

MILROSE;

OR,

The Cotton-Planter's Daughter.

A TALE OF SOUTH CAROLINA.

BY DR. J. H. ROBINSON.

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# MILROSE;

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### CHAPTER I.

PETER RUST.

The balmy winds of the Sea Islands went rippling across the green belts of intervening water to the main land, breathing blandly on plantations of cotton and swamps of rice, breaking, finally, in languid waves on a far-stretching, barren shore of pine woods, in the narrow, irregular openings of which might be seen scattered, at varying distances, the ill-constructed huts of thriftless whites, whose indolent, vagabond habits form a peculiar and distinctive feature of Southern life.

At a certain point in the foreground of this pine belt, between it and the sea, stood, at the beginning of the civil war, the humble cabin of one Peter Rust, known for his eccentricities and wandering propensities all along the tide-water section, from Beaufort to Lake Drummond, and whose means of existence was a subject of mystery and speculation. To some, he was known as a wood-chopper; to others, as a still-hunter; procuring the simple necessities of life by long and silent tramps in the barrens, ranging at intervals, when it suited his mood, the entire coast to the distant Alleghanies; while there were a few poor whites who shook their torpid heads and hinted at darker game, and a more lucrative pursuit.

Although Peter had a dwelling at the somewhat ambiguous place we have named, it was persistently affirmed by the suspicious and idle that he had other haunts, and, despite his seeming loneliness, comrades and accomplices in the obscurities of the forest. Not choosing to associate with the lazy and the lawless, and keeping strictly his own company, he made enemies of those who, under any circumstances, would scarcely have made good friends and trusty companions.

When the South arose in flaming wrath to welcome her Northern neighbors "with bloody

hands to hospitable graves," Peter Rust was a marked man; and none so hard upon him as those huddled drones who had nothing to lose in the game of war.

Within easy eye-range of Peter's modest cabin, rising on the crest of a graceful swell, was a mansion of unusual size and architecture. This habitation, though built in a land of beauty and visited by soft, southern suns, had nothing warm and cheerful in its outward aspects, and repelled rather than invited the approaches of the curious. It was surrounded by a village of negro huts, which swarmed with life of every hue, from the eighth drop of the octoroon to the full quota of the genuine black.

One morning, Peter Rust sat at his cabin-door, cleaning his double gun, when a man, whom he had seen more than once lolling in the sun near a smoky shanty in one of the pine openings in the vicinity, swaggered up to him with an air of importance that had much native impudence in it. Peter did not notice his coming in any perceptible manner. The person, after staring at him a moment, opened a mouth that extended from cheek to cheek, and said, between a grunt and a growl, pointing to the large dwelling on the slope:

"Wanted over you!"

"Which?" said Peter, carelessly, contriving to squirt some black water from the vent of his gun into the man's eye.

"Wanted up to Lowenthal's," he answered, wiping the sooty liquid from his face with the back of a hand that was a stranger to the uses of water.

"What's the handle to such a tyke as you be?" asked Peter, pouring more water into the barrels.

The fellow scowled and snarled at this easy style of address.

"If you mean my name, it's Ben Dykes. Ben Dykes, of the pine openin's. Ben Dykes, of the turpentine woods. Ben Dykes, the long-

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range shooter. Ben Dykes, the dog-trainer. Ben Dykes here, and Ben Dykes there."

"What a useful bein' you must be!" responded Peter, aiming another jet of water at Ben Dykes' other eye. He squared off, and muttered:

"Don't squirt no more o' that yer, mister!" Peter laid his twin barrels across his knees, and stared at Ben's mouth about long enough to boil an egg. He shook his head gravely.

"Wonder it hadn't took your life," he said. "Wonder *what* hadn't took my life?" asked Ben, sullenly.

"If it had gone an inch further, 'twould took your head off!" continued Peter, with increasing seriousness.

"What took my head off?" growled Ben.

"How did it happen?" added Peter, impressively.

"What happen, you slow-spoken pup?" yelled Ben, losing all patience.

"Why, that gash under your nose. Hardly left enough for a hinge for the top to turn on—did it?"

"G'long, you lank, slap-sided, lathy-legged, lantern-jawed, bob-tailed setter! Thar! take that!"

Ben Dykes drew in a column of air that reached to the bottom of his tattered trousers.

"One o' the white trash, a'n't ye, Ben?" queried Peter, again turning to his work. "Better run back to your pups, hadn't ye? Some o' them nigger-dogs that you're trainin' of may want ye. It must be interestin' to spend your time 'mong p'inters, blooders, and bull-pups!"

Peter threw enough cool contempt into his voice to provoke Ben to his fighting temper.

"I don't mind your fling at the dogs," he retorted, hot with anger. "Snap at 'em ag'in, if you want to. As for my mouth, it's as natur' made it, and I'd thank ye to keep out on't."

"Twan't an accident, then?" said Peter, thoughtfully, his eyes wandering as if mechanically to the debatable mouth.

"If you don't stop gapin' at me in that ar' way, I'll give ye a gash worth havin'!" menaced Ben. "But 'a'n't my time to quarrel. As I tole ye, yer wanted up to Lowenthal's."

"What if I don't choose to go?" asked Peter Rust, quietly.

"Try it! try it! Should like to have ye try it!"

Ben Dykes was gleeful over this.

"Tell Lowenthal I'm no man's man," answered Peter, calmly.

"Sartin! Sartin I'll tell him. He'll give it up, Lowenthal will!" He rubbed his two palms together in a small spasm of satisfaction, and grinned dreadfully.

"Look out there, you Ben Dykes, or the kiver of your mouth'll tip back'ards!" cried Peter, warningly. "Twould be our'ous to see

your head hangin' on your shoulders, like a co-quettish gal's bonnet in a hot day."

A change passed over Ben's face at that moment. It was as if a ray of mischievous light had fallen upon the angry darkness of his expression. He blazed up with exultation. His visage said, distinctly:

"I have you now, Peter!"

"Look at me straight, you woo opper."

"I'm lookin'," said Peter, whose self-possession seemed never to forsake him.

"Say *Cotton is King*!" dictated Ben, with imps of malice sitting cross-legged and jubilant in his eyes.

"Which?" inquired Peter, placidly.

"You've got to mouth it!" cried Ben, snapping his fingers as near Peter's nose as he could without hitting it. "Everybody's got to say it that's asked it, and anybody may ask it. Roll it as a sweet morsel under your tongue, you thin-blooded, weak-kneed Yankee hound! The Shibboleth, Lowenthal calls it, and woe to them yer as can't pronounce it free and yearnest. Come, now; out with it. Here goes! *Cotton is King*!"

"I do nothin' on compulsion," said Peter, setting the twin barrels carefully on end against the cabin. "I don't keer," he went on, "whether Cotton or Sweet Potatoes is king. I'd as soon it 'twould be one as 'tother. Have which on 'em you like. Let it be Hemp, if you choose, or Flax, for that matter. A deal o' difference it'll make to a white trash whose king. As for niggers, you never owned one, and never will. You can lollap round in the sun like a dirty alligator, and that's about all you're good for. If you know when you're well-off, you'll take that mouth o' yours to head-quarters, and let it for a commissary storehouse: it'll shed rain if you keep the kiver down."

"If 'twasn't on other folk's business," muttered Ben, drawing a knife from one leg of his tattered trousers, "I'd cut yer into long, thin strips and hang you on a pole to dry!"

Having cast this possibility at Peter, he stropped his knife on six inches of bare brown arm.

"If I fall afoul of ye," responded Peter, with a steelish sort of glimmer in his quiet eyes, "you won't know King Cotton from Northern wool. You've got no courage, and you know it. Put up your cleaver and be scarce!"

Ben Dykes slowly sheathed his weapon in his trowser's leg and backed cautiously away, grimacing provokingly.

"Skedaddle!" cried Peter, ruffled by his grinning diabolism. "Go to him as sent ye, and tell him I've my own affairs to mind."

Ben performed a series of sinister pantomimes, and walked off with as much haste as his lounging habits would allow.

Peter Rust went on with his task in a mood less cheerful. He wiped the twin barrels dry

and replaced them in the stock with special care. The gun was a fine piece of workmanship. The barrels beautifully finished, and fitted to the wood as if they had grown there, were of different weight and calibre, and for different uses; one being a shot-barrel and the other a rifle. Peter Rust admired the weapon, and seemed never weary of looking at the hair-line-settings of the blue steel mountings, the thorough and flush-edged lock-work, the curliness of the sturdy old piece of English walnut, the smoothness of the oil finish, and the symmetrical completeness and perfection of the united whole. Dykes had looked at it more than once with covetous eyes.

The following evening, while Peter was reclining, half-asleep, under the branches of one of the fine patriarchs at his door, he was surrounded by a dozen mounted men, and informed that he was a prisoner.

"Which?" asked Peter, rising and placing his back to the tree.

The word "prisoner" was repeated by some one.

"Who are ye?" inquired Peter.

"Confederates," answered he who had before spoken.

"Confederates!" repeated Peter. "Two, four, six, eight, ten, twelve. It only took from twelve to a dozen of ye to take me! And I ain't quite taken yet. I could make a pretty fight, if I's in the mood on't. But don't be afeard. I'll keep the peace as long as you."

"Up to Lowenthal's with him!" said a voice that Peter knew very well.

"Hillo!" cried Peter. "The man with the hinge j'int on the back of his head, is hereabout. Push him along, so I can see him. Rather see him than a caravan. In all my still-walkings, up and down, along and athwart, crossways and lengthways, coastways and inland, I never run afoul of a cretur with his head cut off, afore."

Peter stared in inimitable wonder at Ben Dykes.

"Set it over night, and what a rat-trap 'twould make!"

The men laughed. Ben muttered some pine barren invocations that were not brotherly.

"Thee will come along!" said a large man, who had hitherto remained silent.

Peter turned to the speaker instantly. The style of address surprised him.

"As there appears to be one decent man among ye, I'd like to ask that man, if it a'n't takin' too much liberty, who he is, and what's wanted of me?"

"I am," answered he of the plain language, one Martin Broadbent, of whom you may, perchance, have heard, overseer of this plantation, agent, tool, instrument, and, as it were, right-hand of one Roscoe Lowenthal, landholder, slaveholder, householder, gentleman born, gentleman bred, and rightful owner of the ground

you stand upon. I am duly commissioned to conduct, convey, transport and carry, one Peter Rust, wherever found, to yonder house on the hill. Beyond this I know not. Dispute my authority, which is derived from said Lowenthal himself, and of a truth I will coerce, constrain, force, enforce, and compel thee to go."

This avowal was made with a semi-religious earnestness, in singular contrast to the blustering, profane manners of the creatures who sat on their queer horses, squinting at Peter.

"Was ever the like heard!" exclaimed Peter. "Was words ever so piled up? Hang that solemn Quaker tongue in Ben Dykes' hoss-shed of a mouth, and there'd be a voice for ye!"

"No more a hoss-shed than your own!" grumbled Dykes.

"My time isn't worth nothin'," continued Peter. "Sprinkle some more words out o' your pepper-box, Mr. Broadbent."

Peter looked so quizzical, that the lawless crew laughed in concert. The Quaker, however, retained his gravity, which grew more ponderous as the hilarity of his assistants increased.

"Is the name, style, title, and temporal designation of thy outward corporality, Peter Rust?" he inquired, with the utmost seriousness.

"Which?" quoth Peter.

Martin Broadbent repeated his question with scrupulous precision.

"I never denied my name," said Peter, "though a namesake of mine, once on a time, told a monstrous and cowardly lie."

"Then thee will come along."

Then to his aids:

"If he comes not peaceably, lay violent hands on him, and constrain him with the strong arm."

"If I must submit to this unlawful proceeding, I'll make a virtue of necessity, and go quietly. But I shall hold ye, Mr. Overseer," Peter added, "responsible for this treatment. With your born and bred gentleman I have no business, that I know on, and don't care to have any."

Rust cast a wishful look at his cabin, and was pushed and jostled toward Lowenthal's, by hands not over friendly. Ben Dykes lingered, and did not overtake the party for some minutes. Peter believed that the knave was looking for his double gun, but held his peace.

## CHAPTER II.

### LOWENTHAL.

While being hurried up the acclivity, he tried to make conversation with Martin Broadbent, but drew nothing satisfactory from him. That a man of his sober faith should be engaged in such a questionable calling in the cotton-fields of South Carolina, was to him a subject of astonishment.

The evening was considerably advanced when Peter Rust was ushered into the house of Low-

enthal. He could not but notice, as he entered, that the place was much like a military camp. He saw, a little way off, shimmering in the moonlight, a cluster of white tents, recently pitched.

Lowenthal was a man between thirty-five and forty years of age, six feet in height, compactly built, features thin and dark, expression hard and keen. Ambition, cunning, and misanthropy, had made their respective writings on his face and character.

Martin Broadbent, having conducted him to this sinister presence, withdrew without remark.

Peter Rust was six feet and two inches in height, straight as his own gun-barrels. He was never more rigidly perpendicular than when Lowenthal was looking him over with his cold eyes. He bore the scrutiny with patient firmness. While Lowenthal studied his man, Peter studied his.

"You were born at the North?" said Lowenthal, by and by.

"I might have been born at the South, had my mother been there at the time," answered Peter, dryly.

"Keep your Yankee wit till it's wanted," said Lowenthal.

"I'll keep it at the door in calling distance, in case there should be a demand for it. Poor market for it here, I allow," replied Peter.

"For the work you're wanted for," resumed Lowenthal, with composure, "Lincolnite, abolitionist, bloodstain, or mudsill, are all one to me. It's not your brains I want but your greasy, mechanical skill."

"Go on," said Peter.

"I am told," Lowenthal continued, "that you can turn your hand to any craft. I have sent for you to put your aptness to use. You needn't speak. I'll do the talking myself."

Lowenthal rang a bell, then taking a revolver from a case, slipped it into a side-pocket.

With wonderful quickness there appeared a negro of such gigantic proportions, that Peter Rust could do nothing but look at him. His body was a great column of flesh that towered above his own height like an ebony Colossus. His head was a mass of crispy hair, giving background and moral support to an incredible surface of face, compounded of lip and nose, mixed with cheek and chin, teeth and eyes, in a very African manner. His sooty visage was scarred and hacked in a disagreeable fashion. One of his naked arms was braided—the letters, deeply printed in fire looking like letters of iron imbedded in the flesh.

"Babel," said Lowenthal, with a wave of the hand, "light us up."

The black, who had obviously been expecting a summons, brought a large lamp which burned with a clear and steady flame, and, without answer, obeyed his master.

Peter followed the giant, and Lowenthal walked behind, thus placing Peter between the two. He went forward firmly, for his nerves were not easily disturbed.

They ascended a flight of steps in a remote part of the mansion, passed through an upper hall, and finally mounted another staircase. Peter was surprised at the capaciousness of the house, which, when viewed from the outside, did not appear so spacious. Babel paused at the door of a room just under the roof, which was barely high enough for him to stand erect. With the broad, red flame of the lamp falling on his pug-nose, and two banks of lips, and the white rims of his eyes, he looked as much like Satan as anything Peter could think of.

"Go in!" said Lowenthal.

Babel shuffled in.

Peter crossed the threshold dubiously, and found himself in an apartment about ten feet by sixteen, having two narrow windows and a skylight; the latter being so arranged that, by stepping in a chair, a person of ordinary height could reach a looped cord by which it could be raised or lowered as ventilation required.

"You see those windows and the roof-light?" said Lowenthal.

Peter Rust replied that he did.

"Now look to your left. You see these oak joists—don't you?"

"I see 'em," said Peter.

"Very well. With those oaken bars you fire to seal up those windows, strengthen this door, and repair the weak places in the walls."

"If I agree to!" muttered Peter.

"There is but one will in this house," continued Lowenthal, imperiously, "and that is mine!"

He made a motion to the black, who, placing the lamp in a wooden bracket, went to a little closet that had, till then, escaped Peter's notice, and thence took a gun, with a short brass barrel and brass mountings. The calibre of this ancient fire-arm was such that a hand of moderate size might have been thrust in at the muzzle. Under ordinary circumstances, Peter would have smiled at sight of it; but matters were growing too serious for smiling.

"Is it loaded?" asked Lowenthal, using his right arm as if it were a ramrod.

Babel nodded his woolly globe of a head, and held up four fingers, to signify that there were four balls in the blunderbuss. He then opened the powder-pan, to show that the piece was primed.

Peter lost nothing of this dumb show.

"Stand at this door," added Lowenthal, in an even, inflexible voice. "This mudsill is not to go till the work is done. If he attempts to force his way hence, shoot him."

Peter remarked that as often as Lowenthal addressed the black, he gesticulated in a singular manner, and that Babel kept his eyes stead-

fastly fastened on his lips. He seemed to speak from the force of habit, but to gesticulate for the negro's apprehension.

"Is this the way you generally get your work done?" Peter demanded, meeting the eyes of Lowenthal, firmly.

The latter pointed at the lumber and the windows. His face grew more determined in its expression. It was easy to see that he had been habitually obeyed. Babel, with his blunderbuss at his shoulder, planted his great hod in the door.

"Work!" said Lowenthal.

"I am no workman," answered Peter, calmly. "Most of my life has been spent in the woods, with my gun for my companion, and the wild-game for my food. I know little of the arts of common life. You have made a mistake about my handiness, ingenuity, and all that. Seeing the whole thing's a blunder, I'll go my way and say no more on't."

Peter Rust watched the effect of his words, but they passed over the stern surface of Lowenthal like the lightest zephyr over a frozen lake. The still-hunter might as well have thrown up a window and dropped his answer out of it.

"You're down among the mudsills," answered Lowenthal, with no apparent increase of impatience; but the tenor of his voice was hard as iron. "Never lived drudging Yankee that couldn't do whatever was wanted. Hammers and planes, chaffering and gains, are their natural weapons and aspirations. As their fathers were, so are they. Work!"

The white hand of the planter went quivering toward the windows again.

The cheeks of Peter Rust burned red, at first; then they paled slowly. There was something like white lightning flickering in his eyes.

"I am but a simple-minded man," he said, "and know little more than simple honesty. I s'pose tools and work are well enough in their way, but a deal too common for born gentlemen. You people down here couldn't have housen to live in, if 'twasn't for Northern brains and Northern planes. You'd be obliged to sleep under the open sky, with your slaves, if you had to trust to your own bone and muscle. But what's bone and muscle? Bone and muscle isn't for born gentlemen and born ladies, of course! Bone and muscle is for niggers and Northern workers!"

Peter looked down at the floor, and compressed his lips. He needed wonderful self-power to govern his feelings, but he struggled for the victory, and obtained it.

Lowenthal's lip curled scornfully, but he vouchsafed no other reply. He paused on the threshold, as he passed Babel, and said, touching his lips and his breast:

"Give him neither food nor drink till the work is done. When it is completed, inform me."

The giant jerked his head like a great black automaton.

"I've no tools," muttered Peter.

Lowenthal pointed to a chest in the closet, and went away.

### CHAPTER III.

#### UNDER THE ROOF.

Peter Rust sat down on the lumber and pondered.

The giant retained his position with the immobility of a stone statue. Peter examined the room; he noted the windows, the walls, the closet, and Babel. The latter engaged his attention the longest. He spoke to him, after ten minutes' contemplation, and in this fashion:

"What's this for?"

It was the simplest form of inquiry.

"The black gave no sign of hearing him, the gr. hite rims of his eyes being rolled upward to the ceiling.

Peter made a motion to attract his attention, then repeated his question. After a strange, sub-lingual rumbling in his throat, he pointed to his ears and mouth.

"Deaf and dumb!" exclaimed Peter. "Might as well talk to a graven image. Thought Lowenthal made a good many motions. Words for me, motions for him. Well, this is particular fine, this is, shut up with a black mute and a loaded blunderbuss!"

Peter pondered again, and hit upon signs. Signs were just the thing. He had talked with Choctaws with signs.

"I have him on the hip, now," said Peter, speaking aloud. "I'll talk with this deaf and dumb devil, in spite of his teeth!"

The concluding word of this resolution was suggested by the white gleam of Babel's masticators through the red depths of his lips. He wanted to ask him the use of that room, but when he came to look over his stock of pantomime, he found it less copious than he had imagined. He swept his hand around the chamber, and then aimed a forefinger dead at the giant; and on his not seeming to understand, repeated it with the words:

"What'll he do with it, you ox?"

Babel's head rolled negatively from side to side.

"What a fool!" added Peter, in strong disgust. "A natural idiot ought to know what that meant. If I had a plantation-whip, guess I'd bring him round so he'd know signs! Hero I be, shet up with a mammoth ox, that can't do nothin' but shake his head and twist his eyeballs."

Peter, being baffled, drew on his thinking-cap determinedly; but speedily forgetting the deafness and dumbness, broke out with:

"Look here, you gorilla! Let me out o' this, and I'll give ye a dozen dollars. A dozen? Two dozen—three, or even four, on a pinch."

There was no change in the silent features of Babel; they were as fixed and unresponsive as before.

"Pshaw! What's the use talkin' to a hulk that can't tell thunder from singin'?"

"Ah! now I'm sure of him!"

Peter held up his two hands, with all their outspread fingers and thumbs, five distinct times; then walked about the room with the most swaggering air of freedom he could put on.

"There!" he cried, triumphantly. "That means fifty dollars and liberty!"

Fifty dollars and liberty produced no effect on Babel. He kept his mute watch, hand on gun, eyes on Peter. Peter looked for results; for a lighting up of the dull countenances; for a gleam of grateful intelligence; for a delightful quiver of the ebony muscles. He saw nothing of that nature.

"No use! no use!" murmured Peter. "He's got bone and muscle, but no brains. If his master should push him from the door, and tell him he's a free nigger, he wouldn't sense it. Give him his own soul and his own body as a present, and he wouldn't know the vally of 'em, nor thank y' for the gift. But it's his natur'. He was made to work, as a clock is to strike; and when he's done that, you've got to the end of him."

Looking up just then, Peter caught Babel's white rims fastened on him in a most singular manner.

"If he had the wit of a child, I'd tell him about the war, and what legs was made for," mused the wood-chopper, aloud. "But 'twould be time wasted. Wonder what backed and scarred him so? That's his affair, and not mine. My business, at present, is with one Peter Rust, now here, and ready to answer to his name. Peter! Peter! What are you goin' to do, Peter?"

Thus calling to himself out of the depths of his mind, the wandering dweller of the pine barrens turned over his resources for a fitting answer. Should he work or refuse? What were windows latticed and doors barred for? To make a prison. A prison was for a prisoner. Who was the prisoner?

This was a natural chain of reasoning; but he could go no farther for want of data. He started off from another point. If he converted the chamber into a prison, according to the best of his abilities, would that be the end of the matter, so far as he was personally concerned? Was this to be a secret transaction, known only to the confidential agents of Lowenthal? So far as he had the means of judging, he believed it was. In performing the labor forced upon him, did he not become a party to the proceeding, and hold in his hand a clue to its exposure? Now came the essential question. Having accomplished the work, would he

be permitted to go his way, without condition or hindrance? The conversion of the place into a prison being clearly a thing of the greatest importance to Lowenthal, Peter thought he perceived that his new and extraordinary difficulties would not end with the last blow of the hammer, and the last stroke of the saw.

He called to mind the troubled state of the country, and the persecutions that harried those suspected of Union sentiments. The life of a loyal man was held in light esteem. Startling rumors reached him daily. Humble as was his position, he was conscious that ill-nature, malice, and suspicion had followed him to his quiet cabin.

The windows barred, the wainscoting sheathed, the door made massive with oak, the labor done, and the bolt shot home, would Lowenthal scruple to have him marched out and shot as a Federal traitor? Would he hesitate to have him put to death in any other manner that was convenient or expedient?

The answers to these questions were so evident to Peter, that he mentally jotted them down as settled.

He would not work. He sat on the oaken stuff till midnight. The first hour was long, the second longer. Babel squatted on his haunches like an overgrown toad, and seemed oblivious of wood-choppers, still-hunters, or any living creature.

Tiring of inaction, Peter glanced occasionally at the chest of implements. A plan of action, though rather vague, was gradually forming.

At one o'clock he arose, and looked at the tools; and, fifteen minutes later, snuffed the lamp with his thumb and finger, and began to measure, mark, and calculate. Presently, the saw creaked in the hard lumber, and Peter was fairly at work.

Babel, who had sat motionless, evinced more life; he nodded, grimaced, and twitched his shoulders. If this lumpish animal ever had an idea, it was in him then, struggling and twisting, and cramped for room. But the idea—if it was one—died out after a little while, and the white-rimmed eyes grew cloudy with sleep. Peter noticed him as little as possible. He had such a seeming of self-absorption, that he might have been thinking of the man in the moon, for aught his custodian knew.

He was fitting a bar to a window, and, to all appearance, was faithfully busy. All was going on well. Babel's vigilance, which had been maintained at the expense of slumber relaxed more and more. The white rims grew less and less, till there were but two hair-line circles, which finally vanished.

Peter queried whether blacks saw from the pupils of their eyes, or from the surrounding parts. He thought it a pity to disturb Babel, and laid down the hammer which he had just taken up.

THE SILENT INTERVIEW.



There was a slight, a very slight sound somewhere; it was the soft rustle of a garment, and the gentle slipping of a foot on the floor. Peter Rust felt, rather than saw, a presence, at first; but, looking over Babel's head, his eyes were greeted with an unexpected sight. It was something altogether mortal, however. It was a young woman of sixteen or seventeen years, who stood gazing at him over the squat figure of the black, with a terrified and wondering expression. Her face, neck, and hands were white as a lily.

Peter spoke not, nor wished to. Never had feminine shape so surprised him. He was really very practical and unimaginative; but odd fancies for a moment disturbed him. The clear, singularly earnest eyes, with the dark and beautifully-arched line of brows above them penciled so exquisitely on the snowy skin, bewildered his simple nature, and confused his naturally calm mind. Had the souls of young girls lived in lilies, the pearly whiteness of her complexion would not have astonished him. He had always supported the common-place philosophy that flesh was flesh, and clay was clay. But here was a pretty piece of humanity that entirely upset his theory.

The circumstances, the hour, the terror, timidity, and beauty of the white-robed visitor, all had their effect on Peter, who knew not whether to advance or retreat, speak or remain silent. Babel was the stumbling-block. Babel was between them. Babel banned his tongue. Babel was a black doubt; a miserable uncertainty.

Being an honest and well-meaning man, he put his hand on his heart, and stood respectfully before the girl, who appeared as much at a loss as himself, besides being frightened. He knew that young women did not tremble without cause, and his good sense immediately suggested one.

Was the negro asleep? Was he really deaf, sleeping or waking?

The brain is inventive under difficulties. With chalk, he wrote, in large letters, on a piece of stuff:

"Is this for you?"

He held the writing up in the light of the lamp.

She read the words and seemed distressed, but made no sign. He wrote again:

"It is a prison."

She moved her head affirmatively.

"I am working against my will."

She smiled faintly, and assented as before.

Peter understood her as well as if she had said: "I know it; I know it."

"What have you done?" he wrote.

She clasped her hands and looked silently upward.

"I'll swear that you never harmed a human

being!" he wrote. A grateful glow suffused her features.

"For love?"

Peter scratched this question on the rough board with some hesitation, and was sorry when he held it up—that he had been so bold. He was treading delicate ground.

The girl's incomparable whiteness did not change much. There was a slight smile, and a momentary drooping of the eyes, and no more.

Peter did not feel answered. He stroked his board, as if he had been guilty of an offence, and wrote:

"For money?"

He watched her eagerly.

She stood unresponsive an instant, glanced apprehensively at Babel, sighed, and Peter believed it was *Yes*.

He was at a loss what to do next; coaxing his invention a moment, his countenance became animated. He wrote:

"Can I help you?"

She shook her head doubtfully.

"Is the black deaf?" he added.

She nodded quickly.

"Then why not—" began Peter, in a low voice. A warning gesture, and a terrified look stopped him of a sudden. Poor Peter was dreadfully perplexed.

Her startled manner convinced him that he had been guilty of an indiscretion. Her small hands thrust toward him deprecatingly, made him feel like a criminal.

She now seemed in the attitude of listening, but to *what*, he could not tell, for he heard nothing. While standing expectant, wondering what next would happen she flitted from the door, and out of sight.

Peter looked a moment at the spot where he had last seen her, then fell to work industriously, making a great clattering about the ears of Babel, who, as far as he could discover, was in no manner disturbed by the din. Raising his eyes presently, he saw Lowenthal at the door, watching him.

The flight of his mysterious visitor had led him to anticipate the coming of this man. From Peter he looked to the black, whose eyes were still closed. Without a word, he raised a small walking-cane which he had brought with him, and gave him a cruel cut across the face.

The negro sprang up, enraged, but seeing Lowenthal, he gradually relapsed into his former stolidity, with the exception of an occasional twitching of the muscles of his face.

"So you have gone to work?" said Lowenthal to Peter. "I thought you would. Who has been here?"

Peter measured a stick, and began to saw.

"Who has been here!" repeated Lowenthal, frowning.



Peter neither paused, nor looked up, nor answered. He pushed the saw doggedly.

"Why don't you speak? Are you deaf and dumb, too?" exclaimed Lowenthal.

"It's my greasy, mechanical skill that you want, and nothing more," answered Peter composedly.

"Stubborn ass!" muttered Lowenthal.

"Brains and intelligence are for born gentlemen!" retorted Peter. "I'm nothing but bone and muscle. Go away! don't talk to bone and muscle!"

"What's that writing?" asked Lowenthal, abruptly, as his eyes fell on some of the characters Peter had traced.

Peter was dumb again.

"What is the meaning of this?" added Lowenthal, angrily.

"You who can write, and read writing when it is written, ought to know," replied Peter, innocently.

"Is it Babel?" mused Lowenthal. "No, the black cannot write nor read. Who would be so presumptuous as to learn a nigger of mine to read? It is not the work of Babel." Then to Peter: "Be not deceived; I know you Northerners: you are full of tricks and devices, nonsense and notions, chaffing and bargaining, craft and subtlety. You are a race of itinerant schoolmasters, possessing the cunning of learning without its dignity. Those that won't work will peddle. The South has broken from the degrading association with such. She will give law to the North, but she'll take none."

"So I've heard! How'll you have that door fixed, squire?" answered Peter, without appearing to have understood Lowenthal in the least.

"Something has passed here," resumed the latter, glancing at the characters that he was too proud to approach and examine. "But treason lurks everywhere; even under my own roof."

"Enough," muttered Peter, "to make a dozen Benedict Arnolds. What more there is, I don't know."

"Better not try to know!" responded Lowenthal, in a sinister tone. "Knowing too much has made many a man know nothing. I knew a person, once, who knew too much. I observed that that person was short-lived."

A peculiar smile flickered across the man's thin lips.

"I dare say you're right, though I don't understand a word out," Peter responded, carelessly.

"The devil may trust him!" murmured Lowenthal, and then looked at Peter five minutes without speaking.

"Fix this door first," he said, by-and-by; "adjust to it a stout bolt to push into a socket on the outside; and see that you do it thoroughly. An attempt to trick me will not be for your advantage."

"Perhaps all this that you're doin' 'll be to your advantage," thought Peter, but he didn't say it.

"I know what you'd like," added Lowenthal, "but you can't go! Be content. Work!"

He walked toward the stairs, and then came back, and said:

"Don't look after other men's secrets. Be as simple-minded as you seem; and when you go from here—" he stopped, and looked strangely at the wood-chopper; "and when you go from here," he repeated, with singular slowness, "don't tell what you have seen."

Peter felt weak in the knees. Uncommonly weak in the knees felt Peter! There was nothing the matter with his nerves, they had always answered his purpose exceedingly well. Dangers he had met in forest and field, and faced them manfully. But cold diabolism was new to him. He had traced cunning beasts of prey, whose habits were familiar; but here was a kind of subtlety that he had never followed. Here was a thing that trod silently in a path so hidden, that he was at a loss to find the masked trail.

"Don't tell what you have seen!" he mentally said.

He went to the door to look after him over Babel's head. He heard the word, "WORK!" and had a glimpse of Lowenthal's vanishing figure. He returned to his labor with less ardor and more seriousness. He was absent-minded, made frequent pauses, stroked his beard in deep reverie, and now and then stared at Babel as if he were a long way off.

#### CHAPTER IV.

##### ON THE BALCONY.

The young girl who had appeared to Peter Rust so mysteriously, was the step-daughter of Lowenthal; and there was nothing supernatural about her, except her beauty, which was so remarkable that Peter may be forgiven if he thought, for a moment, that an angel had come to him. She was not an angel, and had no wish to be one. Angels are not common, though this young girl was pretty, and, I believe, good enough to belong to that anomalous race.

A very interesting object is a lovely feminine creature of seventeen, in a white dressing-robe, trembling with fear and timidity.

This girl's name was Milrose Dorn. Her history is what I propose to relate.

When Milrose flitted from under Peter's eyes, she passed through an adjoining chamber and down a private staircase to her own room. She closed and locked her door, and listened at the keyhole. Presently she heard Lowenthal descend. He stopped, in passing, and softly turned the knob of her door. Finding it locked, he went on, and she soon heard his footsteps below.

Milrose extinguished a wax-candle that burn-

on her dressing-table, and being faint and heated, threw up a window which opened upon a balcony. The cool air wooed her, and she stepped out. The night was dim, though balmy. The shadows of some large trees were thrown around her sombrely. The narrow walks looked like mystic aisles. The quietude had a calming influence on Milrose. She leaned against the balustrade. Her heart was beginning to beat naturally, and she was putting her thoughts together in connected form, when a voice said:

"Milrose!"

She looked up, for the named seemed to drop from the air. There was a rustling among the branches of a tree, and a young man dropped at her feet.

She did not stir. Surprise kept her motionless.

"Have I terrified you?" he asked.

"You have done more than that, sir; you have offended me," she answered, hastily.

"Did I come too abruptly? I will go back and come more leisurely. Nay, Rose; frown not till you have heard me. If I make not good my cause, then you shall be angry," he said, with an air half-penitent, half-playful.

"Frederick North," returned Milrose, reproachfully, "you presume too much on my forbearance. There are some things that a young woman cannot forgive. One of those things is—"

"Say it not, dearest Rose! Let not those kind lips give me pain. I had little thought of seeing you," replied the young man, earnestly.

Milrose pointed to the tree.

"Are you of the monkey race, Frederick? Do you live in trees? Do you sleep in trees?"

"No more than you are a lawyer, Rose. Follow me not so closely with your good wit. Question you can, and closely. I ask but a patient hearing."

"Speak less boldly, then, or those will hear who are far less merciful than I. Frederick!" she sunk her voice to a soft whisper—"you imperil not only my good name, but your life. This is 'Castle Dangerous.' No one can approach it with impunity, even in the light of day. At night the risk is greater. Lowenthal suspects you. Our interviews, I fear, are not known to ourselves alone. There may be uncertainty in his mind, but jealous suspicion arms even doubt with double malice. He would kill you at my feet!"

Milrose had permitted him to advance, but not to take her hand. She wished, for his own good, to make him miserable before making him happy.

"If you must speak," she continued, "speak in whispers."

"How can I speak in whispers when you keep me so far from you? A whisper must be breathed to one's ear," he gently answered.

"Trifle not; for in a moment that window

will be closed, and you will be alone. I would not be harsh, but I am sure you will force me to it. I have been too easy with you, Frederick. I must assert myself, or you'll forget what's due me."

"Forget what is due you! I know what is due you. Respect, Love, Worship—all that the heart of man can yield. I adore you!"

His voice was full of pathos.

"I tremble with terror! If you should be heard, Frederick! If you knew what I know! You should not be here. I ought to banish you. I know how angry I ought to be. Robbers prowl at this time of night, Frederick."

Her voice indicated real distress.

"There is seeming justice in your reproaches," said Frederick, getting possession of her hand. "Indeed, remorse is mixed with the joy of seeing you. I know I endanger you; but Love is of such a nature that it dares every peril in the world. It defies and overcomes every difficulty. It scorns worldly wisdom. It flies into the face of impossibility. It scorns misconstruction and torture. It faces Death. Love is the FIRST, the LAST, and the GREATEST. It brings me here. It casts me at your feet. It makes my homage my happiness—my humiliation, my exaltation—my shame, my glory. My heart cries, 'Rose, Rose!' and will never be satisfied. Though it run over with thee, it will never have enough."

He stood very near her; he whispered very gently; he felt her breath on his cheek.

"My own Rose, white and pure! how much I love you, every trial and every act of my life shall show! I haunt this place because you are here; because my hope and my world are here; because my soul flies away from me, and my body must go after it. Soul, did I say? Half a soul, I should have said, which runs to thee for its whole."

The young man expressed himself like an enthusiast, as he was.

"Are we so poor, then, that we have but one soul between us, Frederick?" she asked, half-playfully.

"So, rich, rather, that the two parts are united. This is not poverty, it is wealth!" he answered, quickly.

"I prefer two perfect souls," returned Milrose, thoughtfully, "that one may receive happiness from the other. If I had but half a soul, I think it would move out."

"It would find nothing pure enough to inhabit."

"There, go; for I doubt not the serious business you came upon is done! You see my weakness. You perceive how I have permitted myself to be cheated of my dignity by your false tongue. If you really love me, go, before you are discovered."

She pushed him from her with gentle force.

"Something I came to say. Your life seems

to me a mystery and a contradiction. You fear Lowenthal; I will not call him your father. You tremble at his name. Why is this? Come, Rose, what is it?"

"If the word DANGER rang in your ears continually, like a bell, what would you think of it? Imagine a bell, with an iron tongue, that rings but one peal from morning till night, and that the warning note of DANGER!"

Her manner was hesitating and slow.

"I believe in causes, Rose. There is more than you tell me," returned Frederick, anxiously. "It cannot be," he went on, "that this ruinous rebellion that is daily gathering strength, seriously affects you. Is he a good, a true man?"

The serious way in which he spoke, indicated that his doubts of Lowenthal's character were more than passing fancies.

"I cannot answer now, but soon, soon I may be at liberty to speak freely. There will be a change here. Ask not what, for I can scarcely foresee its nature. I hope, Frederick, we may meet again."

"We shall, Rose, we shall! You will be watched over; you shall be protected. Heaven will raise up friends to see that every violated right be vindicated, and every abuse of privilege punished. He who is a traitor to his country, will be false to every obligation. I have heard that you have never been a favorite; that since the death of your mother he has looked upon you with cold and jealous eyes. Perhaps you stand in the way of his ambition and pride. It is said that you inherit your mother's fortune."

Frederick stopped, as if afraid of going too far in a matter so delicate.

"Lowenthal," he added, "needs but a powerful motive to urge him to cruelty and possibly to crime. I speak thus to make you watchful of yourself and observant of him. Any other villainy may grow side by side with treason. Should he oppress you, should he throw his strength against your weakness, should you really feel that Danger which follows you like a warning bell, endeavor, in some manner, to communicate with me. There dwells in a cabin, not far from here, on the margin of the Barrens, one Peter Rust, whom I think, in emergency, you might trust. With this Peter I will leave some clue to my own whereabouts; for sometimes, Rosa, I am not easily found. Although this man leads a wandering life, and is called, by turns, wood-chopper and still-hunter, he has rare qualities of head and heart, and is true, not only to his friends, but to his country."

Milrose stood, with clasped hands, listening to her lover. She was in painful doubt what to say to him. She knew not whether to express her fears, or to keep them shut up in her own breast; whether to give voice to a terrible suspicion, or to remain silent. Her agitation did not escape the quick eyes of Frederick North.

He was about to entreat her to bestow her full confidence upon him, when she placed a hand upon his lips, and whispered with a suddenness that startled him.

"Go instantly! Some one has raised a window."

The alarm depicted upon her face was sufficient to determine the movements of Frederick. He seized the nearest limb, swung himself from the balcony, and immediately she heard him drop to the ground, and simultaneously, the report of a pistol. Greatly terrified, she sprang to her chamber, closed the window, and went trembling to her bed. She had scarcely laid her confused head on the pillow, when she heard the well-known rap of her maid at the door.

Calming her features, she arose and admitted her. The girl was excited, and eager to speak.

"Well, Angeline?" said Milrose, encouragingly.

"What do you think, Miss Milly?" cried Angeline, with open eyes and uplifted hands.

There she stopped short, most provokingly.

"I don't know, I'm sure," said Rose, trying to speak with indifference.

"Master's shot somebody that was prowling round the house!"

Rosa sank upon her bed, quite weak and faint.

"Don't know who 'tis nor what he wanted. Like's not, Miss Milly, 'twas a burglar, and like's not 'twas one o' them dreadful Yankees. 'Twas a young man, anyways, master said. Goodness, Miss Milly, I'm scared! None of us is safe, now days. He might climbed right up to your room and frightened the breath o' life out of your body. Lord, miss, how pale you be!"

"Silly creature!" cried Milrose. "Bring me my salts, and then sit down and be quiet. Do not chatter till I give you leave."

"Love o' God!" muttered Angeline, *sotto voce*.

"Mistress hasn't got no nerves. We all might be murdered, and she wouldn't make no fuss about it! Well, some folks isn't like some other folks; but if some folks was like other folks, folks would all be alike!"

Angeline, a smart-looking quadroon, settled herself in her mistress' easy-chair, with the air of a person of consequence.

Milrose, though full of womanly sensibility, did not belong to the fainting school of heroines. Vexations and trials but served to bring out her hidden strength. Although her brain reeled dizzily under the announcement of Angeline, she did not weakly and unwisely yield to outward expressions of grief. Lying with closed eyes, her white face shaded with as white a hand, she thought rationally and sensibly of the subject, and presently began to doubt the truth of the story. Recalling all the noble qualities of Frederick North, she found it impossible to believe that he had met a fate so unworthy of him.

## CHAPTER V.

## PETER SPEAKS HIS MIND.

Peter Rust worked. He had in the first place resolved not to touch a tool, or yield in the least degree to the despotic will of Lowenthal. But—as men often do—he changed his mind, as has been seen. He fixed a wooden bolt to the door in the way he had been ordered. As he had anticipated, the moment it was done, that very door was closed and that identical bolt drawn upon him. This did not disappoint him in the least; for it relieved him of the sight of Babel, who now kept his vigil outside. Peter rejoiced, in fact. A smile that had cunning in it appeared on his face.

By this time it was broad day. The sunlight quivered in at the windows, very golden and cheerful, saying "Good morning!" to Peter Rust, who, looking out, saw soldiers drilling in the distance.

"Am I a nigger," quoth Peter, "that I should do this thing? It ain't constitutional, be hanged if 'tis!"

With these remarks, he went to work and put a long bar across the door, and fastened it.

"There!" said Peter, wiping his forehead—"there's a bolt on both sides now, I guess. Perhaps they can get in, if they want to. Perhaps they can't!"

Having surveyed this job a little while, he affixed additional bars, and made strong his position.

"I'll take a little nap," said Peter to himself. "Sleep is a sharpener of the wits. If I can sleep ten minutes, I'll circumvent the whole o' 'em!"

He stretched himself upon the floor, with a piece of joist for a pillow. He had no sooner shut his eyes than he heard the bolt drawn and an attempt made to enter. Then there was a knock—a double and triple knock.

"Come in!" said Peter. "Come in!" Somebody kicked the door spitefully. Peter heard Lowenthal muttering and cursing.

"Don't stan' on ceremony, 'squire. Call on me often. Shall be in all day," added Peter.

"In till you starve!" came through the barred door, in tones most ominous.

Then Lowenthal evidently directed Babel to put his shoulder to the door and burst it open.

"Push away!" said Peter. "If it starts, let me know."

The giant made his great joints crack in vain. His master, enraged, beat him, and seemed inexpressibly annoyed by Peter's device.

"Let me in!" cried Lowenthal. "It is folly for you to oppose me. My house is my castle. I can wall it up or burn it, if I will."

"Jus' so!" said Peter. "The Irishman burnt his barn to kill the weasel."

"I can starve you out. Nobody is proof against hunger," threatened Lowenthal.

"Carry on the forward movement as you like,

squire," returned Peter, carelessly. "You wanted a specimen o' my greasy skill, and you've got it. As for brains, I was born too fur North to have 'em. Bone and muscle isn't of much consequence, you know. When you force a free man to do your villainous work, you must have everything accordin'. When you take to coercion, coercion it must be. When it's a thing o' strength, bring on your strength. When it's a question o' cunning, trot up your cunning. When it's a matter o' justice and right atween man and man, make manifest your justice and right, and stan' to it. Make things equal, I say. But never rely on him as works on compulsion. Here I be, fortified in your den. Get me out, if you can."

"I can order the wall cut down with axes," said Lowenthal, hoarse with anger.

"Ay! You can cut away more in an hour than you can build up in a day," returned Peter.

The cotton-planter reflected a little, then changed his policy.

"Come, be reasonable. Open the door. Perform the work, and you shall be liberally rewarded. You may rely on something you don't anticipate, when this little job is done."

"It's that very something," thought Peter, "that I'm afraid o'!"

But he very carefully kept the thought where thoughts are made.

"When honest men have honest intentions," he replied, "they don't drag in an honest neighbor to do their dishonest work. There's a difference atween a nat'l-born scoundrel and a nat'l-born gentleman. In my opinion, you're a d—d cold-blooded villain!"

Peter said this with a little more heat, a little more energy, and a little more everything else than usual. His contempt and indignation now and then escaped like pent waters.

"You didn't take me at the flood-tide of my good-nature," Lowenthal answered, in his most frigid tones. "My momentary weakness is ebbing."

"Let it be low water as quick as possible!" quoth Peter. "Your flood and your ebb tide are the same to me. Our views are different. We can't think nor act alike. My notions are free where you nat'rally take to cotton and niggers. We're enemies, and there's no disguisin' on't. Had you kept your hands off, you'd had nothin' to fear from Peter Rust. But after this night his name will be to you a dread and a secret terror. I throw the glove at ye fairly and squarely. I give ye warnin' duly and truly. I tell ye, Lowenthal, that you've got a slow-tracker after ye. Slow-trackin' is my business, and has been for many and many a year. You know what a still-hunter is, I s'pose? A still-hunter is one as hunts without dogs—one as trusts in himself, and not in the instincts of brute-beasts—one as has confidence in his



powers—one as goes far and goes slow—one as steps lightly and makes no noise, and comes up with the game afore it's aware—one as is not heard till he strikes, and never strikes till he slays!"

Peter's voice, as he proceeded, took on more and more an earnest and impressive tone. There was a kind of quiet solemnity in his enunciation. Lowenthal never felt so strangely in his life. He knew not what he had caged.

"Perhaps you think you've got a nigger here—a poor, oppressed, cringin', quiverin', beggin' nigger, that'll cry out 'O mars'r! mars'r!' with every blow you give him. You're mistaken! I'm no more a chattel than cotton is king. Peter of the Pine Barrens is no white trash—no Ben Dykes, or apostate Quaker—but a man, that in the end will give ye trouble. You got me up here for some monstrous villainy. You want a secret prison in your own house. Because you command a hundred slaves, and the Lord knows how many hundred traitors, you mean to rule without regard to the rights of others. While callin' cotton king, you king it yourself among the deluded creturs that are daily swellin' this rebellion. You've got power. Very well! I know it. What am I? A prisoner. I know that, too. But I've got wit—a free gift of Mother Natur—and that's all I've got to stake agin your undisputed authority. There! Now I allow that you know some'at about Peter Rust."

Peter ceased, and waited some time for an answer. When Lowenthal spoke, his voice was steadier and calmer than before, but far more dangerous.

"It does not become my rank and station," he said, "to waste time and words on a low-born fellow. Slow-tracker and still-hunter as you are, I don't think you'll be able to slow-track or still-hunt your way out of my dwelling back to your beggarly barrens!"

Peter Rust looked through a small hole in the door, that he had made for that purpose, and saw the planter cock a revolver and direct its muzzle to a panel, then waited, evidently, for him to speak.

Peter didn't speak, but, stepping out of range, tapped on the panel with a stick.

Thinking Peter's body was where the sound was, Lowenthal let fly a ball, which, tearing through the door, went out at the window, opposite.

Peter sprang upward as far as he could for the ceiling, and came down, sprawling, near the door. Everything in the room rattled with the shock.

Lowenthal put up his pistol and listened. It seemed to him that he had done mischief; but that didn't disturb his equanimity at all. He was used to doing mischief. He had shot runaways often, and winged a few Union men of late.

He heard no sound; and concluding that Peter was very dead or very deceitful, he went slowly down-stairs to his breakfast.

## CHAPTER VI.

### SWAMPSEY.

Peter Rust, being neither hit nor hurt, arose. It was now a plain matter of deadly enmity between Lowenthal and himself. The intentions of the planter, there was no longer room to doubt. But Peter did not regret speaking his mind. He felt less like a hypocrite, and more like a man; less safety, and more determination.

The way the case stood, it was a question of escape, or something worse. Exchange places, in imagination, with Peter, and the difficulties and embarrassments will be better apprehended. The windows were a long way from the ground. One could not drop from them, like Bruin from a tree, and run away unhurt. There was a poor chance of escaping in that direction without an outside assistant. He looked downward wishfully, and that was all he could do.

He raised the skylight, then drawing the chest along, and placing some lumber on it, he mounted high enough to examine the roof, which had a pitch so sharp as to render walking upon it unsafe. There was a light iron piling just back of the gutters, but it looked as if a slide against it would carry it away.

The view before Peter was not a cheerful one. There were the slippery tiles that no feet could stand upon; there was the oblique surface, with nothing for the hands to grasp; there was the increasing velocity, when one got started; and below was the fatal fall, with, seemingly, nothing but a cobweb between to prevent it.

Peter Rust did not wish to break his neck to save his life; but he resolved to trust himself on the roof as soon as it was dark, if no more feasible method presented. He would have made the trial then, had not the whole plantation been astir. It was fortunate for him that he exposed so little of his person; for just as he was withdrawing, he discovered Ben Dykes lurking suspiciously about the grounds.

"The lazy villain!" muttered Peter. "He's got a hankerin' after my double-gun."

Peter drew in his head, closed the skylight, and continued his observations from the windows with little or no satisfaction.

The day wore on very slowly. He called on his patience, and his equanimity did not fail him. He heard Babel walking to and fro in the passage, and, save his shuffling footsteps, no other sound in the house. Hungry he was, and thirsty; but hunger and thirst were old companions whom he had met on the plain, and in the forest. He could bear their company very well for a day or two. He was not going to be put down by a day's fasting.

LITTLE SWAMPSEY.



He momentarily expected Lowenthal, and was perplexed at his absence.

While peering cautiously from a window, late in the afternoon, Peter saw a small negro boy wandering about listlessly, with his hands crossed behind him. Although this little fellow seemed to have nothing to do, and to be of not the least consequence to anybody, Peter Rust's countenance lighted up the moment he beheld him.

"There's Swampsey," said Peter, much pleased. "There's that little black dog, Swampsey, straddlin' about, lookin' for his master, I'll warrant. I'll throw a chip at him." Peter threw out a little block, which fell near the boy, who looked first at it, then upward, to see where it came from. Immediately he began to throw somersets, and pitched about in a surprising manner. For a minute or two, it was difficult to tell whether he was on his head or his heels. When he had ended his performances, and stood upright again, with his hands behind him, his countenance was placid enough, and there were no signs of unusual excitement about him.

