would vouch for the high standing of the noble Christian gentleman from whose pen the accounts emanated. As the letters were from the very section—indeed, from the very neighborhood which Thurston always cited as an evidence of the beneficent effect of his theory of moderation—Mrs. Welch, who was the head of the organization to which Leech had written them, saved them for the purpose of confounding and, once for all, disposing of Captain Thurston's arguments, together with himself.

So one morning when Thurston was calling on Ruth Mrs. Welch brought in the whole batch of papers and plumped them down before him with a triumphant air.

“Now, you read every word before you express an opinion,” she said, decisively.

While Thurston read, Mrs. Welch, who was enjoying her triumph, annotated each letter with running comments. These impressed Ruth greatly, but Thurston wilily kept his face

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from giving the slightest clew to his thoughts. When he was through reading, Mrs. Welch drew a long breath of exultation.

“Well, what do you say to that?”

“I don’t believe it!” said Thurston, calmly.

“What!” Mrs. Welch was lifted out of her chair by astonishment.

“The writer of that is Jonadab Leech, one of the most unmitigated——”

“Captain Thurston! You do not know what you are talking about!” exclaimed Mrs. Welch.

“Do you mean to say that Leech is not the writer of those letters?”

“No, I did not say that,” said Mrs. Welch, who would have cut out her tongue before she would have uttered a falsehood.

“I would not believe Leech on oath,” said the Captain, blandly.

“Oh, well, if that’s the stand you take, there’s no use reasoning with you.” And with a gesture expressive both of pity and sorrow that she must wash her hands of him completely and forever, Mrs. Welch gathered up her papers and indignantly swept from the room.

When Thurston went away that day he had entrusted Ruth with an apology for Mrs. Welch capable of being expanded, as circumstances

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might require, to an unlimited degree; for Ruth had explained to him how dear to her mother's heart her charities were. But he had also given Ruth such sound reasons for his views regarding the people in the region where he had been stationed that, however her principles remained steadfast, the sympathies of the girl had gone out to those whom he described as in such incredible difficulties.

“Ask Larry about Miss Blair Cary,” he said. “Ask him which is the better man, Dr. Cary or Jonadab Leech, and which he'd believe first, that Steve Allen, who is spoken of as such a ruffian, or Hiram Still, the martyr.”

“And how about Miss Dockett?” Ruth's eyes twinkled.

“Miss Dockett?—Who is Miss Dockett?” The little Captain's face wore so comical an expression of counterfeit innocence and sheepish guilt that the girl burst out laughing.

“Have you been in love with so many Miss Docketts that you can't remember which one lived down there?”

“No—oh, the girl I am in love with? Miss Ruth—ah, Dockett wasn't the name. It began with Wel—.” He looked at Ruth with so lan-

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guishing an expression that she held up a warning finger.

“Remember.”

He pretended to misunderstand her.

“Certainly I remember—Ruth Welch.”

Ruth gathered up her things to leave.

“Please don’t go.—Now that just slipped out. I swear I’ll not say another word on the subject as long as I live, if you’ll just sit down.”

“I can’t trust you.”

“Yes, you can, I swear it; and I’ll tell you all about Miss Dockett and—Steve Allen.”

This was too much for Ruth, and she reseated herself with impressive condescension.

Miss Welch was greatly interested for other reasons. Her father’s health had not been very good of late, and he had been thinking of getting a winter home in the South, where he could be most of the time out of doors, as an old wound in his chest still troubled him sometimes, and the doctors said he must not for the present spend another winter in the North. He had been in correspondence with this very Mr. Still, who was spoken of so highly in those letters, about a place just where this trouble was.

Besides, a short time before this conversation of Ruth’s with Thurston, Major Welch had re-

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ceived a letter from Middleton, who was still abroad, asking him to look into his affairs. He had always enjoyed a large income, but of late it had, he stated, fallen off, owing, as Mr. Bolter, his agent, explained, to temporary complications growing out of extensive investments Bolter had made for him on joint account with himself in Southern enterprises. These investments, Mr. Bolter assured him, were perfectly safe and would yield in a short time immense profits, being guaranteed by the State, and managed by the strongest and most successful men down there, who were themselves deeply interested in the schemes. It had happened, that the very names Bolter had given as a guarantee of the security of his investment, had aroused Middleton's anxiety, and though he had no reason, he said, to doubt Bolter, he did doubt Leech and Still, the men Bolter had mentioned.

