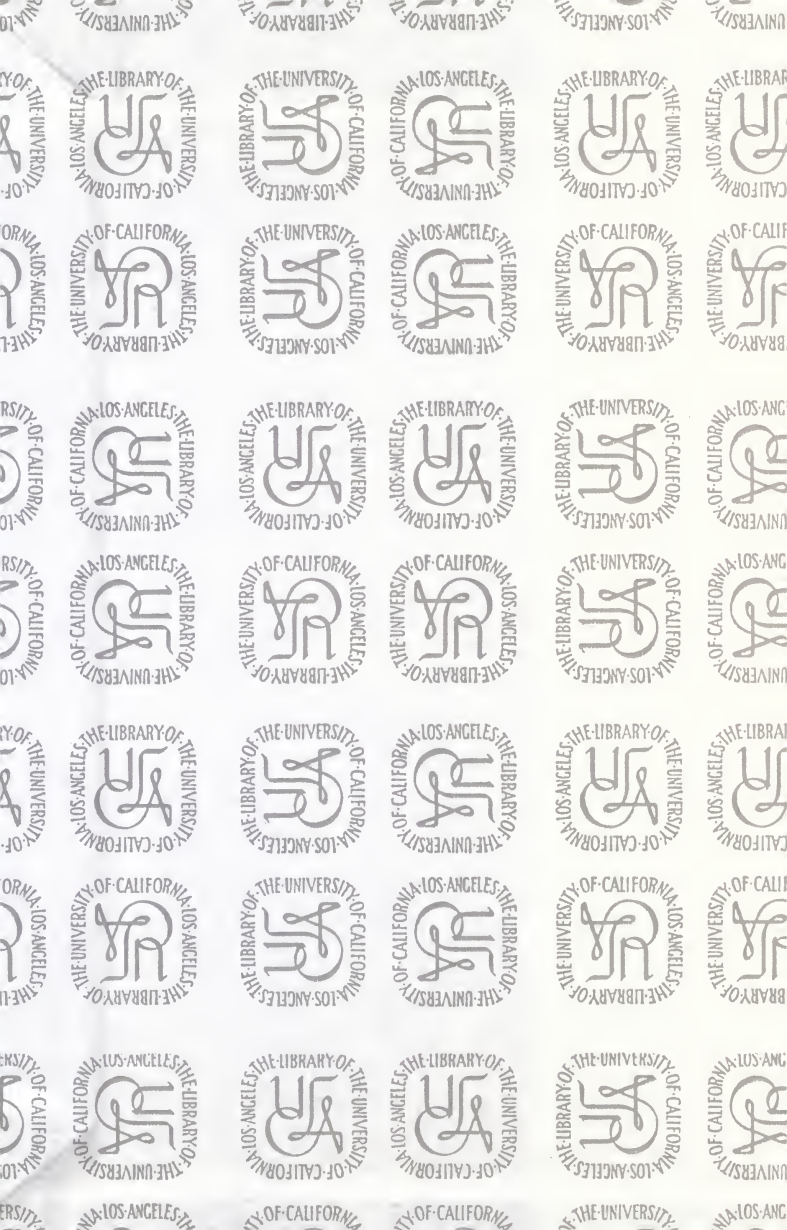
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ADAM SHUFFLER,

BY

S. A. BEADLE.

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DEDICATION.

IN the course of life it sometimes happens that one meets with a stalwart fellow pilgrim who is so congenial, obliging and agreeable; so considerate of your personal welfare and general good; one that is so gracious and kind that his devotion, rising above the meaner passions of mankind—malice and hate—lifts the pack from your shoulders; and, with your burden upon his own, divides the vicissitudes of the journey with you. In the evolution of an inferior people, the same often occurs; and I but assert a simple truth when I say that the education of the Negro in the South is fostered and maintained by such a spirit.

And if, in the dedication of a book, the author should remember the patron who has made the publication of it possible, I know of nothing more worthy than that philanthropic public spirit which has built a school-house and a church on every hill-top, so to speak, in our sunny clime.

To this spirit I sincerely dedicate this unworthy atom of my regard and say, "Thanks."