As he stood there, with his face turned slightly upward, he was a wonderful little object, quaint and grotesque beyond description. His sooty countenance wore an expression of careless indifference to all things. It seemed to look at him, as if anything and everything might happen without disturbing him.

Swampsey was just a yard long, in his bare feet. His toilet was of the simplest Southern kind; a tow shirt without any sleeves. Swampsey could change all his clothes in a minute.

Peter Rust had picked him out of the mud of Alligator Swamp, on one of his long tramps, and from this circumstance named him Swampsey. This incident happened two years before, and since then the boy had not grown an inch; and, in fact, had given up the business of growing. In this way, Peter had acquired a very small but very faithful servant.

Swampsey was a natural whirligig. He was born full of squirm and twist, whirl and twirl. He could spin like a top, roll like a wheel, climb like a cat, and hang by his toes like a monkey. He had a marvelous equipoise. He could stand and walk on anything that had been stood on and walked on. In making this swamp-foundling, fear had been left out of his composition. He didn't know when to be afraid. Nobody wanted Swampsey. There wasn't a planter nor a "trash" within a hundred miles that would give a pod of cotton for him. But that troubled him least of all. He was content to follow Peter Rust. The only sentiment he knew was devotion to Peter. The rest of the world was naught to him.

"He sees me," muttered Peter. "He sees me, the little feller does! Now, I wonder what's passin' in that head o' his'n? If he hasn't got wit enough to know I'm in trouble,

he'll be in the house directly, tryin' to find me—same's a dog would. Should hate to have him hurt."

Peter watched the boy anxiously, who showed no disposition to go away. So Peter stared down at Swampsey, and Swampsey stared up at Peter. The latter could think of no way of communicating with his small friend on the ground, and there was no certainty that his small friend on the ground had any clear idea of the situation of his large friend above.

Peter was at a loss for expedients. In this case, the most fruitful mind could suggest nothing practicable. He had reached the end of invention. He could gaze at the black pigmy, like an experienced owl in a cypress-tree, that makes great eyes at everything he sees of a perplexing nature.

Swampsey dropped on the grass, presently, as if Peter had shot him with his eyes. Then Swampsey kicked up his heels.

"Never expected to be a slaveholder," mused Peter; "but I be. I own jest one yard o' nigger. Couldn't help it, though; couldn't sell him nor give him away. He didn't seem to be worth savin' when I fished him out of his mother mud. But there's a good 'eal o' somerset in him, now. He's as full of hop and climb as an egg is of meat. Don't s'pose he ever had an idee in his life. Can't say that slaveholdin' is very loocerative. But the outgoes is small. I've no doubt but that tow shirt 'll last him an age. When it wears out, I shall get a gunny-bag to put him in. 'Tisn't much trouble to dress niggers; and as for eddication, it's easy as death. The less they know, the more they're worth. I've been keeful not to spile Swampsey by makin' him wise. His ignorance makes him a pearl o' great price. I'm afraid he wouldn't know the letter N from a goraffe!"

Peter looked wondrous thoughtful, and seemed to be lost in the question of negro property.

"Poor Gymnastyous!" murmured Peter, dreamily, meaning the boy, whom he often called by this name. "Poor little Somerseter. It's better to have a dog to love ye than nobody. What'll he do, if he loses his only friend? He's a very small cretur to be alone in a very large world!"

Till the afternoon wore quite away, till the sun went down, Swampsey lay on the grass, airing his heels, and cooling his brains, and peering up at Peter.

Till the afternoon wore quite away, till the sun went down, Peter sat at the window, glancing now and then at the dusky soles and crispy head, till Swampsey and the night got mixed together, and hopelessly lost in unity of color.

#### CHAPTER VII.

##### MISTRESS AND MAID.

"Angeline," said Milrose, the following morning, awaking from a troubled sleep.

"Well, Miss Milly," said the waiting-maid, yawning.

"What do you think of this house?"

This straightforward question caused the girl to look wonderingly at her mistress.

"Love of God, Miss Milly!" she exclaimed, with less affectation than usual. "I don't know my own mind two executive minutes together. Sometimes I think one thing, and sometimes another. But if I's sick and wasn't goin' to live, and was goin' to die, and the doctors had give me up, and there wasn't no hopes of me, and I was goin' to speak the truth for the last time, I should say that this is a mighty queer house anyways!" Angeline left her easy-chair, approached the bed, and thrust her two hands into two little pockets in her apron. Whenever she put her hands into those pockets, it was a sign that she was on her mettle, and meant to have her say. "I'm goin' to speak the unconfined truth jest as out and out as a white person."

She turned her eyes toward the ceiling, deprecatingly, and Milrose prepared to hear uncommon words with uncommon applications.

"This is a house, Miss Milly! That's dead sure. It's a house, and no mistake. But is it a house where people feel as easy and happy and contentions in their minds as some other people? Is it a house where folks walk about like other folks, as if they wasn't afraid o' bein' scared at their own noises? Is it a house where you hear cheerful talkin' and hearty laughin'? Does anybody even smile in an equivocal and detrimental fashion, like folks who've experimented in religion? Is it a house where there's no looks and keys to reiterate curiosity? Is it a house where the marester wears a sunshiny face, and has a word of kindness and desolation for all? Who knows what's done? Who knows what's above or what's below? Who knows who comes and who goes? Who knows the meanin' o' this or the meanin' o' that, or who can put it all together and make unicorn sense of it? Tell you what, Miss Milly, some of us is comin' to grief; and that is what I think of this house!"

"Don't speak quite so loudly," said Milrose.

"Never said so much afore in this contestible house, and if Mars'r Lowenthal was to 'tect me runnin' on in this way, I should be cut up dreadful, and p'raps vaniah of a sudden, and nobody know where to. Tell you what, none of us feels safe here! What's more, don't durst say so to one nother; for we're watched, and can't extinguish the spies from the rest of us."

"Slaves are not blind, after all!" said Rose, thoughtfully.

"No, indeed, Miss Milly! Course they ain't. They see lots and lots. But they don't tell!"

Then dropping her voice:

"Been dreadfully worried 'bout you, dear

Miss Milly. Sometimes been most refracted in my mind by the car'n's on. The grim faces and the black looks is 'nough to sour sweet milk. Now, mistress, what you goin' to do? You ain't happy, and haven't been since your pretty mother married mars'r, though you's only a child then. But children, like niggers, find out things."

"Angeline, on this occasion you have spoken very well," answered Milrose. "Your remarks about this house are, in the main, correct. I no longer feel safe here. I must of necessity, trust some one; I will trust you."

Lord, Miss Milly! Never had no doubt 'bout trustin' me, did ye? Who can you trust, if not me? If I betray you, you needn't never put no confidence in anybody. Love you, and that's all about it! So tell me what you want, darlin', and I'll go through fire and water for you."

The quadron spoke with warmth and feeling. So far as Rose could judge, there was no hypocrisy in the girl's heart. She thought of the strange tales she had heard of Angeline's parentage, and wondered if they had ever reached her ears. She looked in vain at her fair face for some feature of Lowenthal's: there was no sinister bend of the brow; no guile in the eyes; no craft about the mouth.

"Go to the door," said Milrose, "and see if any one is in the passage."

"Lord's mercy, Miss Milly! How you do scare one with your strange ways! Your eyes 'pear so wild-like and dreary."

Angeline opened the door and looked out. "Not a breathin' soul!" she said, closing it and returning. "You can speak your mind without preserve."

"You use peculiar words, Angeline," said Milrose, smiling.

"Laws, miss! Don't s'pect I'll talk like niggers and low white folks, do ye? Ain't a nigger, anyways!"

"I must leave Lowenthal," continued Milrose.

"Goodness! You don't mean it, Miss Milly! Better let somebody go that hasn't so good a right to stay. All this here—" Angeline made a wide sweep with her hand—"b'longs to you. S'pect you own a heap o' property."

"Property, indeed!" answered Rose, sighing. "I know but little about it, I confess; much less than the servants, I presume. Whatever belongs to me, I know I have control of nothing. That man Lowenthal"—her face expressed strong contempt—"never refers to that subject. It is seldom that I see him, and he chills and terrifies me, to begin with. In money, my poor girl, none are poorer than your mistress."

"Lordy, Miss Milly! you're an heiress. Don't run on in such a respondin' way. I wouldn't have such a rejection of spirits for nothin'."

"I'm going away, Angeline. You are the

only one I depend upon to help me. I go, because I cannot stay in this house. I hope I have always been kind to you, Angie!"

Rose looked steadily at the girl. She wanted to read her mind and understand what was in it.

"How can you doubt my retentions, my dear mistress!" cried Angeline, throwing her arms around Rose's neck. "Nobody's more scared at mars'r than me. Always shake in my shoes when he speaks to me. Laws! he thinks no more o' niggers than he does o' cattle! He cuts up dreadful with 'em. There's been terrible works, first and last. There's been right-down murders on this plantation, though 'tain't so bad since the new overseer come. If you go from here, I go with you. Don't care what comes of it. My mind's made up, and I'll fol-ler and fol-ler, to the world's end. I've tried to be cheerful, mistress, and to be deceitful, to keep up your courage; but I've knowed this long time that trouble was comin' to ye. I've been spyin' about, weeks and weeks; lookin' at this and that; dodgin' here and there; slyin' and pryin'; askin' questions of one and t'other; puttin' odds and ends together; and you may put it down for certain that this is a wicked house! The man that'll kill niggers in cruel ways, and think nothin' on't, in a little while'll kill white folks. If he kills niggers and loses money, won't he kill white folks to gain money?"

"You are talking frightfully, Angeline!" shivered Rose.

"Be shut up, first thing you'll know!" persisted the girl, earnestly. "There's a dreadful Yankee to work up you. Tried to keep all the help out the way. But Lord! that isn't easy in a place like this. If mars'r goes on as he's begun, this house'll be a millinery follyfication, course o' the summer. It's full o' guns, and swords, and bayonets, and balls, and powders, and animation, and bum-shells, and six-pound swivelers! And to-day they're to bring up some mortars, and God He knows who's to be pounded in 'em!"

"How you mix things?" said Rose.

"I don't like that business up stairs. Mars'r meant it should be a secret. But it's mighty secret, ain't it? Folks can have a good many secrets when other folks are watchin' 'em. A wooden cage at the top o' the house! And somebody's to be confirmed in it! I don't say who's to be confirmed in it; but the person'll know soon enough, I warn ye!"

"Being a slave, Angeline, you may be purchased, if you go with me," said Milrose.

"I'm your slave, if I be. Between you and me, I doubt as whether Mars'r Lowenthal owns a nigger in the world."

"These are strange ideas!" replied Milrose, greatly surprised. "Where did you get such notions?"

"Stole 'em, here and there, as crows steal

corn!" answered Angeline, laughing. "Leave me to find out things, mistress! If you go, I go, slave or no slave, hunt or no hunt, dog or no dog. When 'll you start, Miss Milly?"

"To-night! I cannot go too soon, or too far. Whatever rights I have here must be settled after this dreadful war. The disturbed state of the country gives my stepfather most dangerous power. When bad men have power, let the weak beware. To-day you shall make up a bundle of clothing, and we'll creep away from here, befriended by the darkness. And, Angeline!"

"Yes, Miss Milly."

"Find out if anybody was really shot last night?"

Milrose kept her countenance remarkably well.

"Yes, Miss Milly. But s'posin' there was, 'tain't no 'count. Folks will get killed anyways."

Simple-hearted Angeline! She could not see into her mistress' heart just then.

"We must git used to firin' and shootin'. Tell you what! They say the Yankees are comin' down to Beaufort to settle this here trouble; and the South Car'line planters are goin' to put their heads together, and jest wipe 'em cl'ar out. I s'pect the Yankees are the wickedest, and stealin'est, and murderin'est folks in the world. Ain't they, Miss Milly?"

"No!" said Milrose, decidedly.

"Love o' God! I thought they was. Heard tell they's goin' to steal the niggers and car' 'em off and sell 'em, and that the planters' women-folks wouldn't be safe a minute after they leave their ships."

"Believe little that you hear," answered Milrose, with a faint smile. "Women and children have nothing to fear from Northern freemen. These idle tales are sent abroad to inflame the popular mind. Bring me some coffee, Angeline, and be discreet. Remember that this is my last day at Lowenthal."

#### CHAPTER VIII.

##### WANT HIM GOT OUT!

With the night came clouds, and with the clouds, darkness. Both clouds and darkness seemed to favor the intentions of Milrose. Angeline had been faithfully busy. Such parcels as she could comfortably carry had been made up, and been put out of sight, in readiness for flight; and mistress and maid waited in much agitation for the hour of departure. The enterprise was not without romantic coloring. Rose had been wonderfully suggestive, and Angeline equally wonderful in execution.

The latter had succeeded in obtaining, by much finesse, the uniform of a drummer-boy for the disguise of her mistress, and, by the same happy management, the second suit of a youthful trumpeter, who had been somewhat intoxicated, by her beauty and two glasses of Bourbon.

These garments, neatly folded, and placed in

two chairs, Milrose was looking at with very wide eyes.

"Laws, Miss Milly! They won't hurt yet these things won't. Needn't be queer 'bout 'em. You'll look jest as handsome as you can live! Can't make ye look ugly, anyways."

In spite of those friendly assurances, Milrose stared a great deal at the gray jackets and trousers, and the jaunty fatigue-caps. Could she ever get used to such comical things?

"Love o' God!" exclaimed Angeline, putting her hand suddenly on Milrose's head. "What's to be done with this hair? I done forgot it."

"Can't you arrange it somehow, Angeline?" asked Milrose, with a startled look.

"Bless ye, no, mistress! There's more'n two capfuls of it. And such hair! It's finer'n silk, and blacker'n Babel's wool. Can't fix it, no-ways!"

"Cut it off," answered Milrose, with an excusable sigh; for her hair was incomparably beautiful.

"Can't do it, Miss Milly, anyways! Haint got the heart to lay a scissors to them silky curls. Tell you what, it's wicked. True's I live, 'twould be *designation*!"

"Designation, or desecration, I must submit to it. Get your scissors, and begin."

"Wouldn't tried to make ye a boy, if 'spected this!" muttered Angeline, most unwillingly beginning to clip the long and shining locks.

"No boy ever had such hair. Coarse stuff, boy's hair is. Declar' I feel like a manefactor! To think how many would go crazy for this hair!"

The dark tresses fell one after another. Angeline fetched a great sigh at every stroke of her scissors. It appeared to her that their troubles had really begun.

"I heard something," said Milrose.

"So did I; I heard my heart thumpin' with grief, and the clip, clip of these horrid scissors!" responded Angeline, petulantly.

"It was at the window. I wish you'd open it," said Milrose, uneasily.

"In half a minute, mistress. 'Most done," replied the girl, lingering to complete the sacrifice. She had severed the last curl, and was in the act of obedience, when the window was softly pushed up from the outside, and a little black boy, in a tow shirt, appeared, standing in the open space between the sash and the floor.

This little black boy was Swampsey; and he had his hands behind him. But this little black boy, with his hands behind him, made as much sensation as if he had been as large as the giant of Gath. Two pairs of bright eyes turned their fires on Swampsey. Two pretty faces paled with fear, and mistress and maid thought they were betrayed.

"Want him got out!" said Swampsey. Not a muscle of his small body moved.

Milrose and Angeline began to breathe, and look at each other.

Swampsey waited a reasonable time.

"Want him got out!"

"Love o' God!" cried Angeline.

"Want him got out!" repeated Swampsey.

"He wants him got out!" echoed Angeline with the blankest of faces.

"Want 'whom got out?" asked Milrose.

"Mars'r Peter!"

The voice seemed to come from an infant sepulchre. It was low-pitched, and straight on. It was a serious matter with Swampsey.

"Mars'r Peter?" queried Angeline, yet in the dark.

"Up on!" said Swampsey, jerking his head upward.

"Peter Rust!" exclaimed Milrose, rapidly connecting several fractional facts.

Instantly Swampsey threw two forward sets to the centre of the room, out a caper of his own invention, and clapped his hands to him again.

Milrose was amazed. This was her first acquaintance with Swampsey.

"Gracious! what a frog it is! Didn't know there was such a little straddle-bug on the plantation."

Swampsey winked and blinked.

"Tell you what, too," continued Angeline. "Shouldn't wonder if this was the little black midget that follows Peter of the Pines."

Swampsey's grave head bobbed up and down.

"Want him got out," he said, with an eye to business.

"He's your master?" asked Milrose.

"Mars'r Peter!" answered Swampsey.

"I can't help your master, little fellow," said Rose. "I wish I could, but I can't."

Swampsey winked vacantly. He could not understand her inability. He studied her face most wishfully, as dogs look at their masters to know their minds.

"What's your name, you curious chicken?" demanded Angeline.

"Swampsey," replied the boy, with a double wink.

"Laws! Swampsey!" said Angeline. "She can't git him out, anyways."

The features of Swampsey remained hopelessly vague and unsatisfied.

"Can't git herself out, you little stupid nigger! Shut up here, we be, as if we's fightin' Fed'ralists. Go 'way!"

Swampsey somersaulted back to the window-sill. It was a sign that he had an idea.

"Want a rope!" he said, when he had crossed his hands behind him again.

"Go 'long, with your tow shirt!"

Angeline didn't mean to be cross, but her mistress' business was of more importance than Peter Rust's.

"Want a rope!" persisted Swampsey.

"Can't you get him a rope, Angeline?" said

Milrose, recalling vividly her singular interview with Peter. "I know that Peter Rust is my friend. But what can this small thing do with a rope?"

She considered him again. The Lilliputian body; the fixed seriousness of the face; the backward carriage of the head; the even, unvarying tone of the voice; the steadiness of his demands, and the remarkable eccentricities of motion that he occasionally indulged in, rendered him an object of more than common curiosity.

"Can't do nothin' with it," said Angie, with a toss of the head. "Better let me drop him out the window, mistress; he's a c'lar bother. And tell you what; his eyes are sharper'n a cat's claws. If Peter of the Pines don't git out o' that you till this shrimp gits him out, he'll stay till he's done rotten!"

The maid was growing plucky, and the mistress, though more than willing to assist Peter, knew of no present method of doing it.

"If I's shut up in the top of a large construction, and was repelled to stay there till this tod-dlepole freed me, I'd just write my own epigraph, and prepare for the hour of delusion."

"Rope!" said Swampsey, utterly unmoved by the opinions of Angeline.

"Can't this boy help us?" asked Milrose.

"No!" answered the girl, tartly. "Couldn't help a humming-bird."

"Help Mars'r Peter," drawled Swampsey, and flung himself out of the window.

"What is become of him?" exclaimed Rose, alarmed.

"Goodness, Miss Milly, he can go *anywhere*! He isn't a bein' nor a nigger neither."

"A banshee, perhaps?" replied Rose, smiling.

"Laws, mistress, 'twasn't a *she* at all!" retorted Angeline. "And he's as likely to be no kind of a sect as *anyways*. Some the plantation hands has seen him totin' after Peter in all weathers, and they just 'cloded 'twas Peter's devil. But whatever is, it's time for us to be gittin' ready. The night's dark, Miss Milly, and it looks lone-some-like outside; but if you've done gone made up your mind to go, put on them there things, and we'll try it. Don't be squeamish 'bout the trousers; lief wear 'em as tother things."

Angeline closed the window, and, for greater security, the shutters also; and pouncing upon Milrose, dressed her in the drummer-boy's clothes in a twinkling.

Milrose not being troubled with sickly sentiment, and possessing a liberal share of common sense, assisted, rather than hindered her practical maid.

"They set like gloves, I declare, Miss Milly! They couldn't be better in the legs, and as for the jacket, with its bright military buttons, its gold lace on the sleeves, and its little pearl collar, it is perfectly *requisite*, and makes you

look like a smart little corporal. Now for the cap! Put it on a bit sideways—so. A sideways cap makes a feller look saucy, *anyways*. What a boy it is! But what the goodness 'll be done with them hands? What hands them to be stuck out of a secesh jacket! Too small, too white, and too clean. That's dead sure! Put on your stoutest gloves, mistress, and keep the little things curled up."

Angeline paused and ran her eyes down Rose till they reached her feet.

"Love o' God!" she exclaimed, in dismay. "Here's 'nother trouble. 'Spect a drummer-boy wouldn't have sich feet as them, *noways*. They look like puss-paws in kid slippers."

Milrose looked at her doll-like feet in silent panic.

"Good in a ball-room," muttered Angeline; "but out 'o place here. Them yer trousers covers all but the tips of her toes. Cal'late I've got a pair with high heels and thick soles, that'll do better'n these, 'nough sight."

Angeline, who appeared to raise difficulties merely for the purpose of overcoming them, ran to a press and brought out a pair of thick walking-shoes, into which the tell-tale feet were thrust, boots and all.

"Look in the glass, Miss Milly," said Angeline.

Milrose looked, and was astonished at the transformation. The extreme delicacy of her complexion, and the marvelous beauty of her face, were in bewildering contrast with her masculine garments. She could not readily reconcile herself to the change. She saw a boy in the glass, with her own features; but it was a boy that made her blush, and smile, and tremble.

Angeline soon cast her feminine husk, and slipped into the trumpeter's suit. Her darker skin and stouter figure gave her a masculine advantage over her mistress; but she was, in truth, a very comely youth. No one would have imagined, looked he ever so critically, that she had African blood. The novelty of the situation was such, that they gazed at each other for some moments with the utmost seriousness.

The house was quiet; indeed, it had been quiet all the day and evening. It was between the hours of ten and eleven. Milrose took a small box from a drawer, and placed it carefully inside her drummer-jacket. Angeline dropped her bundle from the balcony, and it only remained for them to leave the house. Rose's perturbations had subsided. She grew calmer as the time of danger grew near. She was now very pale, but firm.

Angeline opened the door cautiously. The hall was clear. Acting as leader, she descended a private staircase, followed closely by Milrose. At the bottom of the stairs was a door that opened upon the garden. It was locked,

Rose heard the girl trying to open it, and believed they should be obliged to seek some other avenue of escape. They stood in total darkness. While Angeline fumbled at the lock, heavy footsteps crossed the garden, and came deliberately to the door.

Milrose caught Angeline by the shoulders and drew her closely to the wall. Her mind, in an emergency of this kind, acted quicker than that of her maid.

A key was fitted to the lock; the bolt was turned; the door was opened; the key was withdrawn and placed on the other side of the lock; while the person who did these things came in, closed and relocked the door, and went creaking up-stairs, leaving the two runaways in a painful suspense.

Milrose's tact alone had prevented discovery; for when the door swung open, they were nestled in a very small corner behind it. Deliberately the thick brogans went up.

"Martin Broadbent!" whispered Angeline. "Know him by the way he walks. Come, Miss Milly!"

The lumbering steps were now in the hall above; and the girl, while she was speaking, turned the key and opened the door. They quickly passed out, and, with little chills of fear, found themselves in the dreary darkness.

## CHAPTER IX.

### MARS'R PETER.

When Peter Rust could no longer see Swampsey, he felt more lonely than ever. It was some comfort to look at the little black figure that had followed him so long and so faithfully tumbling about on the grass.

Feeling about in the tool-chest, he found a chalk-line. Slipping the looped end over his finger, he dropped the reel from the window, which went whirling and unwinding to the ground. He feared, as it swirled downward, that it was not long enough; but when it was all run out, he was pleased to discover that he could fathom the distance. Taking a turn around a nail, he let it hang there—pulling at it occasionally, as if he were fishing for flounders. It was his magnetic connection—his Swampsey telegraph.

Peter Rust sat there, musing, hour after hour. The absence of Lowenthal still perplexed him; but Babel he could hear, at intervals, shuffling to and fro in the passage.

The large lamp hung unlighted and dark in the bracket. He had the means of lighting it; but he preferred the unlighted prison, nor cared to make himself a better target. He had resolved to defer his attempt to escape till a late hour; and it required the exercise of no little self-control to remain passive till then.

Bobbing at the line, by-and-by he thought he had coaxed a bite; for it had grown heavier. He began to pull in, and the resistance grew

more palpable. Up and up came the line, and up and up went Peter's curiosity. When, hand over hand, Peter had drawn in all the line, the cause of the extra weight appeared in the form of a rope knotted to the reel. Seizing the end of the rope, Peter tied it to a stout joist, which he placed across the window in a trice—then paused to think.

"It can't be the little chattel," he muttered. "Swampsey wouldn't never think of a rope. He's chock full o' somerset; but there isn't no contrivance in him. If he could git me out by stannin' on his head, or unjintin' his legs, or by any kind of a trick that has a good 'eal o' squirm in it, he'd do it. But a rope! Oh no! Couldn't git a rope out of him. I've got a friend somewhere 'round, and the bein's above only know who 'tis; for I don't. Can't think of nobody in this miserable, rebellious, king-cotton country that'd go a step out of his way to do me a good turn."

Peter reflected; but memory refused to quicken him. He examined the rope. It was rather small, but new and strong. He believed he might safely trust his weight upon it. It would be hard clinging to it; but Peter had seasoned palms and tough fingers.

He glanced out to see how far he could follow the white track of the cord. His eyes traveled about fifteen feet, and were thrown off the track by a black object that looked like a football. Over this football Peter puzzled a moment; but when he saw it moving upward, he understood. It was Swampsey, climbing the rope! Swampsey, pushing up through the darkness! Swampsey, dancing in the air, like a cork on a trout-line! Swampsey, swimming like a frog and mounting like a monkey! Swampsey, not in the least disturbed, pausing now and then to swing by one hand, or hang by his flexed legs, head downward.

Peter was mute with wonder. He shivered somewhat, too, at the wild antics of the boy. He drew back, expecting to hear him drop upon the ground, and was going to speak to him sharply to make him cautious, when the black head shot up above the window-sill. For an instant the pigmy elbows rested on the sill, and the serious little face was turned upon Peter. The attitude and the expression touched Peter. He stared at Swampsey.

"Mars'r Peter!"

There was infinite content on his still features.

Peter caught him by the arms and drew him in, and set him on his feet with surprising quickness.

Swampsey straightened up his yard of length, clapped his hands behind him, and said:

"Mars'r Peter!"

The two words were very simple, but they spoke the one sentiment of the boy's life—love for Peter.

The white six feet two looked down benignly at the three feet nothing in the tow shirt.

"Poor Swampsey! queer little nigger!"

Peter's voice was kind, and there was a note of pity in it.

"I was afeard you'd break your neck."

Swampsey joggled his head, to see if his neck was right.

"Tain't broke, I guess; but you might broke it," continued Peter. "But who put ye to comin' up? Who got the rope and tied it on?"

"Told lies. Stole rope. Help Mars'r Peter," answered Swampsey, in his straight-on style.

"What, alone? Well, leavin' out the lyin' and stealin', which comes nat'ral to niggers, that's extr'ordiner! There's more in that tow-shirt than there looks to be. It'll hold, I s'pose—won't it?"

Peter took hold of the rope, and Swampsey nodded violently.

"Then slide down, little nig, and I'll be after ye in no time. Go keerful, and don't stop to cut shives."

Swampsey sprang to the window-sill, and was out of sight in a moment.

Peter followed him more leisurely, and, after some dangerous swinging, reached the ground safely, but with wounded and smarting fingers. He paused an instant to breathe, glanced at the house with a quiet smile, and stalked silently away, with Swampsey running at his heels.

## CHAPTER X.

### FLIGHT.

Hurrying across the cultivated ground, shunning the negro quarters, choosing the shaded walks, and stepping softly, mistress and maid left Lowenthal behind. The plans of the fugitives were not very definite. They hoped to find temporary shelter in the hut of a poor white, and on the following day put in practice those somewhat crude schemes which they had talked over.

Angeline resorted to a singular expedient to entertain Milrose on the way; she related various startling things that had happened in the pine woods, and on the borders of the plantations. These tales did not increase the young lady's courage. Her imagination became so excited that she momentarily expected to have a frightful adventure. She often detected herself looking to the right and left for some unwelcome object, and involuntarily holding her breath to listen for footsteps. She was finally obliged to rebuke the untimely volubility of Angeline.

Although the darkness covered her flight, Milrose's situation was so new that its gloom constantly made her shiver. She had trodden those winding paths in sunshine only, when there was no occasion for fear; but that night reversed everything, and turned another leaf in her life.

They reached a cabin standing among some trees. They might easily have passed without seeing it, had not the footpath led directly to the door.

"What is this?" asked Milrose.

"Peter Rust lives here, Miss Milly. We can go in and rest a minute or two, if you like. You breathe kinder hard, that's clear."

"Poor Peter!" said Rose.

"Laws, Mistress, he's a Yankee! Ain't no 'count, nohow!" answered Angeline, slightly. "Got no plantation. Own's no niggers, he don't. Isn't much s'perior to Ben Dykes, and them."

Angeline resolutely pushed open the door, and Milrose reluctantly followed her in. Within, nothing was appreciable but darkness. Rose paused, afraid to step. Angeline, less timid, went feeling and stumbling about.

"Here's a stool, honey; sit down, and don't be flurried. Won't nothin' hurt ye. Jest as safe as Mars'r Dan'l was 'mong the lions."

"I cannot think of stopping in this dark place. We may not be alone," answered Milrose.

"Laws! nobody here. Nobody'd be likely to be here, 'cept that little toddlepole. Could wring his neck quicker'n you could blow out a candle!"

"I was told that I could trust this Peter Rust," said Milrose, reflectively.

"You can't trust a man that's shut up in a construction. Stands to reason! 'Nother thing, he ain't no company for a born lady that owns a heap o' niggers. Ought to practice a deal o' circumflection 'bout your s'ciety," said the girl, oracularly.

"My position is certainly enviable!" laughed Milrose. "What do you suppose I am worth, girl?"

"Eight or ten million, I s'pect. Laws! I don't know. May be more'n that," replied Angeline, promptly.

"You have strange notions of figures," said Milrose, amused in spite of herself. "I am, really, but a poor runaway. I have so little money in my purse, that I shall be obliged to pawn my jewelry; a necessity that I shall yield to as soon as I can find a money-changer."

"Bless ye! 'spect I knows one that ar' kind o' folks. Mars'r goes to him to get money. I done found that out myself. Sells money. Queer!"

Angeline stopped to think about selling money.

"He lives a long stretch from the plantation, though," she added. "Cur's name, too. Markthaler, 'tis. Mars'r Lowenthal's been to him more'n once. Mighty cross when he goes to Markthaler's, and mighty set up when he comes home."

"To-morrow, Angeline, you must take me to the town where this usurer lives. I am surprised that you know so much about my mother's



husband. You must have been very observing or very meddlesome. If all waiting-maids were like you, masters and mistresses would have few secrets."

"Can't help it! Eyes and ears wasn't made for nothin'. Mine wasn't, leastways."

"Come, Angeline! I don't like this dark place. Lead me, if you can, to the poor white family you spoke of."

Milrose groped her way out. Then the fugitive pair joined hands and walked on.

Fairly in the forest, new fears assailed them. The barrens abounded with wild animals, which might lurk in their path. Then there were other creatures, of the Ben Dykes order, to be no less dreaded. As they passed under the lofty arches of the pines, these dangers, to their disturbed minds, drew nearer. Keeping closely together, they hastened forward in silence. Angeline's garrulity was tamed; and Milrose half regretted that she had not remained at Peter's cabin till the day began to dawn. But that was too near the prison she was flying from, and that truth gave strength to her feet and firmness to her will. Lowenthal was a greater terror than beasts of prey or the starless gloom of night. She urged on her companion, whose fears equaled her own, but whose mind had less force, and whose actions had a feebler impelling motive.

They heard dull and distant sounds in the forest. Angeline wished to turn back; Rose, more practical, stopped to listen.

"I declar' for't, Miss Milly, my courage is done gone! If them ain't catamounts a comin', it'll be the mercy o' God!" said Angeline.

"You've not a particle of reason," answered Milrose. "A wild beast wouldn't come upon us with such a clatter as that. It would creep without noise, or lie in wait and spring on us before we had warning of danger."

"Tell you what! that's worse than 'tother way. Creep, creep, creep! Crawl, crawl, crawl! Seems as if I could hear one this minute, comin' without a bit o' noise."

"Your sense and courage have gone together, Angeline," Rose replied. "Do be quiet. That which makes no noise cannot be heard. The sounds that you can really hear are made by horses, and not by dangerous beasts. Do you not hear the iron thud o' their feet?"

"I do b'lieve 'tis. Laws, yes! And there's folks ridin' 'em. Knew 'twas't nothin'. You git scared dreadful easy, Miss Milly."

Angeline was now very brave.

"Tole ye there's folks on 'em," she went on. "Can hear 'em talk. Been 'ere in the day-time, time and time ag'in, and never was the leastest natom scared. Don't b'lieve ye for bein' flustered, though. It looked wone pokerish for a spell."

The voices of persons could now be plainly heard, and Lowenthal's among them.

"Tell you what! there's mars's voice," added the voluble maid. "Shouldn't wonder if he's pursuin' of us."

"If he was pursuing us, he would be quite likely to come from the opposite direction," Milrose sharply replied.

"So he would, come to think! Shouldn't meet him if he's follerin' after us. You've got a head-piece, anyways."

"Let's get out of the path," said Rose. "He is near, and my heart beat's fast, in spite of me."

Milrose and the girl glided from the path and sat down among the pines. The former, although there was not much danger of discovery, exaggerated what there was, and awaited the passing of Lowenthal with anxiety. He approached, talking fiercely of the war. He, and those with him, were excited with liquor. Like all persons more or less intoxicated, they were pot-valiant. They defied their Northern foes; and said they would make every battle-field a Bull Run. There would be a large crop of Bull Runners. The new army on the Potomac was but a Manassas egg, that would soon yield a nestful of Bull Run chickens. Thus they made merry.

Then they spoke of a rumored invasion of Port Royal, and hoped the Yankees would soon appear, so that they might give them a taste of Southern steel. They would make the invaders bow to King Cotton before they were half done with them.

Had they not traveled slowly and talked loudly, as vaunters are wont, Milrose could not have heard so much. Their words were audible both before and after they had passed, and the last distinct sentences she heard were bitter fulminations against spies and informers, whom they intended to deal with most summarily.

Milrose made no effort to see Lowenthal and his companions. Sitting silently under the branches, shrinking and fearful, she was content to be passed unnoticed. But Angeline, having more curiosity, stretched up her neck, and availed herself of every opening in the foliage to look after them. Had not the clouds lifted a little, she would have seen absolutely nothing. But a spectral spray of light, falling through an embrasure above, came opportunely to her aid. She protested, after hoofs and voices were out of hearing, that she had seen the parties go by, and that one of the horses sat a young man with his hands tied behind him. This person, she declared, rode with his head down, and had a dispirited look generally.

"Your eyes," said Milrose, "must have been sharper than they were a while since."

"Laws, Miss Milly! Don't s'pose I'd perventricate, do ye? Got one good look at 'em, and that's the truth. A little ribbon o' light come down through a hole in the clouds, and that's the way I got a peep at 'em. Tell you

what! They had a prisoner, and his arms was opinionated abind him."

"Describe him," said Milrose, incredulously. "And, to save time, let us walk on."

"Can't scribe him much. Only got a glimmer of him, you know. Couldn't see his physiology very well. Was dressed in black, citizen's clothes, he was. He had black hair and a black cap, and I shouldn't wonder but he was handsome. He was a pavilion, anyways."

"Goodness! A civilian, Angeline." "Laws! means the same thing. He was in trouble, leastways. He sat on his horse like an anthomaston, and a more injected repression I never see. Tell you what, 'twas some Union, abolition traitor that they've got hold of!"

Although Milrose was not inclined to give full credit to the girl's eyesight, she was much troubled by her description of the prisoner, whom she could not help connecting, in some unaccountable manner, with Frederick North. If that young man had fallen into such bad hands, the worst might be anticipated. She tried to believe that he had not only escaped the pistol of Lowenthal, but all subsequent perils. Thinking these thoughts, turning over a hundred things in her mind, making and unmaking predicaments, starting at every sound, walking, now hurriedly, now slowly, looking not backward, with her eyes fixed on the black and thread-like vista through which the pathway ran, she did her best for escape and liberty.

## CHAPTER XI.

### IN THE FOREST.

For some time they could feel the path with their feet. A hard indentation, distinctly appreciable, assured them that they were following a beaten track. Imperceptibly this little foot-groove grew shallower and less apparent, and by-and-by it was lost; but the trees stood so far apart, and the way was so unobstructed, that the fugitives did not immediately perceive that they were walking where there was no path. The pine patriarchs loomed up grandly around them. Soft, balsamic odors impregnated the quiet air.

Milrose paused. The forest was a cathedral. The pine odor was the incense, swung silently to and fro before the altar, by the hand of Nature. Milrose was awed, yet tranquilized. The veil of darkness drawn over the woods had more significance and less terror. This temporary calmness made her bear with more fortitude the discovery which she now made that they had lost the friendly guide that had led them on with hopefulness and tolerable courage.

"Where is the path?" Milrose asked. "The Lord, he only knows, mistress! It's done gone. Never was so turned round." Angeline felt and looked vainly for the path.

"Think you can find the hut you spoke of?" asked Rose, nervously.

"Might as well hunt for a pigeon's egg!" answered the girl. "Fact is, I'm cl'ar run out. Don' know which way to go. S'pect we're lost, and shall have to stay in the woods all night, anyways. Thought I'd be dawl sure of the way. If the wild critters don't eat us, and we don't starve to death, and nothin' happens to us, we shall do well 'nough."

Angeline tried to speak with all the courage the situation required, and as it appeared, with far more than she possessed; for Milrose could hear her teeth chattering.

"So you advise us to give up?" said Milrose, who had long since arrived at the conclusion that she must trust in herself and not in Angeline.

"Don' know what's the good tryin'. Better set down and save our strength, than to 'be walkin' 'bout. 'Sides, Miss Milly, my courage is jest snoozin' out o' my fingers-ends. But don't be in a state o' perpetration, my dear mistress. We can't be more'n killed, anyways. All got to be killed, sometime. Fed'rals 'll kill us, if mars'r don't. Won't be nothin' but killin' and ravagin' for the next few months."

With this cheerful view of things, Angeline dropped upon the ground in utter desolation. Perplexed as she was, Milrose could not but smile at the ludicrous hopelessness of her attendant.

"Peers like I can hear 'em creepin'!" she continued, her mind running on every species of danger.

"Get up, and come along!" said Milrose, sharply.

"Can't, Miss Milly! My limbs are jest analyzed with fright; and that's the truth."

Milrose was now obliged to exert her authority.

Perceiving that her mistress was in earnest, Angeline arose and followed her, wondering that she should be so brave.

Trusting to her judgment, Milrose struck off through the more open part of the forest with a strong resolution not to give up. She had observed that the ground gradually ascended as they receded from the plantation, and fell off whenever they approached it, and this peculiarity of the land guided her. Her reason and sagacity proved more reliable than her maid; for after walking about half an hour, they were cheered by the discovery of a hut. Cheered! Under better circumstances, the word could not have been used. It was, in fact, a most miserable hut; a smoke-blackened, forlorn, and thriftless hut, with all the mute yet eloquent witnesses of sloth around it.

Milrose's first emotions of joy subsided as she silently stood and contemplated this wretched abode. The clouds had drifted away from overhead, and the blurred light thrown on the

crazy roof-boards revealed gaping crevices for wind and weather, and a tottering stick chimney at one end. Puffs of pitch-pine smoke revolved lazily from the top of this chimney.

The attention of Milrose was unpleasantly drawn from these matters by a great outcry of dogs. There was a dire uproar inside; a scratching, whining, barking, howling, and yelping. Little dogs, and large dogs, hounds, curs, and terriers, small voices and big voices, and anon a human voice, united in one grand overture.

"Love o' God!" cried Angeline. "You've taken me to Ben Dykes!"

"Ben Dykes!" repeated Milrose, in consternation.

"Ben Dykes, the dog-trainer; Ben Dykes, the nigger-hunter; Ben Dykes, the poor, good-for-nothin' white trash!" muttered Angeline, completely at fault.

"Hush!" whispered Milrose, he is opening the door. I am afraid of those clamorous dogs. It is too late to retreat. If we run, those savage brutes will be after us. Now, Angeline, do try and be prudent. Remember that you are a young man and belong to the army."

"Laws!" I cl'ar forgot 't's a young man," said Angie. "And by the same token, you're a boy, Miss Milly. I s'pect the whole thing'll leak out."

"Be silent! Do not speak except when spoken to, and then in the briefest manner. Watch and imitate me," answered Milrose, hurriedly.

"What's the matter out yer!" cried Dykes. Down, pups, down! Stop your bother. Can't hear my own talk. What's up, I say?"

Ben Dykes seized two of the stoutest dogs by the napes of their necks, and held them, at the same time kicking over a brace of cowardly, yet noisy young bulls.

Milrose was going to reply; but at the first trial her voice failed her.

"Who's thar? Who's out yon? I see ye, hidin' in the dark!" shouted Ben. "Come out o' that yer, or I'll let the dogs loose. Shouldn't wonder if you's runaway niggers."

"You're mistaken, friend," said Milrose, advancing, and using the most masculine voice she could make. It was not the best article in the market; it was inferior in quantity, if not in quality. There should have been more of it.

"What you squeakin' about? Toddle up here, where I can see ye. Have ye got pistols and sich? Don't try no shootin' game on me. Jeff and Beau'll be onto ye, fast thing you dunno!" vociferated Ben, warningly, pinching the dogs' necks to make them growl.

"Don't be afraid, sir!" added Milrose, walking cautiously among the canines. "It's our business to protect, not to hurt people." She said this with a condescension that quite surprised herself.

"Soger, fellers! soger, fellers!" muttered Ben, as the two fictitious young fellows drew near. "They must be dratted hard up for sogers, down yon. All I can say 'bout it is, that they might made ye bigger. Reckon you crawl into the cannon to clean 'em, and creep out through the vent-hole to save turnin' round."

"Fine dogs, stranger; fine dogs!" said Milrose, with a careless sweep of the hand.

"They're sweet dogs, anyways," interposed Angeline, in beautiful masculine.

"Wal, they be some persimmons, them pups be. Some on 'em has been broke in. These two I've got hold on'll take arter niggers beautiful! 'Stonishin', the instincts o' hounds is. But the runaways don't see it. One of the black villains tried to kill this yer very pup no longer ago than last week; jest 'cause he ketched him by the throat."

Ben Dykes fetched a sigh from the bottom of his thorax, in view of the awful depravity of niggers. But his attention was now much occupied with his unexpected visitors.

"What kind o' killin' do you do, mostly, youngsters?" he rather sarcastically asked. "Should think you might make the worst kind of a panic in a poultry-yard. Got little straps on your jacket, ha'n't ye, bubby! This other chap's got some on his'n, too. There ain't no higher officers than you be—be there? As I said afore, all I've got to say is, they might made ye bigger."

Mr. Dykes opened his mouth and laughed a fearfully wide laugh.

"Tell ye what! there's something they couldn't made bigger," put in Angeline, in her very successful masculine.

"Oh, you've pitched into my mouth, too! Everybody pitches into my mouth!" snarled Ben. "Darned if I can have my joke 'thout gettin' a fling in the mouth. Keep out, youngster! Tell ye to keep out!"

Milrose apologized for Angeline's personalities, and regretted that she had accidentally disturbed his repose.

"What weepens do ye carry?" he asked, eyeing them curiously.

"Nothing but pistols, at present," Rose answered, with well-acted indifference. "I believe I have seen you at Lowenthal's," she added.

"Be shot if ever I see you down yer. Can't git the hang of ye, nohow. Look here! Ain't musicianers, be ye?"

"You've just hit it," replied Milrose, with misgiving. "My friend is a trumpeter; I beat the drum."

"You beat me, too. Hanged if you don't. Drummer and trumpeter," mused Ben. "I've got a drum and a trumpet. Git ye to play some tunes on 'em the fast thing you dunno. Come, tumble inside. My shanty's plenty big enough for a brace o' musicianers."

"Thank you," said Milrose, to this polite invitation.

Dykes went in, and all the dogs rushed after him. For a few moments the door was effectually blockaded.

"Come on, you what's-your-names!" cried the dog-trainer, from within.

"Come, Dick!" said Milrose, briskly, giving Angeline an admonitory squeeze of the arm. It is needless to say that she felt little of that smartness that she artfully threw into her voice. Her mind was in a tempest of agitation. Her courage was more than once at the slipping point. Here she was, unsexed, and infinitely out of her sphere, in the society, and perhaps power, of a person whose name had always been to her a synonym of villainy. Her own delicacy, refinement, and beauty, were now, her greatest betrayals. During her wanderings that night, she had tried to stain her face and hands with the juice of leaves; but with what success, she did not know.

Pushing her way in, she met darkness and a medley of strange odors. She heard Ben putting the brands together, and presently there was a blaze on the stone hearth. The light revealed children and dogs, and a dirty woman. The children were dirty, too, and mostly naked.

Milrose could not tell how many there were of them; but they were lying all about. Some of the newest ones were nestled with the newest dogs. The woman, clad in unadorned rags, reclined on a bench, with a teething baby in her arms. The storm of the world had evidently wrecked her hopes. She now lay water-logged on a stagnant sea. Nothing was left of the freight she had started in life with. Wholesome pride and expectation were gone by the board.

She did not even look up when Milrose and Angeline entered, but with her hand supporting her head, kept her eyes fixed vacantly on the moaning child. Mrs. Dykes' clothing was not worth mentioning. There was not much of it, to begin with; and what there was, was threadbare and untidy, and clung to her like her own poverty. She was the victim of laziness, children, and pups. There was not enough left of the original Mrs. Dykes to swear by.

"Don't be afraid," said Ben, encouragingly. "Stumble up, and clap down anywhere you can find a place. Be keeful, and not step onto the pups."

Ben did not consider it worth his while to caution his visitors about stepping on the children. The dogs were the most profitable. If the children would have brought money, he would have sold them. But they were not exactly the right color for traffic, although a great deal of miscellaneous dirt had worked through the cuticle, and imparted an anomalous leaden hue.

"You're right on the war-question, I 'low, or you wouldn't be in the army. Cotton's king. We ain't goin' to have no meddlin' with our niggers, you know. If them yer Northern barbarians want niggers, let 'em buy 'em, and not steal 'em."

"You keep a heap of 'em, don't ye?" inquired Angeline, in a tone that greatly troubled Ben.

"Wal, can't say I do," he replied, uneasily; for he had a singular dread of being quizzed. "Can't say I keep 'em, what's-ye-name. But we ain't goin' to be brought to poverty by them yer Yankee mudsills. We're bound to be a durned great republic one o' these days. Down there, Jeff! Hold yer noise, Bruno! Mister Drummer, jest rap that yer pup nearest ye!"

Having stirred up a tolerable blaze, the man sat down on a pine-block, and stared at his guests with a curiosity that seemed to Milrose more than good for her safety.

## CHAPTER XII.

### TOM AND DICK.

"What did I understand yer name to be, small un?" asked Ben, presently, shaking himself sluggishly out of a snarl of thought that he had fallen into.

Milrose had no doubts to whom this question was directed, for he was looking at her.

"Tom," she said, taking the first name she could think of—"Tom!"

"Tom!" repeated Dykes.

Mrs. Dykes looked up for the first time since their entrance, on hearing Milrose's voice. Something in its accents seemed to strike her dull ear. Milrose noticed it, and felt a painful distrust of her powers of masculine imitation. Her voice was really too soft by half. Her beauty, too, could not be put out of sight by leaf-stains and a drummer's jacket. She looked a brave youth of fourteen or fifteen—that is, where the coloring had been successful; but there were little patches of white skin about the chin and neck that the short collar but imperfectly concealed. Angeline discovered this discrepancy with dismay. The pure alabaster lining shining through the dark stains was startling enough.

"Keep your chin close," the girl whispered. "It's dreadful white in spots!"

It is a well-established truth, that a sense of the ludicrous will creep into every situation. Had it not been for this, Milrose would not have been able to master her terrors. But the distress of Angeline, and the predicament itself, appealed to her sense of the grotesque, as well as to her fears; and between these conflicting emotions she was kept from self-betrayal.

"Tom!" reiterated Ben. "A short Tom. Not a long Tom, by no means. Tom is all, I s'pose?"

"Yes," said Milrose. After she had said yes,

she perceived that it should have been no. But it was too late to mend it; and she let it alone. "Yer folks was very ekernomical," continued Ben. "Saves time, Tom does. Tom's a long handle 'nough for a short boy."

There never was such a thrilling in her blood before. Had this white savage of the pine barrens already penetrated her secret? If so, was not her position perilous? It was, unquestionably. From his civilization she could hope nothing, because he was not civilized; from his honor nothing, for he had none; from his honesty nothing, for he had none of that. She longed for the morning. Then she thought that even the light might be dangerous. So there was no end to her embarrassments; if there were, she knew not where to find it.

She looked to Angeline for strength, and was cheered to see that she was behaving very well, having, from habit, fewer scruples to contend with than herself. Besides, she was the hardest and best-skinned boy, and though she had proved faint-hearted in the woods, was now more at ease than her mistress. Perhaps the girl did not see the danger, or, seeing it, put a wrong estimate upon it.

The teething baby moaned, and flung its thin arms restlessly about. Milrose, glancing pityingly at the woman, met her mournful gaze, which, to her quick apprehension, grew to wonder while she looked.

Some people's eyes seem stolen from the brute-races, and express only the craft necessary to seize their prey, and provide for their daily-recurring appetites. Such eyes had Ben Dykes. Both eyes and instincts were for prey. And thus Rose interpreted them.

"Does Peter Rust live far from here?" she inquired.

"Peter of the pines?" said Ben, fishing a fractured pipe from the stick-chimney, and rapping the bowl on his thumb-nail. "Go up you, and ask Lowenthal about him. Them as can't say 'Cotton is king' is no company for me."

"Tell ye what!" said Angeline, resolutely. "It doesn't make the leastest difference to them that hasn't got no cotton, nor no niggers. You can't lose a heap, war or no war. You're one o' them poor whites that's jes' outside all creation. So what's the good talkin'?"

Although secretly glad to hear this rebuke, it put Milrose in a panic.

Ben filled his pipe, and thrust it into a corner of his mouth.

"Dick!" he muttered. "Dick the trumpeter. That's you!" He nodded toward Angeline. "A trifle larger boy nor Tom. Longer and sarser. Cotton and niggers yer botherin' about! Wall, I ha'n't got nary one; but if it had been 'totherwise, I might a had millions o' bales o' one, and thousands o' 'tother. So blow yer trumpet ag'in, if yer likes."

Ben buried the top of his head in smoke.

His mouth, seen through the tobacco-fogs, looked like a rift in the chimney.

"Don't be impertinent to the gentleman," said Rose, wishing to smooth matters.

"Don't be worried, comrade. Know how to take care of myself. Carry some little fellows under my jacket that are a heap o' company." Angeline tapped herself on the breast with a wise air.

"We army chaps," she added, complacently; "have to be right smart with pistols and things. Shot a dozen times the other day at a soldier's cap, and you could cover the whole of 'em with the palm of your hand. But that's nothin' to what I could do when I's in practice. Don't want to hurt nobody, anyways." Angeline yawned, and appeared very much at ease.

The apathetic eyes of Mrs. Dykes wandered from Milrose to Angeline. There was fascination in the voices of the delicate youths. What associations they awakened in her lonely life, none may know.

Ben inhaled his cheeks full of smoke, and blew it out with a great deal of importance. He was preparing to be belligerent.