Major Welch had made an investigation. And it had shown him that the investments referred to were so extensive as to involve a considerable part of his cousin's estate.

Bolter gave Major Welch what struck the latter quite as an "audience," though, when he learned the Major's business, he suddenly unbent and became much more confidential, ex-

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plaining everything with promptness and clearness. Bolter was a strong-looking, stout man, with a round head and a strong face. His brow was rather low, but his eyes were keen and his mouth firm. As he sat in his inner business office, with his clerks in outer pens, he looked the picture of a successful, self-contained man.

“Why, they fight a railroad coming into their country as if it were a public enemy,” he said to Major Welch.

“Then they must be pretty formidable antagonists.”

“And I have gotten letters warning me and denouncing the men who have planned and worked up the matter—and who would carry it through if they were allowed to do so—as though they were thieves.”

He rang a bell and sent for the letters. Among them was one from Dr. Cary and another from General Legaie. Though strangers, they said they wrote to him as one reported to be interested, and protested against the scheme of Still and Leech, who were destroying the State and pillaging the people. They contrasted the condition of the State before the war and at the present time. Dr. Cary's letter stated that “for purposes of identification” he would say that

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both his father and grandfather had been Governors of the State. General Legaie's letter was signed "Late General, C. S. A."

"What are you going to do with such people!" exclaimed Mr. Bolter. "They abuse those men as if they were pickpockets, and they are the richest and most influential men in that county, and Leech will, without doubt, be the next Governor." He handed Major Welch a newspaper containing a glowing account of Leech's services to the Commonwealth, and a positive assertion that he would be the next Governor of the State.

"What did you write them in reply?" asked Major Welch, who was taking another glance at the letters.

"Why, I wrote them that I believed I was capable of conducting my own affairs," said the capitalist, with satisfaction, running his hands deep in his pockets; "and if they would stop thinking about their grandfathers and the times before the war, and think a little more about their children and the present, it would be money in their pockets."

"And what did they reply to that?"

"Ah—why, I don't believe I ever got any reply to that. I suppose the moss had covered

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them by that time," he laughed. Major Welch looked thoughtful, and the capitalist changed his tone.

"In fact I had already made the investments, and I had to see them through. Major Leech is very friendly to me. It was through him we were induced to go into the enterprise—through him—and because of the opportunities it offered, at the same time that it was made perfectly safe by the guarantee of both the counties and the States. He used to be in my—in our—employ, and he is a very shrewd fellow, Leech is. That was the way we came to go in, and it doesn't do to swap horses in the stream."

"Mrs. Welch thinks very highly of him," said Major Welch, meditatively. "She has had some correspondence with him on behalf of her charitable society for the freedmen, and she has been much impressed by him."

"My only question was whether he was not a little too philanthropic," said Bolter, significantly. "But since I have come to find out, I guess he has used his philanthropy pretty discreetly. He's a very shrewd fellow." His smile and manner grated on the Major somewhat.

"Perhaps he is too shrewd?" he suggested, dryly.

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“Oh, no, not for me. I have made it a rule in life to treat every man as a rascal——”

“Oh!” A shadow crossed the Major’s brow, which Bolter was quick to catch.

“Until I found out differently.”

“I should think the other would have been rather inconvenient.” Major Welch changed the subject. “But Captain Middleton had some sort of trouble with this man, and has always had a dislike for him. And I think I shall go South and look into matters there.”

“Oh, well, that’s nothing,” broke in Bolter, hotly. “What does Middleton know about business? That’s his trouble. These military officers don’t understand the word. They are always stickling for their d—d dignity, and think if a man ain’t willing to wipe up the floor for ’em he’s bound to be a rascal.”

It was as much the sudden insolence in the capitalist’s tone, as his words that offended Major Welch. He rose to his feet.

“I am not aware, that being officers, and having risked their lives to save their country, necessarily makes men either more narrow or greater fools than those who stayed at home,” he said, coldly.