THE AUTHOR.

CONTENTS.

PREFACE.

Again I come to the point where composition is painful to me and tedious to you; for, so I take it, he who presents his children to strangers is expected to show pride in the introduction. How painful it must be when the stranger knows that the doting parent is covering the deformity of his child with artistic and gaudy apparel from the wardrobe of fashion.

Truly, I would not write a preface were it not fashionable to do so.

Since I am at it, let me fancy that I am as consistent as the mother who, holding up her six-weeks-old baby in the presence of her husband, says to his friend: "Ain't he sweet and beautiful? Just like his papa, so everybody says."

You were worthy of the contempt of every mother in christendom, if you did not appreciate the situation and say, "The child is indeed lovely," although you knew that the hunchback father and club-footed baby were not models of beauty.

However much deformed these children of my fancy are, I part with them with a shudder and a pang, especially so when I remember the little pleasantries and fond ties which have bound me to them are soon to be severed forever and their privacy invaded by critics.

Excuse my emotion! It is no easy thing, this leave-taking of the children of my fancy. They have been with me so long—I have learned to love them so! They are such beautiful things, these conceptions of my brain—so much like living, human beings they seem—so much a part of me—so wayward, frail and mean, that I shudder when I think of their pilgrimage and the stern, cold, relentless world through which they are to take their course.

They were created for amusement, and if they do not make you smile then they are miserable failures; and I hope they will have the common sense to shake the dust of your house from their heels and pass on to more congenial climes and people more jovial.

Should they, Aunt Ellen, Peter Snelling, Ike Stubbs, Hager, and the gentleman who forgot his head, pretend to have extraordinary powers, you must not be deceived, for they are but children of the hovel —and a Negro hovel at that.

These are simple stories of Negro life, written for the amusement of my friends; and if they in any way add to your pleasure, I shall feel myself amply paid for my endeavor.

With your pleasure ever uppermost in my mind, I am,

Yours truly,

SAMUEL ALFRED BEADLE,

No. 727 West Pearl Street,

Jackson, Mississippi.

SAMUEL ALFRED BEADLE.

Molasses Cured Ham.

Molasses Cured Ham.

I WAS passing Mr. James Head's barber shop, which is near the dining-rooms of Dudley Stewart, when I heard an animated discussion over the curing of ham.

Mr. Head's shop is a place of artistic beauty. From the oil-cloth floor to the frescoed ceiling, novelty is its absorbing feature. It is said that the chairs of this shop are enchanted; that no sooner do you touch them and feel the edge of the razors of the place upou your throat than you fall into seductive slumbers, the dreams of which are so delightful that those of the opium-eater, in comparison, are mere traditions.

Pardon me; it is not my purpose to advertise a barber shop, nor to give you an analogy of Dudley Stewart's dining-rooms. They are, however, universally known as the "Palace Dining-Rooms." Why, I know not, for they are the reverse of the shop in appearance, with dingy walls, cob-webbed ceilings

and greasy floors. The only redeemable feature of the place is the way they cook and serve ham there.

It is said by those who are in the position to know that there is no taste, however refined, that can reject the viands cooked there; and this, no doubt, accounts for its name.

It was the hour of the evening meal, and a delightful odor from a savory ham came up from the "Palace Dining-Rooms," which caused Ned to remark:

"Som'uns sure foolin' wid de cul'nary art in de Palace Joe."

"That is a *prima facie* fact, Ned."

"Come, now, whar you done got dem big words?"

"I have been to college, Ned."

"Ter what?"

"College."

"Does dey teach you ter cook dar?"

"Not where I went; but, I am told, at Tuskegee and Hampton they do."

"Den I's gwan dar en take er degree. I knows how ter cure hams an' ken tell one ez fur ez I ken smell it. Dat am er sugar cured one dat am 'fumin' de Palace.?'

"You are at error, now, friend. There is no such thing as sugar cured ham; that's a misnomer. The thing you are speaking of might with as much appropriateness be called an ice cured ham."

"Go 'long dar, nigger; don't yer 'spute my word."