"I'm Ben Dykes," quoth he. "Ben Dykes, the squatter—Ben Dykes, the howlin' dervish of the pine-woods—Ben Dykes, dog-trainer, nigger-hunter, shoulder-hitter, Confederate, and what not?" He stretched his ragged legs, and his ragged arms deliberately, and wrinkled a threatening frown from the bridge of his nose to the hair on his forehead. "I'm a nat'ral suv'reign of the sile," he resumed. "I can sleep all night and fast all day, or I can eat all night and sleep all day. I can eat any kind o' grub, from a leg o' bacon to a b'iled owl. I can outdrink any man in South Car'line. I stick to cotton and the Constitution. And I raise dogs. And I hate work. Goddlemity, how I hate work!"

"Mrs. Dykes sighed. A sickly croak came from the child, while two young hounds quarreled over a bone.

"I can lay ten hours whar it's hot 'nough to bake airthern ware. I like a row as much as I hate work. When that's a fight, I'm thar. When a hound's to be slipped on a runaway, I'm thar. When anybody treads on my toes, I'm thar, too. Don't buzz round me, little trumpeter. Some-at'll happen, fust thing you dunno."

"You talk right smart, Mr. Tykes," replied Angeline, coolly. "You're cl'ar grit, anyways. Why don't ye 'list? Lord's mercy! what a scaterin' you'd make 'mong the Yankees! Come; go down you and jine."

"When I want advice, I'll ask for't," said Ben, somewhat mollified. As for Lowenthal, I know him right well. If I ain't his right-hand man, perhaps you can tell me who is. What I dunno 'bout this yer war, wouldn't be worth goin' to the door to find out. These great military men have to have confidential agents, to pull

the wires and set the machinery agoin'. But, mind ye, I say nothin'. I hate braggin' worse 'n I do pison. Mebbe I ha'n't helped to scare up an army. Mebbe 't'otherwise! Ask them that dunno. Ask the fust man you overtake comin' towards ye."

"Love o' God!" exclaimed Angeline. "Pears like you're the mainstay of this here resurrection. When the Yankees land at Port Royal, you must go down with your pups. But it's about time for Tom and I to be goin' to camp. You see, we was on the way to Brimlow's, and got turned round in the darkness. Perhaps you'll jes' put us in the path; and for your trouble, you shall have a long pull at my canteen whenever you come to the quarters of the Palmetto Guard."

"And I'll speak a good word for you to Colonel Lovelace," said Milrose.

"Thank'e, drummer!" responded Ben, grinning the whole width of his mouth. "P'raps I shall jes' mention ye to Lowenthal. Who knows but he'll permote ye? 'Twouldn't be queer if he should give ye a high sityvation!"

Milrose thought of the prison at the top of the house. There was something horribly repulsive and sinister about the wide-mouthed man.

"He'd take mightily to a little cock-robin like you—Lowenthal would. Do for a page. Could hold his stirrup, or toddle arter him with his sword. Great military people are fond o' pooty boys. Goddlemity!"

Milrose shivered. What did he mean?

"The war'll be a short one," he went on, with a low chuckle. "We'll send out drum and trumpet, and sound a parley. What arms we've got in our army! And what legs, also!"

Ben's eyes rolled leisurely and exultingly over Milrose. He was about to proceed with his startling pleasantry, when the door of the hut creaked on its wooden sockets, and Swampsey stalked solemnly in. He had approached so softly, that even the dogs had not heard him. Some of the hounds, to vindicate their watchfulness and training, arose, snuffed round him, and growled. But the little founding of Alligator Swamp was undismayed. While Milrose's features expressed wonder, Ben's swarthy face evinced decided dissatisfaction.

"What you here for? Who sent ye, yer little rat?" he demanded.

Swampsey looked steadily around him, and took in quietly the whole scene. On Milrose and Angeline his eyes finally settled. He did not answer Ben's questions, and that free-born lord of the barrens grew impatient. The sputtering Tom and Dick were afraid to speak to the black pigmy, whose fixed gaze was every moment growing embarrassing.

"Come 'long," said Swampsey, presently.

"Come along where?" Angeline asked.

"Come 'long Swampsey."

"Do you know the way?" she added.

"Know the way," drawled Swampsey, winking and blinking violently. "Come 'long white folks!"

"He knows the way," said Milrose, eagerly "and he will do just as well for a guide as an older person."

Swampsey bobbed his head perseveringly. "Git out, you stunted mud-nigger!" roared Dykes, quite disturbed. "If you ain't out o' this yer in a minute, I'll set the dogs onto ye!"

Swampsey looked wishfully at Milrose, who, arising, said:

"Thank you, Dykes, for the shelter of your hut. We won't trouble you farther. The boy, I think, knows the way to camp. Don't let the dogs hurt him."

Ben jumped from his block and seemed perplexed and dubious. That he did not wish his visitors to go, was evident. Milrose trembled for the result.

"Tisn't near mornin' yet," the man muttered, scowling wrathfully at Swampsey. "But if ye choose to foller this yer imp in the tow shirt, why, foller; but if ye git lost, don't blame me for't."

This acquiescence came in so surly a manner, that Milrose's fears were rather increased than allayed. She perceived in him an unwillingness to lose sight of them.

Swampsey flung a somerset over three dogs, and was out of the hut in a second. The girls did not linger. It was yet dark, but the darkness was welcome. Milrose went panting from the thick, choking atmosphere within, to the clear, reviving air without. Never had she experienced such relief. She heard Dykes quietly encouraging the negro-hounds to attack their little friend; but for some singular reason, they smelled around him without offering him harm. Giving the frisky quadrupeds no notice, Swampsey set his face in a particular direction, and led off. As he trudged along, he seemed to Milrose like a small black speck in the path.

When they were some distance from the hut, Angeline asked:

"Where you goin', Swampsey?"

"Goin' 'long," he replied.

"Know you're goin' along; but where you takin' us? Don't want to be lost in the woods ag'in," persisted Angeline.

"Won't be lost," answered Swampsey.

"What do you think you're doin', anyway?" cried the girl, losing patience.

"Goin' to Mars'r Peter," said the boy.

"Who sent you?" asked Milrose.

"Mars'r Peter."

"Tell ye what!" protested Angeline. "This toddlepole can't say nothin' but 'Mars'r Peter! Mars'r Peter!' Look here, you talkin' authomaston! We a'n't goin' to Mars'r Peter noways. Glad we're cl'ar o' that nasty dog-keunel, and

by the same token we ain't goin' to be demurred in the top of a construction."

"Perhaps Peter Rust has escaped," observed Milrose.

"Helped Mars'r Peter," said Swampsey. "Stole a rope; Mars'r Peter pulled up de rope with a string; climbed de rope and mars'r come down."

"Laws, Miss—Tom! he can talk when he tries. Don't 'pear like he could help Peter git away. Now, what you spect he thinks 'bout us?" said the girl, curiously.

"That is a question I cannot answer," replied Rose. "I confess I do not understand this little fellow. He does not know us, surely."

Swampsey wagged his head strangely, then walked on his hands, with his body in the air, in the shape of a bent bow.

"Lord's mercy!" exclaimed Angeline. "I'm afraid this young nig is the Old Nick hisself, or one o' his family. Decl'ar! don't know 'bout goin' much further with sich company. Got a soul to be saved, I 'spect, and don't want to lose it!"

Forming various conjectures, but giving utterance to none of them, Milrose followed the wonderful Swampsey.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### THE TURN OF THE ROAD.

"Tell ye what!" said Angeline. "Always believed in things myster'ous. There's some that don't believe in the devil. Spect it's mighty wicked not to believe in the devil. How's folks to git religion, if there ain't no devil? Laws, couldn't git along 'bout him, noways! The preacher-men 'd be o'lar good for nothin' if 'twasn't for the business Old Nick gives 'em. Bible says he takes all sorts o' shapes, and, to deceive folks, sometimes deforms himself to an angel of delight. Now, if he can do that, he can do 'tother things. If he can look like an angel, by the same token, he can look like a little nigger."

Milrose did not answer; and Angeline gave her tongue full liberty.

"See what shines them be for a mortal bein'! Do ye spect real niggers, with souls to be saved, walk on their heads, and pitchpole about in that there way? Goes as well one way as another. Can't tell which end's up half the time. He's a reg'lar swivel! Good Christians, Miss Milly, stick to the yearth and the flat o' their feet; but this Will-o'-the-Whisk sticks neither to one thing nor 'tother, but jes' skedaddles atween 'em."

The subject of these uncharitable reflections tumbled on the tenor of his way, totally unmoved thereby, until he reached a part of the forest that was darker and gloomier. He stopped; ceased his antics, and stood sedately on his nimble feet, looking backward.

Milrose and Angeline, who regulated their movements by his, paused also.

"Promably," whispered Angie, clinging to her mistress' arm, "he's goin' to turn into somethin'! He's likely as anyways to be big as a mountain next. He can transmogrify hisself easy as nothin'."

"Hush!" said Milrose. "He seems to be listening."

"Laws, Miss Milly, he's only waitin' to be metamorphosed into something frightful! When he changes shape, I shall dump down in a swoond."

"Angeline, be still!" exclaimed Milrose. "You talk too much. If you will be a child, I must be severe with you."

"Don't know how to be severe, I spect. Never give me a blow in your life, and I love ye better'n I fear ye, darlin' Miss Milly!"

"Do you hear?" added Milrose, in a voice of real displeasure.

"Lord's mercy! I'll be quiet as a muffled drum. What a solemn little fo'ndling!"

There were a few moments of silence. Swampsey stood like a charcoal image.

"Dog-man after us," he said. "Must run."

"I hear tracks!" protested Angeline, trembling, and clutching Milrose's arm, who gave her an admonitory shake, and listened.

"I can hear nothing whatever," she said. "Are you sure, Swampsey?"

"Come all the time," answered the boy. "Heard him walk, walk! Come 'long!"

The lad darted forward, and the young women flitted after him as fast as they could. Angeline managed to embarrass Milrose by her uncontrollable cowardice, which continually prompted her to get in the way, and make blunders. They proceeded rapidly, and began to think they were clear of the danger.

The path made a short bend to the right. Swampsey halted suddenly. Milrose saw a figure just beyond him. It was too familiar not to know it; and her fears named it Ben Dykes before the features crept out of the darkness.

The dog-trainer had taken a shorter way, and struck in ahead of them. There he was, with his two favorite hounds.

"Pears like we wasn't to part company so easy," he said. "Here I am afore ye." Then to Swampsey: "You can 'cut dirt, little nig. Go anywhar; to the devil, or the Dismal Swamp."

Swampsey threw himself heels over head into the bushes.

"Jes' as I tole ye!" cried Angeline, swinging her hands. "He's led us astray, and now he disappears like a jack-o'-lantern. The head o' the family has come now. Say your prayers, darlin', for we shall be car'd off, and never brung back!"

"Come, my short Tom! Come, my dandy Dick! I'm yer guide now. I'll take ye over yon in the twinklin' of a star," continued Dykes,



THE FUGITIVES AND THEIR GUIDE.



casting aside all meekness, and sinking into his natural swaggering style.

"I do not want you!" answered Milrose, curtly. "Go your way. If you interrupt us, it will be at your peril."

"What a incident it is!" retorted Ben. "It's a event for a centry, this yer is! I'll be dog-goned if 'tisn't too rich for the stomach."

The wide mouth grew fearfully facetious.

"This way, my warriors! This way, my canary-legged musicians! Know every foot of the piney-woods—I do. No danger gittin' lost. Be in a beautiful shanty, fust thing you dunno. Lead ye through this yer straight as an arrier the darkest night."

"Choose your path, and begone!" replied Milrose, with surprising steadiness. "We stir not at your bidding."

"Come along, or I shall have to fetch ye!" exclaimed Ben, advancing upon Milrose. She shrank from him, and looked hopelessly for Swampsey. The man seized her wrist, and dragged her forward. The climax of misfortune seemed to be reached. She struggled resolutely; but his hand was harder than the pine trees, and held her remorselessly. She thought her wrist-bones were being crushed in his greedy grasp. She knew her secret was out. She perceived that no common motive was moving Dykes' conduct. A powerful spell was on him, and there was a frightful zeal in every action. He appeared as one under the intoxication of hasheesh.

Here was the parallel of the dove and the hawk. The one was fluttering, and exerting its feeble strength in unavailing resistance; the other, fierce and pitiless, had fixed its talons, and was bearing off its prey.

She entreated; she threatened, and called for help. The barrens echoed to her voice.

Angeline, in a position entirely new, her mind muddled with superstitious fears, proved utterly useless. She might, perhaps, have thrown herself upon Ben, had not the two hounds, Jeff and Beau, smelled around her as if their nostrils had caught the scent of negro blood. She had a wholesome dread of trained dogs. She had seen runaways brought back, torn and worried. She could not forget the terror of those unfortunates. She loved her mistress, and she did make a fight with her fears.

As Dykes led on his victim, she followed, at first moaning and muttering, and finally, finding herself actually alive and uninjured, hurling all manner of epithets at Ben, who, leaving the beaten path, pushed into the woods as fast as he could urge the unwilling feet of Milrose.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

##### THE MESSENGER.

The moment Lowenthal left Peter Rust in such a state of uncertainty, a messenger arrived on a reeking horse, and pushing aside the guard that opposed his entrance, strode hurriedly into the

mansion. Hearing quick, heavy steps in the hall, Lowenthal went to meet the unceremonious visitor, in whom he recognized a Confederate officer.

"Colonel Lovelace!" exclaimed Lowenthal. "This is an unexpected pleasure. What brings you?"

They shook hands.

"A horse, covered with foam, which requires careful grooming," replied the officer, excitedly. "The Yankee fleet has appeared on our coast. We are expecting an attack at Port Royal!"

"So near!" said Lowenthal, with a start. "They have threatened us a long time; but I doubted whether their temerity would lead them so far. They never can pass Hilton Head. We have soil enough to bury them on if they effect a landing, colonel!"

"We care not thus to enrich our soil!" answered Lovelace, with a shrug.

"I wish Lincoln would send down an army of gentlemen. It's too bad to put us to killing cobblers, tinkers, and tailors!" said Lowenthal. "You are a great deal spattered and blown, colonel. I hope there's no panic down there."

"Panics are for Manassas. We leave those for the 'On to Richmond' people!"

Lovelace laughed.

"I was just sitting down to breakfast. A cup of coffee, I am sure, will be acceptable to you. This way."

Colonel Lovelace threw off his military overcoat and cap, and in a moment had his military legs under Lowenthal's table. The planter touched a bell, and a colored girl came in to serve.

Lovelace looked at Lowenthal inquiringly.

"Babel is away," said the latter, answering the glance, "but you need not fear to speak freely. My slaves never leave the plantation."

"That black Goliath was mighty convenient," replied the colonel, "because he could betray no secrets. Pity the whole race wasn't deaf and dumb! But we couldn't make soldiers of them in that case."

"You have not come for nothing. May I ask your business, colonel?"

"Hurry up the men! Everything and everybody must be pressed into the service as rapidly as possible. We must arm the slaves. Your niggers 'll fight, won't they?"

"I don't know," answered Lowenthal, reflectively. "Our traditions say they'll fight for their masters. We have many pretty legends about the devotion of our chattels. I should think they'd fight to perpetuate their bondage!"

Lowenthal looked at Lovelace very meaningfully.

"A slave chain and an overseer's whip ought to be the device on their banner."

Lovelace smiled over this pleasant conceit.



"This nigger devotion is a damned humbug!" muttered Lowenthal. "But it's a humbug that we must keep alive. It's a lie; but we must inflate the lie till it puffs up like a balloon. You are going to stay here, I hope, to aid in this work. I've hustled a drove of fellows together, by one hocus-pocus and another; but I'm sorry to say that my little army is made up of confounded poor trash. The worst of it is, they haven't got a cursed thing to fight for! I've stuffed them with cotton and Southern rights, till I'm heartily sick of it. And by G—d, colonel, you must make some speeches!"

"I'm a soldier," answered Lovelace, "and hate clap-trap; but the spirit of revolution must be kept alive. The tag-rag and bob-tail, the unwashed riff-raff, that, like the lilies, toil not, neither spin—that own not a slave, nor a rod of land, nor a pod of cotton—must be flattered, cajoled, and, if necessary, coerced. What are they good for, but to push against Northern mulishness?"

"Nothing, and scarcely that," answered Lowenthal, with an emphatic gesture.

"Let me tell you, Lowenthal," added Lovelace, leaning toward his friend, and lowering his voice, "that there is one danger that we cannot ignore or lose sight of. The niggers sulk and mutter. It's my solemn opinion, that if the Federals disembark from their gunboats, and achieve anything like a victory, there will be a general stampede of the blacks. Our institution will take to itself legs, and run away. That isn't all. They'll raise the devil, when once their own masters. If, by any possibility, the enemy should demolish our defenses at Hilton Head and Fort Walker, and the inhabitants be forced to fly inland, Sambo might not wish to keep them company. Think of the scenes that might ensue! Possibly a new chapter of horrors would be written in our history."

These words made a deep impression on Lowenthal. He was silent a long time, then sent for his overseer. While a servant was gone on this errand, Lovelace, who had been looking about uneasily, asked: "Where is Milrose?"

"Ill, in her own room," replied Lowenthal, absently. "Girl's heads, I believe, are always out of order."

"She's loyal, I suppose?" the colonel remarked carelessly.

"Be hanged if I know! Rather think she's for the Union!"

The planter looked slyly at Lovelace, who, supposing a matrimonial jest was meant, was pleased.

"If I could flatter myself that there was any hope!" he sighed.

"A young lady knows not her own mind," said the planter, uneasily. "However, I will speak for you, colonel. In fact, I will use my influence. Really, the match would be very suitable. Here comes my overseer."

Slow and heavy steps were heard in hall.

Lovelace smiled.

"Yes," said Lowenthal, "it is my elephant."

"A safe one?"

"I trust so, as things go," replied the planter.

Martin Broadbent appeared. His figure was remarkable. In his rounded coat, his long waistcoat, baggy trousers, broad-brimmed hat, and thick brogans, he presented a very respectable outside. His face was grave; too grave for cheerfulness. He did not take off his hat, and without a bow, or any kind of greeting, stood seriously before Lowenthal.

Lovelace considered him with careful attention. He was not much acquainted with this species of man.

"Martin," said the planter, "are the boys orderly and well-behaved?"

"Yea, verily!" replied Martin.

"I want no yea and verily! Are the niggers sulky, or not?"

"According to my observation, they are well content," returned Broadbent. "Yet were I to answer thee," he added, reflectively, "in strict truth, I might make some few exceptions. If there have been murmurings among the seditions, I trust that wholesome discipline hath had its perfect work."

"The devil, sir! Give me less of your circumlocution, and speak faster, man! Have you used the whip thoroughly?" retorted Lowenthal, impatiently.

"Truly, friend Roscoe, I have been a faithful shepherd to the black lambs."

"Black lambs be d—d!" cried Lowenthal.

"Have you cut them up, I say?"

"Verily, I have labored with the contumacious, with stripes and imprisonment. Thanks to timely severity, the incipient evil is checked; and there is not now one among them who would hesitate to take arms at my bidding. The pious of them pray daily for a mighty wind that shall sink the Yankee fleet, and bring confusion upon our enemies."

"If we've got to wait for the prayers of the niggers to sink the Yankee fleet, I'm afraid the war will move slowly!" laughed Lovelace.

"Look you, Martin! I do not feel entirely acquainted with you. There is something curiously New-Englandish in your speech. You are watched, my man; so have a care. However, so far as I can see, you have been faithful; although, if there were less whine, drawl, and cant about you, I should be better pleased. I can tell you a few plain rules for the treatment of the blacks: If they are lazy, whip them; if they are smart, whip them; if they are happy, whip them; if they are low-spirited, whip them; if they talk much, whip them; if they are sullen, whip them; if they are stubborn, whip them; if they are cringing, whip them; and, in short, always whip them."

"These loves the whip, friend Roscoe; and, truly, there is a sweet music in it, as it goes humming through the air. He that spareth the rod spoileth the child. These black Saxons are our children, and we do not well if we beat them not soundly."

Broadbent sighed, and turned his eyes upward. He had a long face just then.

"This is edifying!" sneered Lovelace.

"In referring to the whip, friend Roscoe, thou unwittingly touched an interesting article of my faith. I believe in scourgings oft. The whip is the great expounder of knotty questions. It is a mighty reasoner. It overcometh the flesh and the devil. It is sharper than a two-edged sword, it layeth bare the back, and divideth the skin and the muscles."

Broadbent stopped, and made a longer face than before.

"A false mercy," he went on, "often doeth mischief. Too much tenderness is a devil to be cast out. The negro is subordinate unto man."

"Subordinate unto man!" repeated Lovelace, with a queer look.

"Being thrown upon our protection," resumed Martin, with growing fervor, "like his brethren of the field, the horse and the ox, it becomes our duty to teach him obedience. The resemblance of the negro to man should not mislead us."

"By no means!" observed Lovelace, highly entertained by Martin's singular views.

"To subject the black to the arts of industry, and make him useful to the human race, is indeed a benevolent object. Let the whip swing; let it hum and whistle from morning till night; let it cut and scarily, flay and blister, mince and macerate, till the brute instincts of the man-animal be subdued, conquered, and extinguished! They are unworthy masters and mistresses who are startled at the sight of blood. I tell thee, friend Roscoe, that the whip is the schoolmaster of the negro; it is his book, his education, his monitor, his conscience, and his savior."

The voice of Martin was steady, cold, and calm. There was no pity and mercy in it.

Lowenthal stared at him in strange perplexity. He thought he could fathom men; but here was one whose depths he was not sure he could sound. He did not know what to say, or how to deal with him.

"This person is getting horrible!" said Lovelace, moving his chair. "He has the cold-blooded cruelty of the North, without the impulsiveness of the South. He should whip no nigger of mine!"

"The horse and the harness, the ox and the yoke, must be well acquainted," said Martin. "The beast that is best broken does the most work, and takes to it most kindly. The relation of man and negro is not one of mutual agreement. It is the relation of Force. I know my

business. I subdue the black animal, or the black animal subdues me. I see the stern alternative. You must trample ambition out of him. Therefore, I say flagellate, flog, cut, slash, and, if necessary, shoot, hang, and burn!"

Broadbent's eyes, which had been fixed in thoughtful contemplation on the ceiling, rolled calmly down upon Lowenthal, who was studying him with all his powers of concentration.

"He's just my man," muttered the planter, "or he's not my man at all."

"Impassive devil!" said Lovelace.

"I give you *carte blanche*," said the planter, by and by. "Whip and pickle to your heart's content. If you hear any mutinous talk, shoot, and welcome. And it would be well to creep among the quarters at night to see what's going on. There are alarming whispers on the wind. Servile insurrections are feared. We don't want our throats cut by our slaves. The Yankee fleet is off Port Royal, the colonel informs me, and there's likely to be fighting. Allow not a hand to leave the plantation. Don't let them be loitering about, and have them in their huts at dark. By-the-by, how is that runaway girl that Dykes brought in the day before yesterday? You didn't quite finish her, I suppose?"

"She is an example to all that behold her. The dogs, perhaps, took hold somewhat sharper than was needful, and in my wrath I was rather too free with the rod, considering that she was weak from fasting and weariness; but she can lie on her face with tolerable ease, and if fever does not set in, she will be well in a few weeks. I am not a hard man, friend Roscoe."

"A very lamb!" muttered Lovelace.

"One word more," added Martin. "I would have the man Benjamin, whose surname is Dykes, use more discretion in the taking of runaways. It is not well to have them returned bitten, and so faint from loss of blood that the whip cannot be profitably employed. I know my business."

"I think you may be trusted," answered Lowenthal, deliberately. He then arose and walked with Martin to the door. "If you prove what you seem, you have a friend in me. If you play the hypocrite, the devil may be sooner or deceived than I. I may have work for you—confidential work. That Peter Rust has not turned out well. He's a mule!"

Broadbent nodded, as if he understood.

"Nothing goes on up there as I expected," added the planter, with a lowering of the voice, and an upward motion. "If I call on you for aid, there will be a secret to keep. A short time will determine. Go, and look well to your business."

"Fear not for me," responded Martin, with that puzzling equanimity and steadiness that, at times, were so baffling to the planter. "In truth, I will be prudent, discreet, circumspect, and, as I may say, wary."

With no more ceremony than he made at entering, Martin Broadbent went with heavy and measured tread out of the house.

## CHAPTER XV.

ELA.

The following night, it will be remembered, was unusually dark. The negro quarters were remarkably quiet. Martin Broadbent, with an overseer's whip under his arm, passed among the huts, and entered the meanest and most solitary of them all. An observer might have remarked that his movements were quicker and his steps lighter than common. Pushing open the door, he went in softly. Over a small fire of pine-knots, a young girl sat shivering, with the most forlorn and hopeless expression. She was about eighteen years of age, with a complexion whiter than Martin's, a handsome nose, and a lithe and graceful figure. Her eyes were large and soft; her features refined and delicate. Her hand, on which her head was resting, was white and tapering, with no dark tracery of negro blood on the nails. She was pretty enough to make one's heart ache.

Hearing the creaking of the door, she looked up languidly. Seeing the athletic figure of Martin Broadbent, with the whip under his arm, a prolonged shuddering seized her. With trembling fingers she drew a tattered shawl about her shoulders, and breathing hard and hurriedly, awaited silently the pleasure of the man whose power she had reason to dread.

Martin Broadbent seemed in no hurry to begin his cruelties. He stood with folded arms, watching the mute terror of the girl. In that beautiful young face he found something to fix his attention. His chest heaved, and the girl plainly saw his quickened respiration. She dared not lift her eyes, nor entreat, nor remonstrate. She knew the mercy of overseers. She understood the crime of which she had been guilty.

"Ela—thou art called Ela, I hear," said Martin Broadbent, presently—"thou hast run away!"

A shiver, only, answered him.

"To run away, is to defraud thy lawful master, who owns thy soul and body."

The shawl slipped from the white shoulders, and Martin saw them thrill and redden.

"Slavery," continued Martin, somewhat hoarsely, "is said to be one of God's own institutions; and to run away from it is to fly into the face of Providence. Ahem!" Martin stopped and coughed. The Adam's apple in his throat appeared to be choking him. "Therefore"—he coughed again—"having run away from an indulgent master, whose will is thy law, and having no right to thyself, and—and—" the Adam's apple troubled him again—"and having given him much trouble to catch thee with

dogs, not to mention the money paid to Ben Dykes, it becomes my duty, as a faithful overseer, to give thee a severe whipping."

There was another pause. She drew the shawl more tightly about her person.

"Drop thy shawl, Ela. If thou hast fortitude to bear thy punishment, I will spare thee the shame of the whipping-post."

The pine-knots sent up a blood-red flame. Contrasted with the glare of the blaze, the features of Broadbent were ghastly white.

"Strike!" murmured Ela. "I will bear it."

"Thy skin," answered Martin, "is soft and tender, and my hand is strong. I fear thou wilt give me trouble. I strike not senseless cloth." The overseer made a show of measuring the distance with his whip.

Ela reluctantly let fall her shawl. She let it go as if modesty were going with it.

"Whip, but do not shame me!" she cried, leaning forward, and pressing her hands over her eyes. She held her breath for the expected blows.

"Scourging is for the back!" muttered Martin.

"Do not mind. The clothes are thin!" sobbed Ela. "You can strike the harder. 'And if you'll give me death, you will be my friend. If I could die, I would!'"

The heart of the girl seemed breaking. As she crouched there upon her knees, with her head bowed, and her person quivering, she was a living realization of beauty in grief.

Martin Broadbent threw down the whip as if it had been a serpent.

Feeling no blows, the girl timidly looked up. Martin was contemplating her with an expression so singular, that she knew not what to think.

"Girl, arise!" he said huskily.

She obeyed mechanically.

"Ah! you will be so cruel that I shall not have strength to stand."

"Heartless monster! Why do you prolong my suspense?" she added, seeing Martin standing still and silent.

"What put thee upon the madness of running away?" asked Martin, abruptly.

"What matters it? I ran away, was brought back, and am to be murdered by you!" she answered, instinctively crossing her arms on her bosom to shield it and them from the lash.

"Thy speech is not that of the common negro," said Martin, trying to be calm.

"Negro!" exclaimed the girl, indignantly. "Smooth-voiced hypocrite! God knows I am not a negro. Look!" She turned upon him in burning anger and blushing shame. She sobbed convulsively. "See this white skin! See these hands! See this long black hair!" Her air, her gestures, were full of dignity. Maidenly pride and modesty outraged, found utterance.

"What was thy crime?" demanded Martin, with pale lips.

The girl drew herself up proudly, and looked at him steadily, said:

"Virtue!"

The tone and the manner thrilled him. He set his teeth firmly together, and curbed the strong feelings that seemed on the point of overpowering him.

"How long hast thou been there?"

Martin made a motion toward the house.

Three miserable weeks, shut up like a criminal, and kept from those whom pity might tempt to ask questions. Oh, if you were human, you might know why I was there, and why I fled! These rags are not mine; they were forced upon me to humble me. I said I would not be that, and he said I should be a slave."

"Lowenthal?" said Martin.

"Ay! It was whispered in his household that he had a refractory slave-girl shut up in the west wing. I suppose the infamous tale was believed. I can betray no one; but I had an opportunity to leave the house, and you know what happened."

"Did the dogs wound thee?" asked Martin, hurriedly.

She held up the torn shawl; there were spots of blood on it. While she was giving this mute testimony, she was seized with another paroxysm of shivering and trembling.

"My God!" exclaimed Martin. "Is this the civilization of the nineteenth century? My poor, poor girl!"

"What?" murmured Ela, vacantly. "What words are these? Who speaks?"

"Thy friend speaks."

"My friend? Alas, I have none!"

"Thou hast. Behold him! He is before thee."

Martin advanced, his usually stern face soft and gentle in its meaning. Ela clasped her hands and gazed at him with incredulity, then, with a cry of joy, sank on her knees at his feet.

"Thou art an angel," she cried, "and not a man! God has transformed thee; if not, I am going mad."

"Mad thou art not more than I am an angel. Be calm," responded Martin, greatly affected.

"What means this goodness?" sobbed Ela. "Will you save me from him? Have you the power to protect me?"

"Hear me, unhappy girl! I swear to thee, by every object that I hold sacred, that I will stand between thee and Lowenthal. To harm one hair of this head"—he touched her hair gently—"he shall first kill me. Be assured. Thy friend I am, now and forever!"

Martin Broadbent spoke in a voice low and solemn. His tones dropped on Ela's ears like notes of heavenly music.

"I should have known that voice. Its light-

est accents should have dissipated my terrors. And yet, I thought you were stern." She seized his hand and pressed it to her hot forehead. "Now I am safe," she murmured, like one dreaming. "Now my soul grows calm. Now my thoughts flow upward prayerfully." She paused, then added: "Am I, am I not mad?"

"All is well!"

Martin turned to the door quickly. He saw a form or a shadow through the crevice. At first, he was in doubt; but shadows make no noise, and this did. He touched again the silky head of Ela, but so significantly, so warningly, that she looked up. She saw that hand she had so lately feared, held toward her in silent admonition, and knew there was danger. She was in the attitude of prayer, and she mentally prayed.

Martin drew a pistol; he leveled it; he fired. There was a fall and a groan. Ela saw the movement and a flash, and the report nearly stunned her; but she did not stir.

Martin went out and drew in the body of a man. She dared not look.

"This will ruin you!" she gasped.

"Nay, it saves me! Be not in dread. This was a spy of Lowenthal's. Had he gone away unseen, both thou and I were indeed in danger."

A light from the pine brand streamed upon the man's face. He was dead. Martin's bullet had passed through his brain.

"It is a negro," said Ela, in an awed voice.

"No," answered Martin, scrutinizing the stiffening features. "It is a white man, with his face and hands blackened."

He considered a moment.

"Hast thou the courage to remain five minutes alone with this body?" he asked.

"I have," replied Ela, firmly.

"Give me thy shawl, then."

The young woman gave him the shawl. He covered the face of the corpse with it.

"Now I am going," he said. "Canst trust thyself, Ela?"

"After what has passed, what have I to fear?" she answered. Then she heard Martin walking away. She was alone with that which the living fear. What was it? Clay. Harmless clay, now, for the evil had gone out of it. Devils and angels dwell in these clay houses, and when they have moved out, neither good nor evil remain. The devil of this tenement being gone, there was nothing to dread.

She thought these thoughts; but the wall of darkness around her, and the red rays of the pine knots darting against it, and creeping over the body like serpents of fire, created unpleasant images in her brain.

## CHAPTER XVI.

BABEL.

Martin Broadbent walked rapidly toward the house, his mind much agitated by recent

events. The same stillness prevailed in the slave-quarters that was observable when he passed over the same ground a short time before. As he approached the mansion, he threw inquiring looks upward to the window where Peter Rust was in custody. There was no light there. A light had burned there the previous night, which he had watched with interest. His suggestive brain shaped many conjectures as he drew near that house of mystery. It was dark, dark. He stopped near the angle of the gable. He heard a sound like the rattling of cordage, or the creaking of a gate, and by fixing his eyes steadfastly, he discerned a dark object swinging to and fro in the air. He stepped backward to screen himself from sight, and saw the vibrating body slip gradually to the ground and hurry away. He knew this to be Peter Rust; and something, which he first thought was a little black dog, but which proved to be a little black boy, in a tow-shirt, followed him.

"Thank Heaven!" muttered Martin. "A burden is lifted from my conscience."

Passing to the rear of the house, he crossed the garden and entered by a private door. Without knowing it, he passed Milrose and Angeline in the dark, narrow hall. He went directly to the top of the dwelling, where Babel was keeping his silent vigil. He found him asleep. Laying his hand on his shoulder, he said:

"Awake, Babel!"

The black clutched his blunderbuss, and leaped automatically to his feet.

"Come, Babel!"

The giant rubbed his eyes.

"Shake off thy stupor," resumed Martin. "I have need of thee."

Babel looked at him inquiringly.

"Thou mayst have tongue and ears," added the overseer. "Lowenthal rode away in haste this morning, and has not yet come back."

"What do you want, my master?" asked Babel, recovering his lost faculties. "One might have expected a harsh voice from that repulsive face, but it was simply deep and strong. It had been locked up by his iron will, but never lost."

"Leave your gun and follow me."

"To death, my master!"

Placing his blunderbuss against the wall, he went with Martin submissively. No more was said till they reached the hut where Ela and the body were.

"Hast kept thy courage?"

"I have kept the shadows behind me," replied Ela. "Think of yourself. Here is a murder—I mean, here is a death to be accounted for. It is a deserved death, I do believe; but it may be fearfully embarrassing. I tremble for you!"

"Be calm, Ela."

When ever Martin said to her, "Be calm," she

seemed stronger. His firm voice infused into her being mysterious energy.

"Babel," he said, pointing to the body, "behold my work! He came to betray, and I slew him."

The black uncovered the face and examined it.

"What thinkest, Babel?"

He shook his head, and glanced at El

"Fear her not. Thy tongue must ache with silence. Shake off its dreadful muteness for a few moments. It will do thee good."

"Master, when you bid me, I speak."

"A miracle!" exclaimed Ela. "The deaf and dumb hears and speaks!"

"Hast seen, Babel, then?" asked Martin, surprised.

"I have seen him often from my window, and I have heard Lowenthal boast of his dumb dog. But do not heed me till this ghastly witness is removed. I cannot forget that it was for me that this deed was done."

"Not for thee only. The world will be better for it, as gardens are better for plucking up the weeds," Martin answered.

"Master," said Babel, "since I may talk, it shall be to the point. I think I can take care of this. But I must wash off the black."

"Do as thou wilt. I can trust thee," Martin replied, watching the negro's countenance closely. "Peter Rust has escaped. I did not see thee, but he is free."

"That is good! I thought he would get away, and it is better for my plan."

The black went for water, and returning with some, washed the burnt cork from the dead man's face and hands. He then took up the body, and started off with it. Martin followed him. He carried his burden toward the house.

"Babel! Babel! What wouldst thou do?" whispered Martin.

"Master, you said you would trust me," answered the black, pausing just beneath the window from which Peter Rust had escaped.

"Yes; I remember," returned Martin, reflectively. "I will not recall my words."

Just then his hand touched the rope that still dangled from the window.

"Ah! what is this?" he said. "It is the rope by which Peter descended."

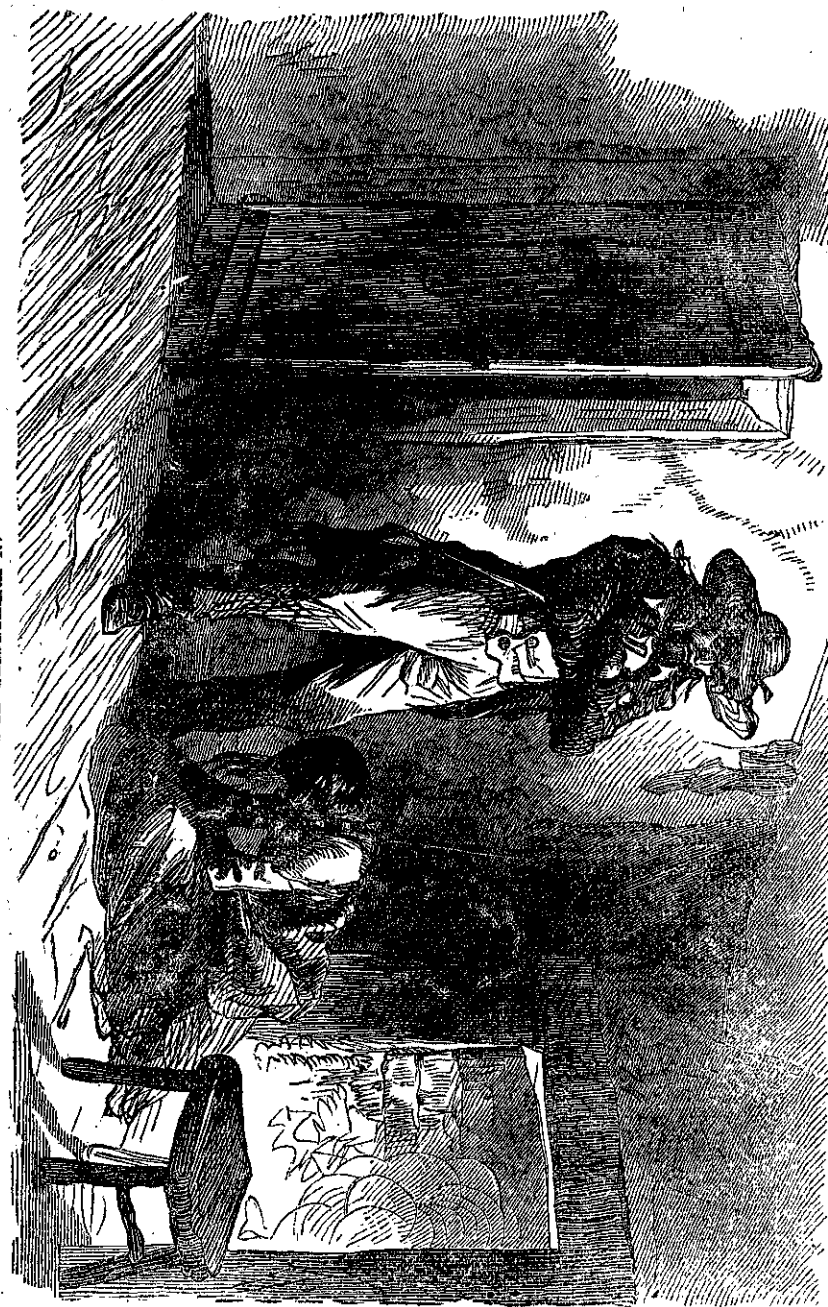
"Give me the end of it, master," said Babel.

Martin handed him the end of the rope, and making a noose in it, Babel slipped it under the arms of the dead man.

"Come, master. My work is above, now."

Babel hurried through the private door and the winding staircase to the place where he had kept watch, Martin at his heels. He lighted a lamp that hung in the passage, and drawing the outer bolt of the door, threw himself against it with such force that the inside fastenings gave way. What could withstand those broad shoulders, when the will went with them?

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND.



Martin followed his movements with wonder and curiosity. The giant darted to the window, seized the rope, and drew up the body. It fell into the room like a clod, as it was. Babel unfastened the rope from the joist, coiled it up, and gave it to Martin, saying :

"When you go out, master, put it out of sight."

After this, he shut the window, and dragging the body, proceeded to place it a little upon one side, with one arm partly under the head, where, in his judgment, Peter Rust would have fallen, had Lowenthal's shot taken effect. When he had arranged the corpse carefully and skillfully, he directed Martin's attention to the bullet-hole in the door ; and the overseer began to comprehend his purpose.

"Master, it is done," said Babel. "He lays as if a ball through that door had killed him. You see, he was shot through the head, and died without a struggle. Master, have I done well?"

"Thou hast done well!"

Leaving the prison, Babel closed the door, pushed the bolt, and resumed his blunderbuss.

While Martin was going back to the hut, he heard Lowenthal returning.

#### CHAPTER XVII.

##### IN JUDGMENT.

Lowenthal came home excited, and in an exultant mood. He drank deeply, ate nothing, went to bed, slept heavily, and awoke in the morning with a headache, and in a detestable temper. Having breakfasted with Colonel Lovelace, he had a prisoner brought in for examination. Though holding no regular commission from the pseudo Confederate Government, he exerted an authority that was sometimes both lawless and summary. The man who controls a few hundred negroes and a plantation which you cannot see across with a glass, is, in all essentials, an autocrat and a despot.

The person brought in to be interrogated and adjudged, was a young man of twenty-six or seven, of good figure and firm bearing. His complexion was clear, his face exhibiting none of those marks of dissipation that characterize men of free ideas and convivial habits. Although pale, he had by no means a sickly or effeminate look. He had calm eyes, and a quick, vigorous intellect.

He appeared in the presence of Lowenthal and Lovelace, guarded by three tall, stoop-shouldered fellows in gray clothes. Lowenthal put a glass to his eye, and looked him over superciliously. He was about to make an insulting remark, when a servant announced that there was a gentleman at the door who desired to see him immediately.

"Let him wait!" said Lowenthal.

The servant replied that the person would not be refused.

"We will see," said the planter, frowning. "Begone!"

The slave was backing tremblingly from the room, when he was unceremoniously thrust aside by the person seeking audience. He entered, followed by a stout negro. He was a man of middle age, with black eyebrows, gray hair, and long gray beard. He wore green spectacles, which concealed the color and expression of the eyes. Had it not been for the silvery beard, one might have said that there was a young face on an old head.

This not-to-be-denied visitor was of slight figure, yet strikingly compact and shapely. His motions were remarkably quick and springy for one of his age. Resolution and decision marked every look and gesture.

The negro who attended him was taller than Babel, straight as a flag-staff, and in symmetry a bronze Hyperion. The African lips, the flattened nose, the low forehead, the crispy hair, were entirely wanting ; there being substituted for them, comely lips, a straight nose, a broad brow, and dark hair. His skin was of a soft yellow, by no means displeasing. There was a certain air of repose in his features, that indicated self-reliance and power. He was plainly yet respectably dressed. He kept very near his master.

Lowenthal was annoyed at this intrusion, and whatever feeling counseled forbearance, it was not good will.

"Markthaler, I think your business would have kept," were his first words of greeting, spoken ungraciously.

"Business!" replied the other. "That is a word I like to hear. Come ; let us attend to it at once."

"I am busy. Matters of state at present occupy my attention. When the safety of the Confederacy is concerned, I have no time of my own," answered Lowenthal, leveling his glass again at the prisoner. "You will oblige me," he added, "by retiring a few moments, while I question this suspicious person."

"Pardon me, sir," said Markthaler, familiarly. "What is your business is also mine. Our interests are somewhat the same, I think. If the South goes to the devil, I suppose you and I, individually and respectively, will go with it. So I will just sit down here and look over my papers, while you look over your man there, with his hands tied. Jacob, stand behind me."

Markthaler dropped himself carelessly into the easiest chair in the room, and the yellow Apollo placed himself behind him.

Lowenthal gnawed his lips with vexation.

Lovelace looked from one to the other in supreme surprise. He was not accustomed to hear Lowenthal addressed so cavalierly. He whispered :

"Throw him out of the window!"

"Unfortunately," muttered the planter surli-



ly, "he's the only man in the world that I can't throw out of the window."

"What is he?" Lovelace asked, in the same tone.

"A money-devil! A d—d blood-sucker!" answered Lowenthal, setting his teeth together. "Can you not get along without blood-suckers?" Lovelace inquired, still more surprised. "Your fortune is princely. You can buy all the usurers in the country," he added.

"It's an extraordinary crisis," answered the planter, flushing, "and—and—in short, I need money. Loans are sometimes wonderfully convenient."

Lovelace scanned the planter's face for a moment, and said no more.

"Pray don't heed me," said Markthaler, pulling some papers from his coat-pocket. "While you are sending your suspicious fellow to be shot or hanged, I shall amuse myself very well with these columns of figures. I hope you feel quite well, my dear Lowenthal. You have those heats and chills yet, I observe. You should take quinine. Quinine is the stuff for these intermittents."

The planter clutched the arms of his chair with his white hands, and tried to look tranquil.

"I have no need of money-devils," said Lovelace, leaning toward the planter. "I can throw him out of the window as well as not."

The colonel started toward Markthaler, as if he meant to put his threat in execution.

The first obstacle he met were the eyes of Jacob, which beamed on him like infernal furnaces; the second was the voice of Lowenthal calling him back.

"Colonel Lovelace, I think?" said the money-changer, nodding slightly. "Happy to meet you, sir. You'll look out for the Yankee fleet, I'll warrant."

Lovelace returned to his seat, unaccountably put down and baffled. He was dissatisfied with Lowenthal and with himself.

"Heed not the usurer, colonel. Money-lenders, like death, cannot be done away with. People must die and be buried, you know, which is a great nuisance," said the planter, in a hurried undertone. Then to the prisoner: "Young man, look at me. I want your attention."

The prisoner turned upon Lowenthal eyes so clear and steady that he was confused, and betrayed more guilt than the accused.

"What is your name?" he demanded.

"Frederick North. Had it been unknown to you, you could have asked it with better grace," replied the young man.

"Confine your remarks to the questions," returned the planter, haughtily. "As for knowing people, my knowledge is usually limited to gentlemen."

"Of what am I accused?" asked North.

"Of everything but loyalty to the Confeder-

acy," retorted Lowenthal. "There are but two classes of people among us, friends and foes."

"You are accused of being a Unionist," said Lovelace.

"A dreadful crime!" said a voice, that seemed to come from Markthaler's direction.

Casting an angry glance that way, Lowenthal saw him busy with his papers.

"Are you both accuser and judge?" Frederick demanded.

"I can produce witnesses, if necessary; but it is my pleasure to question you in the presence of Colonel Lovelace. These are not times to be over nice. In South Carolina we have a remarkably short way of dealing with traitors. It is well understood that your language, on several occasions, has been treasonable; and, in fact, that you are in correspondence with the enemy. I might have had you shot down yesterday when you resisted my men; but I preferred to condemn or acquit you out of your own mouth. Were you not lurking about my house, at a late hour, night before last?"

"Frederick North's cheeks flushed, and he replied, after a moment of confusion: 'I decline to answer that question.'"

"You hear, colonel?" He refuses to answer," observed Lowenthal. "Do you, or do you not, believe in the Confederacy?" he added.

"To what Confederacy do you refer?" asked North.

"To the Confederate States of America!" replied the planter, pompously.

"I have heard of such a concern," said Frederick, coolly; "but I know of no such government on earth."

"Insolent!" exclaimed Lovelace.

"He ignores the government he lives under!" resumed Lowenthal, with affected astonishment.

"Perhaps, young man," he went on, with increasing severity of manner, "you will next speak ill of the President, Vice-President, and of the Southern Congress?"

"He cannot rise to such a sublimity of infamy as that!" interrupted Markthaler, with singular sang froid.

"Will you mind your business, sir?" cried Lowenthal, quite thrown from his moral equilibrium.

"I have never troubled the President or Vice-President," replied Frederick, quietly. "As for the other thing you mentioned—the Southern Congress—I have never met it anywhere in my travels. All I wish is liberty and my natural rights. You have seized me like a felon, and dragged me here with violence and insult; and if the time ever comes when I can meet you face to face, on equal terms, as man should meet his fellow-man, I will reward your friendly offices as they deserve. At present you have the advantage. You are surrounded by your tools and ruffians, and it only remains for me to bear your injustice and brutality as I may."

"Let us put an end to this," said Lovelace, impatiently. "Will you or won't you, fight for the new flag?"

"New flag? Show it to me!" replied North, maintaining his provoking composure.

"It is for your interest, Mr. North, to treat this subject seriously," said the colonel. "It is easy enough to see which way your sympathies point, but we choose to give every man a chance to vindicate himself. If you can purge yourself of treason, I shall not be sorry; but if you go on in this disrespectful and contemptuous manner, you must not complain if we award you the fate of traitors."

"My condemnation is a foregone conclusion. I can say, conscientiously, however, that I have taken no part in this rebellion. I fear no man; and I do not mind telling you, plainly, that I consider this insurrectionary movement a stupendous wickedness, which will soon culminate in overthrow and disgrace. If there is treason in that remark, you are welcome to it."

"Will you accept a lieutenant's commission in the Confederate army?" demanded Lovelace.

"I will not!" answered North, with disdain. "I would sooner take a plantation-hoe and go to the cotton-fields with your negroes."

"He's at our niggers!" sneered Lowenthal. Then to Frederick: "I am glad you thought of it, sir, for we intend to put the mudsills to raising cotton after we have subjected the North. Go on, sir; you'll soon hang yourself."

"Colonel Lovelace," said the young man, with earnestness, "if I loved your cause, if it was a high and worthy one, if it deserved the support and commendation of mankind, I would fight for it."

"We are struggling for liberty," stammered Lovelace, quite embarrassed by North's bold and outspoken sentiments.

"It is not true, sir! You are arrayed in arms against human freedom. You are making these fair plantations the grave of Liberty. Shame on the men who lead armies in obedience to the despotic will of a few lordly cotton-planters! What do these cotton-planters complain of? Grown insolent and imperious by swinging the slave-whip over half-naked negroes, they wish to degrade free labor to the level of chattel labor. That ambition is vain. Hunt and kill Union men as rigorously as you will, the Union sentiment can never be extinguished. I have had my say. Go on with your miserable mummery as fast as you please."

"You were born at the North?"

"Thank God, yes!" answered Frederick. "My heart has not been corrupted by your cherished institutions. The enchantress has not yet captivated me."

"This is a very dangerous person," observed the colonel. "He might raise the devil among niggers and weak-minded people. Yet I hardly know what to do with him."

"Hang him!" suggested Lowenthal. "Burn him!" said Markthaler, like a distant echo.

Lowenthal gave him a savage look.

Lovelace frowned.

Neither were pleased. These unexpected interruptions were singularly distasteful, particularly to the planter.

"You have certainly a very nice government, when people can be hanged without judge or jury!" retorted North.

"A few hangings would no doubt be salutary," said Lovelace, reflectively. "But it is my opinion that this person had better be kept a few days for future examination."

"Before you express yourself more fully, colonel," observed Lowenthal, hastily, "we will hear what one of these men has to say concerning our prisoner."