The other, after a sharp glance at him, was

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on his feet in an instant, his whole manner changed.

“My dear sir, you have misunderstood me. I assure you you have.” And he proceeded to smooth the Major down with equal shrewdness and success; delivering a most warm and eloquent eulogy on patriotism in general, and on that of Captain Lawrence Middleton in particular. Truth to tell, it was not hard to do, as the Major was one of the most placable of men, except where a principle was involved; then he was rock.

Bolter wound up by making Major Welch an offer, which the latter could not but consider handsome, to go South and represent his interests as well as Middleton’s.

“If he is going there he better be on my side than against me, and his hands would be tied then anyway,” reflected Bolter.

“You will find our interests identical,” he said, seeing the Major’s hesitation. “We are both in the same boat. And you will find that I have done by Mr. Middleton just what I have done for myself. And I have taken every precaution, of that you may be sure. And we are bound to win. We have the most successful men in the State with us, bound up by interest, and

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also as tight as paper can bind them. We have the law with us, the men who make, and the men who construe the law, and against us, only a few old mossbacks and soreheads. If they can beat that combination I should like to see them do it.”

The only doubt in Major Welch’s mind as to the propriety of a move to the South was on account of his daughter.

The condition of affairs there made no difference to Major Welch himself—for he felt that he had the Union behind him—and he knew it made none to Mrs. Welch. She had been working her hands off for two years to send things to the negroes through these men, Still and Leech. But with Ruth, who was the apple of her father’s eye, it might be another matter.

But when the subject was broached to Ruth, and she chimed in and sketched, with real enthusiasm, the delights of living in the South, in the country—the real country—amid palm and orange groves, the Major’s mind was set at rest. He only cautioned her against building her air-castles too high, as he knew there were no orange groves where they were going, and though there might be palms, he doubted if they were of the material sort, or very easy to obtain.

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Ruth's ardor, however, was not to be damped just then.

"Why, the South is the land of Romance, Papa."

"It will be if you are there," smiled her father.

It is said that curiosity is a potent motive with what used to be called the gentler, and, occasionally, even the weaker sex, a distinction that for some time has been passing, if it has not altogether passed, away. But far be it from the writer even to appear to give adherence to such a doctrine by anything that he may set down in this veracious chronicle. He does not recollect ever to have heard this remark made by any of the thousands of women whom he has known, personally, or through books with which the press teems, and he feels sure that had it been true it would not have escaped their acute observation. In recording, therefore, the move of the Welches to the South he is simply reporting facts.

On the occasion of the discussion between Mrs. Welch and Captain Thurston, Mrs. Welch was left by that gentleman in what, in a weaker woman, might have been deemed a state of exasperation. After all the trouble she had taken

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to secure the evidence to confound and annihilate that young man, he had with a breath undermined her foundation, or, rather, had shown that her imposing fabric had no foundation whatever. He knew Leech, and she did not. She would now go and satisfy herself by personal knowledge that she was right and he wrong—as she well knew to be the case, anyhow. So, many people start out on a quest for information, not to test, but to prove, their opinions. Thus, when Major Welch came with the statement of the offer he had received, Mrs. Welch truthfully declared that she in some sort saw in it the hand of Providence. This was strengthened by a conversation with Miss Ruth, who quoted Thurston's opinion of Leech.

“Captain Thurston, my dear!” said Mrs. Welch. “So light and frivolous a person as Captain Thurston is really incapable of forming a just opinion of such a man as Mr. Leech, whose letters breathe a spirit of the truest Christian humility, as well as the most exalted courage under circumstances which might well make even a strong man quail. I hope you will not quote Captain Thurston to me again. You know what my opinion of him has always been. I never could understand what your father's and

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Lawrence Middleton's infatuation for him was. Besides, you know that Captain Thurston was in love with some girl down in that country, and when a man is in love he is absolutely irresponsible. Love makes a man a fool about everything."

Thus Mrs. Welch, so to speak, shot at, even if she did not kill, two birds with one stone. If she did not kill this second bird it was not her fault, as the glance which she gave Ruth showed. Ruth's face did not wholly satisfy her, for she added:

"Besides that, Mr. Bolter has been down there and he tells me that he thinks very highly of Major Leech."