He pointed to one of the gaunt fellows that came in with North.

"Step forward, Mr. Hillhouse."

The man made an awkward advance. A more singular figure it would be difficult to imagine. Nature had cheated him in the measure of his chest, and heaped him up in the measure of his back. He was hollow-breasted and stoop-shouldered. Generally speaking, the individual whom Lowenthal had for the first time in his life addressed as Mr. Hillhouse, was thin enough for kindlings. He had bilious eyes, bilious face, scraggy beard and stiff hair, neither of which were of any particular color. His teeth were snags, and his snags were very black. His voice was a contralto. His ideas of time and place were exceedingly vague, and in giving his evidence he continually lost the unities.

Hillhouse was a specimen still of Southern life. Lowenthal's object in bringing him forward, was to plant a burning jealousy in the heart of Lovelace that should operate fatally against Frederick North; and the testimony of Hillhouse, which was well calculated to excite uneasiness in the heart of a lover, will be found in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### LOVE AND TREASON.

"Speak up boldly, sir," said the planter, encouragingly. "Don't let the prisoner embarrass you." Then, to Frederick: "Young man, you will lose that anger, presently."

"Well, ye see," began the witness, dragging his hair desperately with his hooked fingers. "I hadn't been 'thar long, and war not lookin' for nothin', and war not spectin' nothin', and war not—"

"Had not been where long?" asked Lovelace.

"No, I hadn't!" resumed the witness. "And I war settin' under a tree. A blacker night I never seed nowhars. The darkness war so thick that you might hung your clothes on't to dry."



"Will you inform me where you were?" interrupted the colonel, emphatically.

"Under a tree, as I told ye!" said Hillhouse, curtly. "And it were awful right down dark. It war so dark you could see it a stickin' through the openin's in the trees, like the eends o' burnt pine logs. I'd taken a leetle white-face with Ben Dykes, which had settled in my legs some- 'at; but my mind was uncommon c'lar. I haven't seldom felt better."

"Get to your story as soon as you can, comfortably," said Lowenthal, nervously.

"As I laid there, with my head agin the pine tree—with my 'magination floatin' beautiful—I growed mighty patriotic; and sez I to myself: 'What's liberty without life?' sez I. 'Tain't nothin', sez I. 'Give me life, or give me liberty,' sez I. 'If I can't have one,' sez I, 'give me 'tother,' sez I."

"Never mind what you said to yourself, sir," interrupted Lovelace, making a wry face.

"Better let him go on!" observed North, with a smile. "He's a representative man."

"His is very important evidence!" said Markthaler, looking up from under his green glasses.

"If you continue to interrupt these proceedings, I shall insist upon your leaving the room!" cried Lowenthal, angrily.

"I am not an easy person to get rid of," said the money-changer, placidly.

"Wal," resumed Hillhouse, "I hearn 'em talkin'."

"Heard whom talking?" demanded Lovelace, petulantly.

"Him and her!" said Hillhouse. "Them it was I hearn."

"Him and her!" muttered Lovelace. "This is simple nonsense, Lowenthal."

"They stood on the balcony," continued the witness. "'What ye up thar for?' sez she, right smart. 'For you,' sez he. 'It's dangerous,' sez she. 'I don't keer,' sez he. 'You'll compromise me,' sez she. 'Not for the world,' sez he."

"Stop a moment," said Lowenthal, anxious to save the remaining patience of the colonel. "Was one of the parties this young man?"

"So I should judge," responded Hillhouse. "It was his voice, and no mistake. And as for her'n, there ain't another like it in all these yer parts. Wal, mebbe her talk was like melted music, and mebbe not!"

Lovelace was now attentive, but not at ease. He wished to ask who it was that had a voice like melted music. He knew of but one person who had such a voice. He wished not, he dared not, to believe it was that person. He had not the courage to ask the question that trembled on his tongue.

"Raise a window, Jacob," said Markthaler, with a disgusted look. "There is a strong odor of whisky here!"

The yellow Hyperion opened a window, under a heavy fire of frowns.

"Stand behind me, Jacob," added the money-changer.

"It war mighty dark, it war," farther deposed the witness.

"So you have informed us several times!" said Lovelace, throwing himself back in his chair, with a hopeless groan.

"You could see the fag-eends of the night stickin' out atween the trees, like chunks o' charcoal. I'd took some old rye, I had, and my mind was right c'lar. 'Here's treason, I reckon!' sez I. 'Here's love and 'lovement,' sez I, to myself. 'Fine times these be,' sez I, 'when young men drop down on the balcony, like ripe apples, to talk nonsense to young gals!' 'Milrose! Milrose!' sez he."

Lovelace started, and grew pale around the lips. His fears were confirmed. If this man were reliable, the truth was out. Milrose Dorn had a lover, that lover was a Federal, and that Federal was before him. His feelings were not to be envied.

An insidious smile lurked on Lowenthal's lips. He cast a sidelong, searching glance upon him. He had calculated where the shaft would strike, and now, without pity, saw it quivering in the wound. He looked from Lovelace to North—from his unconscious instrument to his victim. He had laid his trap artfully, and both had fallen into it.

"Wal, if I hadn't been near, I shouldn't heern 'em. The pine tree war right close to the balcony. She seemed skeered, but not the least mite put out. He got hold of her hand, I allow, and talked about his feelin's. Finally, she sort o' gave in, and listened to him patient. Lowenthal was spoke of, and it war sort o' 'greed upon that there war some kind o' danger."

Frederick North tried to confuse Hillhouse by the steadiness of his gaze; but he might as well have stared at the wall.

The cotton-planter enjoyed the scene.

"She didn't say what the danger war; but it 'peared like the idee haunted her day and night. It r'ally seemed as if the poor gal was afeard o' bein' shet up, and put out the world in some strange way."

Markthaler laid down his papers, and looked at Lowenthal as if he would read every thought that was passing within him. He then whispered to Jacob.

Lovelace turned in his seat, to get a better view of his friend.

"Confine yourself to the treason of the prisoner," said the planter, coldly, trying to suppress the witness with his eyes.

"Be quiet, Lowenthal!" said Lovelace, hastily.

"Look at me, Hillhouse. Did Miss Milrose seem really afraid of Lowenthal?"

"Wal, she did, and no mistake!" answered Hillhouse, promptly and emphatically. "And

she said she hadn't never had no control of her property. But that didn't seem to worry her like 'tother thing did."

Hillhouse chanced to look at the planter, and was confounded to see him pale with rage.

"Your witness," said North, sarcastically, "is like a two-edged sword; he cuts both ways."

"You are drunk, sir!" cried Lowenthal, severely.

The witness glanced wonderingly from one to another.

"Proceed, sir," said Lovelace, who was in a cold perspiration.

"'Twar right down love-makin'," said the witness, desperately. "Never hearn sich, never! To look at him, you wouldn't s'pose he could speak in such a chaffin' sort o' way. It war 'like hearin' a book read, full o' flamber-gasted words; but they all come in mighty pat, they did. I allers thought I war some 'mong gals. But Lord love ye! this yer chap took the conceit out of me mighty sudden."

"What said the young lady?" faltered Lovelace.

"Wal, her talk war jest as good as his'n. Long towards the last on t, 'twar better 'n better. 'Twar a genuine case, and it war all right atween 'em. While he was vowin' and promis-in', a winder war shoved up. The gal tole him to go; and fust thing I knowed, down he plumped, right aside me. Then somebody fired a pistol, and this here chap run away as fast as his legs could take him over the ground. Wal, I'd took a leetle old rye with Ben Dykes, which had settled in my legs; but my mind war mighty c'lar." Hillhouse dragged his hair again with his hooked fingers, in an unsuccessful effort to rake out a new thought. "Ye see, I war settin' under a pine-tree, and the darkness it war so thick—"

"That will do, sir!" interposed Lowenthal. Then, to Lovelace: "I hope you are satisfied, colonel?"

"I am satisfied that your step-daughter has a lover, sir!" answered Lovelace, with an ill grace. "There are other matters that I do not so well understand."

"I can see the love plainly enough," observed Markthaler, dryly. "but not the treason!"

"It is quite immaterial what you see, or what you do not see!" retorted the planter, in bad temper.

"Thar war treason enough to hang a dozen men," said Hillhouse; "but I didn't mention it, because it war not so interestin' as 'tother."

Encouraged by an approving nod from Lowenthal, he went on.

"'The new flag is a rag,' sez he, 'and the rebellion a monstrous wickedness,' sez he. 'Don't say that out loud,' sez she; 'and keep out o' the way, or you'll come to grief,' sez she. 'They'll hang you for a spy,' sez she. And there war more more o' that kind o' talk, and he

war very bitter on the 'Federates. He war down on cotton and niggers. It war dreadful aggravatin' to hear him run on about our cotton and our niggers. It tetched me in a tender spot, it did. I'd took some old rye, my legs war weak, but my mind it war mighty c'lar. I wanted to see his face; but it war uncommon dark, and you mought feel the fag-eends—"

"There is too much draught on this man, Lowenthal. Turn his damper," interrupted Markthaler, with a smile and a shrug. Then to Lovelace: "Which will you punish, colonel; the love or the treason?"

The Confederate officer gnawed his lips and reddened with anger.

"I have soldiers within call," he retorted; "and if you should find your way to the guard-house, or the whipping-post, do not be surprised."

The tall, symmetrical figure of Jacob loomed higher and higher behind his master's chair. His nostrils expanded, his eyes shot rays of defiance.

Markthaler sat cool and unmoved, toying with a slip of paper.

"You represent," he answered, calmly, "the soldier-power, while I represent the cash-power. Cash is greater than cotton. Cotton is local, cash universal. With cash in hand, we marry the prettiest girls, and live in the finest houses."

This remark, though quietly uttered, touched the officer in the most sensitive spot. He wished to marry Milrose, but he had no cotton. He wished to marry Milrose, but he had no negroes. He wished to marry Milrose, but he had no cash. The colonel's chattels had been knocked down by the auctioneer before the siege of Sumter; and his cotton, unfortunately, had perished between the seed and the pod. Had it not been for this, there is no knowing how much he might have been worth. As it was, he sat there with a commission from Jeff Davis in his pocket, a large capital of family pride in his head, a good deal of rebellion in his heart, a major-generalship in the distance, and a splendid sword with which to slay the enemies of the South Carolina Nation.

The colonel, though young, brave, and good-looking, had a heart-disease, and that heart-disease was Milrose Dorn; and that young lady unconsciously kept him in a painful palpitation of hope and fear. He had tried to get cured of Milrose, but after several efforts, yielded to the malady, which had made fearful inroads on his peace of mind.

The singular testimony of Hillhouse revealed to him a secret of which he had been profoundly ignorant. It astounded him more than a burst of artillery. A feeling of disappointment, impossible to describe, swept over him; then came chagrin, and a desire to be avenged on some one, and whom so proper a subject of vengeance as Frederick North? He had a lingering

wish to be just; but jealousy and justice got mixed together, and disturbed the nice equilibrium of the balance which the metaphorical woman holds in her hand.

"The treatment of this case is very plainly indicated," said Lowenthal, sternly. "Extraordinary emergencies call for extraordinary measures. A file of men, colonel, twenty paces, a short, sharp word of command, and we are freed of a disloyal, traitorous citizen."

"You didn't mention a drum-head court-martial," observed Markthaler, with a slight sneer.

"He can expect no less," said Lovelace, excitedly. "We have more to fear from foes within, than from foes without. If we spare him the cord, he may thank our forbearance for it."

"How grateful I should be for this Confederate compassion!" exclaimed Frederick, with scorn. "But I confess that I do not yet see your mercy. If nocturnal, and perhaps imprudent, love-making be a capital crime, I plead guilty, and have no defence to offer. Even you, gallant colonel, may have committed that grave offence."

Lovelace writhed, and studiously avoided meeting the young man's eyes. This was a thrust that mortified and enraged him.

"Hanging," observed Markthaler, with an air of abstraction, "is no more than he deserves. But here is a paper that puzzles me." He held up a slip of paper, adjusted his green glasses methodically, and studied it with apparent interest. "As I was saying," he added, "hanging is none too good for him; but yet—the claims of mercy should not be disregarded. Let him be shot. This is a most remarkable signature!"

Markthaler pushed up his spectacles, pulled them down, sawed them sidewise across his nose, and became more intense in his examination of the paper.

"As I remarked, friend Lowenthal," he went on, "this young man merits a good shooting; and yet—ahem—and yet—how very annoying this writing is!"

By this time, the planter had his eyes fixed on the troublesome paper with a vague misgiving.

"I was about to add," resumed Markthaler, "that treason is a crime offensive alike to gods and men; but that mercy commends itself to both."

"Justice is a principle equally imperative," returned the planter, a cold perspiration appearing upon his forehead, "while human mercy is often mistimed and misplaced." Allow me to observe that your remarks are inopportune and impertinent. And as for your papers, this is not a fitting place to examine them. You may be very useful, sir, in your proper sphere, and there are times when your dirty

dollars give you importance; but if you presume too much upon your money-chests, you will commit an error, fatal alike to your interest and your safety."

The planter was chokingly angry, but endeavored to assume a dignity that a wrathful man can seldom successfully affect.

Frederick North looked inquisitively at the money-changer. There was an inexplicable something about the latter that excited his curiosity, and continually drew his attention.

"No doubt, but you are entirely correct," said the usurer, drawing from his pocket a watch studded with diamonds. It reflected a thousand rays of light. Lovelace had a vague remembrance of seeing the late Mrs. Lowenthal wear the same costly time-keeper. This recollection awakened unpleasant suspicions, and gave free scope to doubt and conjecture.

Lowenthal's confusion increased, and he kept glancing at the mysterious paper which the money-changer still held up. Wicked thoughts entered the planter's head. Here was a man holding a sword over him. Here was a calm, impudent fellow, covertly menacing him with destruction. Here was a low-born usurer aspiring to be his master. This could not be endured. His pride revolted at such a censorship. His hatred grew equal to his anger. He silently sentenced Markthaler.

Between the time of taking out the watch and the time of replacing it, the planter had mentally passed over a great deal of ground, and arrived at a very startling conclusion. He turned to Lovelace.

"Dispose of this person as you please; but I would suggest giving him his choice of death, or the ranks. Let him shoulder a musket, or stand at twenty paces before the muzzles of a dozen of them. What do you say?"

The officer reflected, if, indeed, he was capable of reflection at that moment.

"The suggestion is a good one. Young man, choose quickly. Will you take the gun and haversack, or the alternative?"

"Is not this rather summary?" asked Frederick, indignantly. "By what authority do you dispense life and death?"

"By the authority of power!" cried Lovelace. "Encamped yonder are a thousand men, that, in a military sense, are a thousand automata. They march, they countermarch, they wheel, they load, they fire, at my bidding. The country is in revolution. Is not that enough?"

"How long time do you grant me to decide whether I will suffer death, or fight against the best government in the world?" demanded North.

"You will answer at once," replied Lovelace, loftily.

Frederick was on the point of rejecting the gun and haversack with proud contempt, when



a warning gesture from Markthaler made him pause.

Lowenthal drew the colonel to a corner of the room, and conversed with him in a low tone. Availing himself of the opportunity, Markthaler approached the young man, and said, hurriedly:

"Accept the musket and the haversack, and all will be well." Having thus spoken, he went back to his seat and assumed his former indifference.

Frederick was so much surprised that he could not withdraw his gaze from him. Jacob made an affirmative and encouraging motion. Those two persons grew more enigmatical to him every moment. They exerted upon him a secret influence—a silent power.

Was this Markthaler his friend? What reason had he to be his friend? His words kept running through his mind: "Accept the musket and the haversack, and all will be well!" By a sudden revulsion of feeling, he resolved to be governed by this advice. When Lovelace returned and said, pre-emptorily:

"Your answer, sir?"

North answered:

"I yield to circumstances, sir. Give me the gun and knapsack."

The colonel heard this announcement with surprise. He had expected the young man would make a different decision, and adhere to it to the last. He could not wholly conceal his disappointment.

"You will find the service," he said, haughtily, "somewhat different from nocturnal love-making!"

"I shall have the honor, at least, of serving under a very chivalrous officer!" replied Frederick, with irony.

"One who will have an eye to your comfort, certainly," returned Lovelace, with peculiar meaning. "You may flatter yourself with probabilities of escape; but it will be my pleasure to reduce these probabilities to impossibilities."

"Your good will, Colonel Lovelace, I cannot doubt," answered Frederick, with dignity. "I shall bide my time with patience, and wait the turn of the tide."

"Away with him!" said Lovelace, imperiously. "Watch him well. If he attempts to run the guard, don't be sparing of your powder. Put him into Company A, Captain Middleton."

"I have much to thank you for, colonel!" said North, with a smile of contempt.

He was immediately hurried to camp, deprived of his comfortable garments, and hurried into a suit of dirty gray. Gun and equipments were assigned him, and, agreeable to orders, he was kept under surveillance. A position more unenviable could not have fallen to his lot.

## CHAPTER XIX.

MISSED.

When the three cadaverous soldiers had departed with North, Lowenthal approached Markthaler, and said, in a low voice:

"You have taken an unwarrantable liberty, sir. This meddling in my affairs is not to be endured. You mean to control my actions by holding over me that paper; but if you presume much on your power, you will commit a fatal mistake. I tell you. Beware!"

"Beware you!" answered the money-changer, with firmness. "You know the proverb about threatened people? A forgery, my friend, is no light affair, although it is sometimes the last delusive straw that drowning gentlemen clutch at. It is a throw of the dice on which is staked that which is worth more than life, and which by far outweighs the evil it is intended to cure."

"Be quiet! This is no place to discuss such a subject," rejoined Lowenthal, much disturbed.

"I will yet retrieve all."

"That is impossible!" exclaimed Markthaler, in a tone that startled the planter. "You cannot call back the past. You cannot make a fairer record. But that is your matter, not mine. Rush to ruin if you will, but do not draw others after you."

"I want not your morality, but your money!" sneered the planter, looking uneasily at Jacob and at Lovelace.

The latter was drumming on a window-pane, in a state of gloomy abstraction.

"I cannot ruin myself," said Markthaler.

"Money can not be had for the simple asking."

"Meet me to-night at Peter Rust's cabin," returned Lowenthal, hastily. "You know where that is—over yonder by the pines."

The money-changer gave him a searching look, as he asked:

"Why choose a spot so solitary?"

"It is needful. Do not fail to be there. What have you to fear?"

"Nothing. I did not say I was afraid. But sometimes, Lowenthal, you are impulsive."

The pale lips of the money-changer curled with contempt.

At that moment Babel entered the room. Interrupted by his heavy steps, each of the parties looked at him. He walked straight to Lowenthal, and stopping within a few feet of him, stood motionless.

The planter made an impatient gesture. Babel pointed upward with his right hand, then made the motions of hammering and sawing. The planter nodded that he understood that he meant Peter Rust. Babel fired a pistol in dumb show, then clapped both hands to his head, closed his eyes, and simulated death the best way he could, standing up, which was not very well; but his pantomime was perfectly intelligible to his master, who, making a signal for him

to stop his gesticulations and follow, left the room.

Alone with the giant, he caused him to rehearse his mute story, and afterward directed him how to dispose of the supposititious body of Peter Rust. It is not necessary to detail his method of communication, but Babel was instructed to take away the body at night and bury it in the pine woods. Having received his orders, the black went his way, and Lowenthal returned to his friends. Re-entering the room, to his surprise he perceived that Markthaler and Jacob had gone.

"Lowenthal," said Lovelace, rather moodily, "I am forced to remind you that I have not yet seen Milrose. You do not keep the ladies of your household under lock and key, I trust?"

These two men, so like each other in some respects, and so unlike in others, looked at each other sharply. Suspicion was a guest mutually entertained. Lovelace no longer felt that he could trust Lowenthal. Some portions of the evidence of Hillhouse disturbed his confidence and gave rise to strange conjectures. Milrose and the rebellion were the absorbing thoughts of his life, and Milrose stood first in importance.

"We have been so busy since your return, that there has been little time to attend to ladies," answered the planter, coldly. "I was about, however, to make you some amends by sending for Milrose."

He summoned a servant while he was speaking. A colored girl appeared, and was sent for her mistress. She came back with a dismayed countenance, and the almost incredible announcement that the young lady was not in her chamber, and could not be found. The girl told her short story with chattering teeth, for she knew the temper of her master.

"Where's Angeline?" demanded Lowenthal. "Can't find her nowhar, mars'r," faltered the girl.

Lovelace stared at his friend in amazement. "Tell some of the house-servants to look for her in the garden," said Lowenthal. "Some of you," he added, "will get out up. Begone!" Then to Lovelace: "I must go and look into this, colonel. Stay here; I will be back in an instant."

Lowenthal hurried to Milrose's chamber. One glance sufficed to enlighten him. There was a runaway air about the room that was plain to see. There was a nameless look of desertion and disorder there.

The planter was utterly confounded. The bird of golden plumage had escaped. He returned to Lovelace, startled and wonder-stricken. To the inquiring look of the colonel, he answered, briefly:

"Gone!"

"Gone?" repeated Lovelace, vaguely.

"Gone!" reiterated Lowenthal, with an oath.

"Where?" asked the officer, trying to get his understanding out of the fog.

"The devil knows!" retorted the planter, angrily.

"This surpasses my comprehension," muttered Lovelace. "There is a reason for this."

"There is a reason for everything, sir, but a woman's actions," vociferated Lowenthal. "While you are trying to find the reason, I shall try to find something without reason; and that is the girl, sir!"

"I am entirely mystified and amazed; but you may count on my assistance. At least, I shall aid you as faithfully as you have aided me."

Lovelace expressed, in voice, if not in manner, the misgivings which he felt respecting the planter. The latter understood him, and being in bad temper, answered, curtly:

"Do you accuse me of bad faith, sir?"

He assumed that dignity which he could sometimes successfully put on. It is a remarkable fact that guilty persons are apt to think themselves accused, and by a singular fatality, name the very thing they are guilty of. In nine cases out of ten, persons are sensitive about their hidden sins.

"I am sorry that you have accused yourself," said Lovelace, coldly. "Children who hide things always betray themselves by looking toward the spot where they are concealed."

"Sir, sir!" stammered Lowenthal. "This—this language, sir, demands explanation."

"There are other matters that need explanation," returned Lovelace, haughtily. "Let us wait till the hour of explanation comes. I am a firm friend, but a poor dupe."

Lowenthal had sense and shrewdness. He saw that they were hurrying toward a deadly quarrel; an event for which he was not prepared, and by which he might, in many ways, be the loser. Besides, he knew Lovelace was brave, a good shot, and a stickler for honor. He flattered himself that he could use him for his own benefit, also. He swallowed his rising wrath, and after remaining silent a short time to regain his composure, said:

"I can forgive much to a man in love, especially when he holds a weak hand; therefore, colonel, I overlook your hasty words. This is really an unpleasant affair, and takes me quite by surprise; but I must not be held accountable by you for the freaks of Milrose. Excuse me; I must go and look after her."

Lowenthal bowed, and left the room with seeming calmness.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE COLONEL AND THE QUAKER.

Colonel Lovelace seized his hat and hastened from the house. The air, he thought, was close and suffocating there, and he felt that he should never breathe freely again within those walls.

The colonel's regiment was called the Beaufort Guards; and their camp, which was about a hundred rods from Lowenthal's, had been named Camp Royal. To Camp Royal Lovelace directed his steps. The regiment was drilling by companies. Notwithstanding the pre-occupation of his mind, he paused and looked at them. Comparisons are natural; they flow out of one's understanding without effort. The Confederate officer was the subject of these mental calculations. His eyes searched in vain for large numbers of those chivalrous gentlemen said to have shouldered arms in the defence of Southern liberties. Instead of knight-errant in gallant array, he beheld a motley mass of poor and ignorant men, ill-clad and rough. In the midst of this undisciplined crew, he saw Frederick North, with a gun on shoulder. To his surprise, this new conscript appeared not the least embarrassed or put down. He went through the manual drill with notable promptitude and precision. His handsome countenance, straight and graceful figure, contrasted strangely with those about him. He made no mistakes, and evidently understood the exercises better than the drill-officer.

Their eyes met. Lovelace blushed; North smiled and touched his cap. The former felt no triumph in his advantage. The young man made him think of Bunker Hill and the old flag. He sighed and turned away. Milrose and the rebellion were still in his heart; but Milrose first. His hopes had that morning received a fatal wound. He was amazed at the depth and fervency of his love for Milrose, which the events of the last hour had revealed to him. He wondered at his own wretchedness. He distrusted Lowenthal. He resolved to see Hillhouse privately, and question him closely.

While thinking of these things, Martin Broadbent approached him. This man's deportment always drew attention. Wherever he went, people paused to look at him. This was because he differed from others. He was one of those persons that can be felt when they are near.

Lovelace bowed recognition from force of habit.

"Truly, friend Lovelace, this is a goodly array of the chief captains and the mighty men of war," he remarked.

"Humph!" said the colonel, with a slight jerk of the body.

"These be the men," continued Martin, sonorously, "who take their lives in their hands, and go forth, without purse or scrip, to fight for their substance and their chattels."

"They have scrip enough, God knows!" retorted Lovelace, impatiently.

"Thou art captious, friend, and speakest after the manner of the children of this world. I fear thou feelest no enthusiasm at a spectacle like this."

Martin stopped, then went on.

"I pray thee note their warlike bearing. Behold how brightly their bayonets gleam in the sun!"

"It happens, unfortunately," said Lovelace, dryly, "that but few of them have bayonets. If a few hundreds of rusty shot-guns gleam, why, then, they gleam."

"Thou carpest again," resumed Broadbent. "But if thou wilt fault their guns and equipments, I will call thy attention to the alacrity of their movements, the perfection of their drill, and the military ardor that inflames their faces."

"You are either a wag, or a great fanatic, Mr. Overseer. I like wholesome praise; but I have a horror of exaggeration. I can see neither alacrity of movement nor perfection of drill; and, to speak plainly, their faces are oftener inflamed with whisky than with military ardor. I should like to find all those manly and soldierly qualities you talk of; but I shall have to look farther, I'm afraid. The fact is, these are the dregs of our social system. Few of them are in good condition. Most of them have been cheated of fair proportions. Low and thriftless habits do not develop manhood. Yonder is a fellow all legs and arms. He is lank and ungainly, lantern-jawed and stoop-shouldered. If you glance around, you will find many like him. It comes of being at the wrong end of the ladder. Now that is not the material for an army."

"But, friend Lovelace, the cause will inspire these people. Reflect that all they possess in the world is staked in this contest."

"Bah! All they possess in the world would not suffice to buy them a pair of brogans each," said the officer, annoyed by the persistency of Martin.

"These must remember that slavery is at stake, and that it is necessary to the cotton interest that the negro race should be subject to man."

Broadbent looked gravely and calmly at the Confederate officer, who answered, dubiously:

"You are a singular person. I wish you would go away."

"Truly, friend, I cannot depart, for here hath Providence cast me to labor faithfully for the subjugation of the black Saxon. Yea, it is my duty to strike, whip, castigate, flagellate, and subdue such as are intrusted to my care. Verily, I will cry aloud and spare not; and reason with them powerfully, even to the crucifying of the flesh. I am not a hard man, and I know my business."

"I am a Southern man, and a rebel of the darkest water, but I loathe barbarity. I confess I am somewhat afraid of you, Mr. Overseer. You know too much or too little, and I have not wit enough to tell which. In either case you may be dangerous. My head is not so large as yours, Mr. Broadbent; therefore, we had better



keep apart. I go in for fighting, but not for mincing up negroes!"

Lovelace folded his arms, and partly turned his back on the Quaker.

"Thou knowest the maiden called Milrose?" said Martin, abruptly.

Lovelace was now ready to hear. Martin had touched the right string. He turned hastily.

"I know, Miss Dora," he said.

"I was of that opinion," continued Martin.

"What did you wish to say of her?" asked the colonel, somewhat coldly.

"Not much, friend Lovelace. She was not quite happy, I thought, when I saw her last. Perhaps the rebellion troubles her, or her property needs looking after. Young girls, it is said, find ways to make themselves miserable. And, of a truth, there are gossiping people who tell strange stories; or, rather, I should say, vague whispers drift in the air, and reach the ears of some, who, verily, may be prying persons given to minding the affairs of their neighbors," answered Martin, fixing his eyes incidentally, apparently, on Frederick North.

"Your meaning is dark, friend Broadbent," said the colonel, whose interest was now thoroughly awakened. "Which way do your suspicions point, or what am I to infer from your words? Come, sir; you can trust me."

"Of a verity, there is a young man in the ranks with whose figure and bearing thou canst find no fault. I do not remember to have seen him in the ranks before," observed Martin. "But, as I was saying to thee, the maiden up yonder"—he pointed to the house—"may have more cause for fear and unhappiness than thou thinkest. Thou art a man of honor, according to thy prejudices and beliefs; and I may safely say to thee that the house of Lowenthal has its mysteries."

Lovelace leaned eagerly toward Martin. Every word he uttered was full of startling interest.

"Do you not know," he said, "that Milrose has disappeared?"

"Heaven give her safety!" exclaimed Martin.

"That implies," remarked Lovelace, thoughtfully, "that she has not been safe."

"The construction was thine," responded Martin. "Where has the damsel gone?"

"Those who run away, seldom leave word where they are going. Tell me, sir—has Lowenthal—"

"Of Lowenthal I say nothing," interrupted Martin. "Thou hast eyes, and ears, and sense: use them. Why should I take away another man's understanding? Nevertheless, were I an honorable man, desirous of doing good, I would lay aside all rivalry and jealousy, and, rising above partisan hate and private vengeance, seek to befriend a demsel forlorn, who hath fallen into the fowler's snare."

Martin Broadbent spoke earnestly and more rapidly than usual. Lovelace thought of the testimony of Hillhouse, and his vague conjectures began to take form.

"Thou knowest thy business, colonel, and I know mine. Thou art a chief captain over men, and I the humble ruler over negroes. Thou art a discipliner of heroes"—Martin's long, white fingers made a thrust toward the Beaufort Guard—"and I the subjugator of chattels. For King Cotton thou swingest the sword; for King Cotton I swing the whip. We serve the same mighty Moloch. Great is Diana of the Ephesians!"

The two men faced each other. The axes of their eyes met. Martin was firm and steady. The officer was held in silence and doubt. He recoiled, putting forth his hands, as if to push Martin back. Martin raised his arms, till they seemed to tremble over all the cotton in the South, and said, in a suppressed voice:

"Cotton, all hail! Thou art indeed a king, clothed in purple and fine linen. Thou goest forth conquering and to conquer. Thou leadest men captive. Thy chariot-wheels crush old and young, and the blood flows even to the bridle-rein! Hail, all hail!"

Lovelace gasped, like a drowning man. He brushed his hand across his brow, and seemed terrified. His gaze wandered over the broad cotton-fields. A vision of fire and blood swam before his sight.

"What are we," resumed Martin, solemnly, "that we should fear to die for the king? Let us cast ourselves under his groaning chariot-wheels. Let us perish with our wives and sweet-hearts; with our mothers, fathers, and brothers. Men die but once. How glorious to fall for the purple monarch! Like the Moslem leader, we may proclaim, 'Paradise to those that fall!'"

Lovelace did not speak; he could not. He was overborne by Martin. He saw armies, and bayonets, and banners, artillery and bursting shells, red shields and trampled fields.

"There will be a sound of mourning in the land," continued Martin, in a tremulous tone. "Mothers weeping for their first-born, and wives wailing wildly over slaughtered husbands. But what of this? Cotton is king, and England and France, and all the nations of the earth, kneel at his bloody shrine. Go on! go on! Count not the cost. God will smile at the carnage, and applauding angels clap their hands. Bid the birds of the air to the feast! Long live the sovereign that has but one institution, and one rallying-cry to battle!"

He paused a moment.

"Thou to thy work—I to mine. Shake out the stars and bars! Down with the Union and the Constitution!"

Lovelace turned away from Martin in wonder and dismay. Never had such pictures been

painted on his imagination. When he looked up to make an angry retort, the place where Martin had stood was vacant.

## CHAPTER XXI.

PETER RUST.

We left Milrose in a situation painful and embarrassing, from which every feminine instinct of her nature shrank with terror and loathing. She saw no means of escape. She resisted at every step; but, opposed to his rough strength, her feeble hands were unavailing. Perceiving that she was wasting her powers fruitlessly, she made a resolute endeavor to regain that self-possession so needful in moments of danger.

Having a vigorous intellect, a commanding will, and a quick wit, she would, no doubt, have succeeded in overcoming her excessive fright, and subduing that weakness that injured instead of aiding her, when the timely appearance of Peter Rust put an entirely new aspect upon the whole matter. Peter of the Pines came suddenly from among the trees, and advancing silently and swiftly upon Ben Dykes, tripped up his heels and laid him upon the ground. The two dogs made a feeble assault upon Peter's legs, but a few well-directed kicks sent them yelping away.

Dykes remained where he had fallen, quite breathless and amazed, with his feet entangled in a cluster of laurel.

"Look out there, youngster!" said Peter, warningly, to Milrose. "Don't step into his mouth! Better get your foot into a bear-trap, than into them there jaws."

Milrose was unable to speak; she was in a flutter of joyful emotion.

"Don't be afraid," said Peter. "The danger's all over. This critter, you see, isn't in a condition to hurt ye."

While Peter was speaking, he gave Ben some sharp strokes with his foot, and added, afterward:

"Get up, you dog-trainer of the turpentine woods, and take yourself off in double-quick! We'll have a settlement of our accounts one o' these days, I guess."

Dykes extricated his feet, arose, and flew at Peter, who parried his wrathful blows and tripped up his heels again.

Just then Milrose discovered Swampsey, a little beyond Peter, cutting capers with wonderful rapidity.

As for Angeline, her courage came back in a most remarkable manner.

"Laws, Miss Milly!" she exclaimed, forgetting her rôle. "Tole ye 'twa'n't nothin'. What's the use bein' scared at a low white trash like Turpentine Ben?"

Milrose gave her maid an admonitory shake, to bring her back to prudence.

Ben Dykes got up and sneaked away, muttering threats and curses.

Day was now dawning. Faint rays of light fell on the pale face of Milrose. Peter of the Pines contemplated her with manifest embarrassment.

"You need not tremble," he said, encouragingly. "I know enough of you to understand how you should be treated. Don't look down and blush. I like spirit and bravery. Folks is sometimes forced to do what they'd rayther not. But the best way is, to draw a cheerful face and make the best on't. I remember ye well. How could I forget that face? I couldn't—never, never! It come to me up there"—he pointed toward the plantation—"like an angel's. I own I never saw nothin' like it, and for a moment or so, I allowed you was supernat'ral."

"Love o' God!" cried Angeline. "'Pears like our secret is cl'ar gone!"

"Never mind your secret," replied Peter, "but come with me. What I can do for you, I'll do with hearty good-will, and with no more curiosity than is nat'ral to human natur'."

"I thank you for your kindness," said Milrose, recovering her confused faculties. "I am sure you are very considerate. But do not mistake my feelings. I do not regret the step I have taken, nor do I blush at these garments. I am young, but not a child, sir. I have no inclination to play the fainting heroine. My story is brief. I was in danger under the roof where I should have been entirely safe. I determined not to remain there longer. I made my escape; therefore, by a combination of circumstances not foreseen, I am here, and in this attire. Abashed I may be; disappointed I certainly am; but return I will not! Do you understand me, Peter Rust?"

Milrose spoke in a firm yet sweet tone of voice, and her consistency and courage had a favorable effect on Peter.

"I was born and brought up, miss, in a country where women are middlin' well understood; in a country where the people are some'at given to the extreme of right, but a good country, nevertheless."

Peter, who had all the while held his double-gun in his hand, laid it carefully in the bend of his left arm, studiously keeping its muzzle pointed from Milrose.

"I can say, miss, that I think I know your meaning," he added. "Don't let your little heart have a quiver of fear or a throb of misgivin'. I like your spirit; and from the knowledge I have of Lowenthal, I judge you haven't escaped an hour too soon. You saw me there at work; and who that prison was for, you ought to know as well as I."

"My own convictions terrify me!" answered Milrose.

"Lordy! How that little nigger does swivel round!" exclaimed Angeline, who could not keep



her eyes from Swampsey, whose ground performances were to her a continual surprise.

"Come on, miss, and we'll talk as we go," said Peter of the pines. "It ain't well for us to loiter here. There's no tellin' who may be after us. I expected to be hunted, and I am sure you will be. Take this path, miss; for we must go a different direction, and mislead them as may follow. If I know Lowenthal's object, he won't be likely to let you get away without pursuit; and he wouldn't mind sendin' a hundred of his men to beat the bush for such a bird."

"Be you a Unioner?" asked Angelina. "If you be, you won't stan' no chance at all; for they's down on the Unioners, anyways!"

"The Unioners, as you call 'em, will speedily be down on them. We shall soon have startlin' news from Port Royal. The thunder of Yankee guns'll soon awake the South from its—"

Peter Rust spoke with earnestness, and checked himself suddenly.

"The colonel says the Seceshers have sunk torpidities down there at Royal, and laid all sorts o' contraptions to blow 'em up. Guess there'll be a 'scatterin' among 'em; leastways," remarked Angelina, her eyes still following the movements of Swampsey.

Nobody replying, she asked:

"Can't that toddlepole say nothin' but Mars'r Peter? The little flippertygibbet scrambled up to Miss Milly's window, and we thought, for all the world, that the old Nickerson, herself, had come! He said 'Mars'r Peter,' and wanted a rope."

"You must tell me about this strange little creature, Mr. Rust," said Milrose. "He manifested a great desire to help you. Poor fellow! He's too small to be of much service."

"Oh!" answered Peter. "You was speakin' of Little Dismal. It ain't the size of a person that makes him useful, I reckon. I owe my liberty to Swampsey, small as he is."

Peter then related the manner of his escape, not neglecting to give the lad all the credit he deserved.

"Why do you call him Little Dismal?" Milrose inquired, casting a curious glance at the object of their conversation.

"Because I found him in Alligator Swamp, which is also called Little Dismal, and lays cheek by jowl with the Great Dismal. I call him all sorts o' names, and it makes no difference. I fished him out o' the mud, you see, and he's pooty much the color on't. I'm a slaveholder; but I didn't vest no ready money. He's an institution, though he never planted a seed o' cotton, or picked a pod; but he can suck a sugarcane, eat a sweet-potater, or steal a chicken with the best of 'em; not to mention his proficiency in jumpin'."

"Laws, Peter! He ain't big enough for a institution noways! 'Pears as though institutions was set up higher from the ground, and

was bigger crossways," affirmed Angelina. "Why don't you make him decenter? It 'twasn't for that tow contraption, he'd be done gone naked!"

"Little Dismal is such an uncommon modest boy," quoth Peter, looking queerly at Angelina. "that he don't need so many clothes as some that are whiter. He has, besides, all the good qualities of the dog; he is faithful and happy with his master. He hasn't no tail to waggle; but he waggles his eyes beautiful! As for talkin', he can talk better nor any parrot you ever see. Not that Swampsey is a great talker, for he isn't."

"He can say 'Mars'r Peter!'" retorted Angelina, mimicking.

"Ay," replied Peter warmly, "he can say it as nobody else can! What he says is always to the p'int."

"I can witness to that," observed Milrose; "for all his wishes were comprised in: 'Want Mars'r Peter got out!'"

"And he got me out, spite of Lowenthal, Ben Dykes, and the whole of 'em; and that's a deal for a hop-o'-my-thumb contraband to do," answered Peter, warmly.

"My maid," responded Milrose, "is rather forgetful. She should remember that Swampsey piloted us from the dog-trainer's hut very skillfully, though he, no doubt, had his instructions from you. Therefore, Mr. Rust, allow me to thank you and him. Your name was favorably mentioned to me last night, by—a friend. I was told that, in an emergency, I might trust you."

"And that friend's name, I guess," said Peter, "is Frederick North."

Milrose felt the blood quickening in her cheeks; while Peter of the Pines assumed additional interest in her eyes.

"Since you are acquainted with Frederick, I am sure you will be my friend?" she said, ingenuously, after a moment of reflection.

"That you may depend on," returned Peter, heartily. "If I didn't know Frederick North, if I did know that you hadn't a friend in the world, I'd be your friend all the same, for your own sake, and for nothin' else."

"I am glad I have fallen into such hands. These assurances give me strength and hope," Milrose answered, quickly. "And now," she added, "my friend, where are we going?"

"To a hidin'-place, I hope, miss. We must penetrate far into the piney-woods, where the hounds of Dykes and the human hounds of Lowenthal won't be likely to track us. How is it with you, miss? Are you mighty tired? You've had a dismal time on't since last night; but you can stan' it a little longer, shelter, and food and rest, will work wonders for ye."

Milrose professed herself able to walk a long distance further; and, with many encouraging words, Peter Rust led them onward.



BEN DYKES AND HIS CAPTIVES.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## THE PLANTER AND THE OVERSEER.

The scene with Ela, in the slave-hut, made a deep impression on Martin Broadbent's mind. Like a faithful guardian, he kept watch near the hut till morning. His anger was equal to his vigilance. It was a steady and unquenchable flame that burned within him. There were many dangers to be averted from her head. To save her from the malice and baseness of Lowenthal, was his fixed purpose. He feared that he might visit her secretly, and discover the deception that had been practiced; in which event, it was difficult to foresee what might happen.

Martin was a man of resolution. His courage was of a calm and elevated kind. In a just cause, he was full of noble daring. In the presence of Ela, he had thrown off the repulsive character which he had assumed. He had stood before her as he really was—a revelation, most surprising and agreeable. Her feelings it is not possible to describe; they were of a mingled and tumultuous nature. There was first a dizzy whirl of wonder; afterward, a staggering incredulity; then, an electric glow of conviction; and finally, a full and joyful consciousness of protection. In her esteem, Martin Broadbent grew to fair and heroic proportions. He came to her as an angel in a place where there was no light. His quiet face was continually in her sight, strengthening her through the long nights.

When, after some hours of restlessness, she fell asleep, she dreamed of Martin, and beheld him towering like a giant between herself and Lowenthal. While her mind thus instinctively clung to her preserver, he was keeping silent vigil over the hut that sheltered her.

In the morning, when other duties called him away, he placed a trusty negro in charge.

After his interview with Colonel Lovelace, he was slowly returning to the negro-quarters, when he met his employer. Lowenthal was excited. The full effects of the disappearance of Milrose were upon him. He was amazed and alarmed. With these two emotions, there were alternations of anger. This meeting with Martin seemed to him opportune. He wanted somebody to ventilate his wrath upon.

"This plantation, sir, is rather loosely conducted, sir! My daughter has run away, sir!" he exclaimed, in a loud and fault-finding voice.

"I am not thy daughter's keeper, friend Lowenthal," answered Martin, wildly. My duties are limited to the negro race. It is not mine to control men and women but to govern chattels!"

"But you should have your eyes about you, sir!" retorted the planter. "You ought to see what is going on around you, Mr. Broadbent."

"I tell thee, friend Planter, I have nothing to do with thy daughter. The services that I give thee for a stipulated sum, touch not thy household. If thou thinkest I would undertake to

control a woman, young or old, thou art greatly mistaken. I know the sex are rebellious; and the younger and comelier, the more rebellious. Heaven defend me from the care of damsels! I can use the schoolmaster—which is the whip—with some small skill and success. I can flagellate, castigate, macerate, score, and under-score, with acceptance and profit; but when it comes to the nicer manipulations and management of woman-kind, I confess my inability and weakness."

Broadbent rolled up his eyes, and sighed.

"Bah!" said Lowenthal, contemptuously.

"Didst thou 'Bah' to me, friend Lowenthal? I'd rather thee wouldn't 'Bah' to me. I am not a goat, that thou shouldst 'Bah' to me after the manner of such!"

"Not a goat, but a donkey!" sneered the planter.

"The animal thou likenest me to, is a most useful, though not comely beast; and like the black chattel, worketh well when subjected to man. Yet I would prefer to be likened to the noble horse that combineth utility with beauty and strength. And that remindeth me that it seemeth a great mistake of Nature that the Black Saxon was not made to go upon all fours, like his co-worker, the ox."

Martin looked serious and reflective. His employer stared at him.

"I can class the world under two heads," he said, keeping his eyes on the Quaker. "Take a sheet of paper and draw a line through the centre of it. At the top, on the left of the line, write fools; on the right, write knaves; and under these two headings you and I and everybody else may find our places."

"Nay, there are some foolish knaves and some knavish fools," answered Martin, with imperturbable phlegm.

"That is but a variation on the same two strings. You may ring the changes on them, cut them into half-notes, quarter-notes, or eighths, flatten or sharpen them to your taste, and they will still be the same. Pure folly and pure knavery may not often be met with, but we can afford to give the name to the preponderating article. I have not classified you, yet, Broadbent, and I'm sometimes afraid that you'll go far to upset my system; but I'm after you, like Agassiz after a fish; and if we don't disagree, we shall be good friends. But I'm watching you, Martin. Don't get in my way, and you won't be stepped on."

The planter gave Martin a meaning glance.

"I should hate to have thee step on me!" observed the latter.

"How is the girl Ela?" asked Lowenthal, abruptly. "I hope you haven't been too hard on her. I didn't mean to submit her entirely to your damned cruelty. I trust she is well enough?"

He walked about uneasily.

"Be not concerned. These runaways are not so easily killed," replied the nonchalant Martin.

"Martin—"

The planter pulled out his watch and looked at it nervously.

Broadbrim waited patiently.

"What did she say, Martin?"

"What those with a smattering of white blood are apt to say," answered Broadbent. "Verily, this mixing of the races is a sin and a shame! We want no white blood in the veins of the chattel. We must give him no half, quarter, or eighth of a soul, by illicit admixture. I protest that we must give him not so much soul as there is in one drop of pure Anglo-Saxon blood. If we give the negro soul, we can't lash and cut him; and I tell thee there can be no well-ordered slave-system without the whip."

"The girl is quite white. I bought her at Port Royal the other day. Got her cheap, on account of the times, and the difficulty of managing her. The fact is, she was too smart for her mistress, who is rather too weak to practice the necessary severity. She told a pitiful story, I suppose?"

Lowenthal avoided Martin's eyes, and pretended to look at the distant tents of Camp Royal. Martin, who was always seen with his whip in his hand, gave it a flourish, and made it snap like a pistol.

"I make it a rule," he said, deliberately, "not to let them talk much. Silence is the word when punishment is the necessity. We should have enough to do, were we to believe the chatterings of negroes. With me, it is a word and a blow; and I think it most politic to give the blow first. An overseer must inspire fear. I would have their jaws rattle like castanets, when they hear me coming! I am not a hard man, but I know my business!"

Martin contracted his features till he looked as ugly as a heathen god.

"You'll spare when I tell you to spare!" muttered Lowenthal. "Keep Ela under strict restraint, but do not strike her. Give her food from the house; and see that you close your ears to her artful tales; for she has that curse of all slaves—education. You said the dogs worried her. Now I charged that shiftless Ben Dykes not to let tooth of hound touch her; and if she is much hurt, I'll have him torn to pieces by his own howling pack!"

Martin felt his blood thrilling, but maintained a quiet demeanor. Lowenthal infused unusual energy into his voice, and his manner did not indicate that indifference which he wished to affect.

"Ben-Dykes is somewhat too willing to slip the leash," returned Martin. "We want our runaways caught, but neither maimed nor lacerated; for chattels heal not readily of dog-bites.

Hence we are defrauded of their labor. But happily I find, upon examination, that this girl Ela was not seriously harmed, though her garments were torn. It happened, strangely enough, that the dumb creatures hesitated about taking hold of her—deceived, no doubt, by the whiteness of her skin; which comes of wickedly mixing the blood of man with the chattel race. I must inform thee, moreover, that the best tracker of the pack was, by some deplorable accident, killed outright in the scuffle. It was thy new dog of great power and beauty, Diana."

"What! Is that splendid creature dead? I had rather have lost the best nigger on the plantation!"

"It was not killed outright, but died shortly after, in spite of the best skill of the plantation-doctor, and the careful attentions of the man Ben, whose surname is Dykes."

Broadbent thrust his whip under his arm, sighed, and cast his regretful eyes skyward. His sympathies seemed much drawn out for the luckless Diana.

"Had it been the dog, Floyd," he added, with mournful cadence, "named after the great financial appropriator, I should have minded less the loss; but that animal only had a leg broken from being stepped on by one of the hunters."

"A hound that I would not have sold for a hundred dollars!" exclaimed the planter, angrily. "It was done by one of them damned niggers, I'll wager! You can't trust 'em. While appearing to help you, they'll always manage to do mischief. In deviltry they're infernally ingenious! If any of our fellows were to blame, go and thrash them. Poor Diana! Her eyes always glistened at sight of a black. She would worry the house-servants in mere sportiveness. They were all mortally afraid of her. One day last summer, when I struck Babel, she sprang upon his shoulders and gave him a right smart nip in the cheek. And there's Floyd, too! What a glossy coat he has! There isn't such a dog for poultry in the whole country. Our people couldn't keep a chicken but he'd steal it. And as for a long race through the turpentine woods, there are but few dogs can keep in sight of him. Have his leg properly set, Martin, and see that inflammation don't set in. There! that will do for dogs and niggers. Now about this truant daughter. Tell me frankly if you have seen her lately."

"Nay, I have not seen her for two days, and can give thee no clue to her present abiding-place," answered Martin. "It's an unaccountable thing!" observed Lowenthal, abstractedly. "I am greatly disturbed by it. Make inquiries, Martin. Take some of the most reliable boys, and search in the vicinity. I have already trusted somewhat to your discretion. You helped me about Peter Rust, who, by the way, proved to be a Yankee spy. On searching him, important papers were dis-

covered, which put his character beyond a doubt. He made a dastardly assault on me, and I shot him. There! that disposes of him. So perish all enemies of Southern rights!"

Lowenthal gave Broadbent a sidelong glance, to measure the amount of his belief or unbelief; to see if his countenance said, "It is well!" But Martin had control of his features, and there were obscure pages in ancient books easier to read than his face.

"I could have made Peter of the Pines servicable had he not been contumacious," resumed the planter. "But it is now of no consequence. If you know anything that you do not quite understand, keep it to yourself. Silent men are the safest."

With these words, impressively spoken, Lowenthal left Martin.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### WHAT MARTIN WOULD DO.

We will not now give the history of Ela. At present we will call her by the simple name of Ela. After receiving the general instructions of Lowenthal, Martin Broadbent hastened to the hut where she had remained since her attempted escape. It was with varied emotions that he found himself in the presence of this interesting girl. Her face, though pale, was now animated with hope. She had made efforts at tidiness. She had smoothed her disordered hair, and made the most of her poor garments.

She received Martin with a faint smile and cheeks that glowed with pleasure.

"I hope thou hast rested after thy fatigues of mind and body?" he said.

"Better than seemed possible yesterday," she answered. "But I thought I had found a friend, and that thought brought sleep with it."

"Thou art still anxious," added Martin, watching her expression.

"I am sometimes afraid that you will not be able to protect me," she replied, with a troubled look.

"A natural fear, but one which thee may dismiss from thy mind. While I am safe, thou shalt be."