"Oh, Mr. Bolter! I don't like Mr. Bolter, and neither do you," began Miss Ruth.

"My dear, that is very unreasonable; what possible cause can you have to dislike Mr. Bolter, for you do not know him at all?"

"I have met him. He did not go into the army; but stayed at home and made money. Papa does not like him either."

"Don't you see how illogical that is? We cannot dislike everyone who did not go into the army."

"No, I know that." Ruth pondered a mo-

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ment and then broke out, laughing: "Why, mamma, I have given two reasons for not liking Mr. Bolter, and you did not give any for disliking Captain Thurston."

"That is different," replied Mrs. Welch, gravely, though she did not explain precisely how, and perhaps Ruth did not see it.

"Mamma," burst out Ruth, warmly, her face glowing, "I believe in a man's fighting for what he believes right. If I had been a man when the war broke out I should have gone into it, and if I had lived at the South I should have fought for the South."

"Ruth!" exclaimed her mother, deeply shocked.

"I would, mamma, I know I would, and you would too; for I know how much trouble you took to get an exchange for that young boy, Mr. Jacquelin or something, that Miss Bush, the nurse, was interested in."

"Ruth, I hope I shall never hear you say that again," protested Mrs. Welch, warmly. "You do not understand."

"I think I do—I won't say it again—but I have wanted to say it for a long time, and I feel so much better for having said it, mamma."

So the conversation ended.

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It was decided that Major Welch and Ruth should go ahead and select a place which they could rent until they should find one that exactly suited them, and then Mrs. Welch, as soon as she could finish packing the furniture and other things which they would want, should follow them.

A week later, Ruth and her father found themselves in the old county, and almost at their journey's end, in a region which, though as far as possible from Ruth's conception of palm and orange groves, was to the girl, shut up as she had been all her life in a city, not a whit less romantic and strange.

It was far wilder than she had supposed it would be. The land lay fallow, or was cultivated only in patches; the woods were forests and seemed to stretch interminably; the fields were growing up in bushes and briars. And yet the birds flitted and sang in every thicket, and over everything rested an air of peace that sank into Ruth's soul, as she jolted along in a little rickety wagon which they had hired at the station, and filled her with a sense of novelty and content. She was already beginning to feel something of the charm of which her cousin, Larry Middleton, and Captain Thurston were

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always talking. Some time, perhaps, she would see Blair Cary, about whom Reely Thurston was always hinting in connection with Larry Middleton; and she tried to picture to herself what she would be like—small and dark and very vivacious, or else, no doubt, haughty. She was sure she should not like her.

On her father, however, the same surroundings that pleased Miss Ruth had a very different effect. Major Welch had always carried in his mind the picture of this section as he remembered it the first time he rode through it, when it was filled with fine plantations and pleasant homesteads, and where, even during the war, the battle in which he had been wounded had been fought amid orchards and rolling fields and pastures.

At length, at the top of the hill they came to a fork, but though there was an open field between the roads, such as Major Welch remembered, there was no church there; in the open field was only a great thicket, an acre or more in extent, and the field behind it was nothing but a wilderness.

“We’ve missed the road, just as I supposed,” said Major Welch. “We ought to have kept nearer to the river, and I will take this road and

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strike the other somewhere down this way. I thought this country looked very different—and yet—?” He gazed all around him, at the open fields filled with bushes and briars, the rolling hills beyond, and the rampart of blue spurs across the background.

“No, we must have crossed Twist Creek lower down that day.” He turned into the road leading off from that they had been travelling, and drove on. This way, however, the country appeared even wilder, and they had driven two or three miles before they saw anyone. Finally they came on a man walking along, just where a footpath left the road and turned across the old field. He was a small, sallow fellow, very shabbily dressed, the only noticeable thing about him being his eyes, which were both keen and good-humored. Major Welch stopped him and inquired as to their way.

“Where do you want to go?” asked the man, politely.

“I want to go to Mr. Hiram Still’s,” said the Major.

The countryman gave him a quick glance.