The Quaker gazed earnestly at the young woman. Her beautiful eyes darted rays of light that went like magnetic currents to his heart. This fair Eve that he had found, threw over him a sweet and bewildering influence that was both pleasing and novel, yet wondrously strange. He felt that he was looking too much at Ela, and that her idea already existed within him as a part of himself. This consciousness kept saying, "Ela! Ela!" His intellect and his affections echoed the word. His soul was like a whispering gallery, and "Ela" went floating and sighing through its mysterious arches.

"What will you do with me, Mr. Broadbent?"

She looked up into his face. What would he

do with her! The simple question thrilled him. His calm face flushed. He thought what he would do with her, if she would say "yes" to a certain question. He drew upon his imagination for a very pretty little home. This was much for Martin to do. It was the only draft of the kind he had ever made. He marveled at his own haste.

"If I had my own way, I know what I would do with thee," answered Martin, glancing modestly at Ela. "I would marry thee!"

Ela recoiled. This plain confession seemed, for a moment, to confound her. She looked at Martin, saw his earnest, honest face, and was not offended.

"There should be no offence when none is meant," she said, seriously.

"In word or deed I would not willingly offend thee," replied Martin, quietly. "He who would wantonly wound thy delicacy, would be something less than a man, and I would treat him as my enemy. I am not one to use vain and unmeaning speech. Thou pleasest me, Ela. I call thee Ela, for this simple name is all I know of thee; and having seen thee and heard thy voice, I am content with it. Since yesterday 'Ela' has become the cabalistic word of my life.

Why should I not tell thee so? If the truth displeases thee I will never repeat it, and there the matter will end. Though I sometimes disguise my character, I trust that character is always true to the right. Therefore, when I say I would marry thee, I mean it partly for thine own safety, and partly for mine own happiness. This straightforwardness is not after the manner of the world. Delay and falsehood are the common methods of courtship. But he who loves, will not love better for seven years' wooing. She who is wooed seven years and deserted, is out of market and of her good name. She who is wooed and wedded in a day, hath love to plead, the youthful romance of hope to support, and more than an equal chance for happiness. And if it happen that she repent at leisure, she cannot say that she hath been utterly cheated of life's sweetest delusions. Pardon me, Ela! I am bold; but it is the soul's prophetic voice that giveth me boldness. It is my soul that speaks to thee. Thou hearest a voice, but that which addresseth thee maketh no sound, and is silent forever!"

Martin turned his large blue eyes on Ela: they were full of quiet devotion and lofty sentiment. A soul of glowing sensibility and tender passion beamed through them.

Ela, who was shocked at first, smiled when he began this long response, was interested by the time he reached the middle of it, and blushed at its conclusion.

"You talk well, Mr. Broadbent, and I thank you for the compliment conveyed in your preference; but wait, sir, till you know me," she answered, gravely.

"I never shall know thee better!" said Martin, impressively. "The heart knows when it finds its mistress; the soul is conscious when it is near it is kindred soul, and the contact and thrill of an answering spirit is unmistakable. I am not a man of theory, but a man of practice; yet practicality itself flows from the ideal. But I will not weary thee. Forgive this much to a simple-minded Quaker. Thou wilt not be less safe for having inspired me with such feelings. My love shall be about thee as a wall of fire. Reflect on my poor offer. Accept or refuse, as shall seem good unto thee. Meantime, prepare to leave this evil place."

"A thousand thanks for your flattering opinion!" returned Ela, whose self-possession was now measurably restored. The unstudied utterances of a noble mind cannot but be received with deference and gratitude. "Your goodness shall not be misconstrued by me. Your sentiments neither shake my confidence nor inspire distrust. I have faith in you. Let the future decide your views of Ela. In regard to leaving this place, I am entirely at your discretion."

She said this with so much modesty and grace, that Martin's previous impressions were greatly strengthened.

"We are friends," he said.

"In token of my friendship, here is my hand," answered Ela. They shook hands, and he held hers some moments in his; then, with some cheerful words, left her to make preparations for leaving the plantation.

#### CHAPTER XXIV.

##### THE MEETING AT THE CABIN.

Attended by Babel, the planter appeared at Peter Rust's cabin at the appointed time. Markthaler was there. He was sitting at a rough pine table, and Jacob stood behind him. The small interior was lighted by a single lamp, which threw a fitful glare on the pale face and gray beard of the usurer, whose young features contrasted most strikingly with his flowing white hair. There was a certain classic delicacy in the arch of the brow, the turn of the chin and nose, and the cut of the mouth, that could not escape the attention of even a common observer. There were, at times, a sublimated sneer upon the lips and a haughty quivering of the eyelids, that gave occasional intimations of what was passing within.

"I expected," said Lowenthal, evidently disappointed, "to meet you alone."

The money-lender pointed significantly at Babel.

"He's a deaf mute," replied the planter to this silent query.

"Jacob is a deaf mute, when I wish him to be. Besides, he is not such a monster as your Babel. You perceive that Jacob has regular features and a fair person; but yours is a very Caliban, hacked and seamed, like a barbarian

chief. It is well he cannot speak, for one might look for a dreadful voice out of that body. Why didn't you bring the devil with you, without any ceremony?"

Markthaler drummed on the table with his small, white hand. Babel, standing just behind his master, kept his large eyes on Markthaler while he was speaking, and there was something approximating to wonder in his expression. A thought, new and suggestive, was working in his mentality.

"Stand behind me Jacob," added Markthaler. "Sit there, Lowenthal, and put your moon-calf where you like. There! Now what do you want?"

"Not quite so imperative, good Jew!" answered Lowenthal, frowning. "You are not in your money-den at home. However," he said, in a milder tone, "he that holds the purse controls the sword. My want is not a new one; it is chronic. You know, well enough, what it is. What can you do for me?"

"Nothing!" replied Markthaler with quietness.

"You will do nothing!" repeated Lowenthal, contracting his brows.

"That is it, sir."

The long taper fingers of the money-lender still drummed lightly on the table. It was an aristocratic hand. The planter wondered why it did not belong to a born gentleman, instead of a usurer.

"Concerning those papers?" he said, and stopped.

"Go on."

Glancing over the planter's head, Markthaler saw Babel's face working with emotion. The idea that had crept into his dark head seemed to have something startling in it.

"Have you brought them?" asked Lowenthal.

"Jacob has them. Hold them up, Jacob."

Jacob held up a bundle of papers.

"One of those papers I must have!" said Lowenthal, depressing his voice.

"Must is for kings and usurers," replied Markthaler. "The fact is, Lowenthal, coffers have bottoms, and all things have an end. Our business is about done. I see no way of turning you to any future account. You have no property. What you had, and what you appeared to have, is tied up in those papers. The negroes don't belong to you, neither does the plantation. I have given you money on everything that you possessed before your second marriage. I have even lent you on some of your step-daughter's diamonds. You represented to me that you owned everything; but Miss Milrose is the legal owner of the estate and its belongings. Now, what do you propose to do?"

The two looked at each other across the table.

"I will tell you," answered the planter, pres-

ently, leaning toward the usurer, and speaking in a low voice; "*I will marry Milrose!*"

Markthaler recoiled from the scheming face that Lowenthal thrust toward him. For the first time during the interview, the usurer manifested surprise.

"Marry Milrose!" he repeated, with a startled expression.

"You are astonished," said the planter, dryly. "You are not proof against all the emotions of human nature. Pale, sir, too—pale! What business has a usurer to be pale, unless his money-bags are in danger? But this does not put your coffers in peril; on the contrary, it will help fill them. Yes, I will marry Miss Dorn! She is called my step-daughter. But what of that? There is no blood relationship. The woman I married had a daughter; that daughter is grown to woman's estate. Her mother was lost at sea. I am now simply that young lady's guardian. She is very rich."

"Very sensible, indeed! I suppose the girl will be glad to marry you?"

Markthaler's lips curved, and his nostrils dilated.

"There is something offensive in your tone," said Lowenthal, tartly. "If I marry Miss Dorn, you need give yourself no uneasiness about her feelings. Your business is with money, and not with women."

"She is pretty, I believe," remarked the money-lender.

"She is more than that: she is beautiful!"

"But there is Lovelace?"

"Pshaw! Lovelace is but my tool, and he is poor. I cannot marry her to a beggar."

"Of course not! You will marry her yourself, which will be a very different thing."

The usurer smiled.

The planter's face reddened. He darted an angry look at Markthaler.

"You have an eye to the main chance," added the latter. "When this little formality of marriage is comfortably through with, I will take your securities, and you shall have money; till then, I must hold the poor paper I hate, and make the best of it."

"I have not informed you," faltered the planter, "that Miss Dorn is not, at present, at home. In fact, she has disappeared rather mysteriously; but I shall soon find her."

"Ah! that is rather important. You cannot marry her till you have found her. Lincoln, you know, cannot hang Mr. Davis till he catches him."

The planter bit his lip.

"The quicker you make your proposal to this pretty creature, the better," the usurer continued; "settle the matter at once."

"As soon as I can discover where she is."

"Did she leave you because she loved you? Was it maiden coyness that made her fly from her own? Young girls are singularly fantastic."

"You choose to be sarcastic," said the planter, repressing his resentment. "But usurers are very facetious gentlemen."

"Shylock was," answered Markthaler.

"Be human, my friend," continued the planter, in a conciliatory manner. "Return me a certain paper. You cannot wish to ruin one out of whom you are coming money. Give it up, and be assured of my friendship and protection."

"That paper is my rod," said the usurer, smiling. "When you are contumacious, I shall give you a blow. The rod, you know, is a Southside medicine. Your overseer believes in it, you believe it, and so do I. I must not be shorn of my strength."

"By ——— I will not be trifled with, sir!"

Lowenthal gave the deal table such a blow that it hopped on its legs.

"Markthaler, don't go too far! I also have a rod—a rod of power. If it fall on you, it will grind you to powder! Let me tell you that you are even now an object of distrust. If you provoke me to it, I'll hang you higher than Haman's gallows!"

Lowenthal was in a furious passion.

"Stand behind me, Jacob!" said the money-lender, calmly, then glanced at Babel, whose disturbed features were becoming tranquil.

The yellow Hyperion being already behind his master's chair, moved not a muscle.

"You mean mischief," added the usurer.

"Very well. You will always find me prepared, though steel and poison are difficult to evade. These troubled days give the murderer and assassin a good chance to ply his infamous trade."

Lowenthal fumbled in his breast-pocket.

Jacob held up the bundle of papers.

"It will not do," said Markthaler. "You cannot safely kill me here. Jacob and I are a match for you and Babel. You want money and Milrose, not blood. By-the-way, how did you like the workmanship of Peter Rust?"

The planter did not answer.

"Why did you wish to build a prison in your house?" said Markthaler.

"Do not meddle with my private affairs!" muttered Lowenthal, confounded and alarmed.

"Then do not threaten me. I have more than one rod, you see? It need be, I will castigate you with Peter Rust?"

Lowenthal wondered if the usurer knew he had shot Peter Rust through the door; nor that he had thus disposed of Peter of the Peace, he had not a doubt. He was greatly perplexed.

"We are living in the midst of revolution," he muttered, "and our acts, whether public or private, cannot be measured by the common standard, nor properly judged by the laws restored, and the scale of justice is out of balance. We are at war, and a young man's State-impulses sever duties. Do you think that I shall shrink from anything I deem right?"

"I have no such thought," replied Markthaler. "You will endeavor to remove every obstacle that stands in your way. But this is a profitless conversation. Neither of us will attain our objects by childish recriminations. You must be brought face to face with this young lady, who has golden gifts; or, what is equivalent, a plantation and negroes."

Jacob touched his master, and raised his finger warningly. The sound of approaching steps could be plainly heard. The usurer and the planter looked at each other suspiciously.

## CHAPTER XXV.

## BABEL'S BRAND.

The door was presently opened, and the grave face of Martin Broadbent appeared. He was evidently surprised at the sight that met his eyes in Peter Rust's cabin. Notwithstanding his controlling power over the muscles of expression, he could not conceal his astonishment.

"I expected not to see thee here, friend Lowenthal," he said, apologetically. "I have disturbed thee, and I will withdraw."

"Not so fast," answered the planter. "Where are you going? Or rather, why are you here?"

"On business of thine," said Martin. "I have been searching for the young woman called Milrose, whose surname is Dorn."

"A late hour to be looking for stray dam-sels," returned the planter. "Who is that behind you?"

Broadbent had remained standing in the open door, which his large person nearly filled; but Lowenthal's watchful eyes saw a figure outside.

"A young chattel that goeth with me," answered Martin.

"Let me look at him," said Lowenthal.

"Come in, Marcus," said Broadbent.

A good-looking mulatto-boy entered reluctantly, with his cap on.

"Pull off your cap!" muttered Lowenthal.

"I'll have no niggers round me with caps on."

The boy shrank back, terrified.

"Yea, it is seemly that thou shouldst uncover," quoth Martin, with a steady look at the youth, who very carefully removed his cap.

"I don't remember this nig, Martin," said Lowenthal.

"He's from a neighboring plantation, and not one of our people," answered the Quaker. "He hath given me some information in regard to the fugitives, which may lead to their discovery. Stimulated by the hope of reward, he goeth with me. Speak him kindly, for he is a faint-hearted chattel, and hath been spoiled by over-much petting by his master. This timorousness and inefficiency cometh of that evil of which thou hast often heard me complain—of mixing the blood of man with the subject race. Bleach the negro to whiteness, and you lose him. Every drop of white blood depreciates

his value. In time, we shall lose the pure negro stock."

"D—n the pure negro stock!" exclaimed the planter. "I don't want to hear anything about it. I have weightier matters to think of. If you have any clue to the runaways, follow it speedily. As for this boy with you, he looks to me more like a girl than a boy."

Markthaler, who was watching Martin, saw an expression of alarm flit across his face; while the boy called Marcus shrank back out of sight. The usurer, sharper than the planter, had already detected a woman in the garments of the mulatto lad. The simple truth of the case was, that Martin was taking Ela from the plantation in this disguise; and wishing to see Peter Rust, and thinking there was a possibility of finding him at his cabin, opened the door and entered, as related.

His feelings during the foregoing interview may be imagined. Ela, brought into the presence of the man she had so much reason to dread, was greatly alarmed. She expected that he would instantly discover her artifice, and attempt to take her back to the plantation, and perhaps would be able to do so. When ordered to take off her cap, she doubted not but the secret would be revealed; but her hair was so ingeniously tucked away, that the cheat escaped his eyes.

"This is your champion of the whip?" interposed Markthaler, eyeing the Quaker with curiosity. "Doubtless he had the cutting-up of the fellow behind you?" He nodded smilingly to Babel, whose face now assumed a ferocious expression.

"Babel," rejoined Lowenthal, carelessly, "owes his ugly marks mostly to me. He was a savage beast till I tamed him. That was not long ago, however; I haven't owned him but a year. Though perverse at first, he seems now as patient and faithful an ox as any among them. And Martin," he added, with a shrug, "has had scarcely a blow at him."

"What are those metallic characters burned into his arm?" asked the usurer.

The planter turned to the giant, and seizing his large, naked arm, held it toward the light. Each letter was a fiery wound. Markthaler formed them into a name and date, which read:

BABEL. 1860.

Even Martin, as many times as he had seen this terrible writing, advanced a step to look at it again; while Ela stood timidly behind him.

Babel's eyes grew red, as if blood had been thrown into them; but save a slight acceleration of his respiration, he stood as impassive as a block of wood.

"This," said Lowenthal, in a cold, hard voice, "is a keepsake I gave him. On account of the confusion of his tongue and ears, I christened him Babel; and that he might never forget his name, I burned it into his black flesh."

Martin touched the arm, and looked warningly into the giant's eyes, which flamed more than ever.

"It took four men to hold him," added the planter, in the same heartless tone. "But when fairly conquered, he bore the hot irons without flinching; but such a look as he gave me was never before seen, I think."

Lowenthal cast the great arm contemptuously from him, with:

"So much for Babel!"

The black stepped slowly back to his place; he exchanged a glance with Jacob, and set his teeth hard together. His large lips were as white as Lowenthal's, and quivered nervously. Jacob watched him a moment, and his yellow face kindled with intelligence. A short silence followed.

Markthaler was grave and thoughtful, looking wonderingly, now and then, from the planter to the mute negro. He marveled at the blindness of one, and the self-control of the other. He saw the fatal error of mistaken confidence, and the bitterness of hate, in marked and startling contrast.

Lowenthal, callous as he was, felt the pressure of other people's thoughts, and was afraid, knew not why. Trying to shake off a clinging sense of evil, he said, by-and-by:

"Begone, Martin!"

But Martin had already left the cabin; and with Ela clasping his arm as if it were her last hope, was hurrying through the pine-woods.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

## AT REST.

Where the pine trees grew thickly, and ran up straight into the sky; where the aged moss hung in meshes from the boughs; where the laurel grew rank and clustering; where the wiry vines ran like serpents along the ground, coiling around bushes and sturdy trunks; where birds made their nests undisturbed; where the footsteps of man never trod; where solitude and silence reigned; where the quietude and repose of Nature gave promise of security, paused Peter Rust, with his weary charge.

They had walked till the sun was higher than the spires of the pine patriarchs; they had walked till Milrose's feet were faltering—till her limbs trembled, and she was faint with exertion; they had walked on and on, where there was no path, and the foliage grew thicker at every step.

Milrose was glad to stop. Just ahead, during this flight, went Little Dismal, turning, now and then, his little, old face over his shoulder to look back at Mars'r Peter and the two counter-ait youths.

"Here," said Peter Rust, "we will rest."

He pointed, as he spoke, to a conical hut, made of pine rift. This simple structure looked to Milrose a sylvan palace.

"I am sorry, miss," he continued, "that you're so tired; but better be tired than in danger. I can walk day after day and not feel it; but there's a difference between men and gals."

"Laws, yes, Peter! Men have institutions like iron; but girls, as a general thing, are powerful weak. Miss Milly's got the cl'ar grit; though she's mighty apt to git scared at nothin'. She's afeard o' catamountains and jack-o'-lanterns, and sich. But I don't give up to them things, anyways," said Angeline, whose tongue weariness had kept under restraint a long time.

"You're one the brave ones!" answered Peter, drily. "I observed, when Ben Dykes had hold of your mistress, you was full o' courage and spirit."

"It wasn't Ben Dykes I's scared at," said Angeline, tossing her head, "but I's afeard he'd hurt Miss Milly."

"Come along, miss," said Peter, kindly, stooping to enter the hut. "Here's a seat for ye that the Queen of England might sit on 'bout complainin'."

He pointed to a couch of boughs, covered with the skins of animals.

Milrose sank upon this luxurious couch with a feeling of exhaustion she had never before experienced.

"This is a relief!" she sighed. "Are we safe here, Mr. Rust?"

"I think so. Only dogs can find us, leastwise," he replied, thoughtfully.

"Dogs ain't of no 'count," said Angeline, with contempt. "Was brought up 'mong 'em—lived with 'em. Dogs know me well enough."

The girl seated herself near her mistress.

"Tired most to death, I do believe," she continued. "Do fly round, Peter, and get us something to eat. Don't 'spect we're goin' to live on nothin'—do ye? But you needn't be partic'lar; a strong cup o' coffee, a tender ven'son steak, and some nice bread and butter'll do yell enough. Laws! we don't care what we eat, anyways."

"You'll have to content yourself with some 'at less nor that," returned Peter, smiling. "I don't keep a hotel here in the turpentine woods; but sich as I can get, you shall have, right willin'."

Peter very cheerfully kindled a fire, and while he was busy improvising a meal, Milrose and Angeline fell asleep. The still-hunter looked at them compassionately. The benevolence of his nature was fully awakened. Milrose, so young and fair, filled him with a soft and tender admiration. She was more like a creation of his ideal than a real flesh-and-blood maiden. Peter Rust had dreamed of such a being in some of his happier slumbers in the forest; and now that he had accidentally fallen upon the substance of the nocturnal shadow, he was both pleased and surprised. But Peter had no thought of loving Milrose otherwise than he would love a flower or a beautiful picture.



Seeing her overpowered by sleep, and resting calmly after her agitation, he kindly forebore to disturb her; and leaving Swampsey to feed the fire with sticks, took his beloved double gun, and, with some hesitation and inward debate, left the hut, and disappeared among the laureled patriarchs.

Swampsey stood on his hands a little while, then on his head, then poised himself on one toe, then tried all his joints by various movements, and finding them all right, and that the whirl and twirl and twist was still in him as good as new, he subsided into a sitting posture by the fire, with his solemn eyes on the sleepers. The grave features of Little Dismal were, on that occasion, worthy of study. The wonder that Milrose had produced in his fantastic mind, had steadily increased, and it was at that moment greater than ever. The tawny beauty of Angeline had no charm for Swampsey. It was Milrose that fixed his eyes in an unwavering gaze. The yellow tint upon her face, imparted by the juices of leaves, detracted nothing from her loveliness in the sight of the boy. He studied her reposing features with intense curiosity. The exquisite beauty of the mouth, and the marvelous delicacy of the other features, put Swampsey to thinking that there was a higher race of beings than his simple experience had made him acquainted with. He arose and took a nearer view, then retreated to stare from his former position. So, with watching and wonder, and want of rest, the little fellow forgot his fire and went to sleep.

The fire burned out, the day waned, and the sleepers slept. The black foundling, though the last to sleep, was the first to wake. He began to stare at Milrose precisely where he left off. When, with a languid sigh, she opened her eyes, the first object she saw was Swampsey, magnetizing her with his earnest gaze. He was sitting by the ashes of the dead fire, with his tow shirt drawn tightly over his knees, where it was held by two little black hands. Over the angle of his flexed limbs, Swampsey aimed his two-gun battery.

Milrose was at first bewildered, then startled, and finally impressed with a sense of the ludicrous. She endeavored to meet his glance steadily and gravely, but it was impossible. She smiled. The boy's mouth slowly opened till he showed his white teeth; it was the nearest approach to a laugh that she had seen on his face.

"What time is it?" asked Milrose, laughing.

"Mos' dark, Mars'r Tom."

"Mars'r Tom!" inwardly repeated Milrose, then glancing downward at her figure, remembered that she was Tom.

Swampsey's eyes had by this time got down to her feet—exhaustless themes of speculation. Their smallness worried him. He was afraid they wouldn't answer the purpose, but give out

at a time when they were most needed. He thought them impracticable and marvelous little feet.

"Where is Peter?" she added.

"Dunno! Gone off," replied Swampsey, in his most straight-on style.

"Gone off? When will he be back?" continued Milrose, disturbed by his reply.

"Dunno!" said Swampsey. "Mars'r Peter gone off."

"He will surely return," she said, thoughtfully. "I must have slept a long time. It is near night."

"Mars'r Tom been 'sleep. Fire gone out."

Swampsey hopped to his feet, winked and blinked at the cold ashes, and added:

"Noffin to eat! Tole me to put on sticks. Speet Mars'r Pete'll be mad! Make up dis yer fire, Mars'r Tom."

Full of these luminous ideas, Swampsey ran off, and was soon back with his arms full of sticks, which he threw down beside the dead brands, then pointed to a match-box on a shelf.

"Rub 'em and they'll burn, Mars'r Tom."

Following these quaint directions, Milrose assisted Swampsey to light a fire, and was thus employed when Angeline awoke.

"Love o' God, Miss Milly!" she exclaimed, rubbing her eyes. "What you doin'?" Ain't buildin' a fire, be ye, for that lazy toddlepole? There he stands, with his hands behind him, as if he never done a hand's stirrin' in his life."

Swampsey answered not a word; but discovering a fair imprint of one of Milrose's feet in the soft earth, put one of his own naked little pedals into it, to measure its relative size. This serious business occupied him till the fagot blazed readily, and Angeline had rushed to the rescue of her mistress's dignity, of which she was very tenacious.

"Laws! what's he at now? Want's to see who's got the largest feet. What queer notions for a mere picaninny! If he isn't a jackalambson or a anhotomaton, he's something worse."

While Angeline was speaking, two men suddenly appeared at the door. One was Lovelace, the other, the poor white, Hillhouse.

#### CHAPTER XXVII.

##### MILROSE AND LOVELACE.

Taken entirely by surprise, Milrose stood amazed and silent. She had believed herself far beyond the reach of Colonel Lovelace, or any other person who might wish her to return to the home she had deserted. Lovelace paused on the threshold of the hut; he looked at Milrose. His gaze, at first, was wandering and uncertain; but directly grew fixed and positive. From Milrose's flushing face he glanced at Angeline. The fugitives were recognized! The form and features of Milrose were too deeply graven on his mind to be effectually disguised

or forgotten. He was much perturbed by this discovery. Before him was the lovely girl he adored, attired in masculine garments, flying from Lowenthal, and influenced by motives which he could scarcely conjecture.

What might he infer from this singular flight. How would it affect his hopes? How should he address her? All the generous impulses of his nature indicated the line of delicacy to be pursued.

"I will attempt no concealment," he said. "I know very well in whose company I find myself; but I must inform you that it is more from accident than from any knowledge of your place of refuge, that I am here."

He hesitated, and while Milrose was collecting herself to answer fittingly, he added:

"I do not question your motives, but they must have been urgent, to impel you to a step so important."

"I thank you, Colonel Lovelace, for your charitable construction of my conduct," she answered, with frankness. "I cannot say that I am glad to see you under such circumstances, yet I appreciate your delicacy."

"I trust," returned Lovelace, "that you will think better of this matter, and return to the plantation."

"Let us not talk of that, colonel," said Milrose, coldly. "I have acted from reason, not from impulse. I would sooner pass my life in this hut, than go back to the tyranny from which I have escaped."

She expressed herself with much earnestness. "To me," responded Lovelace, "the whole subject is wrapped in profound mystery. You know," he added, with emotion, "the hopes I have fed, and the aspirations that have led me on."

Lovelace stopped and grew pale; for he thought of Frederick North.

"I am scarcely worth pursuit," answered Milrose, in a playful voice. "Give your thoughts to some worthier object. Believe me, there are many who would not only feel honored by your preference, but responsive to your emotions. Therefore, Colonel Lovelace, let us understand each other, and act like beings endowed with reason, although girls of my age are not always credited with that useful commodity. Act like a sensible gentleman, as you are, and forget one who forgets herself, and goes masquerading in male attire."

Her voice was gentle and kind, and her manner not calculated to wound.

"It is easy to talk, Miss Dorn," said Lovelace, despondingly. "Words cost but little effort; but, falling from some lips, they strike deeper than Federal steel. While annihilating my hopes, you yet strengthen the magic chain that binds me. I fear I know too well the fatal obstacle that stands in my way."

"Set down, Mars'r Colonel," said Angeline.

"You look mighty faint. Swampsey, drag along that bench."

Swampsey didn't stir, and Angeline was obliged to place the bench herself.

"Excuse me, Miss Dorn," muttered Lovelace, sitting down. "I am quite exhausted with walking."

Hillhouse, during this conversation, stood looking and listening, in an uneasy state of suspense and surprise. By degrees the truth dawned upon him, and his wonder gradually turned to curiosity of the strongest kind. He looked at Milrose with a steadfastness that was tireless. Prettiness finds admirers in whatever garb it puts on.

"Peter Rust will return presently," said Milrose, shrinking beneath the staring eyes of Hillhouse, "and I doubt not he will give you hospitable treatment. Will your friend be seated, colonel?"

She pointed at Hillhouse, and laid some stress on the word friend.

"He will take care of himself outside," replied Lovelace, carelessly.

"It war about noon," quoth Hillhouse, combing his bristling hair with his fingers, "when the colonel he come to see me, and sez, 'Hillhouse,' sez he, 'the gel's gone.' 'Want to know?' sez I. 'Jes so,' sez he. 'Gone, hook and line, bob and sinker; and I wants you to pilot me through these yer woods as quick as never you can.' 'I'm yer man,' sez I; and with that, we started off. And so we went and went, 'thout regard to the p'int's o' compass. He war uncommon narvous, and give me a dreadful sweat! Wal, 'long toward night, we war goin' 'long, and war not seein' nothin', nor thinkin' nothin', nor 'speakin' nothin', nor 'keerin' for nothin', nor stoppin' for nothin'—"

"Love o' God!" broke in Angeline. "Nor you ain't a comin' to nothin', neither! Never hearn such a string o' nothin's noways. Reckon now you jest 'mount to nothin', and that's what you be. Tell ye what! take your nothin's and go out with 'em. Mistress don't care to have no nonsense anyways."

"As I war sayin'," resumed Hillhouse, "it war about noon. I had took a little sip o' whiskey, and war feelin' mighty fine—"

"Retire, and wait for me," interposed the colonel, abruptly.

Not in the least abashed, Hillhouse shuffled from the hut.

"Allow me," added Lovelace, in an impressive manner, "to ask if your decision is final? I would not propose this question here, situated as you now are, were not the times most perilous; and that the contingencies of war may call me away at any hour, to conflict in the chances of battle. If my long and sweet delusions must really end, better to know it beyond peradventure, than to cherish expectations that must die at last."

"Really and truly, Colonel Lovelace," Milrose answered, with equal seriousness, "I cannot make my lips belie my heart. Destiny has not written what you wish. We must follow fate. Bow to it gracefully. Accept my friendship; and if I may not love you, let me ever be able to respect your character, and honor your high and chivalrous nature."

She frankly held out her hand. Lovelace took it sadly.

"Lowenthal favored my ambition," he said, in a mournful tone.

"You were deceived," answered Milrose, earnestly. "Had my heart responded to your suit, no one would so bitterly have opposed you as Lowenthal."

"Is this possible?" exclaimed the colonel.

"You need not doubt it. If he played one part with you, with me he acted another. He said to me: 'Beware of Lovelace! His lands and his negroes are swallowed up by creditors. He has nothing but his commission and his sword.' There! I have been frank with you. It is but justice to a man of honor!"

The Confederate officer held the little hand an instant in his, then relinquished it, with a sigh. His face was now flushed with resentment.

"Your voice is truth," he replied, much disturbed. "You have opened my eyes; I begin to see clearly. He who deceives me once, will not deceive me again. I have been misled. Look, Milrose!" He pointed to the open door of the hut. "The sun is going down; so sink my hopes; but, like the sun, they will not rise again. The night of my disappointment has come. But I shall not grope, whining and complaining, through the darkness. I will bear my life-long regret like a man."

"You speak in a manner becoming your dignity. I trust I shall continue to deserve your good opinion. I left Lowenthal, because I was not safe there. A sense of danger continually haunted me. That man was the husband of my mother; but in him I feel that I have an enemy of the most malignant character."

"For what reason is he your enemy?" Lovelace asked. "He is bound by every law of humanity to protect you."

"Tell you what, Mars'r Lovelace!" cried Angeline. "He was goin' to shut her up in a construction at the top o' the house. What did he put Peter Rust up there for, anyways? What did he tote up so much lumber, and saws, and hammers, and nails for? Be them kind o' contraptions wanted in a 'spectable family?"

"All this is inexplicable!" exclaimed the colonel.

"It don't 'pear like myster'ous to me," replied Angeline, with decision. "A young lady that owns two or three hundred niggers, and a big plantation, and a fine house, and a good 'cal o' property, and lots o' di'monds, and money and things, isn't likely to get through the world

without plenty o' trouble, nor without findin' somebody willin' to rob and murder her, and pizen her, and put her to death, and take her life, and all she owns, and her niggers and her plantation, money, and di'monds!"

Angeline relieved herself of these expressions with high-pressure rapidity, while the Confederate officer listened with increasing wonder.

Milrose was terrified by the volubility of her maid. It is a notable fact, that plain people are apt to speak the plain truth. A porter will tell more truths in an hour than a prince will tell in a day.

"My maid," said Milrose, "is in the habit of speaking her mind without consulting my wishes."

"In this instance, I am glad that it is so," answered the colonel; "for her simple and straight-forward declaration has given me a new insight into your life, and the character of your stepfather. I must believe that I have been a dupe, however humiliating the thought. From this moment, Miss Dorn, count me among your friends."

He recalled the evidence of Hillhouse, and, although it revived unpleasant associations, it operated powerfully against Lowenthal. Anger and pride served to elevate his feelings. If he could not be an accepted lover, he could at least be a faithful friend, and the protector of Milrose. His line of conduct was quickly decided upon, and reflected credit on his manhood. He blushed at the recollection of his injustice to Frederick North. Blinded by his unfortunate passion, and hurried on by a false devotion to the rebel cause, he had been guilty of an act of oppression which, had it not been for the singular interference of the usurer, might have gone on to crime.

As he sat there, with bowed head, he passed through a great crisis of his life. He felt faint and sick; he trembled, he gasped; and—and—he relinquished Milrose.

#### CHAPTER XXVIII.

##### FREDERICK NORTH DESERTS.

Frederick North did not intend to remain long in the Confederate service. He accepted the gun and knapsack as the least of two evils. He had no particular objection to being a soldier in a cause receiving the sanction of his conscience; but to bear arms against his country was wholly repugnant to his feelings. The pure flame of patriotism burned brightly in his heart; it could not be extinguished by the lawless rule of the rebellious leaders. The long-established order of things might be broken up; civil war might prevail; terrorism might reign; Union men might be hunted down like felons, and persecution appear in its most revolting shapes; but none of these things could shake his allegiance to the old flag.

In his recent arrest and mock-trial, he plainly

discovered the malice of Lowenthal and the jealousy of Lovelace. His personal danger did not cause him so much uneasiness as the peril that seemed to surround Milrose Dorn. The words she had hurriedly spoken during their short interview on the balcony, had been a fruitful source of fear and doubt. His arrest and detention could not have occurred at a time more unlucky for his purposes; and though he bore his impressment into the rebel ranks with outward calmness, his mind was in a whirl of apprehension and impatience. Inwardly, he abjured the seven-starred rag that floated over him, and held in scorn and contempt the pretensions of the pseudo Government.

Frederick North was sleeping outside the crowded little tent to which he had been assigned. It was the second night of his stay at Camp Royal. Wrapped in a dirty gray blanket, he was dreaming of Milrose, when he was awakened by a gentle pressure upon his arm. Opening his eyes, he beheld a large negro standing over him. He looked at this dark apparition with a momentary fear. The moon was shining on his sooty face and herculean person. Frederick saw ugly scars on his face, that, apparently, grew ghastly in the moonlight as he looked at them. His lips were notably African, while his eyes showed two white rims beaming like two dull stars. On one of his brawny, naked arms, he observed curious indented lines, as if hot irons had been driven into his flesh.

The black stood motionless until assured that Frederick was fully awake, then made signs for him to arise. The young man threw off his blanket and arose. Babel touched him on the breast, then touched himself, and pointed toward the pine barrens.

"The sentinels?" whispered Frederick, making a gesture to the outer limits of the camp. Babel put his finger to his mouth and ears, to give him a knowledge of his feigned infirmities, and the next instant drew forth a bowie-knife not much smaller than a broadsword. This formidable weapon he kept ingeniously concealed under his garments.

Frederick was perplexed. He knew not whether to follow or refuse. Escape was paramount in his thoughts; but this might be a trap set by his enemies. He could not quite understand Babel. When he touched his mouth and ears, he knew not whether he was warning him to silence, or indicating the inability of these organs. There was no time to lose. The question was to be decided quickly. He looked black over once more. The white light falling on his dark arm revealed the tracery of characters. He read the word "BABEL," and remembered having heard Milrose mention him. Had he been sent, or had he come of his own will?

These thoughts passed rapidly through Frederick's mind, and when Babel turned to go, he

was ready to follow. He soon perceived that he had no inexperienced guide. He evidently knew exactly where to go. He did not approach the guard in a direct line, but in a circle that swept half way around the camp, and that fell within the line of shadow of an avenue of trees.

Frederick's faith in Babel increased at every step; so did his desire to get clear of the camp.

He expected every moment to be challenged by a sentinel; but nothing of the kind occurred. The giant soon crept upon one, but he lay stupidly drunk upon the ground. The negro bent over him, unclasped his resistless fingers from his gun, and gave it to Frederick.

They passed on, and were soon beyond the limits of Camp Royal. The black walked faster and faster; he strode toward the long margin of forest with great strides. North spoke to him several times, by way of experiment, but received no notice.

He saw Lowenthal's mansion lying pale under the moonlight. While looking at it, he could think only of Milrose. Her presence had hallowed it. Her idea gave a silent charm to the dwelling and all connected with it. He thought of Milrose as still there, exposed to that unknown danger of which she had vaguely spoken. He stopped, without knowing it, and continued gazing. Babel's hand upon his shoulder, drawing him onward, aroused him from his reverie of Milrose. Presently, he found himself standing before Peter Rust's hut. A few days before, he had flattered himself that he should meet Milrose there; but now that pleasing hope seemed far distant; perhaps it had become impossible. He sighed gloomily, and looked around for Babel; he was gone. He stood alone before the cabin of the still-hunter.

#### CHAPTER XXIX.

##### THE LITTLE GUIDE.

While Frederick was wondering at the disappearance of Babel, he saw an object coming toward him. He thought it was an animal; but presently it proved to be a black boy of very small size, who approached him in a novel way, tumbling heels over head, and revolving like an animated wheel. He struck finally at Frederick's feet, like an India-rubber ball; the next instant, his yard of length stood upright, and as quietly and soberly as if he had always walked the earth like other mortals.

Although taken by surprise by this unexpected appearance, the young man now recognized the little creature as a faithful follower of Peter Rust.

"Well, Swampsey, what do you want?" asked Frederick.

Little Dismal winked and blinked as fast as he could, but did not open his mouth.

"Is Peter in the cabin?" continued Frederick. Swampsey shook his head solemnly. Every-

thing relating to Peter was, to his apprehension, a matter of the first consequence.

"Mars'r Peter's gone," he replied.

"Gone where?"

"Come 'long Swampsey," said the boy. "Mars'r Peter leff dat yer." He nodded his head at the cabin. "Mars'r Peter can't stay in dat yer. White folks want Mars'r Peter. Mars'r Peter got away from white folks. Keep el'ar on 'em, now."

The swamp-foundling kept his blinking eyes steadily on Frederick, and his little face grew marvelously serious.

"Has Peter been in trouble?"

"Shut him up, down yon. Couldn't git out—Mars'r Peter couldn't. Got a rope for him, and he slid down from dat yer bad place. Spect dey won't cetch him ag'in. Dat's all 'bout dis yer. Come 'long!"

Swampsey gave Frederick but little time to deliberate, but started off promptly, and with a celerity of movement that the young man did not care to imitate. There evidently being design in this, he followed his unique guide, confident that he would not lead him into danger. Sometimes, Swampsey was so far in advance that he could with difficulty see him; and in several instances, when he thought he had entirely lost him, he came upon him unexpectedly, passing the time of waiting in turning somersets and walking on his hands. On one of these occasions, he was considerably startled to find the boy confronted by a thrifless-looking man, with two dogs at his heels, and who was threatening him in a boisterous manner. His elocution went after this fashion.

"You're Peter Rust's little nig—be ye? You's dug out o' the mud—wasn't ye? Wall, now, I reckon you're a fine specimen of a ape. Can't mind yer own business, I s'pose—can ye? Have to meddle with mine, promably! Had to come up to my shanty to tote off my little drummer and trumpeter. That war not your work, though; you's put up to't by that am-blerition no-count, Peter Rust! He sent ye up yon, though the Lord be on'y knows how ye had wit 'nough to git thar, and remember what was said to ye. I made up my mind, then that I'd jest make a el'ar cend of ye; and I'm now on the p'int o' doin' it. These yer dogs, I reckon, 'll pull ye to pieces quicker nor they would a possum."

The fellow stopped, made great eyes at Swampsey, and whistled to his dogs.

"Mars'r Peter tripped up yer heels!" answered the lad, winking and blinking rapidly. "You can't do noffin with Mars'r Peter!"

"Here, Jeff! Here—here—here!" cried Ben Dykes. "At him, pup! Take him, Beau!"

But Beau crouched on the ground, and Jeff alone mustered courage to assault Swampsey. He sprang at the lad's throat, but Swampsey flung himself into the air, and alighted behind

the hound, which rushed on madly against a tree. Turning to renew the attack, he met with no better success; for Swampsey came down on his back, and putting his black arms round Jeff's neck, choked him till both eyes and tongue protruded, and he howled with pain and suffocation. Stung by pain, the hound did its utmost to rid itself of its persecutor, and a hurry-scurry struggle ensued. Sometimes the dog was uppermost, sometimes the boy, and there was a violent scattering of leaves.

"Have done there!" vociferated Ben, alarmed for the safety of his hound. "Come off that, yer pup! Wouldn't kill a innocent dog, would ye?"

But Swampsey had no sympathy for an innocent pup, and kept steadily at his business.

"Goddemity!" muttered Ben; "what a spry critter he is! Should think he's made of eels and wild-cats. Git out there, or I'll cut your weasand!"

Ben drew his bowie-knife from his trousers' leg, where he always carried it, with the point sheathed in his boot. It was a novel application of a common adjunct of low Southern society; but Benjamin Dykes found it exceedingly convenient and within reach, and when drawn out in a swaggering manner, that piece of steel had an excellent moral effect on the beholders, and on various occasions had done more to abash his adversaries than its actual use.

Cutting the air with this ugly instrument making a disagreeable, whizzing sound, the dog-trainer advanced upon the combatants, intending to make a thrust, at the critical moment when there was no dog between Swampsey and the ground.

"Goddemity!" exclaimed Ben, lugubriously. "I'm afraid someat 'll happen to Jeff. How they do flop over and over! Beau, you sneak in' pup, why don't you go in and win? It's nothin' but a no 'count nigger, anyway. I'll browse you, my lad, for this! Let go, nig! Let go, dog!"

Dykes poised his knife over the floundering pair, but there was no time that it could descend without endangering the canine, and the tender-hearted owner perspired with concern.

At this juncture Frederick North, who had been a silent observer of most of this scene, no longer able to repress his indignation, advanced suddenly upon Ben, and with the barrel of his gun gave him such a sharp rap across the knuckles, that he dropped his knife and danced about like a trained bear in a menagerie. He would also have tickled his ribs with his bayonet, had he not quickly taken himself away. Having performed this meritorious action, he reached down, seized the hound by the nape of the neck, tore him from Swampsey's grasp and flung him at his master with such force that, striking him across the stomach, he drove the breath from his lungs and knocked him flat upon his back.

Swampsey hopped to his feet as good as new, and threw a somersault of delight at the discomfiture of his enemies, then subsided very quickly to his characteristic gravity.

"Who are you?" demanded Frederick, sternly, turning upon Ben while he was recovering his feet.

"Who be I, eh?" hissed Ben, spitefully. "I'm Ben Dykes; Ben Dykes of the turpentine woods; Ben Dykes, the dog-trainer; Ben Dykes, the nigger-hunter; Ben Dykes here, and Ben Dykes there!"

Ben Dykes swelled prodigiously. He inflated himself with the idea of his own importance.

"What's Lowenthal without Ben Dykes?" he went on. "What's the rebellion without Ben Dykes? You'll be strung up and have your throat cut, fust thing you dunno!"

"Why did you set your dog on this child?" asked Frederick, wrathfully. "Had you no better business for your curs? When you seek a quarrel, take one of your years, and not an infant."

"Goddemity! He a infant!" sneered Ben, shaking a menacing finger at Swampsey. "He a infant! Then I'm a infant, and you're a infant. He's a soupnat'ral and an onnat'ral. Dog-on-me if ever I see such a nig! But I'll swaller him, sometime. I'll cut him up into long, thin strips, when I come acrost him!"

Ben glared at Swampsey savagely. Having expressed himself in that direction, he turned his attention to Frederick. He cautiously approached him, and read his face and expression by the moonlight.

"Happy to know ye, Mr. What's-your-name. Glad to meet ye. Hope I shall see ye ag'in. Cotton is King. Be kind enough to say that yer, won't ye?"

"I'll say what I please. If you have regard for your safety, you will start immediately for your shanty, wherever it is. You look to me like a person who has a hungry wife and starving children at home. Take your shark's mouth away."

Frederick advanced and Ben retreated.

"There's my cussed mouth ag'in!" he muttered. "Nobody can keep out o' my mouth. The devil's in my mouth, I b'lieve. If 'twasn't for eatin', I wish I hadn't no mouth."

"Here comes Mars'r Peter!" drawled Swampsey.

Ben glanced about in alarm, and discovering Peter Rust approaching, prudently put most of his body behind a tree.

"Mars'r Peter! Mars'r Peter!" cried Swampsey, exultingly, spinning around on one leg, and clapping his hands.

Peter Rust had his double-gun. He tapped it significantly on the barrel, and leveling a finger at Ben Dykes, said:

"Skedaddle!"

And Ben Dykes of the turpentine woods,

Ben Dykes, the dog-trainer, ran away like a cowardly

### CHAPTER XXX.

"Mars'r Peter!" said Swampsey, winking wider and oftener than usual.

Peter came up rapidly, and somewhat disturbed. He glanced anxiously at North, and the little foundling; then examined the scene of the late conflict between the latter and Ben's dog.

He leaned on the muzzle of his double-gun, and asked:

"What's happened to Little Dismal? Been trouble, here, I reckon."

"Yes," answered Frederick. "A fellow came along with a large hound, and maliciously set him upon Swampsey."

"Stop, someat!" said Peter. "I think I can describe that varmint. Had a mouth that nigh on't took his head off—hadn't he?"

"I had a very fair view of him, as I came to Swampsey's assistance," replied Frederick, "and I did observe that he had a mouth of uncommon width."

"Fact is, Mr. North, the liver of Ben Dykes' mouth is hung on a hinge, and he's obleeged to be awful keeful when he laughs, to prevent the top of his head from tippin' back'ards. If I had sich a mouth as that," continued Peter, smiling grimly, "I'd let it for a milit'ry barracks, or a institution o' larnin'. He calls himself Ben Dykes; Ben Dykes of the Turpentine Woods; Ben Dykes, the dog-trainer; Ben Dykes, the nigger-hunter; Ben Dykes here, and Ben Dykes there. Well," added Peter, "he's all that, and more. He's a pine-woods politician, and a thrifless vagabond. He lives in a hut that would disgrace a savage; raises pups and children—edicates the pups, but neglects the children; talks about Southern rights and free institutions, and never combs his hair nor washes his face; boasts of the great Confederate republic with his whisky-drinkin' companions by day, and sleeps with his dogs at night. Wanted me to say Cotton is King, Ben did! Wanted me, Peter Rust, to say Cotton is King!"

Peter slowly raised himself from the muzzle of his gun, drew his six feet two inches of height as straight as the twin barrels, and looking up calmly at the skies, and lifting his right arm in mild protestation, repeated:

"Wanted me to say Cotton is King!"

Every part of Peter told how impossible it would have been for him to say, "Cotton is King!"

"They may go on," added Peter, deliberately—"they may go on with this here business. They may gather armies, and fly their rebel rags; they may drive Unionism from the land; they may bring misery and desolation on the country recently dotted with peaceful and happy homes; they may hurl all their strength

against the North in fratricidal war; they may rejoice in their rebellion, and revel, for a time, in blood and pillage; but all these things shall be as short-lived as a passing dream."

It was seldom that Peter Rust said so much, or delivered himself with so much earnestness.

"Your heart is in this matter, Mr. Rust," observed North.

"Right, lad, right! The heart should be in every matter worthy of pursuit. Cotton's no king for me, Frederick. If I have any favorites in that line, it's sweet potatoes and hemp; and that's what I told Ben." Then to Swampsey: "Did the dog hurt ye, Little Dismal?"

"No, Mars'r Peter," answered Swampsey, with an incipient grin. "Couldn't git hold of Swampsey, dog couldn't. Rolled over and over—made the leaves fly!"

The black foundling of Alligator Swamp winked and blinked in his most effective fashion.

"Come along, Mr. North," said Peter, shouldering his double gun and moving off. "You didn't stay long in the rebel service, I remark? Don't much blame ye for secedin' from sich a lot o' tatterdemalions. The further you can git from Camp Royal, the better; for the Beaufort Guards 'll be arter ye in force. Nothin' 'll suit Lowenthal better than to see ye hanged as a deserter."

"I shall do my best to spare him that trouble," responded Frederick.

They had gone but a short distance, when North saw two persons just beyond them, who seemed to be awaiting their approach.

"Who are those?" he asked, stopping.

"None that you need fear."

Frederick went on again, and was soon near enough to the parties to recognize the man Markthaler and the mulatto Jacob, both of whom had been present at his examination at Lowenthal's. He could not but recall the singular deportment of the usurer; his occasional interruptions during his mock trial, his quick consciousness of all that transpired, and the strange effect of his eccentric interpositions. He had more than excited his curiosity; he had created a deep feeling of surprise, which had been but little lessened by the interval that had elapsed. It was with peculiar emotions that he drew near this person, and was introduced by Peter of the Pines.

"Mr. Markthaler, Frederick," said Peter, briefly.

Both bowed, and looked at each other sharply.

In the white shimmering moonlight, the pale face of the usurer looked paler, and his white hair whiter. His eyes shone with the brilliancy of a woman's through the glasses that partially obscured them. Frederick was particularly struck, as others had been, with the freshness and smoothness of the face, contrasting

strongly, as it did, with the gray setting. There was a peculiar delicacy of mouth and feature that was also apparent. There was a severe symmetry and elegance about the man that did not altogether please Frederick, who had a marked dislike to anything like dandyism.

Lifting his eyes just above the usurer's head, they rested on the statuesque proportions of Jacob, whose countenance still wore that unbending placidity that had characterized him at Lowenthal's. Both master and man were marvels, in their way. Both had points of resemblance, yet they were notably unlike.

"We have met before," observed Frederick.

"I remember," answered Markthaler.

"I am impressed with the idea," continued the young man, with some hesitation, "that you were useful to me on that occasion."

"A pleasant scrap of imagination, I think," responded the usurer. "You may recollect that I was at that time deeply immersed in important papers, which left me but small opportunity for your business. I do remember, however, that your loyalty was questioned; that something was said about putting you to death; but I could not find time to give you more than casual notice."

"And yet the few words that you uttered appeared to have a determining influence on my judges."

"A mind excited by danger is apt to give meaning to the most common-place things," answered Markthaler. "You were accused of love, as well as treason, if I remember rightly?"

The luminous eyes of the usurer were bent on the young man with particular intentness, as if to search out the secrets of his heart, if he had such.

"Something of that nature came up," said Frederick, coloring.

"The man Hillhouse, in his evidence, mentioned a lady, a balcony, and a midnight interview. I supposed that a lady, a balcony, and a midnight interview might have something to do with love."

A smile curled the pale lips of the usurer. Swampsey, with his hands crossed behind him, looked up gravely at both, and winked and blinked.

Peter caressed his double gun, while the yellow Hyperion, Jacob, stood in impassive tranquillity behind his master.

"It appears that those important papers did not wholly absorb your attention," said Frederick, embarrassed.

"Shall I go on?" asked Peter, looking at Markthaler.

"Lead to the hut," answered the latter. "We will follow."

The still-hunter moved forward moderately, and the others kept near him without effort. The path was narrow, and the usurer walked before Frederick, talking as he went.



SWAMPSEY'S STRUGGLE WITH DYER'S DOG.



"I sometimes have a double consciousness," he said, answering the young man's last remark. "I confess that I felt sufficient interest in you to make a trifling effort to save you from the malice of Lowenthal, and the jealousy of Lovelace. Your secret came out during that somewhat extraordinary trial. Pardon my frankness, for I am, to a considerable extent, interested in the affairs of the cotton-planter. I have certain claims on the Lowenthal estate that may seriously affect the fortunes of his step-daughter, Milrose Dorn."