“Well, you can’t git there this way,” he said, his tone changed a little; “the bridge is down on this road and nobody don’t travel it much

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now—you'll have to go back to Old Brick Church and take the other road. There's a new bridge on the road, but it's sort o' rickety since these freshes, and you have to take to the old ford again. One of Hiram's and Jonadab's jobs," he explained, with a note of hostility in his voice. Then, in a more friendly tone, he added: "The water's up still from last night's rain, and the ford ain't the best no time, so you better not try it unless you have somebody as knows it to set you right. I would go myself, but——" He hesitated, a little embarrassed—and the Major at once protested.

"No, indeed! Just tell me where is Old Brick Church."

"That fork back yonder where you turned is what's called Old Brick Church," said the man; "that's where it used to stand."

"What has become of the church?"

"Pulled down during the war."

"Why don't they rebuild it?" asked the Major, a little testily over the man's manner.

"Well, I s'pose they think it's cheaper to leave it down," said the man, dryly.

"Is there any place where we could spend the night?" the Major asked, with a glance up at the sunset sky.

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“Oh, Hiram Still, he’s got a big house. He’ll take you in, if he gits a chance,” he said, half grimly.

“But I mean, if we get overtaken by night this side the river? You tell me the bridge is shaky and the ford filled up now. I have my daughter along and don’t want to take any chances.”

“Oh, papa, the idea! As if I couldn’t go anywhere you went,” put in Ruth, suddenly.

At the Major’s mention of his daughter, the man’s manner changed.

“There’s Doct’r Cary’s,” he said, with a return of his first friendly tone. “They take everyone in. You just turn and go back by Old Brick Church, and keep the main, plain road till you pass two forks on your left and three on your right, then turn in at the third you come to on your left, and go down a hill and up another, and you’re right there.” The Major and Ruth were both laughing; their director, however, remained grave.

“Ain’t no fences nor gates to stop you. Just keep the main, plain road, like I tell you, and you can’t git out.”

“I can’t? Well, I’ll see,” said the Major, and after an inquiring look at the man, he turned and drove back.

TWO NEW RESIDENTS ARRIVE

“What bright eyes he has,” said Ruth, but her father was pondering.

“It’s a most curious thing; but that man’s face and voice were both familiar to me,” said he, presently. “Quite as if I had seen them before in a dream. Did you observe how his whole manner changed as soon as I mentioned Still’s name? They are a most intractable people.”

“But I’m sure he was very civil,” defended Ruth.

“Civility costs nothing and often means nothing. Ah, well, we shall see.” And the Major drove on.

As they passed by the fork again, both travellers looked curiously across at the great clump of trees rising out of the bushes and briars. The notes of a dove cooing in the soft light came from somewhere in the brake. They made out a gleam of white among the bushes, but neither of them spoke. Major Welch was recalling a night he had spent in that churchyard amid the dead and the dying.

Ruth was thinking of the description Middleton had given of the handsome mansion and grounds of Dr. Cary, and was wondering if this Dr. Cary could be the same.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE TRAVELLERS ARE ENTERTAINED IN A FARM-HOUSE

THE sun had already set some little time and the dusk was falling when they came to a track turning off from the "main, plain road," which they agreed must be that described to them as leading to Dr. Cary's. They turned in, and after passing through a skirt of woods came out into a field, beyond which, at a little distance, they saw a light. They drove on; but as they mounted the hill from which the light had shone Ruth's heart sank, for, as well as they could tell through the gathering dusk, there was no house there at all, or if there was, it was hidden by the trees around it. On reaching the crest, however, they saw the light again, which came from a small cottage at the far side of the orchard, that looked like a little farm-house.

"Well, we've missed Dr. Cary's after all," said Major Welch.

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It was too late now, however, to retrace their steps; so Major Welch, with renewed objurgations at the stupidity of people who could not give a straight direction, determined to let Dr. Cary's go, and ask accommodation there. Accordingly, they picked their way through the orchard and drove up to the open door from which the light was shining.

At the Major's halloo a tall form descended the low steps and came to them. Major Welch stated their case as belated travellers.

Ruth's heart was instantly warmed by the cordial response:

“Get right out, sir—glad to have you.