"It is not the young lady's fortune I seek," replied Frederick, tartly. "Money probably assumes a higher value in your estimation than in mine, because it is your business to deal in the article; but at my time of life, there is something infinitely higher than a mere accumulation of wealth, and which more nearly affects my happiness. I cannot conceive how your business relations with Lowenthal give you any right to interfere with the affairs of Miss Dorn, or to intrude your advice upon one who has not asked it."

Frederick believed that this rebuke would silence the usurer; but he was mistaken; he did not seem to mind it in the least. There was no irritation in his manner; when he continued:

"I have more interest in the lady than you think. The truth is not always seen at a glance. Life is shaped by invisible threads that we unknowingly follow here and there. Some of these invisible threads unite me, perchance, to the fortunes of Milrose Dorn."

"You are, in truth, a romantic money-lender!" sneered North. "Milrose would no doubt be flattered by your invisible threads."

"Would you marry her without fortune?" demanded Markthaler, peremptorily, pausing to mark the effect of the question.

"Ay, without a farthing," exclaimed Frederick. "Perhaps, however," he added, sarcastically, "a certain usurer has better claims to that distinction."

"I know of no young lady, at present, whom I would marry," answered Markthaler, smiling, and looking at Jacob. "Do I know any lady whom I would marry, Jacob?" he asked.

"No, mars'r," replied Jacob, gravely.

"Think you I would marry Milrose, Jacob?"

Jacob shook his head.

"I fear your servant puts but too modest an estimate upon your merits!" observed Frederick, with irony.

"Possibly," responded Markthaler, dryly.

"I must add, also, that you, yourself, display a measure of self-abnegation that is quite refreshing! I wonder that you do not bear off this pretty prize at once."

Frederick frowned, and glanced contemptuously down at the small and tidy figure of the usurer.

"A truce to badiuago! This is no time for

folly. Events of the gravest character are daily transpiring, changing the fates of men and fortunes. That which you may secure to-day, may be forever beyond your reach to-morrow. I can tell you things that have happened since your impressment into the rebel army, that you little dream of. I am familiar with the affairs of Lowenthal. Our business relations have been close and of long continuance. I have absorbed yonder plantation. My coffers have closed upon a hundred and fifty negroes. I may be said to have swallowed Lowenthal, cotton, chattels, and all."

"And dare you make a boast of your infamous extortions? Should you not rather blush to confess to your Jewish robberies?" cried North, indignantly. "In defrauding Lowenthal, you defraud Miss Dorn. In impoverishing one, you beggar the other."

"Young man," said Markthaler, coldly; "but a moment since you would marry Milrose without a farthing. Now you are wrathful, forsooth, because of her poverty. We do not always touch the secret springs of character at first, but if we feel for them carefully, we are sure to find them, at last."

The countenance of the money-lender was now severe in its expression. His displeasure was manifest, and not to be ignored.

North was confused. He had not expected to be turned upon in this abrupt and novel manner.

"My heat," he said, presently, "arises not from any expectations of being benefited by the worldly possessions of the young lady in question, but from a natural detestation of over-reaching cupidity and usurious knavery. Know, once for all, meddling Jew, that I entertain small hopes of being anything more to Miss Dorn than I now am; but I do, and shall ever feel, a deep interest in her prosperity and happiness. Rumor has whispered it abroad, I know not with what truth, that yonder estate, comprising its chattels, one and all, rightfully belonged to her, being inherited from her mother deceased. If this be the case, I am at a loss to know in what manner the plantation and its belongings could be conveyed to you as securities for moneys loaned."

Markthaler had stopped again, and stood confronting North with a gaze so fixed and penetrating, that the young man involuntarily recoiled.

"Do you hear what he says, Jacob?" muttered the money-lender, frowning. "We have unmasked him, at last!"

"No, mars'r," interposed Jacob, anxiously.

"Do not contradict me, Jacob! I say we have unmasked him!"

Markthaler looked angrily at his servant.

"I say we have not!" retorted Jacob, firmly, yet in a tone of respect. "He is honest," he added. "He is true. He is angry with the ex-



tortion and the extortioner, and his grief is not for the lost fortune, but for her who loses it."

"You abuse your master's goodness, Jacob," said Markthaler, softened somewhat.

"It is his goodness that makés me speak plainly," answered Jacob, with humility.

This scene bewildered Frederick. He stared first at one, then at the other. Inexplicably enough, the money-lender was obtaining an ascendancy over him.

They walked on slowly, each thoughtful, and Frederick in a maze of doubt.

"And so you love her, young man?" said Markthaler, by-and-by, turning upon North, suddenly.

"Had one asked me that question, entitled to a calm and truthful reply, I should have answered with the frankness of a boy, 'with all my heart!' Nor would that have expressed the depth and intensity of my devotion. She has become a part of my existence. If my soul has an aspiration, it is for Milrose; if it has a voice, it continually speaks her name: my thoughts, my dreams, are of her. But you, sir, know nothing of a passion like this. If you have a love, it is the love of gold; if you worship aught, you bow the knee and the spirit to bonds, deeds, securities, and bursting coffers."

Frederick made a gesture of infinite contempt toward the usurer.

"How well he reads us, Jacob!" cried the money-lender, with a singular blending of mirth and bitterness.

"Think of your hoards, and trouble me no more," added Frederick, moodily.

"Think of whom you will, and come along!" retorted Markthaler. And the parties walked on silently.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### AN AWKWARD PREDICAMENT.

It was nearly morning when Peter reached the hut. The darkness that precedes the dawn lay heavily on the pines. Emerging from the thick inclosure of trees, Frederick entered the little opening in which the still-hunter had built his humble habitation. The first thing that met his sight was a cheerful fire blazing ruddily a few yards from the door of the hut. The next object that drew his attention, was a figure wrapt in a military coat, reclining upon some pine foliage near the burning fagots. Upon this recumbent form young North fastened his eyes with great interest. There was something in the quiet outlines of the unknown person that seemed not unfamiliar to him. This silent guardian was either sleeping, or mentally lost in reverie; for he did not change his attitude until Peter Rust was close upon him. He started up, however, in alarm, before Peter was near enough to touch him. Retreating in a bewildered manner, he drew a pistol from his breast-pocket, exclaiming:

"Who comes! Who comes!"

"Put up your little joker, colonel," answered Peter, "for there's no danger. Must have been sleeping pooty sound not to have heard us comin'."

"I have not been sleeping," said Lovelace, in a hollow voice, his abstracted air still clinging to him.

The man's tones made Frederick's heart leap under his Confederate jacket. Lovelace, his judge, and his rival, stood before him.

Frederick still wore the rebel jean. His knapsack he had left at camp, but his cartridge-box, containing several rounds of powder and ball, he had brought away; while upon his shoulder he carried the musket which Babel had taken from the sleeping sentinel.

There he was face to face with the colonel of the Beaufort Guard—a deserter discovered in the very act of flight. But the circumstances were such that he had no qualms of conscience respecting the desertion, and yet the rencontre was, for various reasons, unpleasant. Peter of the Pines he could rely upon in any emergency, but of Markthaler and the yellow Jacob he was not so certain. As North's surprise abated, a feeling of proud resentment took its place. He recalled the recent arrogance of the man, at a time when he had him wholly at his mercy; nor did he forget that to Lovelace he was indebted for his unjust and proscriptive degradation to the rebel ranks. The idea of Milrose went sweeping through his imagination, coloring and intensifying his feelings.

The two men stared at each other. To Lovelace it was a moment of bitterness. The sight of Frederick made him terribly sensible of his own disappointment. To that overpowering grief which the final rejection of Milrose had occasioned, was now added a darker and more dangerous sentiment. He struggled hard to repress the sterner and fiercer part of his nature, and to practice that magnanimity which he had resolved upon while in the presence of Miss Dorn. Seeing the young man before him, whom he was conscious he had dealt harshly with, all his powers of self-control did not suffice to prevent a slight reddening of his cheeks; it was manhood's instinctive tribute to honor.

But something must be said; a fact of which Lovelace was well aware.

"How dare you leave your regiment, sir?" he demanded, haughtily.

Frederick threw his musket contemptuously to the ground. He advanced deliberately upon the colonel, and folding his arms upon his chest, confronted him with a most natural and dignified assumption of pride. Within, he glowed like a furnace; but he tried to be calm.

"It is time to drop this mockery, sir," he said, with tolerable composure. "You may have a regiment, Colonel Lovelace, but I have none. You are in this rebellion, heart and

soul, but know, sir, that I am for the Union and the old flag! Talk not to me, sir, of regiments and subordination; I scorn such contemptible assumptions of authority. Think you I can forget that shallow mockery at Lowenthal's, which you called a trial. You cannot make a rebel of a man by forcing him into a suit of rebel jean, and giving him a musket and a knapsack. Treason must be in the heart, sir!"

"Sir! sir!" stammered Lovelace. "You forget your position! I order you back, sir!"

"Let this arrogance cease, sir," answered Frederick, indignantly. "I am your equal by birth and education; and possibly," he added, with a perceptible sneer; "I may not be below you in fortune."

"Do not insult me!" said the colonel, biting his lips. "I am not in a mood to be trifled with."

He laid his hand upon his sword.

"I have no sword," resumed North, "but should be most happy, when equally armed, to give you every satisfaction in my power."

"I have pistols," replied Lovelace, whose anger was getting the better of his discretion; "but perhaps," he continued with evident contempt for his adversary, "you have no predilections for lead."

"Pistols will do," said Frederick eagerly. "Produce them quickly, and away with words."

Markthaler, who had been an earnest listener, approached and said to the colonel, in a low voice:

"You are forgetting your rank, sir."

North heard the words, and they fired his heart.

"If he takes refuge behind his rank, he is a coward!" he exclaimed.

"Love o' God!" interposed another voice, with such emphasis that Frederick turned involuntarily to look for the person who had spoken. Guided by the fire-light, his gaze rested on the figure of a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age, wearing, like himself, the Confederate jean. A species of fascination kept him from withdrawing his eyes from this mal-a-propos intruder.

"It 'pears like they're going to cut each other's throats. We can't have no such carr'in's on here, anyways! Laws, Peter! why don't you step in and stop that yer! Somebody 'll be swoundin' away, the first thing you dunno!"

Frederick's wonder grew to exaggerated dimensions. Had he heard that voice before? A latent consciousness told him he had heard one wondrously like it; but it was associated with one of the other sex; while here, standing distinctly in his sight, was a dark-skinned, but not uncomely boy. He was trying to make this matter clear to his apprehension, when Peter Rust advanced briskly, with his double-gun in his hand, and said, with a deprecating sweep of his long arm:

"These here are my premises, gentlemen, and I'll have no wranglin' on 'em, I allow! Live folks are worth someat, but dead ones ain't scarcely of no account whatsoever. Put up your tools, men, and settle your differences som'ers else."

Swampsey went and stood just beside Peter, and winked and blinked in his most solemn fashion. The contrast between the two was notable; but none of the parties found leisure to mark the striking difference between six feet two and three feet nothing.

There was a lull in the storm. The principals in the altercation scowled and looked away from each other in a most unamiable manner.

North was about to address some apologetical words to Peter of the Pines, when a new claimant to his attention appeared, in the shape of another youth very similar to the first, although more delicately formed, more regular in features, and of lighter complexion.

Lads of fifteen and sixteen, and near that period of life, have certain characteristics in common, and few of them attract particular notice when met casually, either in the street or any other place; but this youth, as he hesitatingly drew near the parties, instantly and unaccountably became an object of interest to North. The blazing brands reflected a strong light upon his face, the delicacy and beauty of which might well excite a gaze of wonder. His figure, too, had equal claims for observation, presenting those rounded lines and symmetrical proportions that give grace and harmony to the human form. Perplexed, without knowing why; bewildered, without apparent cause; interested without any reason he could think of, his incidental glance became a gaze, and his gaze a stare.

The youth made a beseeching gesture to Peter Rust, displaying, as he did so, a hand childishly small. Frederick looked downward, and saw a pair of feet to match the hand.

The silent adjuration of the boy had an immediate effect on Peter.

"The young man seems to have forgotten the pistols," said Lovelace, derisively, watching the direction of Frederick's eyes.

"Quite the contrary!" retorted the young man, his anger, which had subsided a little, flashing up again. "I think you will never find an antagonist more willing to meet you than I. Let Mr. Markthaler arrange the preliminaries without loss of time. Any terms that are equal will suit me. Twelve paces, or twenty, or muzzle to breast, are the same to me."

Frederick's deportment was usually distinguished for its modesty and the absence of everything to draw notice upon himself; but now his air was bold, and his bearing proud and confident. The taunt of Lovelace had stung him, and he was hot to renew the dispute, and end it by an appeal to the deadly duel.

"Peter Rust! Peter Rust!" cried the youth who had last appeared, imploringly.

"I tell you that this can't go on," remonstrated Peter. "If the matter must come to pistols, let the pistols and you be in some other place."

Peter stepped between the prospective combatants. Planting the breach of his double-gun on the ground before him, and standing with his left hand upon the muzzle, he presented a grim and formidable figure, as he glanced rebukingly from one to the other.

"If you fight, men, it must be through me!"

Meantime, the voice of the youth had done more to divert the wrath of Frederick than the stern countenance and remonstrative words of Peter. A feeling far stronger than curiosity held every other emotion in suspense, and sent the hot blood thrilling through his veins. Markthaler, too, seemed similarly affected, for he could not keep his eyes from the lad; and Angeline noticed that his color continually went and came. It appeared to Frederick that he saw before him the veritable face and form of Milrose, and that he had not heard her voice. He asked himself how such a thing could be. His reason answered, that it was impossible. But love is sharper than reason; and Frederick's heart knew Milrose. Logic is a laggard, and love is lightning, which travels far and fast.

"I am content to let this quarrel rest for the present," stammered Frederick, in a confused manner.

Lovelace recalled his promise to Milrose, and regretted that he had so soon forgotten it.

He had said that he would be her friend, true and faithful. Had he acted in conformity with this agreement in insulting the man who loved her, and whom he was painfully forced to believe occupied the first place in her affections? She gave him a glance that sufficiently manifested her displeasure. He dropped his pistol to its accustomed pocket, and lamenting his impetuosity, walked from the spot, with his head far less erect and haughty than a moment before.

Markthaler, pale and faint, leaned against a tree for support. Jacob, who had been watching him ever since the appearance of Milrose, approached him with the greatest anxiety, and said, hurriedly:

"Be firm, master! Do not yield to this weakness. Thus far you have been strong. Bear the trial a while longer."

"Why did you not tell me, Jacob?" faltered Markthaler, much agitated. "I will not forgive you!"

"I knew it not," responded Jacob, earnestly. "Master, no one told me that she was here. And is it not as well? The longings of your soul will be satisfied with seeing her. Guard your secret, I beseech you!"

Jacob managed to interpose his person be-

tween his master and the light of the fire, so that he was mostly screened from observation.

"Why is she here, Jacob, and in those garments? There is something that we do not know. O Jacob! you have been unfaithful!"

"I have acted according to my knowledge and ability," answered Jacob, much depressed by the rebukes of his master. "The danger may have been nearer than I judged."

"Yes, much nearer," said Markthaler, who trembled like a woman. "The poor girl has been forced to fly from the tyranny of that infamous man! Stand behind me, Jacob. I would behold that sweet face once more."

"Wait till you are calm," entreated Jacob. "Hazard not all at once. All will be well. This duel shall be prevented. Rather look upon this as a happy chance, than as a misfortune. What better opportunity can you have for observing her character?"

"True! true!" murmured the money-lender.

"How beautiful she is!" continued Jacob, following up his advantage. "Did mortal eyes ever see such a figure? I wonder not that the young man adores her. She is an angel!"

"Cease! cease!" sighed Markthaler. "I shall be calm presently."

All this time, Frederick's eyes were directed to the mysterious youth; and his heart kept crying: "Milrose! Milrose!"

Seeing the danger of an immediate encounter averted, the counterfeit drummer, startled at her own boldness, retreated precipitately to the hut, into which Frederick's dazed eyes followed her wonderingly.

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE PARTING WORDS OF LOVELACE.

Lovelace, having calmed the tumult of his feelings by reflection and second sober thought, conversed a moment with Peter Rust, and then entered the hut.

The night had passed, and the first rays of the sun were reddening the east. Crimson beams, like threads of gold, crept through the foliage of the trees, and struggled into Peter's little shanty, and fell shimmering and trembling on the pale face of the maiden. Lovelace went in, with depressed head and hesitating steps. Milrose turned upon him with some asperity of manner, and said:

"You have kept well your promise, sir! This, Colonel Lovelace, is your friendship!"

"Be not annoyed, fair Milrose," answered Lovelace. "Your lover is safe."

The Confederate officer had intended to be very humble in the presence of Miss Dorn; but her sharpness vexed him, and he could not forego the opportunity of vexing her in return. Milrose blushed.

"I can understand you," she said, in a quiet voice; "and knowing the disappointment you have suffered, can hardly blame you for the re-

proach contained in your last remark. By my lover, you, doubtless mean Frederick North. Knowing the danger to which he has been exposed, I can readily accept your assurances of his safety."

Milrose looked up, and smiled. The colonel moved uneasily, and bit his lips.

"A fair retort, Miss Dorn," he replied.

"And given without malice, believe me," returned Milrose. "Have you not done this young man injustice?" she asked.

The colonel's eyes fell before her steady look.

"I ordered him back to his regiment," said Lovelace. "But I came not to speak of this; I came to take leave of you."

"I can believe, sir, that it is not a subject you like to dwell upon. It is seldom agreeable to recall a wrong we have done to another. I have heard the details of that mock-trial, conducted by yourself and Lowenthal. Some other feeling than loyalty governed your actions. Sir, I am not a lawyer; but a simple sense of justice teaches me that your duties had nothing to do with Frederick North, and that the whole thing was an unwarrantable stretch of power, discreditable to you and the other party concerned. You forced him into the ranks of your regiment. Wishing to degrade, you certainly exhibited great discrimination in your sentence; for if there is anything degrading to an honorable man, it is, to be thrust into the society of that ignorant, intemperate, and ragged crew, called the Beaufort Guards. Colonel, I believe not in this rebellion; and had Frederick North espoused the unrighteous cause, and conspired against the lawful Government at Washington, no word of friendship, no look of encouragement, no smile of approbation, would he have received from me."

Milrose spoke with enthusiasm, her warmth increasing as she went on. Her face was glowing when she ceased, and the golden light falling upon it through the crevices of the hut, made it look inspired and beautiful. The high and noble qualities of her soul were spontaneously drawn forth. She looked, indeed, a fair prophetess.

Lovelace sighed. That sigh came from his heart; his heart so empty, so hopeless, so despairing.

"I have never read in history," resumed Milrose, "that a traitor could be trusted! Treason is the plague-spot of honor, the blight of truth, and the parting knell of virtuous ambition."

The colonel's chin sank lower and lower upon his chest.

He looked vacantly at the inspired Pythoness. He gasped for breath. His poor logic, his bad reasons, his fatal sophistries, received unexpected and staggering blows.

"If Frederick is loyal," added Milrose, "my heart will rejoice in his loyalty."

"Loyal to what?" asked Lovelace.

"To liberty and the Union."

"Then it is as I believed," said Lovelace. "He is a secret enemy of the Confederate Republic. In making this avowal, Miss Dorn, you place your lover in a dangerous position. Do not forget to whom you are speaking."

"I am speaking to a rebel officer," responded Milrose.

The colonel's face flushed in a moment.

"I would thank you, Milrose," he returned, curtly, "to bestow on me a name less offensive. We are Revolutionists, not rebels."

"A distinction, sir, which the world will not make. History will record a different verdict."

"I care not," resumed Lovelace, after a pause, "what history calls it. Posterity is for others, and not for me. In loving you, I lose fame, name, heart, and ambition."

Emotion choked his utterance. A few moments passed before he was able to proceed. Milrose was too much affected by his mournful tone to interrupt him.

"The motive-power of life is gone. The hopes, the expectations, the aspirations of existence have departed. I care not what wind drives me out to sea. I shall float aimlessly on the tide. Often and often my thoughts will revert to thee. Thou art the pole-star, the lodestone of my soul; it turns to thee like the needle to the north."

He stopped again, but quickly added:

"Enough! This is painful to you and to me. I shall trouble you no more. Duty will soon call me away. I shall go hence to meet the foe. But not the red glare of battle—not the thunderous peal of cannon—not the deadly hail of musketry, nor the bristling of bayonets, nor the shock of charging squadrons, shall turn my thoughts from thee, nor pale my face with fear."

"Go, sir, I entreat of you!" exclaimed Milrose. "You grieve me beyond measure."

"It is the last time, Milrose. Have patience."

His tones were sadder than his face.

"Hear my confession. I will not be an utter traitor to honor. Let Frederick North keep out of my way. I hate temptation. God knows what I might do—I do not. The man that excites your love, excites an opposite emotion in me. You have bestowed upon him life and hope; but I—Heaven pardon me!—would reverse these gifts. If you would save me from being a villain, send him from the country at once. Let him fly, and look not behind him. What is he but a robber and an assassin? He has robbed me of your love; he has stabbed my happiness."

He hesitated, breathed hard, and added:

"While in your presence, my better nature struggles for utterance; when I am gone, the darker devil will, perchance, awake and exert his baleful power. Be warned in time. I feel

within me a spark of latent hate, which may be fanned to a flame by the time I reach camp. Hide him; hurry him hence; screen him from the reflex tide of my jealousy. There! I have done my duty. If this Frederick North, if this abolition traitor, this secret enemy of the Confederacy, meet with a tragical fate, remember that you were advised of it beforehand. And now, Milrose, I go. Should we meet again on earth, may it be to be happier, or to find the glowing passions of our hearts burned out and dead. Better to be a clod, than to love in vain. Better be insensible to the softer touches of nature, than to feel a passion we cannot ourselves inspire."

Bowing low to Milrose, Colonel Lovelace passed from the hut with slow steps and heavy heart, leaving Milrose in a whirl of unpleasant thoughts. Without speaking a word to any one, the Confederate officer went silently and sorrowfully from Peter's retreat, and it was some time before it was known to the parties without that he had gone.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

## PETER SPEAKS HIS MIND ABOUT MILROSE.

Frederick saw the Confederate officer enter the hut with feelings of jealousy and alarm. Why did he follow Milrose? What relation did they at that time sustain to each other? Why was Milrose there?

He reflected. A most painful thought crept insidiously into his brain. The girl had perhaps forgotten her sweet assurances, and fled with Lovelace in the disguise in which he had found her. He asked himself if that was not a natural inference growing out of the situation. The probabilities, it struck him, were strong in favor of this view of the case. He tortured himself with that possibility. His dislike of Lovelace increased. His protracted stay in the hut terrified him; it confirmed his worst fears. What right had he there? Why was not Angeline with her mistress? Why did she sit sleepily at the door, while Lovelace was admitted to the very sanctuary of innocence? He persuaded himself that there was more in this attachment of his rival than he had hitherto understood.

He seated himself on the couch of boughs recently occupied by Lovelace, with feelings of distraction and bewilderment that rendered him miserable.

Peter was busy for a time with Markthaler and Jacob. He saw those persons conversing apart, but engrossed in his own doubts and fears, gave them but little notice.

Presently Peter came to him, and observing his depression of spirits, said, in a kindly tone:

"Cheer up, lad! Nothin' is so bad as it seems at first. Gals is an uncertain thing; but they are easy managed arter you get the run on 'em."

"I am afraid," answered North, despondingly, "that I have never been so fortunate as to get the run of them; to use your own words."

"There's some," added Peter, shaking his head in perfect conviction of the truth of what he was saying, "that can't be trusted."

Peter glanced mildly at the newly-risen sun, then added, with a benevolent expression:

"Then ag'in, there's them that can."

"Explain all this," cried Frederick, no longer able to control his suspense. "Why is she here? Answer me without delay."

"Go and ask her," answered Peter. "If you want to know some'at of a woman, go to that woman and ask her."

"I thought you might save me that trouble," said Frederick, moodily.

"But I won't," returned Peter, bluntly. "What she wants ye to know, she'll tell ye; and what she don't want ye to know, that I know, I shan't say nothin' about. I don't betray none sich as her. She's too good and too pretty not to have her own way about everythin'."

"I thought she was an angel not long since," said North, cynically.

"Well, what do you think of her, now?" asked Peter, gruffly.

"Answer that yourself, Peter. I find her in the pine barrens, in male attire, attended by Colonel Lovelace, an old admirer. In their good company there is but one person, and that person a mulatto girl, a slave, and in the same anomalous guise. Think of the time, the place, the hour; then put all these together, and speak hopefully to me, if you can."

"Be careful what you say, young man," answered Peter of the Pines, sharply. "If another had said what you have been sayin', some'at would have happened to him afore he'd got through with it. I remember well enough where I first see her; how unexpected she came, what a sudden wonder came over me; how my blood thrilled, and my thoughts went and came doubtin'ly; how white she was, and what brightness beamed from her droopin' eyes! Do you think I shall forget it? Do you s'pose the image will ever pass away? No! I see her now, standin' ahind Babel, her long robes sweepin' the floor, her slight form tremblin' on the threshold."

The still-hunter pressed his brown right hand upon his heart, and sighed so softly that the sound was like the murmuring of the pine leaves. Frederick partially raised himself, and looked at Peter Rust with new interest. He could not yet understand the dweller among the pines. His allusions to Milrose were utterly inexplicable.

"I was at the cotton-planter's house," resumed Peter. "I had been sawin', and hammerin', and workin', for some'at as I didn't understand. The great dumb nigger set at the door, with his

broad face dropped on his broader chest, his blunderbuss layin' acrost his lap, and the great white rims of his eyes eclipsed by the slumberous lids. I looked up, and there was a sight for ye!—a white angel hoverin' over a black devil! I thought the sight would melt away into air; but it lingered, and it was Milrose Dorn. When my breath had come back, and the blood had stopped stingin' the ends o' my fingers, I knew there was some'at wrong, and she was goin' to be shet up in that prison."

"I knew not that you had seen her!" exclaimed Frederick. "This is very strange; but touches not the question."

"There's times," continued Peter, reflectively, "when we see a person's character in a minute; when we know 'em root and branch; when doubt yields to certainty. Well, that was one o' them times, and I'll stake my life upon her truth and goodness!"

"Did you converse with her," asked Frederick, completely absorbed in Peter's story.

"Which?" queried Peter, abruptly.

"Did you talk with her?"

"Yes, I talked with her; but I didn't say anythin'," answered Peter, gravely.

"Explain."

"I wrote questions in large letters on the stuff I was at work on. She read 'em, and answered by signs. That's the way it was."

"I am mystified," muttered North, shaking his head dubiously.

"If you love her," quoth Peter, bluntly, "go and tell her on't. But in course you love her! Everybody does that gits a sight at her! Even Swampsey is enamored, and does nothin' but roll his solemn eyes at her whenever he's near her. Go and tell her, I say!"

Peter Rust pushed Frederick toward the hut.

"I have told her," said Frederick, doggedly.

"Go and tell her ag'in," persisted Peter. "If she loves ye, you can't repeat it too often; if she don't, the least said the soonest mended."

Swampsey had stood by, a grave and earnest listener. Judging from his dreamy insensibility, no one would have thought that there was any whirl, and twirl, and somersets in him; but when Frederick started for the hut, his heels went up and his head went down, and all the latent action in his little body became marvelously active. He trundled like a hoop; he tumbled like a harlequin; he rotated, revolved and circumvolved; stood on his head, on one hand, on two hands; on one leg, on two legs, and on nothing at all.

"Tell ye what!" cried Angeline, in a warning voice, yawning off her morning slumbers; "never see sich car'in's on since I come to the years of discretion! 'Pears like that little Jackalampson is c'lar done gone and lost his senses. If it's Peter Rust, I'd tote him back to Alligator Swamp, and stick him down into the

mud, 'zactly where he took him from, tow shirt and all! If it's sick, and was goin' to die, and wasn't expected to live, and the doctors had give me up, and I was takin' physick, and 'spected every minit would be the next, I'd say atween the breathin' spells, that it isn't nat'ral for a nigger to walk on his head!"

Angeline held up her hands like two large exclamation-points.

"If I didn't own but one yard of nigger, and that one yard a nigger swiveled about in this 'ere way, I'd swap him off for one of Ben Dykes' bull-terriers, and I'd throw the terrier into a well. Or, if I didn't do that, I'd stick a pin through him, as they do through lugs that they keep for specimens of curiosity."

"He's an institution," said Peter, who had advanced, and now stood near enough to hear Angeline's views.

"Don't call such a contraption as that an institution, do ye? A institution is more'n a yard long, any ways."

Swampsey, hearing his name mentioned, came and looked very seriously at Angeline, and was seized with a violent winking and blinking.

"Go way, you todlepole!" said Angeline, disdainfully. "Skedaddle, you tow-shirted swiveler!"

This powerful appeal was accompanied by a gesture of good-natured contempt, the meaning of which fell hurtless on the mute little head of Swampsey.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

## LOVE IN THE PINES.

Frederick stopped near the door of the hut, doubting whether to go in, not knowing but Lovelace was yet with Milrose. Angeline was at hand to resolve his doubts. He asked her if her mistress was alone. For a moment the girl was in a quandary. She knew not what character to sustain. One glance at her jacket of rebel jean settled the matter in her own mind. She laudably determined to sustain the credit of the trumpeter whose garments she wore.

"Love o' God, young man!" she exclaimed. "What ye talkin' about? Ain't got no mistress, anyways. I'm a honest trumpeter. I don't want to hear no dissimulations about my character. Go 'way, you expicious, evil-minded valentine!"

Angeline jerked her cap smartly over her eyes, and assumed more dignity than her size seemed to warrant.

"What is your name?" Frederick asked, willing to favor the deception somewhat.

"Dick, sir! Dick, of course!" replied Angeline, curtly.

"A short name!" Frederick observed.

"I'm a short boy," returned Angeline.

"Quite!" said Frederick, dryly. "And your friend's name?"

He pointed to the hut.

"Tom—Tom, the drummer, sir. Another short boy, with a short name, sir."

"Angelina spoke briskly, and with notable precision.

"I suppose that these short names are attached to something else?" remarked Frederick, interrogatively.

"Pears like you are mistaken," retorted Angelina, with spirit. "They ain't tacked on to nothin', noways. Tell ye what, a long name don't mount to nothin' in these yer times. Any more questions to ask, sir?"

"Yes. Is Colonel Lovelace within?"

"Went away ten minutes ago. If you are goin' in, mind and be civil, for there is them hereabouts that is right smart with pistols and such."

Without waiting to hear more, Frederick North passed into the hut, and stood in the presence of Milrose Dorn. She arose as he entered.

The sun was now above the verge of the horizon. Its quivering beams lay horizontally along the tops of the trees, carrying light and heat to the depths of the forest. The rift-wood hut was illuminated with soft, fluctuating rays, which floated in fitful waves over the maiden's face. Having removed her cap, her long hair had fallen over her shoulders in masses of wavy ringlets. Her white neck contrasted strangely with this bath of dark tresses. Frederick beheld before him the realization of that ideal face that had haunted him from childhood, filling his soul with vague dreams of happiness. He longed to worship his ideal in the real. He wished to approach her, and say:

"Thine, thine only! For thee I live!"

Just then came the thought of her flight and of Lovelace. He had read in books that maidens having the faces of angels had been false. He had heard, again and again, that beauty is a snare; and that the fair seeming covers the deceptive doing. He had come to bring Milrose to a strict account for her conduct, and he would do it and not be cheated out of his firmness by the incomparable loveliness of her face.

"I once knew a girl called Milrose," he began. "This girl Milrose was fair. Her beauty, to me, was like the beauty of angels, and her purity of soul like the whiteness of lilies."

Milrose smiled faintly, and supported herself against the wall of the hut.

"The girl Milrose," continued Frederick, "was the perfected type of my youthful imagination. She filled my conception of graceful womanhood."

"Cut short your peroration," murmured Milrose, with impatient gesture. "This is too sublimated. Come to the point, Frederick."

"Oh! you are going to be practical!" said Frederick, coloring and quite disconcerted.

"Dreadfully practical," stammered Milrose, in doubt whether to laugh or to cry.

"Go on, Frederick," she faltered. "You commenced exceedingly fine. What have you to say of this girl, Milrose?"

"I have much to say," answered Frederick, seriously. "But I am met with levity on the very threshold of my subject."

"You come as my accuser, I perceive. You didn't use to come to me as an accuser, Frederick."

Her voice was sweet and subdued. It touched Frederick; but he was resolved to be firm.

"I was going to tell you, when you interrupted me, what passed between her and myself."

"I know all that. The girl was very weak, and believed you. Now for the accusation?" said Milrose, gaining courage.

"You force me bluntly to the point. If I am rash, blame your own imperativeness."

Frederick glanced at the exquisite face, on which the morning sun was quivering, and his courage nearly failed.

"Miss Dorn," he began, then stopped, blushing and confused.

"Miss Dorn," repeated Milrose, in a very gentle tone. "Proceed, my friend. Miss Dorn is good to begin with, but it don't convey a very intelligible idea."

Frederick didn't trust himself to look up again, but said, with a kind of desperation:

"I came to seek some explanation of your recent conduct. I didn't mean to say conduct, exactly, but flight; and not exactly flight, entirely, but—Lovelace."

"Why, Frederick! what a mixture you make of it," observed Milrose, who, being a very sensible girl, determined to keep back tears and fainting to the very last minute. She believed that sensible words were better than a few crystal drops from the eyes, and that a firm and graceful deportment went further than a downright faint.

"For Heaven's sake, Milrose, think of the circumstances! I found you here, and your old persecutor and admirer keeping faithful watch over your person. Forgive me, Milrose; but, taken in connection with my detention at the rebel camp, the known wishes of Lovelace, and your own singular flight, I confess that my faith in you was most cruelly shaken."

Frederick looked up, gasping and trembling with excitement. He met the calm eyes of Milrose.

"I suspected," she answered, with emotion, "that it was this that brought you here with a face so dark and troubled, and manners so cold and severe. Frederick"—her voice grew a little firmer—"I must not be doubted. The man who loves me"—she averted her eyes, and her white forehead crimsoned—"must love me with such faith and confidence that my truth cannot be dimmed by the black shadow of suspicion. I have not decided whether I shall forgive you. I rather think I will not. There are different

kinds of doubts, Frederick; yours was little less than an insult. Had you hastened to me with kindness in your manner, and friendly earnestness in your eyes, and asked, 'Milrose, what has happened?' I would have answered you as gladly and as truthfully as you could have desired. But now I must punish you. Do not expect me to be forgiving."

Casting his doubts to the winds, and no longer able to repress his idolatry for the young girl, he sprang across the hut and knelt at the feet of Milrose.

"You speak like an angel, Milrose! But a man in love cannot always be reasonable. I'll doubt no more. Explain nothing. But do not frown on me thus. Turn not from me those dear eyes. Excuse the madness of a moment. Everything conspired to blind me. The insolence of Lovelace; his interview with you; my infinite wonder at finding you here: all these misled me."

Frederick seized her hand, which she made a feint of withdrawing.

"Arise, Frederick!" she said, smiling. "Do not make love to me while I am in this ridiculous attire. Why, it is nonsense, Frederick!"

A lover, properly defined, is one who is subject to every wind of passion; one who reacts from one extreme to another the most opposite and distant, without appearing to be conscious that he is in any manner inconsistent.

"To me you are the same!" he exclaimed. "No disguise can conceal from me those graces of character and those beauties of person that excite my love and adoration. To me you are Milrose, now and forever. One beaming look from those bright eyes chases away every cloud of uncertainty from my soul. The soft melody of thy voice, speaking, as it ever does, kindly and sensibly, charms away every fear, and inspires within me hope and courage. In the night-time; in the morning, when the golden sun dries the dew from the nodding grass; at noon, when his meridian rays stream fervidly upon the sweltering earth; at all times, whether light or darkness prevails, my heart has but one watchword, and one rallying cry, and that is, 'Milrose! Milrose!' I am never weary of hearing it. It never falls tamely upon my ear."

"Do not turn my head, Frederick," answered Milrose, softly. "Thou art a poet. Poets are dangerous."

"Love makes poets of us all," responded Frederick, with enthusiasm. "I were a dull elod not to feel the influence of Milrose; I were unworthy of her favor, not to be inspired by her smiles; I were a cold worshiper to allow another to kneel at the consecrated shrine. Speak to me; speak to me, Milrose."

"What shall I say, Frederick? There is little that maiden may say. Look upward, Frederick. See the scattered fragments of life falling upon us like threads of gold. Let us believe

that light means happiness, and that this morning hour flings countless treasures at our feet. But life is changeable, Frederick, and the chances and changes of time destroy a thousand pleasing illusions. Bow not too submissively to the ideal; it is a treacherous divinity, that oftentimes disappoints the hope of the devotee, and leads him a weary pilgrimage, to be retraced with bitterness and tears. It is sweet to be flattered; there is delight in the faith of another mind; but I tremble at the thought of being placed too high in the glittering palace your imagination has created. Give me your hand, Frederick."

She stretched out her hand with unaffected grace and simplicity.

"There," she added, smiling, "I restore you again to my favor. Doubt me, and you lose me. No great loss, perhaps, and yet you would not care to lose me. Be very, very sensible. Do not make an angel of me. Make an angel of me, and I shall fall to pieces of my own imperfections. Frederick, my dazzling poet, try to see in me something very human, but very true, and very earnest."

"Something very true and very earnest," repeated Frederick.

They looked into each others' eyes, and were silent. Frederick thought for the moment that his ideal world had become real, and that Milrose and himself were to inhabit it.

A footstep startled them. Raising their eyes, they beheld Markthaler standing like a shadow at the door.

#### CHAPTER XXXV.

##### WILL YOU TAKE HER WITHOUT FORTUNE?

Upon seeing these two persons standing, hand in hand, Markthaler did not retire, but slowly approached them. Frederick was annoyed; indeed, a much stronger expression would no more than do justice to her feelings. But there was something in the manner of the money-lender that prevented Frederick from treating him with rudeness. In fact, that person had been to him, from the time of their first meeting, an increasing mystery. The youthful face, the feminine eyes, the white hair and beard, had played a prominent part in his dreams ever since the examination at Lowenthal's. Markthaler had crept into his consciousness, and he could not cast him out. The conversation of the night just passed, had added, in a marked degree, to his previous impression. Nothing was more natural than that his allusions to Milrose and her fortune should, at that moment, be remembered. What the usurer had stated concerning her property, had not only vexed, but pained him; for his love was of so unselfish a character, that her welfare and worldly prosperity were things of paramount importance in his mind. As Markthaler stood looking at them, Frederick thought of bonds, mortgages,



and securities. That he had penetrated the disguise of Milrose, he did not doubt; his deportment sufficiently evinced that knowledge.

"You seem to be looking at us, sir?" said Frederick, with a slight movement of contempt. "Has your business anything to do with bonds, mortgages, and collaterals?"

"It has much to do with what you cannot at present understand," answered the money-lender, calmly.

"Nothing can be more correct," said North, coldly.

"I may have interests that underlie all yours," resumed Markthaler, in a clear and placable voice.

While speaking, he took off his green glasses and put them in his pocket. This made quite a change in the expression of his face; the dark and brilliant eyes being more fully revealed, and the heavy arched brows over them adding to their effect.

Milrose felt neither anger nor annoyance. The usurer's presence excited more wonder than trepidation.

"If bonds and mortgages," sneered Frederick, "lie deeper than the dearest sentiment of the soul, then your interests may underlie mine. Your interests and mine are quite different."

"Very probably," said Markthaler, dryly. "But, possibly, there may be other interests than those that accumulate on moneys lent."

He now fixed his regards on Milrose.

"Do you flatter yourself, young woman," he said, in a calm and even tone that was not without a touch of severity, "that you could disguise a face and form like that by the simple putting on of male attire? Everything betrays you. Your face, your eyes, your hair, your white skin, your hands, your feet, the rounded lines of your person; and, above all, your timid and hesitating manner betrays you."

"I feared as much at the outset," replied Milrose, not in the least offended. "Had you found me here through some impulse of girlish folly, I should have reason to hide myself from sight; but the motive being good, and the attempt laudable, I think I should be held blameless by all chivalrous gentlemen."

Milrose spoke very becomingly, but blushed in defiance of her wishes and her graceful self-control.

"Most sensibly spoken," said Frederick, encouragingly.

The bright eyes of the usurer were averted an instant; he raised them presently, and asked:

"Permit me to inquire, Miss Dorn, why you have left your step-father and guardian in this singular manner?"

Frederick was about to give a hasty reply to this question, but Milrose prevented him by placing her hand upon his lips. A strange feeling was upon her. Strangely enough, she was

not irritated by the boldness of Markthaler. On most occasions, she was not wanting in spirit; but here was a person with whose liberties she could not feel indignant.

"Because I believed that safety and even life required it. Reasons the most urgent made me fly from Lowenthal," she answered.

"Life in danger! Reflect, young lady; it is a grave charge. Cruel step-fathers do not generally devour their pretty step-daughters. Be-think you, Miss Dorn; call in your sober judgment. Was it not a softer impulse that drew you from the paternal roof at night? Was there not an expectation of meeting this young man at some designated place?"

The money-lender's voice quavered, somewhat, as he proceeded. It was evident that the motive that prompted him to these queries was strong.

"I assert, most clearly and emphatically," replied Milrose, hastily, "that I had no such expectation. Your question, sir, is not flattering either to my judgment or my delicacy. I hope, sir, you are satisfied."

"He will not be satisfied," interposed Frederick, "till he has taken possession of your residence and plantation. His business relations have been such with your guardian, that you are likely to be defrauded of the fortune which, I am informed, was left you by your deceased mother."

Instead of flashing up at this insinuation, the money-changer received it with the utmost composure. He simply said:

"Very true, young man."

Milrose trembled, and clung to Frederick's arm.

"It is well to know, Mr. North," continued the money-lender, "whether you are in earnest. If you take the young lady at your side, who certainly seems to have some faith in you, you will take her without fortune."

The deportment of Markthaler was inexplicably impressive. It was hard to tell where his dignity came from, or whence he derived his authority; but both were apparent. The exquisitely feminine face of Milrose was whiter than snow. Her soft eyes were dilated with wonder and a sort of vague, undefined terror.

"With or without fortune, Milrose is all the same to me," answered Frederick, with glowing enthusiasm. "She is one whose gifts elevate her far above the fluctuations of fortune. She is inestimable in herself. To me, though robbed of her worldly wealth, she will come freighted with treasures of the soul, far above computation, should she bestow upon me that hand which I would die to obtain."

"Don't overrate me, Frederick, for this man is a magician; he will tear away every flimsy flattery, and show me as I am. I am afraid of him, yet he fascinates me. Go, sir! Leave me!"

"Be quiet, Milrose," said Frederick, who also felt the power of the usurer. "You are agitated. The unaccountable pertinacity of this man terrifies you."

"Fear me not," answered Markthaler, quickly. "There are others more dangerous than the money-lender. By and by, Mr. North, I wish to see you alone. If you have courage and discretion, I may put you in the way of something which may prove greatly to your advantage. Do not answer me, for I know you will come to me. When you have soothed and comforted this damsel-errant, I shall expect you among the pine patriarchs."

He looked at Milrose, and passed from the hut; but his silvery voice still lingered upon the ears of Frederick and the young girl.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

### THE DISPATCHES.

"How do you like Tom?" asked Angeline, as Frederick left the hut to seek Markthaler, at the appointed time. There was mischief in Angeline's eyes.

"Much better than Dick," retorted the young man, smiling.

"Pears like you do," said the girl, quite willing to follow up the interesting subject. "Stayed a good while, that's clear. Laws! How long have ye been so fond o' boys? Didn't take to me like that, anyways. Fact is, Master North, didn't know whether you's in the secret or not. Thought I'd try reception, leastways; but I ain't a boy, more'n nothin'. Never was a boy. Laws, no!"

Angeline said this with so much good-nature, that Frederick was amused, and lingered a moment to give her some friendly words.

"We didn't put on these yer things because we wanted to," continued Angeline, looking at her masculine apparel, "nor for a frolic like; but because we couldn't help it, and was 'bliged to 'escape, and get away, and leave, and run off, and take to flight in the night-time, when it was dark. We had lots of trouble in pickin' our way here and there, and was scared e'enmost out of our senses more'n once, nor twice, nother. Love o' God, Mars'r North! Mars'r Lowenthal was goin' to shet Miss Milly up in a constriction at the top o' the house. Bless your body! they've got all sorts of contraptions down yer to worry Miss Milly. It's a queer house, that is, down yon. If I wasn't well, and was complainin', and was sick abed, and was down with the measles, or some other contagious disease, and was give up by the doctors, and wasn't s'pected to live, and my life was despised of, and every minute was the next, and I was layin' at the pint of absolution, I would say and declar' without qualification or preservation, leastways, anyways, or endways, that it is a queer house; a done gone, right down, up and at-ye queer house!"

It is impossible to describe the elocutionary power which Angeline threw into this long and impressive declaration. Frederick stared at her in silent admiration. He had seldom or never been out in such a shower of words. The inevitable Swampsey, who had, by some strange hocus-pocus, arisen from the ground in their immediate vicinity, opened his eyes wider at Angeline than they had ever been known to be opened before. He tried to grin; but solemnity got the better of him, and the incipient formation was lost in a wondering dilation of the mouth. North bit his lips, but could not entirely control his sense of the ludicrous.

"No wonder you laugh, Master North," added the girl, looking contemptuously at the foundling. "But he ain't of no 'count, anyways. Found in the swamp—he was. 'Spec ye can pick sich out of the mud anywhere. Ain't worth pickin' up, though. Wouldn't take a dozen of 'em, if anybody'd give 'em to me. What's he good for? Jes' three feet long. That makes a yard o' nigger. Can't plant the cotton, nor pick the cotton—a yard o' nigger can't. Laws! couldn't lift a plantation-hoe. For my part, I can't precieve what Peter Rust wants of sich a little toddlepole of a mud-so'nd lin'. Rather have a dog, any day. A dog'll trot along ahind his master, like a decent and 'spectable kodrepid, and you'll never see him pitch-polin' about as if he had a gill o' red peppers in his stomach."

Extricating himself from the volubility of Angeline, Frederick North approached the fire, where he found Peter Rust busily engaged in cooking, to the best of his limited means. The still-hunter pointed toward the clustering pines, and said:

"You'll find him and his man out there."

"I have much to thank you for, Peter Rust," answered North, gravely. "You have prepared for me the happiest surprise of my life."

"Accident, Fred—more accident. It happened so of itself. Chance, my friend, is sometimes greater than our hopes. To chance you owe this. I trust, young man"—Peter Rust spoke impressively—"that you will improve this opportunity in a way that you will never regret."

He rose from the fire and stood upright, with his right hand traveling thoughtfully to and fro across his forehead.

"If I was what I am not," he said, reflectively; "if I could be what I would; if my privileges had been equal to my honest wishes; if I could speak and act as some as I know of; if I was younger nor I be, and the world was all afore me, and I was thrown into the company of such a young gal, I know what I'd feel, and I know what I'd say. I'd feel no feelin' that wasn't true and kind, I'd say no say that wasn't proper for sich to hear, and I'd act no action that would throw reproach on my motives. There! that's what I'd do."



Peter Rust paused and turned on Frederick two eyes, honest, but a trifle humid. The cheeks of the forester were somewhat redder than usual, and there certainly was a needless shamefacedness observable about his brown countenance.

"Your notions," replied Frederick, in a subdued voice, "are so honorable, so just, and so fitting to the occasion, that my respect for your character is greatly enhanced. I have endeavored to say and act in the manner you have indicated; but I fear with less of Nature's own spontaneous eloquence than a man I know of would have employed. I confess that you have given me a meaner opinion of myself, and a more exalted comprehension of the teachings of an honest heart."

Peter sighed incredulously, shook his head, and pointing again, said:

"You'll find him down there."

Perceiving that Peter wished to say no more, Frederick walked on, and by-and-by came upon Markthaler and Jacob. The latter watched his coming with that tranquil demeanor and repose of features that always characterized him. The money-lender was sitting upon the trunk of a fallen tree, and Jacob stood behind him. The former pointed to another similar seat.

"I prefer to stand," said Frederick, coldly. "I presume what you have to say to me may be soon said?"

"And said it will soon be," answered Markthaler. "Can we trust him, Jacob?" he added, turning to the mulatto.

"We may trust him," responded Jacob.

Frederick looked with curiosity from master to man. He felt that he ought to treat all this with indifference, but he found it impossible to do so. Markthaler imposed a restraint upon him which he could not break through.

"I am informed that you are loyal to the Union," said the money-lender, abruptly.

"I do not know but you may use the confession against me," answered North; "but I freely own that I am for the old flag and the Washington Government."

"Boldly avowed," said Markthaler. "I will be as straightforward as you are bold. A trusty messenger is wanted, to communicate with the Federal fleet, lying off Hilton Head. There is important information to be conveyed to Commodore Dupont."

"This means that you wish me to be the bearer of dispatches?" replied Frederick.

Markthaler answered in the affirmative.

"There are several things to be considered," observed North. "First, your loyalty; next, your authority; finally, the value of your dispatches."

"For my loyalty, Peter Rust will vouch," replied the usurer. "My authority is the same as that of any secret agent of the Government. The dispatches are so important, that they give

information of the number of rebel troops that will oppose the landing of Dupont's and Sherman's forces, the number of guns mounted at Forts Walker and Beauregard, and comprise, too, a plan of the fortifications themselves. I will not attempt to conceal from you, Mr. North, that this will be a mission of danger. The bearer of these dispatches will have to pass through the enemy's country, which, as you are aware, is in a disturbed and lawless state; your person and movements will be subjected to suspicion and search, while you have a certainty of being hanged as a spy, if you are discovered."

Markthaler watched Frederick's face very closely while making these statements.

"Do you not own a plantation of negroes?" Frederick asked.

"I do," replied the money-lender.

"You have much treasure in gold and silver?" added the young man.

"I have."

"Perhaps you have many thousand bales of cotton?"

"I have."

"You think the Union forces will save the country, and insure every right guaranteed by the Constitution?"

"I do," said Markthaler.

"If, then, you own plantation, and negroes, and gold and silver, and cotton, and believe the Northern troops will restore the old and peaceful order of things, why do you not yourself bear the dispatches to the Federal commanders?"

It was the purpose of Frederick to observe the features of Markthaler during this questioning process and its climax, and see if he could detect any sign of insincerity or double-dealing; and he adhered to his intention with steady pertinacity. The money-lender met his gaze with firmness, but not without evident annoyance. The yellow Jacob evinced surprise. His large, handsome eyes dilated wide on Frederick.

"You are a philosopher, sir," said Markthaler, dryly.

"I hope your logic is not greater than your patriotism. Possibly the danger is greater than you would care to incur!"

"Were I disposed to accept the commission you offer, personal danger would weigh nothing in the account," answered Frederick, little pleased with the manner of the usurer. "If I reject the proposition, it will be because I have different plans in view."

"To linger, doubtless, by the side of yonder maiden, while your country is in danger!" replied the money-lender, in a tone of rebuke.