“Ah, my dear—here are a lady and gentleman who want to spend the night.” This to a slender figure who had come out of the house and joined them. “My daughter, madam; my daughter, sir.”

“Good-evening,” said the girl, and Ruth, who had been wondering at the softness of these farmer-voices, recollected herself just in time to take the hand which she found held out to her in the darkness in instinctive friendliness.

“I am Major Welch,” said that gentleman, not to be behind his host in politeness. “And this is my daughter.”

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“We are glad to see you,” repeated the young girl simply to Ruth in her charming voice, as if the introduction required a little more formal greeting.

“Ah! Major, glad to see you,” said the host, heartily. “Are you any relation to my old friend, General Welch of Columbia, who was with Johnson?”

“I don’t think so,” said Major Welch.

“Ah! I knew a Major Welch in the Artillery, and another in the Sixth Georgia, I think,” hazarded the host. “Are you either of those?”

“No,” said the Major, with a laugh, “I am not. I was on the other side—I was in the Engineer Corps under Grant.”

“Oh!” said the host, in such undisguised surprise that Ruth could feel herself grow hot, and was sensible, even in the darkness, of a change in her father’s attitude.

“Perhaps it may not be agree—I mean, convenient, for you to take us in to-night?” said Major Welch, rather stiffly.

“Oh, my dear sir,” protested the other, “the war is over, isn’t it? Of course it’s convenient. My wife is away just now, but, of course, it is always convenient to take in wayfarers.” And he led the horse off, while his daughter, whose

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quiet "Won't you walk in?" soothed Ruth's ruffled spirit, conducted them into the house.

When Ruth entered she had not the slightest idea as to either the name or appearance of their hosts. They had evidently assumed that the travellers knew who they were when they applied to spend the night, and it had been too dark outside for Ruth to see their faces. She only knew that they had rich voices and cordial, simple manners, such as even the plainest farmers appeared to have in this strange land, and she had a mystified feeling. As she entered the door her mystification only increased. The room into which she was conducted from the little veranda was a sitting or living room, lower in pitch than almost any room Ruth had ever been in, while its appointments appeared curiously incongruous to her eyes, dazzled as they were from coming in suddenly from the darkness. Ruth took in this rather than observed it as she became accustomed to the light, for the first glance of the two girls was at each other. Ruth found herself astonished at the appearance of her hostess. Her face was so refined and her figure so slim that it occurred to Ruth that she might be an invalid. Her dress was simple to plainness, plainer than Ruth had

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ever seen the youngest girl wear, and her breast-pin was nothing but a brass button, such as soldiers wear on their coats; yet her manners were as composed and gracious as if she had been a lady and in society for years.

“Why, she looks like a lady,” thought the girl, with a new feeling of shyness coming over her, and she stole a glance around her for something which would enable her to decide her hosts’ real position. The appointments of the room, however, only mystified her the more. A plain, white board bookcase filled with old books stood on one side, with a gun resting in the corner, against it; two or three portraits of be-wigged personages in dingy frames, and as many profile portraits in pastel hung on the walls, with a stained print or two, and a number of photographs of soldiers in uniform among them. A mahogany table with carved legs stood in the centre of the room, piled with books, and the chairs were a mixture of home-made split-bottomed ones and old-fashioned, straight-backed arm-chairs.

“How curious these farmers are,” thought Ruth; but she did not have a great deal of time for reflection, for the next instant her hostess, who had been talking to her father, was asking

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if she would not "take her things off" in so pleasant a voice, that before hat and coat were removed all constraint was gone and Ruth found herself completely at home. Then her hostess excused herself and went out for a moment. Ruth took advantage of her absence to whisper to her father, with genuine enthusiasm, "Isn't she pretty, father? What are they?"

"I don't know, but I suspect—" Just what it was that he suspected Ruth did not learn, for at that moment their host stepped in at the door, and laying his old worn hat on a table, made them another little speech, as if being under his roof required a new welcome. Major Welch began to apologize for running in on them so unceremoniously, but the farmer assured him that an apology was quite unnecessary, and that they were always glad to welcome travellers who came.