"Mr. Markthaler," said Frederick, gravely, "I have not intermeddled with your affairs, and it would be well if you took a lesson from me in that respect. I acknowledge that I owe you no trifling debt of gratitude; but I am sorry to say that your singular intrusion upon Miss Dorn's notice, and the well-nigh unpardonable

liberty you have taken in a matter that relates wholly to herself and me, nearly cancels the obligation."

"Let me entreat you to be careful what you say," interposed Jacob, earnestly. "Weigh well your words, young mars'r."

"Be silent, Jacob!" said Markthaler, authoritatively. "Let the young man cast away his last chance, if he will. I had hoped that he possessed courage and zeal, and that he would show himself worthy of one whose name I will not pronounce."

The steadfast look of the money-lender; the severe tone in which he spoke; the startling import of his words, surprised and embarrassed North. It seemed to him that a new phase of the subject was presented. The money-lender had, unquestionably, made an allusion to Milrose. What was the meaning of this? By what right did he pretend to exert a controlling influence over that young lady? These thoughts coursed through his mind very rapidly.

"Your last remarks," said Frederick, anon, "lead me to inferences that are not altogether clear."

Jacob made significant motions to North over his master's head.

"I have offered you the road to Milrose and fortune," answered the money-lender, impressively, "and you have refused to take it."

"How can I leave her unprotected?" exclaimed Frederick, throwing off the restraint which he had imposed upon his feelings.

"Trouble yourself not about Miss Dorn," said Markthaler, frigidly. "She needs not your courage to defend her from danger. To other hands will be intrusted the care of her person. To-morrow she will be far from here."

Jacob continued to gesticulate behind his master, and Frederick was beginning to see that he was dealing with one whose power was greater than he had previously suspected. But the secret of this power baffled him. He feared he had already made a fatal mistake. He hastened to retrace his steps, to regain, if possible, the place he had lost in the esteem of this strange man.

"Be not in haste, sir," he said, considerably disconcerted. "I have not yet decided to refuse to be the bearer of those dispatches you have mentioned. I will own, sir, that you have held out a most powerful inducement. I will not pretend to deny that every thought of my life is influenced by this young girl. My country, my God, and Milrose, comprise the arcana of my existence."

Jacob made an approving motion.

"Do you hear this infatuated boy, Jacob?" asked Markthaler, appealing to the mulatto.

"Yes, mars'r," he replied. "He is going to accept."

"Do not encourage him, Jacob. Let him choose for himself," responded Markthaler, with severity.

"He has decided, mars'r. He will go. He will bear the dispatches with secrecy and courage," added Jacob, with more expressive pantomime for Frederick.

"Jacob is right," said the latter, urged on by his feelings, and the mute entreaties of the slave. "I will go."

"The papers you are to carry will be ready for you in an hour," replied the money-lender. "When you receive them, you will have further instructions, and the route you are to take will be indicated."

He arose to go.

"Is there no more, sir?" asked Frederick, anxiously. "Did you not speak of Milrose? Was I not left to infer somewhat from your words?"

Markthaler turned upon Frederick suddenly, and said, with an earnestness that he had not exhibited before during the interview:

"Be content, sir! If you are worthy of Milrose, she shall be yours; if not, after this day you may never again behold her. I hold her destinies in my hand. As I will, she will act. As I decree, so shall it happen. Doubt not my power."

The words of the usurer fell with thrilling effect upon Frederick. He would have smiled at these declarations, had not the strangely brilliant eyes of Markthaler been fixed upon him with impressive intensity. While those orbs were beaming on him, and that voice was ringing in his ears, he could not find it in his heart to disbelieve.

"What you tell me seems incredible!" he stammered, turning, with a strange sense of bewilderment from the money-lender. Not receiving any reply, he looked up a moment after, and perceived that he was alone.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE MESSENGER AND GUIDE.

Frederick North returned to the hut, meditating upon what he had heard. In this case, reflection brought no light. The question remained unsolved. He did not weary of it, however. Markthaler was an object of increasing curiosity. His singular manners and his extraordinary face were continually dwelt upon.

He wished to see Milrose, but Angeline stood at the door, keeping guard upon her mistress, and refused him admission. Miss Milly, she said, was tired, and not to be disturbed. So Frederick paced to and fro among the pines. At the expiration of an hour, he returned and found Markthaler waiting for him. Peter and Jacob were with him. Jacob held a package in his hand, which, at a sign from his master, he opened. Unfolding several papers, he spread them on the ground, before Frederick.

"Make yourself generally acquainted with their contents," said Markthaler. "Unless, in-

deed," he added, "you have changed your mind."

"My decision was made an hour ago," answered Frederick, beginning to examine the papers placed before him, on one of which was drawn elaborate plans of Forts Beauregard and Walker. Having satisfied himself of the value of these documents, he again expressed his willingness to attempt to carry them to the Federal flag-ship. These plans and specifications had been made upon the thinnest and lightest of paper, and Peter Rust, taking them in hand, very ingeniously quilted them into the linings of his coat. This consumed considerable time, and the afternoon was well advanced when Frederick was ready to commence his dangerous journey. He was to set out in no other disguise than the Confederate gray; and, indeed, it would have been difficult for him to have procured any other in the vicinity of Lowenthal's.

"Who will guide me from this wood?" he asked, when there was no longer anything to detain him.

"I have a guide for ye," said Peter. "A guide as is as different from all others, as was ever seen. A guide as will go as no other creature can go. A guide as is not large in size, but full of all manner of locomotions and propulsions. A guide who loves nothin', and fears nothin'."

"Where is he?" inquired Frederick, looking around.

"I'll show him to ye," replied Peter, beginning to whistle as if he were calling a dog. Immediately Swampsey came somersetting to the spot, in a most reckless and eccentric fashion.

"There he is," resumed Peter, as the lad found a resting-place on the crown of his head, with his two legs and the soles of two black little feet pointed like tridents to the skies.

"There he is, Mr. North, and it don't make any odds which way he goes. Self-adjustin' and self-movin', little Dismal is. Don't have to touch no springs to start him, and when once in motion, there ain't nothin' on airth can come up to him.

Swampsey flipped over on to his feet, and took on, with marvelous facility, one of his most solemn and impressive countenances, the fellow of which could not be found in the whole of cottondom.

"A yard long," pursued Peter. "An institution and a contraband, a chattel and a cattle, as Martin Broadbent would say; but he can guide you, not only out of the pine barrens, but to Beaufort itself, and by highways and byways and slyways that you've no idea of."

"This black dwarf guide me to Beaufort!" exclaimed Frederick. "You are jesting, Mr. Rust."

"Can you show him the way to Beaufort,

little Dismal?" asked Peter, turning to Swampsey.

The foundling winked and blinked, and wagged his head like an educated seal.

"You needn't be afeared to trust him," continued Peter. "He don't talk much, but he knows a heap o' cunnin' tricks. If he don't keep clear of the p'ison secesh, it won't be for want of the natur' of the fox."

"I have entertained a high opinion of your judgment, Peter, but in this instance I confess I distrust it," replied Frederick.

"Poor little gymnastics!" said Peter, reflectively. "Nobody trusts in him. Nobody believes in him; but he's helped me more'n once."

"Help Mars'r Peter!" drawled Swampsey, his dark countenance becoming animated. "Help Mars'r Peter!"

"He was my guide last night," said Frederick, "and his instincts were sufficiently sharp for the purpose. But the undertaking before me is a different affair, and I fear the lad would encumber rather than aid me. He might be a clog upon my movements, rather than the useful creature you are inclined so to think him."

"He'll be no drag upon ye," responded Peter. "He can take care of himself better nor most people. But I don't just like that rebel jean that you're wearin'. Howsomever, if you can get beyond the reach of the Beaufort Guards, it'll answer very well; but if Cap'n Middleton gits hold of ye, you'll be shot as a deserter. If you haven't traveled that road much, you won't know which is the safest; but Swampsey has been there with me at a time when it wouldn't been safe for us to be seen by certain rabid disunionists. If you see him throw a double somerset and run as fast as never he can, why, take the hint and skedaddle after him. Farewell, Frederick, and come back safe!"

They shook hands, but Frederick still lingered. He wished to have a parting word with Milrose. He was going on an errand from which he might never return, and desired to renew his vows and bid her adieu.

"Go," said Markthaler; "there is nothing to detain you. I know why you loiter; but is in vain. You have said to her all that you need say. You have vowed by the moon and the stars; you have sworn by everything movable and immovable; you have poured forth adoration by the canto; you have sighed by the hour, and I see no more for love-sick ingenuity to perform."

Although the money-lender tried to speak very gravely, his tones lacked that severity which he wished to enforce.

Frederick was about to reply with some heat, when Peter prevented him. Taking the young man by the arm, the still-hunter walked with him some distance on his way, enjoying up to

him, in a friendly manner, the virtue of patience, and the value of wholesome self-restraint. North endeavored, by various expedients, to draw from Peter some definite knowledge of the usurer, but was foiled at every point. Of one thing, however, he felt perfectly assured; and that was, that Markthaler was not what he assumed to be. That he exercised, or was about to exercise, an influence over Milrose, he was more than ever disposed to believe. Parting from Peter, he followed his little guide through the pines, in a state of dreamy doubt and uncertainty concerning the circumstances that so strangely surrounded him.

#### CHAPTER XXXVIII.

##### FREDERICK DISREGARDS THE ADVICE OF HIS GUIDE.

Frederick pursued his solitary way. The sombre shadows of night soon enwrap the forest like a vast mantle. He could scarcely see the little figure of Swampsey as he ran along before him. He asked no questions, he made no conversation with his pigny conductor. Thoughts of Milrose, Markthaler, Lowenthal, and Lovelace engrossed him for a long time. The night grew older; the stars came out, and the moon now and then sailed out from among the clouds, and cast upon his pathway soft, white gleams of light, which quivered like electric flashes on the dead pine-leaves. Frederick had at that time little consciousness of his mission. It is true that he intended to discharge his duty with courage and zeal, but there was a sweet dream of Milrose upon him all that night. Every kind word; every gentle look; every tender flash of the eyes; every beaming smile; every stray ringlet fluttering over her white cheek, and all the graces of her person, were remembered and dwelt upon with all a lover's delicious infatuation.

It is certainly a great pity to drag a lover rudely from his first Aiden, and to obtrude very commonplace things upon his attention in his moments of exaltation; but Frederick was brought out of his enchanted catalepsy by the discharge of a musket, and the warning music of a bullet passing near his person, and striking the branch of a tree beyond him.

Swampsey, on hearing this salutation, saltated very high, and came down very low, and looked around very seriously.

Frederick drew a pistol which Markthaler had provided him with, and was attempting to discover the source of danger, when Swampsey said:

"Mars'r Fred," and pointed with his finger.

North looked in the direction indicated, and caught glimpses of the Confederate gray moving about among the trees. He comprehended the situation at once. Some of the Beaufort Guard were out searching for him. The consequences of capture he well knew, and he resolved not to be taken alive. He was not de-

cided which way to go, not knowing the number of his pursuers, nor at what points they might lie concealed. Little Dismal settled the matter, and if he did not end the doubt, he did the irresolution.

"Come 'long, Mars'r Fred," said Swampsey, and ran as fast as he could.

North remembered the injunctions of Peter, and followed him. A harmless volley of musketry rattled among the trees just behind them. It was to Frederick a very novel flight, but by no means wanting in the excitement which danger lends to adventure. Swampsey's methods of propulsion were exceedingly varied. Sometimes Frederick was confident that the black dwarf was soberly adhering to the earth in the accepted order of nature, and at the next moment was equally certain that he was revolving, end over end, on an equinoctial line drawn just below his stomach. But in whatever fashion he went, the young man had difficulty in keeping up with him, and at the expiration of ten minutes, was in a profuse perspiration, and very willing to halt, if such had been the will of his conductor. They presently emerged from the forest, and were fairly launched on the plantations, across which Swampsey led the way with tireless speed. This continued till Frederick was nearly ready to sink down from exhaustion. He had heard pursuit at the outset, but lost sound of it before leaving the woods.

Swampsey guided him so adroitly, that they evaded the houses of the planters and the quarters of the negroes. From a high ridge of ground he could see, when he stopped, Lowenthal's mansion, the roof of which was silvered with moonlight. The sight gave him mingled feelings of pleasure and pain. It was there he had seen Milrose; it was on those silent grounds that his heart had been captivated; it was in one of those pleasant walks that, with pale cheeks and agitated voice, he had dared to woo her.

"Come 'long, Mars'r Fred," admonished Swampsey.

"But where are we going, my lad?" asked North.

"Goin' 'long, Mars'r Fred. Runnin' 'way from the men with guns. Sogers kill Mars'r Fred, if they catch him."

"I must go toward Beaufort, at all events," added Frederick.

"Go there with Mars'r Fred," muttered Swampsey.

"Where is Beaufort?" inquired Frederick, desirous of testing the knowledge of the lad.

"Down you," replied the foundling, nodding toward the seacoast.

As vague as this answer was, he was forced to be content with it. His guide gave him little time for reflection and choice, but led straight on across fields of cotton, through upland and lowland, through wet and dry, regarding with sub-

lime indifference every natural obstacle that opposed his progress. The lightness and agility of Swampsey gave him a decided advantage over North, who, although the boy had moderated his pace, still found it difficult to keep near him.

A little after midnight, they reached a deserted farm-house, which they entered. The foundling signified to Frederick that he would rest a short time, and then go on again. Scarcely waiting for this intimation from his strange conductor, Frederick stretched himself upon the bare floor, and in a few moments was asleep. Never was slumber more welcome to his exhausted frame. He forgot alike care and danger. If a single thought crossed his brain, it was of Milrose—a soft, sweet dream.

From this peaceful rest he was awakened by the foundling; before, it seemed to him, he had slept ten minutes. He opened his eyes vacantly. By the pale light of the moon, he saw the dwarf's face beside him; it broke in upon his dream like a dark phantom; it pushed away the image of Milrose, and occupied her place. It was not till he had spoken that Frederick comprehended the situation.

"Come 'long, Mars'r Fred," said Swampsey. "Go away," yawned Frederick, and lay down again.

But Swampsey was not to be put off so easily.

"Mars'r Fred mustn't stay here," he persisted. "Mars'r Fred 'll get cotched. Soger men huntin' for Mars'r Fred."

"Go to sleep," muttered Frederick.

"Mars'r Peter don't want me to go to sleep. Mars'r Peter wants them yer papers car'd safe down to them yer big ships," added Swampsey, growing more earnest.

"Lie down, my poor boy," answered North, wearily. "Your small body must be tired. We have traveled far, and in this retired spot are quite safe. So be content."

Frederick dropped to sleep again. The foundling awakened him by droning in his ear:

"Mars'r Fred! Mars'r Fred!"

"All right!" mumbled Frederick. "Go as fast as you like, I am with you."

He was unconscious immediately, and all Swampsey's efforts could not withdraw him from a sleep that overpowered every sense and faculty.

In the slumberous hours that followed, there were more dreams of Milrose, wild, romantic, inconsistent, yet enchanting.

The dreams of night and slumber have an end; the nocturnal witcheries of the imagination, like every charm of the fancy, fly away with the morning dews and the morning sun. The young man awoke, arose, and looked around with an uncertain, inquiring glance.

The red sunbeams streamed in at the farm-house windows, and trembled on the desert

hearthstone. He remembered where he was, and on what errand he was going. He was astonished to discover that he had slept so long. Accusing himself with want of zeal, he approached a window, and opening it, leaned out and inhaled the refreshing morning air. Having stood there a few moments, he thought of Swampsey, and his eyes instinctively wandered about in search of him. He expected to see him sleeping on the floor, or basking in the sun, at the door; but in this he was disappointed. Having satisfied himself that he was not in the house, he went out and called him in as loud a voice as he thought prudent. There was no answer; no bounding into sight of the dwarf gymnast; no whirl and twirl and somerset; no solemn face; no winking and blinking of two very grave and very white eyes.

Frederick was uneasy. He reconnoitered somewhat in the neighborhood of the farm-house, but with no other result than the conviction that he was deserted by his guide.

He began to consider which way he should go; and by the time he had settled that point, he thought of his dispatches, and involuntarily put his hand to his coat, where Peter Rust had concealed them. He did not feel them. He pressed harder—he opened his coat—the linings were cut—the papers were gone. Amazement for an instant transfixed him to the spot; but this emotion was quickly followed by confusion and self-reproach. He remembered the warning words of Swampsey, and perceived plainly where he had made a fatal mistake. For a time he could scarcely believe that the precious papers were abstracted, but his hasty and anxious search among the several linings only confirmed the too-apparent truth. In fact, the long, vertical gash itself was sufficient to inform him what had taken place. What farther evidence was needed? The dispatches were gone, Swampsey was gone, and his honor gone, too. Had he lost Milrose with his dispatches? If the money-lender was to be trusted, he had. Never in his life had Frederick felt so keenly a misfortune. But these things do not come singly; they come in groups, and so it fell out with him; for while he was fumbling hopelessly in the linings, he was awakened to a sense of danger by the sudden sound of footsteps approaching, at a double-quick, accompanied by the peculiar and unmistakable clangor of muskets and bayonets. In a moment, Frederick was surrounded by a corporal's guard of Confederate soldiers. He pulled out his pistol as quickly as he could, but the rebel bayonets were already bristling at his breast, and to have used it would have been madness. He returned it to his pocket, and awaited the result of this unexpected event. He was at once, roughly searched, and a pair of hand-cuffs slipped upon his wrists. By the time this was accomplished, he had recognized Corporal Bently, of the Beaufort

Guards, a man whose pretty persecutions during the few days he had been a conscript in Captain Middleton's company, he had many reasons for remembering.

"March him up to the farm-house," commanded this doughty warrior. "And after we have rested, we'll right about face for Camp Royal. Arter that, my lads, you shall see a man shot for desertion."

"Meaning me," said Frederick, calmly.

"Meanin' you!" retorted the corporal, emphatically.

North now ceased to regret the lost dispatches, for now there was a possibility that they might have fallen into worse hands, or, at least, come into possession of those who would be glad to use them to his disadvantage.

He was hurried to the farm-house he had so recently left, and dragged into it with more energy than kindness. With many threats and much roughness, he was thrust into a corner, and ordered not to stir, on pain of being summarily dealt with. The Confederates then unstrung their knapsacks, and distributing themselves about the room, drew forth the rations which they had brought with them, and began to make themselves comfortable. Several suggestive flasks appeared, which passed rapidly from one to another, and with marked effect; for presently they became boisterously merry, and told wonderful stories of the cowardice of the Federals, and of their own exploits. Frederick was offered nothing in the way of good cheer, but more than enough in the way of abuse. They called him a great many hard names, and assured him, in every style of declamation, that he was sure to be shot as a deserter on reaching camp. All this, as may be believed, did not have a very inspiring effect upon North, who began to believe, seriously, that his last hour was near. From Lovelace he could expect no favors. The relations which they respectively sustained to Milrose, left him little room for hope. Lowenthal he had equal reason to dread. Between the two, he doubted not but the fate promised him by the corporal and his rough crew would be remorselessly meted out.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE FARM-HOUSE.

As the soldiers grew hilarious they became quisitive, and in searching about the house, discovered a keg of whisky. Now, for their own good, they had better have found a keg of gunpowder; for gunpowder is easily let alone, but whisky is not. These gallant fellows made such an assault on this dangerous magazine, that several of them were, in a short time put *hors de combat*, and were forced to lay down both their arms and their legs on the floor. On account of this mishap, the corporal, who, to tell

the truth, was but little better off, was compelled to remain at the farm-house till his confederates should be in a condition to shoulder arms and right about face, march. This was one of the casualties of war which could no more be provided against than battles or cannon-balls. Corporal Bently swore an oath or two, then mollified and moistened his wrath by a protracted suction at the keg. After getting his breath, which, for a few moments, he thought had slipped away into the keg and was lost, he put two of the soberest men to guard Frederick, then seating himself, with his back against the door, soon lapsed into a rum sleep, in which he dreamed of Confederate cotton, Confederate negroes, and Confederate scrip. Bull Run and divisions of flying Federals doubtless entered into the composition of his vagaries, together with a prophetic view of the greatness and prosperity of the magnanimous South Carolina nation.

The two men set apart to keep watch and ward upon Frederick North, distrusting their own powers of endurance, and willing to provide for contingencies, proceeded, in spite of remonstrances, to tie their prisoner's ankles together with a stout cord, which they found by rummaging about the house. Having by this remarkable foresight met the danger in advance, they had more leisure to attend to their personal comfort. Some of their comrades, who yet remained sober enough for that duty, went out and examined the poultry-yard; and finding nothing to reward their trouble, came back in bad temper, and were obliged to have two respective and serious struggles with said keg before their disappointment would soften; but the most obdurate ill-nature will yield, after a time, to the benign influences of new corn whisky that is a dead-shot at forty rods.

If the author had time, he would raise a loud pean to rye and corn, when sublimated to the form of liquids stimulant, rampant and benignant to man. He does not feel equal to the task. His ambition soars not so high. Humbler themes employ his modest pen. He knows that it is a good thing for rebellion; that it is a mild accompaniment of cotton and niggers; that water injures it; that it forms the glorious background of Southern war; that it takes kindly to bowie-knives and pistols; in short, that it renders one Southern gentleman fully equal to five Northern abolitionists. With this measure of knowledge, the uninspired author subsides upon himself, and resignedly waits for a loftier intellect to lift the laudative chorus to an element so necessary to the existence of man, yet so destructive to women and children, negroes and Indians.

It may readily be believed that Frederick observed the movements of his captors with lively interest. With secret satisfaction he beheld them, individually and collectively, approach-

ing a state of inebriation, which, in its progressive stages, was exhilarating, jubilant, vain-glorious, boisterous, maudlin, and, finally, insane and stupid.

The corporal, awaking after three hours' sleep, made a great bluster among his fellows, but failed to get them in a suitable condition to start for camp; so that the remainder of the day and most of the evening were spent in abortive endeavors to rally. These lion-hearted creatures had fared so badly in the service of Jeff Davis, that they were glad of a little freedom, and were in no hurry to return to their bondage and corn-bread. Being interested in but one institution in the country, and that relating almost exclusively to the distillery business, they could not be expected to display so much alacrity in the cotton war as those who actually owned thousands of bales of that article. Whatever feelings actuated them, they clearly decided on improving present opportunity, and so the whisky debauch went on without serious interruption.

Frederick was faint and thirsty. One of the Confederates, better-natured than his comrades, held a tin cup full of the contents of the keg to his lips; but his kindness came near being more fatal than his cruelty, for it was of a nature so hot and fiery, that the hero of this story liked to have died under it, and barely saved himself from strangulation by a spasmodic withdrawing from the burning chalice. As it was, he became very red in the face, and his throat smarted so badly, that, as a favor, he begged the good Samaritan to take the cup away, and give him gunpowder and water, or a mild preparation of nitric acid.

Frederick was a silent yet vigilant observer of the progress of events. He hoped an opportunity of escape would occur. He made various attempts to slip the handcuffs from his wrists, but unsuccessfully. He also made repeated endeavors to free his limbs from the cord that kept him helpless, but with no better encouragement.

At night, some fuel was brought in and kindled in the wide fire-place. This fire, during the evening, lighted the room, flashing fitfully on the uncouth amusements of the noisy revelers. Having failed, as previously stated, to procure poultry, some of the more adventurous of them went farther and fared better; coming back with a corpus of a juvenile swine, which was put to roasting as soon as sufficient heat had been produced. It was the superintendence of the martyrdom of this porker that kept most of them awake after their first stupor, and the dead sleep that followed it.

Despite the loss of his dispatches, and the fate that menaced him, Frederick finally grew weary with watching and fell into a gentle sleep. He knew not how long this lasted, but probably it was but a brief respite from fatigue

and anxious foreboding, for the swine was still sweltering at the fire, and the sleepy ones snoring and starting, impatient at the delay. Assisting in this protracted culinary process, Frederick beheld with surprise one who, unquestionably, had entered during his slumber, and that person was Babel. His surprise was instant and genuine. The agency of this gigantic black in his escape from Camp Royal, was something he could not forget. He owed him a debt of gratitude. He had often thought of him since that night when he so unexpectedly appeared to guide him through the Confederate guards to Peter Rust's hut. He recalled the fact that the man had not spoken on that occasion; also his inference from the same. Was not the coming of this seamed and scarred negro a favorable omen? He was inclined to regard it as such.

He watched Babel with awakened expectations; he fluctuated between hope and fear; he watched his every movement. But Babel kept at his work; he turned the perspiring carcass he dipped the reeking juices from the vessel into which they trickled, and turned them upon the blistering flesh. The white trash, sensible of his superior skill, had fallen back, and relinquished the momentous business entirely to his management. Frederick tried to meet his eyes, but Babel appeared entirely unconscious of his presence. He was somewhat puzzled at this, but did not not lose heart and hope. This persecuted creature might be wiser and more potent than he seemed. If he had saved him once, had he not the same incentive to save him again? There is nothing so easy as for a man to believe what is agreeable to him; and so Frederick soaled him-self with hope.

The cooking of that Confederate pig was the most tedious process to Frederick that he had ever witnessed. He wished a hundred times that it would take fire and consume in its own fatness; but nothing of the kind happened. The steaming, roasting, basting, and burning were accomplished at length, and the savory object of so much care placed on a table before those who had been so long expecting its advent. Babel then drew out of the keg, into a pail, what was left of its contents, and set it before the happy subjects of the new and great Republic, who attacked it with as much freedom as if they had belonged to the smallest principality of the Feejee Islands. It was a welcome sight to Frederick, for he was well aware the sleep would follow satiety and excess of drink.

The belligerents had good appetites, and their feast was provokingly protracted. What he anticipated came to pass, with a few exceptions. Three or four of them, instead of yielding to the stupefying effects of the fiery beverage, took on the wild and excited phase that not unfrequently attends the drinking of large quantities of alcoholic stimulants, and prove

not only annoying to their companions, but dangerous to the prisoner.

They were at first content with insulting remarks; but this not being satisfactory to their chivalry, they began to offer him personal indignities. They snapped their fingers in his face, jostled him from side to side, pricked him with their bayonets, and were proceeding to more serious treatment, when Babel, who was now, apparently, as drunk as the rest, arose from the corner where he had been sitting, to all appearance asleep, his great head swaying from side to side, and approached the scene of these unmanly aggressions. His eyes shot flashes of light, and his gigantic frame quivered with excitement. Frederick marked him closely as he came. The scars on his face stood out more palpably, and he plainly read in the bright firelight the word "BABEL," charred into the shriveled flesh of his arm. He caught the muskets from their hands and darted them through the window; then turning upon the men themselves, beat them down with his great fists. The noise of their fall, and of the brief struggle that preceded it, awakened the corporal from his heavy slumbers. Seeing some of his men fall, and Babel standing over them in flaming wrath, he staggered to his feet, and drawing his sword with much difficulty, shouted to his fellows to get up and defend themselves, for the devil or the Federals had come.

The black, quite undismayed, sprang to the table, seized the wreck of the roasted porker by the hinder legs, and swinging it over his head to give it momentum, let it fly at the corporal with such force and precision, that he was swept from his feet as effectually as if stricken by a cannon-ball. Babel was now master of the field. He snatched the corporal's sword from the floor where it had fallen, and set Frederick's limbs at liberty in a moment; then, grasping him firmly by the arm, hurried, or rather dragged, him from the house. Some random and very scattering shots followed them.

"Run, Mars'r North!" said Babel.

Frederick heard this with amazement. The dumb giant had spoken! The young man could not refrain from exclaiming:

"You speak! I thought you were dumb and deaf."

"At times," answered Babel, hoarsely, "I am mute as the skies, and deaf as the clods we walk on. But to-night my senses are unsealed. I hear and I speak."

Frederick hastened on in silent wonder. Impelled by strong curiosity, he soon returned to the subject.

"Do you, then, control the powers of speech and hearing?" he asked, considering, with something of awe, the grim figure at his side.

"I do," replied Babel, solemnly. "I say to my tongue, Speak not! I say to my ears, Hear

not! and lo! I am deaf and dumb. No sound reaches my soul, and no sound proceeds from it."

"Why is this?" inquired Frederick, his curiosity still more thoroughly aroused.

"Ask me not," muttered Babel, sombrely. "The time may soon come when you shall know. Till then, let me be Babel, the deaf mute. When my purpose is accomplished, I care not what I may be, or whether I shall have any being in this dusky form. When my work is done, this black and unwieldy frame may perish for aught I care. These corporate members may lie down with their scars, and seams, and unhealed wounds, to become food for the crawling worm and the consuming mould. To mother earth resolved—dust to dust, and element to element surrendered; then will end the career of the man-animal, Babel. I thank the mysterious powers of Nature that the white and the black man are hurrying to one common grave."

The black spoke with stirring vehemence. His pent-up passions, like an overpowering tide, gushed forth without restraint.

"God is just!" answered Frederick.

"I know nothing of the Southern God!" exclaimed Babel, fiercely, stopping suddenly, and turning upon Frederick as if he would rend him. "I care not to know the Deity that would oppress my race. They are weak fools who accept the vile religion of their oppressors. It is enough that they wring gold and pleasure from our blood and our tears. Let them not force upon us a religion that teaches them how to whip, starve, and break us down to the condition of cattle, whose patient necks bear the galling yoke."

He paused, and swept the sky with his long dark arm and hand.

"The God I believe in, exists in yonder starry arch; but whether he dwells in the moon, or in the sun, or in fields of light far removed from mortal vision, I know not; but if such a being lives, the white and the black Saxon will one day plead their cause together."

He stopped again, then added:

"But I have done. Speech is a mockery of human expression. I shall soon abjure it, and return again to be the dumb devil I was. Betray me not till the time comes. Talk to me no more at present, for we must hasten and I must soon leave you. By-and-by, I will free you from those irons, and you will be at liberty to resume your journey to Hilton Head."

Babel went forward again like a race-horse, and Frederick followed him silently.



## CHAPTER XL.

## THE REAL BEARER OF THE DISPATCHES FOUND.

Babel halted presently, and with considerable hammering and prying, relieved Frederick of the irons on his wrists.

"If you would go to Hilton Head," he said, pointing with his finger, "your way is yonder. The Federal fleet is riding in the harbor, and you may be fortunate enough to pass the rebel pickets and reach it in safety."

"But why should I go?" asked Frederick. "My dispatches are gone, and I fear my honor is lost with them."

"I know nothing of your honor, whether lost or found," returned Babel. "During my life—my miserable and oppressed life—I have seen little of the article you call honor! I have known Cruelty and Rage, but never honor, in the white men that have claimed to own my flesh and my blood, and to guide my muscles and control my will. Cruelty and Rage have I known, and Revenge comes next."

The great, white rims of Babel's eyes grew yellow with wrath. His broad chest heaved and swelled like the waves of the sea, and Frederick beheld, with something like fear, the tremors of his muscular body.

"It is the key of my life!" muttered Babel, huskily. "Revenge is the key of my life; the key that locked up my soul in silence; the key that kept me deaf; the key that shut me in with my own boiling and burning passions, to wait, with weary and wearing impatience, the day and the hour, and the moment of retaliation. It is near at hand. Not much more watching and waiting; not much more reviling; not many more blows not many more blood-hounds. As soon as the Northmen have taken Beaufort, there will be such a sight as North Carolina never witnessed before. A shout of joy will rise from the cotton-fields and rice-swamps, that will make the white masters pale with terror."

"And what do you think of Lowenthal?" Frederick inquired.

"Mention him not!" cried Babel, furiously. "Speak not his accursed name! Look here—see this!"

Babel lifted up his branded arm. The soft light of the stars and the moon lay in white billows on the brown letters. "BABEL, 1860", stood out as if every character clamored for attention. "It burns at this moment, as if the smoking irons were still eating into the flesh!" added Babel. "Each letter demands its separate vengeance. I will give him pain for pain, blow for blow, and death for all!"

He gnashed his teeth, and his wrath grew startling. Holding his arm toward heaven, he exclaimed, with thrilling effect:

"Let the God of the white man look down on this, and witness between the two races of men!"

North, amazed and awed, recoiled from Ba-

bel and averted his eyes. Immediately, Babel turned and strode away. Knowing it would be useless, the young man did not attempt to detain him, but stood thoughtfully where the black had left him.

Something dropping from a tree and falling beside him made him jump with alarm, under the impression that a wild animal was about to attack him. Such a rattling and scattering of the leaves followed, that Frederick could not instantly determine what kind of a creature had come; but, by-and-by, by close examination, he was able to separate some black feet from the revolving mass; and very soon after, the crispy head and solemn face of Swampsey were mutely presented to view. His surprise was great; for he had given up all hopes of again seeing the foundling of Alligator Swamp. But there he was, lithe and agile, and good as new. There was manifestly as much squirm, and twist, and leap-frog in him, as ever. He recollected most of the unique names that Angelina had called him, and could not help smiling as he contemplated the little fellow.

Swampsey's absence had not been unproductive of results. He reappeared to his new master with some notable improvements in his toilet. He had discovered, somewhere in his travels, a pair of homeopathic trousers, which had been tenanted originally by a very small child, and into these Swampsey had crowded his eighteen inches of legs, and contrived, by pulling and tugging, to button the waistband just above the hips. The general effect of these trousers was, to make the foundling's short pilasters look like a pair of candle-molds; and leaving, on account of the shortness of the garment, a black selvage extending from the ankle half-way to the knee. When Frederick had time to take in the full stage-effect of this costume, he forgot, in his sense of the ludicrous, even the loss of his dispatches. The tow-shirt, of which mention has been made in divers and sundry places, japanned with dirt and glazed with faithful service, was gracefully tucked under the trousers, and fell in baggy festoons over the waistbands.

"Where have you been, Swampsey?" asked Frederick.

"Been 'way, Mars'r Fred," replied the foundling, in a voice as straight on as usual.

This reply was so obviously true, that North had nothing to say about it.

"But why did you leave me?" continued Frederick.

"Cause I went off," drawled Swampsey.

This was so exceedingly reasonable, that Frederick had not a word to urge against it.

"Do you know what happened after I went to sleep?" queried North.

"Told ye not to go to sleep, Mars'r Fred. But you would go to sleep. If you'd kept your eyes open, you wouldn't gone to sleep. Sogermen come and took Mars'r Fred."

Swampsey tried to insinuate his hands into the pockets of his new trousers, which were drawn so tightly around his little body, that it was impossible for him to insert more than one finger. This, however, gave him ample satisfaction, and he threw a somerset on the strength of it.

"That was not all, my sooty gymnast," said North. "Did you see Peter Rust sew some papers into the linings of my coat?"

"See Mars'r Peter put 'em in," answered the foundling. "Mars'r Peter wanted 'em ear'd safe down to them yer Yanks, as am goin' to shoot the rotten shot at de big forts. Know what Mars'r Peter wants, well 'nough. Don't want them yer papers' lost."

"Lost they are, at all events, to my shame and disgrace be it spoken!" exclaimed Frederick, despondingly. "Poor little fragment of life!" he added, abstractedly. "He cannot realize how much I have lost, in those dispatches. Possibly I may have lost Milrose. That mysterious money-lender intimated that my success depended upon the faithfulness with which I discharged this trust. Well, I have to thank myself for it. I was stupidly forgetful of my duty and the responsibility of my mission. O Milrose! Milrose!"

"Got 'em yer," said Swampsey, laying his hand upon the breast of his tow-shirt. "Sewed 'em in like Mars'r Peter."

A gleam of indescribable triumph flickered over the foundling's face.

"Got the dispatches?" exclaimed Frederick, incredulously.

"In yer," responded Swampsey, pointing to his bosom.

"In there?" repeated Frederick, still in doubt whether he understood him.

The black dwarf winked and blinked affirmatively.

"How did you get them?" demanded Frederick, somewhat sternly.

"Cut 'em out Mars'r Fred's coat. Mars'r Fred was 'sleep," replied Swampsey, perfectly self-possessed.

"You!" cried Frederick, quite confounded.

"You cut the linings of my coat! You take out the dispatches and make off with them!"

"Yes, Mars'r Fred," responded Swampsey, steadily, with a benign wag of the head.

"What for?" interrogated Frederick, whose wonder had not abated.

"To keep 'em," replied Swampsey. "Knew you'd be cotched, and Mars'r Peter wants 'em taken down yon. Was goin' down with 'em. Met Babel. Babel told me to wait out yer. and I waited. These be the papers."

Swampsey pressed a black finger upon his breast again.

"Give them to me," said Frederick, advancing and holding out his hand.

"Keep 'em for Mars'r Fred," answered Swamp-

sey, with immovable gravity. "Nobody wont know whar to find 'em."

"What! you keep them?" demanded North, who was unprepared for this announcement. "Why," he added, with a smile, "if they are discovered concealed in your shirt, you will be hanged as a spy."

"Be hung for Mars'r Peter," said the foundling. "Don't care what happens if they get the papers down yon."

"You are too small to take charge of them," remonstrated Frederick, who was overjoyed to find that the dispatches were not irretrievably lost. "Besides, you may lose them in some of your ground and lofty tumblings."

Swampsey shook his head in solemn and utter contradiction of this possibility.

"Can't git out. Fastened in tight. Sha'n't go to sleep."

The closing argument of Swampsey's remarks was one that came close home to the conscience of the young man. He really felt confused before this odd little creature. Sleep, indeed! It was well thought of. It was aptly spoken by Swampsey. Frederick reflected. The lad had displayed remarkable instincts. His mysterious foresight had probably saved his dispatches from the rebels, and very probably his own life. Why should he not trust him? He had proved the more faithful of the two. There were no good reasons why he should not allow him to retain the papers; and as he was resolved to do so, whether he assented or dissented, he made a virtue of necessity, and made no further efforts to get possession of them.

"Do as you like," said Frederick. "Perhaps your plan is the best. So far, at least, you have exercised the utmost discretion; and, in truth, you are the hero of this undertaking. Now, Swampsey, as I appear to be thrown upon your guidance, tell me which way we shall go? If you know of any place where we can procure something to eat, without being too closely questioned, go there as fast as you can."

Swampsey winked a few seconds, turned slowly about, and started off with more than usual moderation. Frederick followed him with greater faith than on the previous night; and just as the morning rays were gilding the tree-tops, came in sight of a house, toward which the foundling directed his steps.

## CHAPTER XLI.

## WITH MARTIN BROADBENT.

Frederick and his guide soon reached the house, when the latter signified that the former should knock, which he did, although not without misgivings. He heard heavy steps, and the door being opened, he was surprised to see the grave face of Lowenthal's overseer—a person with whom he had had some acquaintance. The surprise was mutual. Frederick knew not how



to meet this man. He stood silent and uncertain before Martin Broadbent.

"Enter, young man," said Martin, "and make known thy business."

"My business is simple indeed—food and rest," replied Frederick.

"The master of the house will doubtlessly grant thy request," said Martin.

Frederick went in, and Martin, closing the door, fastened it. Swampsey was the first to enter, and appeared very much at home; as he seemed to be in all places. Martin conducted Frederick to a small room on the first floor, the only occupant of which was a young woman, who arose at his entrance.

"It is a friend, Ela," said Martin. "Thou needst not be afraid. It is the young man, Frederick North, of whom I spoke to thee on the way."

Frederick bowed. Swampsey marched demurely into the room.

"This is that strange little being," added Broadbent, "of whom I also made mention as having been found in the swamp by one Peter Rust, to whom he is now greatly attached. Truly, he is very unique, quaint, and wonderfully agile; full of quirks, and capers, and numberless eccentricities. I would commend him to thy care and kindness, because, of a truth, he loveth his master, and followeth him like a faithful dog."

Ela made a graceful acknowledgement to Frederick, and greeted the foundling of Alligator Swamp with a pleasant smile.

"I confess," said Frederick, recovering from his temporary embarrassment, "that I am surprised to meet you so far from your plantation."

"It is the day of surprises," returned Martin. "If I can read the signs of the times, surprises will follow surprises in quick succession. I have left my black Saxons to take care of themselves for a season. But not for long; I'll warrant, thee, Frederick, that I shall see them soon."

"Sooner than they may desire to meet you, if the accounts I have heard of you be true," answered Frederick, with a smile.

"Verily, I have had the name of cruelty," responded Broadbent, with a glance at Ela, whose cheeks flushed. "But the time will come when all who know me may judge of my conduct."

"I cannot discuss that point with you," said Frederick. "I take it for granted that every man's conscience accuses or acquits him of injustice."

"Thou art true to the old flag, I believe?" observed Martin, thoughtfully.

"Would you have me true or false to it?" demanded Frederick, warily.

"I would have thee do according to thy conscience," answered Martin.

"The Union forever!" interposed Ela, with warmth.

"I re-echo the sentiment," said North, impressively. "Why should I disguise a feeling that is honorable alike to the heart and the understanding? Whatever your views are, Mr. Overseer, mine are in harmony with the Washington Government. If you live in accordance with the peace-loving religion which you profess, you will not betray me to the rebels. To be frank, I am beset by traitors, and my life is in peril."

"My business is not to betray, but to save and to deliver. While here, I trust thou wilt be safe. But one cannot tell what a day may bring forth. Thou canst see from this house portions of the Yankee fleet lying off Hilton Head. To-morrow, if I am rightly informed, there will be an attack upon the rebel forts, and soldiers and citizens will be marching and hurrying to and fro. If the Confederates are defeated—which there is good reason to believe they will be—by ascending yonder hill, thou mayst be able to see them fly, or witness their capture by the Federals. Though our troops prove victorious, there will still be danger to loyal people. I would advise thee, friend, to keep close within these walls until the battle has been fought."

The Quaker looked earnestly at Frederick.

"I would that you would speak out plainly, that I may know you," said North, hesitatingly.

"That may not be, friend, for I know not myself. This young lady," he pointed to Ela, "is one who hath experienced the reverses of life. On her way to the North, she fell into the hands of Roscoe Lowenthal, from whom she suffered insult and indignity. It was my happy fortune to rescue her from his power. She is one of good family, but unjustly robbed of fortune by the wickedness of this rebellion. I greatly esteem this maiden, and am willing to endure much for her sake. I go not back to my black lambs!"

A good-natured twinkle appeared in Martin's eyes, and he lifted his broad shoulders significantly. "If I mistake not, friend Frederick, the black lambs will soon come to me. You will soon see such a stampede among the slaves as was never dreamed of in all cottondom. When the thunderous guns of the Wabash give the signal of general assault, a thousand fetters will fall from a thousand limbs. A thousand, did I say? Ay, ten thousand! Thou wilt discover whether men love slavery or freedom best. If the institution be mild and benevolent, master and man, white Saxon and black, will fly together, and together seek common safety and common good. This will be the test of the modern bondage. If it be good, the docile negro will to it adhere, with all the tenacity of his simple nature. If it be malign and cruel, from it he will hurry with joyful steps. Let the

## CHAPTER XLII.

## TO FORT ROYAL.

Having breakfasted, Frederick North informed Martin Broadbent that it was imperatively necessary that he should resume his way, and communicate, if possible, with the flagship, Wabash.

"I will not detain thee, friend Frederick," the Quaker replied. "On the contrary, I will bear thee company; for I know of a place close down to the margin of the sea where we may, without risk, witness the grand scene that is about to open in the harbor."

"But the young lady you call Ela?" queried Frederick.

"The young lady I call Ela," answered Martin, with a smile, "will give us her good company."

"If I draw not false conclusions," added Frederick, "the young lady called Ela will find you her good company for a very long time."

"As Heaven may ordain," said Martin, softly.

"And as you mutually agree," said Frederick.

"Verily," quoth Martin, "I should ask thee concerning one they call Milrose—the girl Milrose!"

A beaming smile flitted like a gleam of sunshine over the sun-browned visage of Broadbent. The cheeks of North were suffused. He could not hear the name Milrose pronounced without emotion; it sent all the blood in his system deliciously thrilling through his veins. There is such magic in a beloved name. There is such music in the sound that represents the embodied image of affection! There is such a tumult of hope and expectation in a few conjoined letters of the alphabet!

"Ask what you will," answered Frederick, gravely. "I have seen enough of you to know you, and to trust you. You have spoken a name that I can never hear with indifference. It is a name that I have hoped to speak often, and to have always near me. But fate takes pleasure in baffling my expectations, and surrounding me, daily, with fresh difficulties. Mystery attends me at every step. I am like a football continually buffeted about, now flying in the air, now rolling in the dust."

Frederick looked so serious, that Martin tapped him on the shoulder, and said:

"Be of good cheer, friend Frederick. If the girl loves thee, that is more than half. If there were no love, lad, it would be a different thing. It is the mutual love that lends a charm to these matters, and forms alike the joy and the terror of life."

"Can you give me any definite information," Frederick asked, "of a certain usurer, whose name is Markthaler?"

"I know there is such a one," replied the Quaker, slowly, "and that Roscoe Lowenthal has often applied to him for money. More

black, thralldom be weighed in a just balance. I ask no more; whatever happens, it will be the decision of God; for it is according to the Divine ruling that evil should have its reward at last."

Frederick, during his brief acquaintance with Broadbent, had not seen his countenance so inspired as now.

"The experience of this young girl," he added, turning to Ela, "adds another condemnation to the system of negro slavery. I will not state the circumstances. It were not seemly, or at least not delicate, to relate her short history."

He approached her and respectfully took her hand. Ela arose. Her face glowed with grateful emotion. "This young girl," Martin went on, "hath been a pleasure to my mind and a delight to my eyes. I have been exceedingly bold, friend Frederick. I have thought it no harm to tell her that she had cast a charm upon my life. I have said to her, 'I love thee, Ela!' And why should I not say this much? If she loves me not, she can say: 'I thank thee, friend Martin, for thy love, but I cannot repay thee in kind.' If, on the contrary, her soul responds to a declaration which thrills the heart of every woman, she might, perchance, reply: 'Your goodness is greater than my merit. I am pleased, but perplexed by your preference. Wait till you know me better.'"

The voice of Martin Broadbent was tender and solemn. Frederick thought he spoke as became a man; and notwithstanding the presence of a third person, his words were marvelously apt and proper.

"Mr. North," said Ela, raising her hurried eyes to his, "this man is of too noble a nature to be trifled with and deceived. Aid me to resist him. I fear I shall be too easily won. I am greatly tempted to repeat the answer he has so kindly framed for me. But I must not—I do not—and yet I do."

Ela averted her eyes; she smiled, she trembled, she blushed.

"I owe this man a great debt," she added, presently, "and you must pardon me, Mr. North, if I treat him as his generous and outspoken character demands."

"I see no need of concealment; we are rather pleased with each other," she went on, with graceful timidity. "But we shall be very rational and practical, I am sure. He'll get no encouragement from me, Mr. North, although we have been placed in most strange and thrilling relations."

Frederick walked to a window and looked out. Something passed between them behind his back, he could not tell what; but Martin Broadbent looked quite content and happy, when, by-and-by, he turned his inquiring eyes upon him.

than this, I do not feel that I can tell thee. But here come the horses prepared for our use. We will lose no time, but set out at once."

Three negroes appeared, leading as many horses, saddled and bridled. One of them was provided with a side-saddle, for Ela, who was presently assisted to it by Martin; when, Frederick and the latter mounting, the party moved off at a brisk pace, followed by Swampsey, who stoutly refused to take a seat behind his new master, infinitely preferring heels to horse.

Martin studiously avoided thoroughfares, choosing by-paths and roads little traveled. The reasons for this were obvious; for that part of the country was now astir with excitement. Blacks and whites could be seen from every hill-top, hurrying to and fro in confusion, as if in expectation of impending events. In the distance, the beating of drums, the shrieking of fifes, the occasional blast of a bugle, and, now and then, the solitary report of a musket or field-piece could be heard. The signs and portents of war, the evidences of revolution, were visible from every eminence and at every turn of their secluded way.

Frederick was much deceived in regard to the distance to Hilton Head, having supposed that two hours' ride would take them to the sea. But the windings and deviations of their course were such that their progress in a direct line was slow; so that it was quite dark when they reached Bluffton. It was, on the whole, a day of adventure. They were often stopped and questioned, but gave such plausible answers that they were suffered to proceed. On one occasion, a squad of raw Confederate recruits, in charge of a sergeant, surrounded Swampsey with the intention of ducking him in a muddy pool of water; but a foundling has to be caught before he can be ducked, and the only difficulty they encountered in this laudable undertaking was, that of catching him; for they could no more lay hands on Swampsey than they could chase down a weasel; so the dispatches, which Frederick feared, at one time, were in danger, came off safely, and with many rotations and somersets that they never would have had, had they remained on the more quiet person of our hero.

At Bluffton, they experienced fresh difficulties; but Martin Broadbent, by some mysterious shibboleth, smoothed the way, and finally reached the house of a trusty person, with whom, it appeared, he had had previous communication. Here they were generously provided with refreshment, of which they were in great need. The night set in quite dark. After resting an hour, they again set forward, but in a different manner. Silently they embarked in a boat, attended by the man who had entertained them. Each was enjoined not to speak. They left the shore, and the muffled oars fell lightly in the water. Swampsey lay curled up

in the bottom of the boat, like a little black terrier, as solemn as ever, his white eyes rolling in every direction. Nothing escaped his vigilance that could possibly be seen by a foundling's eyesight. If a camp-fire blazed on the adjacent island; if a rocket went up, breaking into a thousand red-and-blue streamers among the clouds; if a signal-lantern gleamed from ship or fort, Swampsey saw it.

Frederick knew not, definitely, where they were going; he only knew that the little vessel was gliding noiselessly along. Frequently they heard the challenges of sentinels, but passed on unnoticed. The young man wondered that Martin would expose Ela to the imminent danger of being fired on from the shore. He observed that he sat on that side of the boat most exposed, to guard her with his person from rebel bullets. With his massive form beside her, a deadly missile could not well reach her, save through the breast of the faithful Martin.

They floated for some time over the calm water. At length, shooting around the headland, the whole Federal fleet, or as much of it as could be seen by the moving lights aboard and the faint light of the rising moon, lay dimly before them. It was a goodly sight. The Stars and Stripes, floating from the "Wabash", made Frederick's heart thrill with pride. The great hulk nodding gently to the slight swell, her tall spars thrown darkly against the sky, were, to him, a prophecy of what she would do on the morrow. It was with a strong effort that he repressed the spontaneous impulse to cheer the glorious old flag. Higher and higher arose the moon. There were clouds lying along the horizon, but the silver light struggled through them, and revealed yet more plainly the Federal fleet.

The features of Broadbent worked with emotion. Ela shed tears. The oarsman kept his oars lifted a moment above the water to gaze at the forest of smoke-pipes and masts, leaving the boat to glide forward by the impetus it had received. Soon after, one oar dipped, then both, and the light vessel shot into a small creek. The keel grated on the sand; the boatman jumped into the water and drew it up, so that Ela stepped from the bow to the shore. Frederick perceived that they were on an island very near Hilton Head.

#### CHAPTER XLIII.

##### THE FOUNDLING OF ALLIGATOR SWAMP GOES TO THE FLAG-SHIP.

A short distance from the water was a growth of palmettoes, to which the person who had governed the movements of the boat and acted as their guide conducted them. Sheltered and hidden from view by the trees, they found a dwelling of considerable size, into which the boatman entered with Ela and Martin. Frederick waited outside until the two men rejoined him. As for Swampsey, he had walked along

very soberly, and kept very near his new friend. The countenance of Frederick he now watched very closely—seeming, like the faithful dog, to get the meaning of his master from his silent face.

Having left Ela at the house, the parties returned to the shore at a point where the land ran farthest to the sea, in the direction of Hilton Head. The defensive works of the rebels were plainly distinguishable. Lying off, out of reach of the guns, was the flag-ship with which Frederick was so anxious to communicate. Frederick looked at it with wishful and restless eyes. Swampsey, the important bearer of the dispatches, sauntered about with his hands behind him, apparently the most unconcerned of the party. He kept remarkably to the ground, not once revolving like a wheel, standing on his head, spinning round like a top, nor throwing a single somersets, till their guide dragged a very small boat from among the shrubbery, and launched it upon the water; then he executed one of the most wonderful aerial saltations ever recorded in history. Having ventilated his feelings in this manner, he waited with lively interest the development of events. The boatman appeared in no hurry. His motions were notably slow and hesitating. He looked often toward the Confederate batteries.

"We are a little late," he said, apologetically. "The moon is a trifle too high."

"The danger must be encountered, at all events," replied Frederick, with decision. "This little cockle-shell of a boat will be blown out of the water," returned the boatman, shaking his head dubiously. "There are plenty of glasses sweeping yonder sheet of water to-night. A hundred eyes will see you before you have passed half the distance, and a dozen rifled-cannon will send their compliments."

"Neither eyes, nor glasses, nor rifle-shot shall deter me from discharging my duty. I ask no one to attend me. I know enough of boat-craft to row myself to yonder ship."

Swampsey lost not a word of this discourse, and evidently comprehending the exact state of affairs, threw himself into the boat with inconceivable quickness, and seizing one of the oars, which were very light, pushed from the shore before any one could interfere to prevent him. When out of reach, he cast overboard both oars, and taking up a paddle that happened to be in the boat, began to use it with skill and rapidity. It was in vain that the boatman shouted after him. It was in vain that Frederick called to him to come back. The foundling of Alligator Swamp manifestly had a will of his own, and gave no more heed to the frantic commands and gestures of Frederick than to the tumbling of the spray upon the headland. Away he went, dispatches and all. Despite his chagrin, the young man could not forbear smiling at the absurdity of the situation.

"You'll never see that contraband again," said the boatman, shrugging his shoulders. "You'll see a flash over yonder presently."

He leveled his finger toward the Confederate works. Meantime, Swampsey, perched upon one side of the boat, plied the paddle briskly, and the frail vessel glided over the long and regular swells with much more velocity than could have been expected.

The moon was high above the clouds; its long white beams trembled like shafts of silver along the heaving water, and bathed with mellow light both fleet and battery. The same great fountain shed equal blessings on friend and foe. It was a spectacle that one might see but once in a lifetime—the sight of a century—ship and transport, tug and steamer, comprising the great naval expedition, riding calmly at their moorings in that magnificent harbor, almost within range of the Confederate batteries.

Between the rebel works and the Federal fleet, tossing on the waves like an egg-shell, was the little boat containing Swampsey and the dispatches, and which, though now but a mere speck, soon became an object of attention to ship and shore. There was a bright flash from one of the island-batteries, and then a booming sound rolled out to sea; while, simultaneously, a large shot went skipping from billow to billow, finally disappearing far beyond Swampsey. But the foundling heeded not this salutation, but continued to propel his bark with a steady purpose. Shot after shot followed this serious admonition. Rebel balls fell like hail around the impassive little black. Frederick became painfully interested. With a glass, which their guide had brought, he kept an anxious watch of the boat and its occupant.

"His head is gone!" he exclaimed, as a thirty-two-pound rifle-shot went shrieking in fearful nearness to the undaunted voyager, and he suddenly disappeared.

"Nay, he is up again," said Martin. "He has saved his head by dropping into the bottom of the boat."

"He stands on the gunnel, dipping his paddle as briskly as ever," exclaimed Frederick, excitedly. "The foundling of Alligator Swamp bears a charmed life. Really, I am very anxious for the safety of this little fellow. The Confederates are firing for practice, and some of them are very good range-shots. It is unmanly to keep up such a thunder of artillery on so small an object."

The glass passed from hand to hand, and each expressed, by turns, his interest in Swampsey. By-and-by, shells began to drop about him, most of them, fortunately for him, exploding too soon or too late. A few, however, burst near enough to throw great jets of water over him, and envelop him in smoke. But through this furnace-blast of shot and shell glided the boat in safety, and by-and-by, like a fly on the ocean,

he disappeared under the dark bows of the "Wabash". But a short time elapsed before Frederick saw something, which he supposed to be his pigmy body, drawn up over the side, and deposited on the deck.

"His mission is accomplished!" exclaimed the young man, relieved of an unpleasant load of suspense and responsibility.

"And all for Mars'r Peter," observed Martin. "Had Peter of the Pines wished those papers conveyed to Fort Walker, they would have been carried there with equal fidelity."

"He will not come back, certainly," said North, somewhat uneasily.

"Verily, he will return, friend Frederick," answered Martin. "Nothing can keep him a moment longer than needful from his beloved Peter. Look! he goes over the side of the ship, and—and now he is in his egg-shell again. He'll come back, though a thousand batteries roar at him."

Broadbent was right. Back paddled Swampsey, through bursting shell and bowling shot. The iron hail and the sulphurous flash were the same to him. Columbiad and mortar, rifled Armstrong and Whitworth, carronade and swivel, ten-pounder or hundred-pounder, were of like significance to this unique bearer of dispatches; and he cared not the snapping of a thumb and finger for the whole of them. Perched on the gunnel, his dwarfed proportions were the focus of hundreds of curious and interested eyes. Both sailors and soldiers watched his passage to and from the flag-ship, momentarily expecting to see boy and boat swept from the water like a speck of sea-foam.

#### CHAPTER XLIV.

##### TIDINGS OF MILROSE.

Although Frederick had wished to be the special bearer of the dispatches to the flag-ship, he was not disposed to murmur at what had occurred, or to envy the laurels of Swampsey. The latter celebrated his success by four grand, consecutive double-somersets, the first of the series being thrown with unusual sprightliness from the bow of the boat. He infused into this performance at least one-founding power—speaking after the manner of horse-power and dog-power, with bark-grinding and culinary reminiscences in view.

On being questioned, Swampsey was as clear and luminous in his answers as he had been at any time since Frederick had been blest with the inestimable treasure of his society.

"Why did you play me such a trick?" asked Frederick, intending to be quite stern.

"Went off in the boat," answered the hero of Alligator Swamp, his eyes working at the rate of a hundred winks a minute. "Let Mars'r Fred ahind."

"I know you did," said Frederick, biting his

lips. "It is a very sorry caper. I was very anxious to go to the flag-ship myself."

"Mars'r Fred didn't go," quoth Swampsey, with the same truthful felicity.

"I certainly did not," said North, who found it difficult to feign anger which he did not feel. "Did you deliver the papers?"

"No, didn't d'liver 'em, Mars'r Fred," drawled the foundling, his eyes revolving rapidly, and in strong contradiction of the idea, as he understood it, contained in the last query.

"What did you do with them, then?" demanded Frederick, considerably startled.

"Giv' 'em to the man with the gold things on his shoulders. Tole him you brung 'em from Mars'r Peter," said little Dismal, with solemn honesty of look.

"Thou speakest beyond his comprehension, friend Frederick," observed Martin. "Thou shouldst use simple language when thou conferest with such."

"What did the man with the things on his shoulders say?" continued Frederick.

"Took 'em down cellar," said Swampsey, imperturbably serious.

"He went down cellar!" laughed the young man. "What did he do after he went down cellar?"

"Spread 'em on a table and looked at 'em. Soon's I see he could read 'em, knowd 'twas the man Mars'r Peter wanted to have 'em. Some more men come an' looked at the black marks, and I comed 'way. Wanted me to stay. Said I'd get blow'd out the water goin' back. Tole 'em I didn't car' for blowin'; must go to Mars'r Peter. Man with the things on his

shoulder looked at me strange. Sailor-men was goin' to hold me, but I slipped down the side the ship afore they could catch me. Then they all hollered to me to stay, and I wouldn't be hurt and he took 'em on. Them men with great swords come up out o' the cellar-place and made motions to me, and I said, 'Mars'r Peter, Mars'r Peter,' and went 'way."

"Did the commodore say that the papers were valuable?"

"No," said he liked 'em," replied Swampsey, repelling by a solemn shake of the head the idea that they were valuable.

"Mars'r Peter wouldn't have noffin' to do with papers that wasn't good."

Just then, a shell from the island struck the water and exploded within fifty yards of them, casting jets of spray high into the air. Fortunately, neither of the parties were injured.

"With the compliments of the season," remarked Frederick, with a smile.

"Verily, our rebel neighbors yonder have discovered us," said Martin. "We might as well move away out of range; for shells, friend Frederick, are not missiles to be trifled with, and go not out of their course for any man."

They now returned to the spot where they

first landed. Frederick noticed that another boat had been drawn up, recently, on the sand near the one in which they had performed their silent voyage. Incidents that afterward happened made him recall this circumstance, and gave it significance. They walked to the house among the palmettos. They had scarcely reached it, when Swampsey ran forward with the joyful cry of "Mars'r Peter! Mars'r Peter!" His revolving eyes had discovered, at a considerable distance, the tall figure of Peter of the Pines. This erratic character would have evaded attention, had it been practicable; but seeing that his presence was detected, he slowly approached Frederick, whose surprise was great. "Seeing is believing," he exclaimed. "But this is a totally unexpected visit. I do not ask you whences you come, but why?"

"I come because I wanted to come; because I was tired of the pines; because I had business here; because the Federal fleet lays in the harbor, and the North and the South are about to try each other's courage and metal; in short—in short, for other reasons as I do not name; all of which," added Peter, hesitatingly, and not quite ingenuously, "you understand."

"When an honest man departs from frankness," replied Frederick, laughing, and cordially shaking hands with Peter, "what a mixed mess he makes of it! No matter what you come for, I am glad to see you."

North took the still-hunter by both hands, and gave the calloused palms a hearty pressure. "We shall have stirring times in a day or two. How did you leave—" Frederick stopped as suddenly as if a ten-inch shell had burst at his feet.

"Which?" asked Peter, demurely, enjoying the young man's embarrassment.

"Which did you observe?" Peter winked and blinked à la Swampsey as long as his good-nature would allow him, then added:

"When an honest man departs from frankness, how modest he becomes."

The still-hunter laughed quietly.

"Milrose was well when I see her last. She looked well, she talked well, she acted well, and that, I guess, is well enough."

"I left somewhat abruptly," said Frederick, "perhaps foolishly. I confess that I was strangely influenced by that unaccountable man who seems to be so much involved in the affairs of Lowenthal and Milrose. I doubt whether I should have parted from her under the circumstances. I have thought, sometimes, that it was a trap to beguile me. I may be wrong; but it now appears to me that my place was near her. Who has a better right than I to guide and guard her?"

"Like many wise men, your forethought comes afterward," responded Peter. "But don't give you self no oneness, whatsoever. The crookedest thing'll get straight, arter a

while, and the blindest man'll see when his sight is restored. Keep a brave heart, young man, and everything that is to happen will happen. Don't make a noise, lad. Still-hunt your fortin', and slow-track it, and don't, by no means whatsoever, foller it with dogs."

This was a figure of speech borrowed from Peter's own manner of life, and Frederick understood it as thoroughly as if the idea had been couched in the plainest of speech.

"If she is safe," pursued North, following his thoughts; "if you pledge me your word that she has been duly cared for, I will endeavor to be content."

"Look at little Dismal," answered Peter; "see him pitch-pole about; see him cut capers a low and aloft. Be as happy as he, Frederick North. I tell ye, kind and true, that there isn't much trouble afore ye. As I said afore, if I was young; if I was good-lookin'; if I had l'arnin', and could talk like a printed book, and write like a settled minister; if the world was all ahead of me, with its sunshine, and its woods and birds, and fields and wild game, and I was loved by Milrose, I should be the happiest bein' in existence. It would be a good world, and she would be the light on't."

The still-hunter sighed pensively, and raised his cap a little from his tanned forehead to let the cool sea-breeze lift the matted locks of his brown hair. It breathed coolly on his honest head, and he stood quietly then, rapt in thought. Milrose, doubtless, appeared to him again in white, as on that eventful night at Lowenthal's, and was the lost angel of his life.

#### CHAPTER XLV.

##### STRANGE MEETINGS.

Frederick was conducted into the house, and after some conversation with the boatman, shown to a comfortable chamber; but he was not in a state of mind to sleep. Sitting down at a window, he looked out dreamily upon the shadowy palmettos. The soft moonlight rested on leaf and lough. The varied incidents of the day; the remarkable delivery of the dispatches; the meeting with Peter Rust; Peter's words concerning Milrose; the impression produced by the Federal fleet; the grand and terrible events about to happen, conspired, with many other things, to put him in a serious and meditative mood. Memories thronged him. Many emotions were awakened, among which were hope, fear, and doubt. Milrose continually glided in and out among his fancies. She came and went with light and with darkness, with joy and with sadness.

A strain of vocal music reached his ears. It was a woman's voice, but from what direction it flowed, Frederick was at a loss to decide. He threw up the window; the melody came in more audibly, but the words were not distinguishable. He listened with breathless atten-

tion. The voice had an undefinable dream for him. At one moment he was ready to believe it was not unfamiliar to him, and at the next he was left in complete uncertainty. The singing appeared to come from the palmettos. Unable to bear the suspense longer, Frederick softly left the house. The notes that had beguiled him forth, ceased for a time, and he waited for their recurrence anxiously. By-and-by it was resumed, but at a greater distance. Frederick walked among the trees; he followed the voice which receded as he advanced. He hurried forward, but the unseen singer becoming silent again, he was entirely at fault, though not inclined to abandon the pursuit. He wandered about a long time, more and more interested in this nocturnal mystery. Disappointed and doubting, he was returning to the house, when a sudden turn in the path brought him face to face with two ladies. The younger and slighter formed of the two was thickly veiled, and Frederick could not see her features; but he mentally said: "It is Milrose!" He believed that he could not be deceived in the graceful figure and deportment. Her companion was a woman of riper years, taller in person, and notably dignified in mien and bearing.

Both the ladies and Frederick stopped. It was an unexpected meeting, and the parties were embarrassed. The one that the young man took to be Milrose, was agitated, and clung closely to her companion. He knew not what to say. He bowed, and rather awkwardly maintained his position, looking from one to the other. The features of the taller of the two were peculiar and quite bewildering in their effect upon the young man. He was confident he had seen that face, or one strangely like it. She met his confused looks with firmness, and after regarding him attentively a moment, said, quietly:

"Will you allow us to pass, sir?"

Reddening to the top of his forehead, Frederick stammered:

"I beg your pardon, madam," and stepped aside.

Both of them swept on, leaving Frederick stupefied with surprise and in an unenviable state of uncertainty. Had he seen Milrose? If he had, why this silence and mystery? Why did she not address some kindly words to him *en passant*? Why this reserve and coldness? If her heart confessed an equal love, would she allow him for even a moment to believe he was under her displeasure? Who was the dignified and self-possessed woman? Whose features did she recall? It was easy to ask these questions, but impossible to answer them.

Frederick changed his mind, and instead of returning to the house, walked toward the shore. He sat down upon the bench. The Federal fleet was in full view, the glorious moon and the effulgent stars revealing, like a magic pic-

ture, the graceful tracery of the spars against the sky. He wondered that he could have thought of sleeping on such a night, with so much to see and to think of, and with events impending that were to become history forever.

He was aroused by the working of oars in the row-locks, and by the sudden appearance of a boat which shot around the headland, with the swiftness of an arrow, and touched the shore immediately. This craft contained at least a dozen Confederate soldiers, and Colonel Lovelace was the first to step upon the sand. Frederick, as may be believed, recognized his rival at once. His first emotion was surprise, on the heels of which came very just fears for his personal safety. He arose to make his escape, but a dozen Confederate muskets were instantly leveled at him, and he prudently stood where he was. Colonel Lovelace approached him quickly, and very soon he was, for the third time, in the hands of his enemies.

"Well, sir, you see how it happens?" said Lovelace, addressing our hero.

"It is useless to struggle with fate," answered Frederick, despondingly. "Nothing less than my life will satisfy you, I perceive."

"We respectively represent two sides of a question to be decided by the deadly warfare of countrymen. The stern usages of war must be complied with," said Lovelace. "I arrest you as a deserter from the Confederate army."

"The punishment of which is death," responded Frederick, with bitterness.

"I see that you need not be instructed on that point," observed Lovelace, coldly. "You will get into the boat."

"I must do as you bid me, but I assure you I would resist if I could," added Frederick, with spirit. "If you want my blood on your hands, why take it. I know well the reason of your deadly enmity, but my death will bring you no advantage. Those that live, will live and love the same. A drum-head court-martial changes not the heart of woman."

"I understand you, sir, but your notions are somewhat wrong. I have given up Milrose. Such a person no longer lives for me. She is dead; deader to me than you will be to-morrow night, when a dozen Confederate bullets shall have pierced your bosom."

Lovelace spoke in a hollow and melancholy voice.

"I owe you some reparation," he added, "and I will pay it. While my men are gone to yonder house among the palmettos, to make further arrests, I will give you that opportunity for satisfaction which you once demanded of me, and which I promised. I have pistols, if they will answer your purpose."

By this time, in obedience to a gesture by the colonel, the soldiers moved off toward the palmettos, and the two men were left together. The proposition of Lovelace was so unexpected,

that for a brief space Frederick was mute with surprise. It was an exhibition of magnanimity which he was wholly unprepared for.

"Surely, sir, you are jesting," he replied. "You cannot for a moment mean to cast aside your advantage and put your life on equal chances against mine. From what I have known of you, I cannot expect this."

"I make the offer in good faith: accept or reject it," answered Lovelace, seriously. "As I informed you, I have pistols. Let the distance be five, ten, or twenty paces, and either will be satisfactory to me. If I fall, you can take yonder boat and escape. If, on the contrary, you fall, it will save you from a deserter's fate, to-morrow."

The Confederate officer spoke calmly, and without passion. His eyes were turned toward the Federal fleet, and his countenance was pale with melancholy thought. Frederick was impressed by his tone and manner. He had never seen him in such a mood. Indeed, he had never deemed him capable of such honorable conduct. But here he was before him, grave, generous, and, to a certain extent, just.

A round shot from Hilton Head, just then, struck between them, and plowed a deep furrow in the sand. Lovelace did not move; he regarded the now motionless messenger with indifference, for life had evidently lost its value.

"I confess that I know not what response to make," said Frederick, thoughtfully. "I am glad to change my opinion of you. If I could have my liberty, I should prefer not to lift my hand against you."

"Let us go yonder," answered Lovelace. And they walked away together on the shore.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

### THE RIVALS.

Lovelace paused occasionally to look at the gunboats, which evidently gave him an uncomfortable feeling. He could not but remember that, not many months since, he had an interest in those same vessels, ships, and steamers, was proud of the glory, and treasured the traditions of the American Navy. He had lost all that; it had slipped away forever, and he was in arms against the flag under which he was born. Thoughts like these crept into his mind. They would not be repressed. Nature asserted her rights, and the love of country was not yet extinguished.

"It is a glorious banner!" remarked Frederick, pointing to the floating flag. "United, we might have defied the world to mortal combat."

"Yes," said Lovelace, abstractedly.

"Divided, we fall," added Frederick, impressively.

"Yes," answered Lovelace, without bitterness.

"The South misapprehends the North," con-

tinued Frederick. "If the people of the two sections of the country understood each other, there would be no quarrel. The North loves liberty, education, and humanity; while it deplores oppression, education, and cruelty."

"Yes," said Lovelace, again; and looked dreamily at the Federal flag-ship.

"We need go no farther, I suppose?" Frederick observed.

"We need go no farther," repeated the colonel. "This place is good as another."

Saying this, he mechanically drew a brace of pistols from his coat.

"They are revolvers," he said. "We can fire six shots a piece. If you hit me the first time, do not mind firing until your weapon is empty."

He spoke with peculiar quietness, and was so different in his air and bearing from Lovelace as he had heretofore seen him, that Frederick was quite nonplussed.

Just then the young man cast his eyes toward the palmettos, and saw Swampsey approaching with more than usual moderation.

"I shall take no undue advantage," Frederick replied. "I can not nor would not fire at a disabled and brave antagonist. You seem serious to-night, sir. I doubt whether you are in a state of mind to fight a duel. Indeed, colonel, I no longer feel resentful and vindictive. Let us part without deadly arbitrament. Go your way, and suffer me to go mine. Your death will not benefit me, and the world is large enough for both."

"It may not be," replied Lovelace, with firmness, and with sadness, too. "I have injured you. I have been unjust. I have needlessly put your life in peril. I have permitted passions to rankle in my heart which should not have been there. I loved; and love, while in good men it exalts the sentiments, stirs into angry strife the baser elements of the bad. In loving Milrose, I forgot all else, and my passion overstepped my honor. I not only deceived myself, but, by a traitorous friend, I was also deceived. The proscenium of my life was bright, but the curtain has fallen, and you may snuff out the light as soon as you please."

Lovelace grasped both the pistols by the barrels, and stretching out his arm, held them toward Frederick.

"Take which of them you will," he added. "They are both loaded alike. If you will not take my word for it, take out the chambers and examine them."

"To-night, Colonel Lovelace, answered North, taking one of the weapons, "your word is not to be doubted."

"I thank you," returned Lovelace, in the same quiet and subdued manner that had thus far characterized him during the singular scene. "A Southern gentleman, in his better moments, knows what honor is. That flag troubles me."



He made a gesture toward the glorious flag of the United States.

"Stand yonder," he continued, "so that, in firing, my face may not be toward it. If I fall, say to Milrose that my last thoughts were of her. Are you ready, Mr. North? If so, count three, and fire on the word three."

Frederick paced off twenty paces, and faced Lovelace. Swampsey came up, and standing a little at one side, so as to form an obtuse angle with the principals, winked and blinked earnestly.

The combatants stood with their side-faces to the sea. Frederick reluctantly followed the directions of his now generous enemy. He began to count. He was about to pronounce the word, three. Lovelace's pistol-hand had remained passive at his side, and he was in the act of slowly raising it, when a shell from one of the Federal gunboats came shrieking over the water, and burst in the air over him. Instantly his arm fell shattered by his side, and he sank upon the sand. Frederick's shot went harmlessly on its way. Seeing Lovelace fall, he ran to him as quickly as he could, and raised his head from the earth. He was insensible, and the blood flowed freely from his wounds.

Swampsey came up and looked at him coolly.

"Where is your Master Peter?" Frederick asked.

"Up yon at the house," replied the foundling.

While Swampsey was speaking, several shots were heard in the direction of the palmettos.

"Mars'r Peter and Mars'r Martin firin' at the 'Fed'rates," said Swampsey. "Mars'r Peter 'il hit 'em, Mars'r Peter will! Better git 'way, Mars'r Fred. Car' ye off, them yer fighters will. Don't want to car'd off, do ye?"

The grave wisdom of the hero of Alligator Swamp never displayed itself more conspicuously than then.

"If I am carried to the island by those men, I am assuredly lost," said Frederick, thoughtfully.

He looked at the unconscious Lovelace, and added:

"But I must not leave this man. There is yet life in him, and if he dies it shall be through no fault of mine."

"The firin' 's comin' nearer, Mars'r Fred," said Swampsey, warningly.

He was right. The Confederates were, evidently, retreating toward their boat. The young man hesitated no longer, but taking up the body of Lovelace, bore him as fast as he could toward the palmetto grove.

"Wouldn't do that yer!" said Swampsey, not pleased with this act of benevolence. "Had ye shot, if he'd car'd ye over yon. Was goin' to shoot ye hisself when de rotten shot bust."

Without heeding the remonstrances of his

little friend, Frederick carried Lovelace across the shingly beach to the shelter of the palmettos, and placed him carefully at the root of a tree, then dispatched the foundling for Peter Rust.

The Confederate officer began to revive. A thrill of life went over him; he sighed, and and opened languidly his eyes. His gaze rested on Frederick inapprehensively at first, intelligibly anon.

"You still here?" he asked, with considerable effort. "Why do you linger? Leave me, as you value your life."

"Fear not for me," replied Frederick. "Look around you. You are no longer on the beach."

"I am among trees," murmured Lovelace. "You must have brought me here. It was a needless trouble, Mr. North. I care not to live. I would that the hungry sands had drank up life!"

"This is not a fitting frame of mind for a soldier," answered Frederick, gravely. "A soldier should not thus yield to despondency. Nothing is hopeless in the world. There is consolation for all; there is happiness for the miserable; penitence for the erring; pardon for the repentant, and compensation for every suffering."

The wounded man looked steadily at Frederick.

"That is a very good doctrine for those in health and happiness," said the Confederate colonel, with a faint smile. "But your remarks were, in the main, just. It is not manly to whine over disappointments. I condemn as much as you that mock sentiment that is full of cant and drivel. But every man must judge of his own condition, and of his ability to bear it. When I talk of being tired of life, I mean that, no more and no less. Three things disturb me: The loss of fortune; the loss of Milrose; the loss of honor. To these losses I can well afford to add yet another."

He stopped. There was something in his mind that he was reluctant to speak.

"I thought," he resumed, "that I could fight the Yankees with hearty earnestness; but when I beheld the well-known flag flying in the harbor, I felt a tugging at my heart and a choking in my throat."

"I understand you, colonel. I have nothing to say. Your own heart shall be your monitor. Your wounds must be attended to. Your right arms seems badly shattered. This sleeve must come off."

"If I lose but my sleeve, it will be but a trifle," said Lovelace, with a melancholy smile. "However," he went on, "you have proved yourself exceedingly kind, and you shall hear no more murmuring from me. If my wounds are not of too serious a character, I must return to Hilton Head, and take part in the coming

contest. I have put my hand to the plow, and must not look back. The Confederate officers are confident that they can sink the Lincoln fleet in twenty minutes."

"Is this belief prevalent at Forts Walker and Beauregard?" inquired Frederick.

"It is freely talked of, and fully believed in by officers and men," answered Lovelace. "But it is regretted that so many ships of war should be sunk when the new Republic has so much need of them. But I have been too frank. I should remember that we are enemies. Conscience or no conscience, I must be there, providing my injuries permit, and you do not keep me under restraint."

"You will suffer no restraint from me," responded North. "Your wounds, I think, are not so serious as at first seemed probable. My only desire is to be of service to you, and to act, so far as I have power, the part of the good Samaritan. I cannot forget that you relinquished a crushing advantage to fill your word, pledged under entirely different circumstances, and to afford me reparation for supposed injustice. But here come those whose faces are, perhaps, known to you. They will remove you to the house, where your wounds will be properly dressed."

Peter Rust and Martin Broadbent appeared, guided by Swampsey, who moved along before them with as much self-possession as if war and wounds had been his particular business since he was fished out of Alligator Swamp.

Swampsey was none of your common foundlings. He was picked out of the mud, but was never muddled in his ideas, nor disturbed himself greatly about any one save Peter Rust, who was six feet two, and himself just three feet nothing. Gunboats and batteries were to him of no more importance than the tall trees of the Pine Barrens. The biggest Columbiad ever cast was not half so wonderful to him as Peter Rust's double gun.

Peter and Martin took up Lovelace, and carried him carefully to the house; while Frederick thoughtfully followed, Swampsey making remarkably long strides at his side, in an imitative effort to keep pace with him.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### A GROUP ON THE SHORE.

Early the following morning, a boat, containing three persons, touched the island. Those three persons were: Lowenthal, Babel, and Ben Dykes. Like hundreds of others, Lowenthal was desirous of seeing the conflict about to take place between the Confederate forts and the Federal fleets; hence his visit to the island.

The sun was just above the horizon, and the day promised to be unusually fine. The gunboats lay quietly in the harbor; but, with his glass, he could see that the men were astir.

Leaving Ben Dykes to watch the boat, he walked toward the palmetto growth attended by Babel. He loitered among the trees. He sauntered to and fro, thinking of the failure of many of his plans, and querying what influence victory or defeat would exercise upon his fortunes. This was not a cheerful employment, and he often listened for some premonitory gun from ship or shore, that, in the more exciting scene of the fight, his mind might be diverted from personal matters far from pleasant. He could not feel that he had been very successful in his aspirations; he could not count the gains of his intriguing life; he could not reach out his hand and seize the object of his ambition. He had built many castles high in air, which he was never to inhabit. He sighed because he had accomplished so little; because his pathway had been so crooked; because villainy had brought no glad fruition; because dishonesty had been loss, and ambition mockery, and hope delusion.

He thought of the motherless girl, her wealth, her plantation, her negroes, defrauded from her by himself, and conveyed to Markthaler—the keen, the cruel, the pitiless usurer. He knew—how well he knew that he was in the power of that pale-lipped man! He cherished a deadly hatred for the money-lender. He meant to be even with him yet. He would not be taunted and mocked at much longer. He motioned Babel to him. The black giant came and stood before him. The morning sun-rays fell very bright and golden on the sooty face, and the broad chest, and the bare arms of the slave. Those arms were crossed upon his breast; and on one of them the cotton-planter read, with a strange shudder:

BABEL  
1860

It was singular that his eyes should fall on those characters just then, when he was about to confer confidentially with his property. He inwardly cursed the fatality and its prophecy. How should he communicate with this mute creature? He thought of a way. He took out his purse, then feigned to put glasses upon his eyes, and imitated the gait of Markthaler. His dumb devil nodded intelligibly and continuously. Lowenthal knew that the wonderful quickness of the black had caught his meaning. He drew a dagger from his breast, unsheathed it, and holding up the purse, made passes at it with the point. Babel nodded again as apprehensively as before, and pointed to his heart.

"Yes," said Lowenthal, momentarily forgetting the deafness of his slave. "You are to kill him; you are to strike him dead!"

Babel raised his branded arm, and leveled it toward a pathway near at hand. Lowenthal looked: there stood Markthaler and Milrose. The cotton-planter was never more amazed. He did not stir—he did not withdraw his gaze—he was not certain that he could trust his sight



The two advanced—the money-lender and Milrose.

"You informed me, not long since, that you had something to say to this young lady. If you were in earnest, and have not since changed your mind, you can now speak freely."

"Not here," answered Lowenthal, quite confounded. "Let us walk down to the shore. Really, I am confused. Milrose, how do you do, child? What put you to running away? I was infinitely pained by your distrust, my girl. But I shall not scold you. Take my arm."

"Excuse me," said Milrose. "It is enough if I walk near you."

They proceeded toward the shore. As soon as they emerged from the wood, they saw the "Wabash" moving straight on toward Fort Walker, followed in regular order by such of the gunboats as were going into action.

"Milrose," said Lowenthal, sentimentally, "This is destined to be a thrilling day. Before the Lincoln fleet is sent to the bottom, decide one thing for me. The relation that has existed between us has been but a nominal one. No kindred blood flows in our veins. Marry me!"

Milrose stopped; she looked steadily at Lowenthal. The girlish form assumed a dignity that was new to her strange suitor. Incredulity, pride, scorn, and indignation agitated her thoughts. While she stood thus, beautiful and silent, a thunderous roar from the flag-ship shook the island. It was Dupont's first terrific salute. Milrose heeded it not. The audacity of her mother's husband engrossed all her consciousness.

Markthaler placed himself where he could see her face, the other side of Lowenthal, and made earnest signs to her, and Jacob, who had just arrived, repeated them.

"Wait a little," said Milrose, restraining her contempt. "There is one whom you shall consult presently. If that person consents, then you shall hear my sentiments."

Lowenthal thought he saw a glimmering of hope; and he was sure that he saw Frederick North and Angeline approaching. This discovery occasioned him infinite surprise; and he was little pleased with this addition to the party. But other persons were hurrying to the shore, attracted by the roar of artillery; and he trusted that he should escape attention, on account of the thrilling and absorbing interest of the scene in the harbor. He did not feel entirely assured of this, however. He feared that this obnoxious young man would come too near, and, in some manner, cross his purposes. His first apprehension was quite right; for Frederick and Angeline soon added two more to the little group.

"Love o' God, Miss Milly! What ye down here for?" said Angeline. "'Pears like you run away from the house."

Her eyes falling upon Lowenthal at that in-

stant, she recoiled, in the greatest consternation.

"Laws, Miss Milly!" she added, in a suppressed voice. "Tell ye what! I's cl'ar done scared. If Peter or some on 'em don't take ear on us, we'll be toted right back to the plantation. And there's that great silent Babel and Turpentine Ben. Wonder what he wants? Looks glum enough anyways!"

Receiving no answer from Milrose, the girl put her sharp eyes into use, and soon perceived that her mistress was unusually dignified, and that something serious had passed, or was pending, between her and Lowenthal. As for Frederick, he beheld this intruder with astonishment and secret fear. Seeing Milrose, his lingering doubts concerning the identity of the person whom he had encountered in the palmetto-walks, on the previous night, were dispelled. Why had she kept herself aloof, when she, unquestionably, knew that he was on the island? Yes, it was Milrose that he had met, and Peter Rust must have been in the secret of her coming. But he could not understand so much secrecy. New influences must have been brought to bear upon her. Something was in progress that was both mysterious and alarming. Would she notice him now? The question was quickly answered. She turned to him with a kindly smile, and said:

"Good-morning, Mr. North."

"Good-morning, Miss Dorn," answered Frederick, bowing. "Your presence here is quite a surprise to me."

"And my own, no less," interposed Lowenthal, with a frown and a menacing glance.

"And yours, no less!" repeated Frederick, calmly.

"Truly the firing is terrific!" said a voice, which caused the cotton-planter to start as if he had received a blow. Looking over his shoulder, he saw his overseer, Martin Broadbent, who had hastened to the shore to witness the fight. "Verily, the earth shakes beneath us. The slaughter will be great."

"Stand behind me, Jacob," exclaimed Markthaler.

"Stand behind me, Babel," repeated the planter, mockingly. Then, to Frederick: "You are in time, young man, to see the Lincoln fleet sent to the bottom of the sea. By nice calculation, based on infallible data, the Confederate engineers at Fort Walker have arrived at the conclusion that it will take just twenty minutes to sink the Yank *such*."

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

## THE ADJUSTMENT.

The firing was now tremendous. The very air reeled and quivered to the staggering shocks of artillery. Huge volumes of smoke rolled upward. The Federal ships, steaming up the inlet in an ellipse, drifted back slowly by the batteries of Fort Walker, pouring in their broadsides at regular intervals and with thunderous din, formed a magnificent spectacle for the eyes and a dreadful diapason for the ears.

"See!" replied Frederick, with a smile of triumph, pointing with his finger at the "Wabash", which, followed by the smaller gunboats, in splendid order, dropped down out of the fiery circle, unscathed. "Your Confederate engineers will have to make another calculation, sir."

"I know which way your sympathies point," sneered the planter. Then, to Milrose: "Let us move a little apart from these people. This is somewhat too promiscuous a company for you. Besides, Milrose, you have not answered me. Even this grandly-exciting scene cannot make me forget that it is from your lips that I am to hear my destiny."

He pronounced the closing period in a low and tender tone of voice, and offered her his hand to lead her away.

"Excuse me, sir," she answered, coldly. "I can see very well here. This battle, Mr. Lowenthal, absorbs every faculty of my mind. It is terribly sublime! Do not speak to me."

The cotton-planter bit his lips, and remained silent.

While all were straining their eyes toward Hilton Head, and watching the magnificent evolutions of the gunboats, Markthaler and Jacob slipped away, unobserved. No one saw Markthaler and Jacob come back; but, after a little time, Frederick saw Jacob quietly approach Milrose. He whispered to Angeline, who whispered to her mistress. The latter smiled, and made an affirmative motion of the head. Frederick now perceived that the tall lady whom he had seen walking with Milrose was standing near the group. She approached Milrose she took her hand; she partially removed the thick veil that concealed her features, and regarded her with fixed attention. The young man observed this, and thought there was much tenderness in her eyes. But there was something singularly striking about her face that greatly excited his curiosity.

Milrose turned to Lowenthal; her companion and herself confronted him. Babel and Jacob moved up a little closer to the central figures of the group; while the Quaker, with his arms sedately folded upon his breast, watched the grand naval drama with an intensity that was quite apparent in his expression. Swampsey was near at hand, ready to serve capers at the shortest notice. The "Wabash" seemed to have particular importance in his eyes; and

whenever she fired a broadside, he threw a double-shotted somerset.

"The person whom I informed you should answer your question," said Milrose, speaking with firmness, "is now before you."

"I care nothing for the opinions of others," answered the cotton-planter. "It is your own decision that I wish to hear."

"She will speak my decision with equal certainty," responded Milrose.

"The views of your friends," said Lowenthal, coldly, scarcely deigning to notice the veiled lady, "as I have just stated, are not of the slightest consequence. If your own heart favors my suit, the consent or refusal of others will not affect my happiness."

He paused, and ran his eyes contemptuously over the woman.

"But who is this person so highly honored with your confidence?" he added. "Is it one who has any claim to guide your movements? Have you reposed in her the right to dispose of your person at will? I so, I must hear her, from sheer necessity."

"Laws, Miss Milly!" interposed Angeline, in a whisper. "You don't mean to marry him, anyways!"

"Out of the way!" exclaimed Lowenthal, sternly. "When your mistress needs your advice, she will ask for it."

"Pears like she don't want to be shut up in a construction in the top of the house!" retorted Angeline, with spirit.

Lowenthal was confused. He was angry, and he tried to conceal both his anger and his confusion; but the concealment was so imperfect that no one was deceived.

He bit his lips, and said, with assumed tranquillity:

"You should teach your maid reverence, Milrose."

"Verily, this forwardness cometh of the admixture of the white and chattel races," remarked Martin, making himself a party to the conversation. "Truly the negro may be subject unto man; but their blood should be kept sacredly separate. The black Saxon, friend Lowenthal, must not know too much. To know how to cultivate cotton and to know obedience is enough for the slave. Now this girl" (he pointed to Angeline) "hath a skin as white as thine, and thou seest what mischief comes of it. I'll warrant she has watched thy doings well. If thou hast had secrets in thy house, she hath discovered them. Verily, she hath just spoken of a prison constructed in thy dwelling for the incarceration of a member of thy household."

Martin looked very serene; but Frederick thought his eyes blazed up a little brighter than usual.

The cotton-planter stared at him, and his face flushed.

"Mr. Broadbent," he stammered, "your serv-

ices, I believe, are not required here. When I want your opinions, I will ask them at the plantation."

"Truly, friend Roscoe, thou art right. The privilege is thine to build a prison in which to restrain the liberty of whom thou wilt, and to marry the girl called Milrose—whose surname is Dorn—even as it is my privilege to lash, gash, mince, macerate, whip, scourge, flagellate, castigate, and mutilate my black lambs! Truly, I know my business! The whip is the school-master of the negro; it humbles, it educates, it saves, it subjugates him to man. Cotton is King—a purple and bloody king. Yonder thunderous artillery at Hilton Head is to prove to the world that Cotton is King. There could be no king if there were no cotton; and if there were no negroes, there could be no cotton. Verily, friend Roscoe, let us shout, with a loud voice: 'Long live Cotton! long live the Black Saxons!' Pardon this interruption, friend planter, and go straight on with thy wooing. Be not vexed at the volubility of a simple Quaker overseer, whose tongue goeth faster than his lash."

By this time, Lowenthal's lips were purple with wrath. He was thrown into surprise, doubt, and confusion. With all his powers of dissimulation and self-possession, he was at a loss how to answer Martin. With a tremor of guilty fear, he began to see what a man he had about him in Martin Broadbent. While he stood, inwardly debating, and trying to put his thoughts together in a way to relieve him of this unexpected embarrassment, the tall veiled lady said:

"If I understand you rightly, Roscoe Lowenthal, you wish to marry this young lady?"

"Nothing can be clearer than your understanding, in this instance," replied Lowenthal, curtly. "But be good enough, madam, to speak in a lower tone of voice, as, by some strange coincidence—he shrugged his shoulders, and looked around uneasily—"we seem to be the centre of a group of curious persons, whom I could heartily wish a thousand miles distant. The devil knows how they came here!"

The planter scowled most ungraciously for one who was expecting a gracious answer.

"You wish to marry your step-daughter?" continued the lady, in a clear, calm tone.

"Miss Dorn knows my wishes," answered Lowenthal, haughtily.

"And I know them, too!" the lady exclaimed. "Thank God! they will never be gratified. You can neither have her person nor her fortune. She knows you, and knows you thoroughly. Your cunning has been met with cunning, and I will bring you plot for plot. Your transactions with Markthaler are known to Milrose and to me. Your villainy has reached its culminating point. Henceforth your way is downward. The estate you have called yours, and which you have fraudulently mortgaged to the money-lender, will never receive you as its

master again. Like Cain, you will go forth to meet your punishment."

By an unaccountable fatality, the cotton-planter saw the black giant's naked arm, and words,

BABEL,  
1860.

stared him in the face.

"I will say little of that room where Peter Rust was shot, and where he was compelled to labor. This girl's life was in danger. Crime was in your heart; you had taken it to be a companion for your other vices. She was to be immured in that chamber, and had not your wickedness been checked, Heaven alone knows how tragic might have been her fate."

Lowenthal stood aghast with amazement.

"Who—who are you?" he gasped.

The lady quietly threw back her veil, and revealed a pale, yet dignified face.

"Look and see who I am, Roscoe Lowenthal!" she exclaimed, without losing command of voice and expression for one instant.

Lowenthal staggered backward, putting out his hands wildly, as if to keep her at a distance.

"Woman or devil, begone!" he cried, while terror and incredulity were depicted upon his countenance.

"Nay, it is you who must begone," said the woman, in a firm and steady voice.

"You are my wife or Satan!" exclaimed Lowenthal, greatly disturbed by fear and doubt.

"I am a creature of flesh and blood, and the unhappy woman you once called wife," resumed the lady. "I was not lost at sea, as reported, but was providentially saved from the wreck without personal loss. I availed myself of the rumor of my death, however, to break a union that was hateful to me. But I have not been far from you. I have watched over my daughter, and I have had, continually, a spy near your person to watch you, and he has been faithful to his trust."

The lady glanced at Babel.

"I shall not inform you who that spy was," she added, "but you will learn soon enough—too soon, perchance."

"Markthaler has betrayed me!" muttered Lowenthal, whose terrors now took a new direction. "He is a fool who trusts in usurers! All this seems incredible!"

Lowenthal suffered the keenest tortures of disappointed ambition and thwarted villainy. His soul was agitated like the sea; it fluctuated this way and that; its dark billows rolled to and fro. He was tantalized by anger and terror. He saw himself ruined and expelled from his fancied paradise, humiliated and disgraced. This woman, his wife, had been more adroit in her overwatching benevolence than he in his wickedness.

"Markthaler," repeated Mrs. Lowenthal,

"has betrayed you. I have in my possession all the papers and valuables that he has received from you from time to time, as securities on sums of money advanced."

"All?" articulated Lowenthal, faintly. "All!" reiterated Milrose's mother. "And now, sir," she added, with a glow of indication, "I think you understand why I can answer for Milrose. I, myself, am an answer to your presumptuous query—an answer so irrevocable that nothing can soften or mitigate it, or make it mean anything but 'No!' now and forever! Go, sir, and hide your head in some place so remote that I may never hear of you more. Go, before I let loose upon you the penalties of the law; or, if law has ceased to exist in South Carolina, before I expose your frauds, forgeries, and crimes to all who know you."

At that moment Peter Rust approached, and pushing through the group of persons that surrounded Lowenthal, quietly presented himself before him. The effect of his appearance was instantaneous and palpable. He recoiled, and trembled violently. For the first time in his life he experienced feelings of real horror. For a short space he ceased to hear the continuous thunder of ship and battery.

"Thought I's planted in the Pine Barrens, I guess!" said Peter, somewhat savagely. "But I ain't uncommon easy to be put out of the way. It takes a lot o' lead to git me down and make me stay down. Fly up like a kickin' horse, I do. Don't want no greasy mechanical skill jest at this time, do ye? Allers can be relied on, Peter of the Pines can. I hope that prison consarn is in fast-rate order! Pity you didn't git the young woman into it. Once fastened up there, without nobody's knowin' it, you might a had unlimited control of all her property, and no marryin', neither."

While making this harangue, Peter Rust did not once remove his eyes from the face of the planter, whose consternation gradually yielded to more natural emotions, till terror and rage were about equally mingled.

"I thought you were dead!" he muttered.

"Not if I know myself," quoth Peter. "Not if I know myself, I ain't dead."

The still-hunter frowned, and looked wishfully at his double-gun. Swampsey, at that moment, perceived that it was highly proper for him to throw a double somersault, and threw it with neatness and dispatch.

"Duped by one, duped by all!" cried Lowenthal, hopelessly.

"The friends of the wicked are never to be trusted," said the wife of Lowenthal.

"Markthaler shall suffer for this!" hissed the planter. "He shall perish—he shall die ignominiously."

"I will show you Markthaler," answered the lady, quietly, making a gesture to Jacob, who approached and gave her a small package. Un-

doing the package, she took from it a gray wig, a long white beard, and a pair of green spectacles, which she adjusted to her head and to her face with a coolness and graceful self-possession that were quite wonderful. Lowenthal was too much astounded to speak. Before him was the pale visage of Markthaler, the money-lender, perfect in similitude, and identical beyond peradventure.

"Love o' God!" exclaimed Angeline. "Pears like, that money-man was a woman, after all. Never see sich contraptions as them be, anyways! If I was sick abed, and was down with the measles, and wasn't very well myself, and wasn't expected to live, and was give up by the doctors, and I had broke down under calamy and bloo pills, I'd say, with my respirin' breath, that I never see a nat'ral-born lady metamortgaged like this, noways!"

Just at that juncture Ben-Dykes pushed himself through the circle, and thrusting his unkempt head under Jacob's arm, and turning it so as to command a full view of the gray wig, and white whiskers, and green spectacles, said, in the most ingenuous manner: "Goddlemity!"

This was, with Dykes, a simple expression, meaning a great deal of surprise and other things.

"Look out; there's a trap-door open!" said Peter Rust, warningly.

"No more a trap-door nor your own bread-trap!" retorted Ben. "Allers in my mouth, that Northern critter is: Everybody's in't. Nobody can keep out on't."

Ben looked about with an aggrieved air.

"Better let it for a floatin' hospital," suggested Peter, "or a row o' horse-sheds. It would keep a heap o' poor animals out o' the rain. It's a nat'ral curiosity, if ever there was a curiosity in the world."

"A most foul conspiracy!" murmured Lowenthal, pressing his hands to his brow. "You are all leagued against me. I have been most damnably duped!"

He was hastening away, when Martin Broadbent touched his arm, and asked:

"Hast thou no parting word for me, friend Roscoe? Have I lashed and gashed, minced and macerated all in vain? Shall not castigation, flagellation, and mutilation have their exceeding great reward?"

Lowenthal was forced to stop and hear the valedictory of his overseer. He stared at the Quaker like one in a trance. Had not so many people been around him, he would have drawn a weapon and laid him dead at his feet.

"Ela! Ela!" cried Martin.

The planter started at the name.

"Ela," repeated Martin, "approach and pay your respects to this chivalrous gentleman. Perhaps thou wouldst like to inquire after his housekeeping, and concerning the health of his favorite dogs."

Immediately Ela appeared, and stood before Lowenthal.

"Behold thy chattel," said Martin, struggling manfully with the stern emotions that shook him. "I have held my temper, and been patient with thee," he went on. "Verily, at times it hath been hard work to restrain the wrath of man, and make it subservient to reason. If the slaves remain at the plantations, it will not be through fear of the whip or affection for thee, but from love of thy step-daughter, Milrose Dorn, and through advice by me. Look! the rebel rag no longer floats over Fort Walker. The Stars and the Stripes wave there. The Black Institution will be in motion before to-morrow's sun. The chattels will go and come as they please; they will flow into the Federal camp in dark streams."

He paused, then added, pointing to the Island. "See the Confederates fly! They die not in the last ditch, as they swore to perish. It troubles them to find the last ditch. Observe that the negroes on the house-tops and eminences do not run. But sufficient of this. I have done. Look at this young girl whom thou hast wronged, and go thy way. The time is near when her young face will rise in judgment against thee. I could find it in my heart to read thee in pieces; but I am a follower, though afar off, of the Prince of Peace, and his sublime teachings stay my hand. Go, unsmitten by me, with all thy sins upon thy head, God will find the instrument of thy punishment, and that soon."

By a most unaccountable fatality, Babel again stood in the planter's way, and "BABEL, 1860," obstructed upon his view, and the characters composing the name and date seemed to have sunk deeper into the black muscles.

Lowenthal strode suddenly down to the water, followed by the mute giant. Presently, Frederick saw them both embark in a boat. Babel grasped the oars, and after rowing a short distance toward Hilton Head, changed the course of the boat, and headed it to sea. Frederick drew near to Milrose, and taking her unresisting hand, watched, with a kind of fascination, the direction of the little vessel. When he was far out, so that his form was scarcely discernible through a glass, the boat stopped, and they saw him raise a dark body above his head and cast it from him into the sea. Milrose shuddered and trembled, while the tall lady grew pale and faint. The girl called Ela looked away, and stood a moment with her head resting on Martin's arm. Even Ben Dykes, Ben Dykes the dog-trainer, Ben Dykes of the turpentine woods, had a vague idea that something terrible was transpiring, and walked uneasily about, throwing anxious glances now at

sea, now at Hilton Head; now at Peter Rust. The old flag flaunted above Fort Walker. Some deafening cheers came over the water from the ships. The smoke of battle gradually lifted. The thunder of the guns ceased. Port Royal was ours, and the way was opened to the heart of South Carolina. And the heart of Milrose was open to Frederick; and smiling and trembling, he passed in to inhabit the charmed citadel. Hand in hand they walked toward the palmetto trees, and Milrose's mother said "Yes", and Milrose looked "Yes". And so it was settled, and in low voices they talked over the events of this reliable history.

By some strange, magnetic sympathy, Ela was wondrously kind to Martin, who thought there was never such an island in the world as that island. So it appeared that these two had agreed upon something that was mutually pleasant.

Swampsey executed a somerset. Angeline, for her part, was glad that "contraptions" and "constructions" had fallen through and "wasn't of no 'count, anyways." Peter Rust shook hands with his friends, and congratulating them in a few honest words, took a boat and crossed over to Hilton Head. Ben Dykes waited a long time for Babel to return, but the black not coming back, he disappeared from the shore, and Frederick saw him no more.

On the following day, all the parties in whom the reader is interested, except Peter Rust and Swampsey, were taken aboard the flag-ship "Wabash", where, I am sure, we shall be willing to leave them in the gallant keeping of Commodore Dupont. When last heard from, both Frederick and Martin had accepted commissions in the Federal army, and were in a fair way of promotion. Peter's knowledge was too valuable to be lost to the country; and since the bombardment of Hilton Head he has been most usefully employed in secret service, the faithful Swampsey continually attending him on his dangerous expeditions. The yellow Hyperion is with his mistress at the plantation near the Pine Barrens, as devoted as ever. Mrs. Lowenthal recovered most of her property, and as incredible as it may seem, her chattels were so attached to her, that the greater part of them remained. In every emergency she still says, with unabated confidence: "Stand behind me, Jacob!"

It is believed that a double wedding will soon take place at the Lowenthal mansion, and that Peter Rust and Swampsey will be there. It is hoped that the latter will supply them with an abundance of somersets. We leave Milrose and Ela with nine prolonged and hearty cheers for the Union.

[THE END.]

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