"We are told to entertain strangers, you know; for thereby, they say, some have entertained angels unawares, and though we cannot exactly say that we have ever done this yet," he added, with a twinkle in his eye, "we may be beginning it now—who knows?" He made Ruth a bow with an old-fashioned graciousness which set her to blushing.

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“What a beautiful nose he has, finer even than my father’s,” she thought.

Just then the young hostess returned, and the next moment an old negro woman in a white kerchief stood in the door dropping courtesies as though she were in a play. Ruth was shown up a narrow little flight of stairs to a room so close under the sloping roof that it was only in the middle of it that she could stand upright. Everything, however, was spotlessly clean, and the white hangings, plain and simple as they were, and the little knickknacks arranged about, made it dainty. The girl picked up one of the books idly. It was an old copy of “The Vicar of Wakefield.” As she replaced the book, she observed that where it lay it covered a patch.

At supper they were waited on by the old negro woman she had seen before, whom both their host and hostess called “Mammy,” and treated not so much as a servant, as if she were one of the family; and though the china was old and cracked, and mostly of odd pieces, the young hostess presided with an ease which filled Ruth with astonishment. “Why, she could not do it better if she had lived in a city all her life, and she is not a bit embarrassed by us,” she thought to herself. She observed that the only

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two pretty and sound cups were given to her and her father. The one she had was so dainty and unusual that she could not help looking at it closely, and was a little taken aback, on glancing up, to find her hostess's eyes resting on her. The smile that came into them, however, reassured Ruth, and she ventured to say, half apologetically, that she was admiring the cup.

“Yes, it is pretty, isn't it?” assented the other girl. “It has quite a history; you must get my father to tell it to you. There used to be a set of them.”

“It was a set which was presented to one of my ancestors by Charles the Second,” said the father thus appealed to, much as if he had said, “It is a set that was given me yesterday by a neighbor.” Ruth looked at him with wide-open eyes and a little uncomfortable feeling that he should tell her such a falsehood. His face, however, wore the same calm look. “If you inspect closely, you can still make out the C. R. on it, though it is almost obliterated. My ancestor was with his father at Carisbrooke,” he added, casually, and Ruth, glancing at her father, saw that it was true, and at the same moment took in also the fact that they had reached the place they had been looking for; and that this farmer,

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as she had supposed him to be, was none other than Dr. Cary and the young girl whom she had been patronizing, was Larry Middleton's Blair Cary, a lady like herself. How could she have made the mistake! As she looked at her host again, the thoughtful, self-contained face, the high-bred air, the slightly aquiline nose, the deep eyes, and the calm mouth and the pointed beard made a perfect Vandyke portrait. Even the unstarched, loose collar and turned-back cuffs added to the impression. Ruth seemed to have been suddenly carried back over two hundred years to find herself in presence of an old patrician. She blushed with confusion over her stupidity, and devoutly hoped within herself that no one had noticed her mistake.

After supper, Major Welch and Dr. Cary, who had renewed their old acquaintance, fell to talking of the war, and Ruth was astonished to find how differently their host looked at things from the way in which all the people she had ever known regarded them. It was strange to the girl to hear her people referred to as "the Yankees" or "the enemy"; and the other side, which she had always heard spoken of as "rebels," mentioned with pride as "the Confederates" or "our men." After a little, she

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heard her father ask about the man he had come South to see—Mr. Hiram Still. “Do you know him?” he asked their host.

“Oh, yes, sir, I know him. We all know him. He was overseer for one of my friends and connections, who was, perhaps, the wealthiest man in this section before the war, Mr. Gray, of Red Rock, the place where you spent the night you spoke of. Colonel Gray was killed at Shiloh, and his property all went to pay his debts afterward. He had some heavy indorsements, and it turned out that he owed a great deal of money to Still for negroes he had bought to stock a large plantation he had in one of the other States—at least, the overseer gave this explanation, and produced the bonds, which proved to be genuine, though at first it was thought they must be forged. I suppose it was all right, though some people thought not, and it seems hard to have that fellow living in Gray’s house.”

“But he bought it, did he not?” asked Major Welch.

“Oh, yes, sir, he bought it—bought it at a forced sale,” said Dr. Cary, slowly. “But I don’t know—to see that fellow living up there looks very strange. There are some

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things so opposed to the customary course of events that the mind refuses to accept them.”

“Still lives somewhat lower down, I believe?” said Major Welch.

“No, sir, he is not very far off,” said Dr. Cary. “He is just across the river a few miles. Do you know him?”

“No, I do not. Not personally, that is. What sort of a man is he?”

“Well, sir, he does not stand very well,” answered Dr. Cary, deliberately.

“Ah! Why, if I may ask?” Major Welch was stiffening a little.

“Well, he went off to the radicals,” said Dr. Cary, slowly, and Ruth was amused at the look on her father’s face.

“But surely a man may be a republican and not be utterly bad?” said Major Welch.

“Yes, I suppose so, elsewhere,” admitted the other, doubtfully. “In fact, I have known one or two gentlemen who were—who thought it best to accept everything, and begin anew—I did myself at first. But I soon found it impossible. It does not prove efficacious down here. You see—But, perhaps, you are one yourself, sir?” very politely.

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“I am,” said Major Welch, and Ruth could see him stiffen.

“Ah!” Their host leaned a little back. “Well, I beg your pardon. Perhaps, we will not discuss politics,” he said, with great courtesy. “We should only disagree and—you are my guest.”

“But surely we can talk politics without becoming—ah—We have been discussing the war?” said Major Welch.

“Ah, my dear sir, that is very different,” said Dr. Cary. “May I ask, have you any official—ah—? Do you expect to stay among us?”

“Do you mean, am I a carpet-bagger?” asked Major Welch, with a smile. But the other was serious.

“I would not insult you under my roof by asking you that question,” he said, gravely. “I mean are you thinking of settling among us as a gentleman?”

“Well, I can hardly say yet—but, perhaps, I am—thinking of it,” said Major Welch. “At least, that is one reason why I asked you about that man, Still.”

“Oh, well, of course, if you ask as my guest, I will take pleasure in giving you any information you may wish.”

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“Is he a gentleman?” interrupted Major Welch.

“Oh, no—certainly not that, sir. He is hand in glove with the carpet-baggers, and the leader of the negroes about here. He and a carpet-bagger named Leech, and a negro preacher or exhorter named Sherwood, who, by the way, was one of my own negroes, and a negro named Ash, who belonged to my friend General Legaie, and a sort of trick-doctor named Moses, whom I once saved from hanging, are the worst men in this section.”

Major Welch had listened in silence, and now he changed the subject; for from the reference to Leech he began to think more and more that it was only prejudice which made these men objects of such narrow dislike.

When Ruth went up to bed she was in a sort of maze. The old negro woman whom she had seen downstairs came up to wait on her, and Miss Welch was soon enlightened as to several things. One was, that Dr. Cary's family was one of the greatest in the State—perhaps, in the old woman's estimation, the greatest—except, of course, Mrs. Cary's, to which Mammy Krenda gave rather the pre-eminence as she herself had always belonged to that family and had nursed

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Mrs. Cary and Miss Blair, her daughter. According to her they had been very rich, but had lost everything, first by the war, and then, by the wickedness of someone, against whom the old woman was especially bitter. "He ain' nuttin' but a low-down nigger-trader, nohow," she declared, savagely. "He done cheat ev'ybody out der home, he and dat Leech together, an' now dey think dey got ev'ything der own way, but dey'll see. Dey's dem as knows how to deal wid 'em. An' ef dee ever lay dee han's 'pon me, dee'll fine out. We ain' gwine live in blacksmiff shop always. Dem's stirrin' what dee ain' know 'bout, an' some day dee'll heah 'em comin' for 'em to judgment."

"Ken I help you do anything?" she asked, presently.

"No, I thank you," said Ruth, stiffly. "Good-night."

"Good-night," and she went.

"Why, she don't like us as much as she does them!" said the girl to herself, filled with amazement at this revolution of all her ideas. "Well, Larry's right. Miss Cary is charming," she reflected.

As she dropped off to sleep she could hear the hum of voices below, where Dr. Cary and her

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father were keeping up their discussion of the war. And as she was still trying to make out what they were saying, the sun came streaming into her room through a broken shutter and woke her up.

END OF VOLUME I