Upon this Ned began to walk the floor of the shop and to disclose his knowledge of hams vehemently. This gathered a crowd, and the discussion became general.

About this time Uncle Philip, a superannuated preacher of the Baptist persuasion, came along, and the loquacious contestants submitted their contention to him.

He accorded Ned the floor, who went on with his speech, all of which I did not hear; but I remember hearing him say there was an affinity between salt and sugar. Continuing, he said:

"Ter prove ter yer de truth uv my remarks, yer jist tase some salt an' some sugar, fuss one an' den de odder, three or four times, an' ter save yer life yer can't tell which is which."

He concluded and Joe began his learned remarks, which, because of his college training, were very luminous—so much so, that I could not follow him through the ancient lore with which he was pleased to favor us. Uncle Philip, however, listened to him with as much decorum as if he had been the great Blackstone himself.

When they had finished, he, cognizant of the propriety of judicial delays, adjusted his spectacles, rubbed his hands and said:

"Gentlemuns, fur de purpose uv 'vestigatin' de 'finity 'twixt sugar an' salt, I takes dis case under 'visement tell turmorrow evenin'; meanwhile, de court would thank yer fur any 'thority yer can show on de pints at issue."

So saying, the old gentleman retired with the affinity between salt and sugar perplexing his simple mind.

Uncle Phillip's home was, from this time on, the center of attraction; and on the fourth of July, 1888, it was crowded with gay and mirthful visitors who had come to hear his opinion.

Some of the young people made for him a bench out of an old willow chair, which they decorated with lace and ribbons and placed in the middle of the floor. He wore his honors easy and was the conspicuous figure in a little knot of admirers who gathered around him in another part of the room. He was a fine old man. Many said they never knew him to have looked better. The gray hair circling the base of his otherwise ball pate, his intelligent appearance, the neatness of his apparel, together with the spirit with which he entered the sports of the young, marked him as the venerable old man grown courteous with age.

Promptly at nine o'clock he ascended the bench and began to hand down his opinion, which, as well as I can remember, was in these words:

"Gentlemen, de court wants to 'gratulate Brudder Ned on his fine 'zernment and many pints. He argufies well; but it takes salt ter save meat. However, ef he had er said *'lasses* 'stead uv *sugar*, de court would be forced ter make er dif'rent rulin'; 'kase while looking fur his 'finity 'twixt salt an' sugar, de court found dat by de aid uv er little 'lasses de 'mount uv salt it takes ter cure meat can be greatly 'duced, de meat gibben er rich, red color, its sweetness creased and de meat thurlee cured in erbout three hours."

Then, stretching out one hand, as if in blessing, and putting the other over his heart he said:

"It pains me here dat I has not er fresh ham wid which ter show yer de secret uv dis important diskivery."

This closed the matter, and the company, with the exception of Ned, retired. After the crowd had gone he came forward and pressed the old man to give him the secret of "Molasses Cured Ham," which he consented to do if Ned would secure him a nice, fresh one; upon which he hurried home and slipped in through the unbarred window, so as not to wake his wife, and took a dollar from the little sum she had been saving to purchase a mandolin. With this sum he went directly to the market place. Luckily for him, he found the butcher in, cutting steak for a few early callers. He purchased a ham,

and hurrying off with it, he soon reached Uncle Phillip's home and presented it to him in triumph. The old gentleman, blandly smiling, thanked him, and in a smooth little speech praised his perseverance; after this he covered the ham with salt, poured over it a quart of molasses, placed it in a pan, and set it aside, as he said, "ter mellow."

It was now about three o'clock in the morning, and they retired, to dream, no doubt, of the highly flavored essence of molasses cured ham.

Before going to sleep, however, Uncle Phillip called his wife and said:

"'Lizer, yer'll find er ham in de dish-pan; cook it whole fur brekfus."

About a half hour later the good woman rose and began to prepare the ham. Washing off the molasses she placed it in the stove to bake, and sat there watching and mopping it with a sauce of salt-pepper and vinegar.

The hours glided unobservedly by till the sun brought up one of those delightful mornings, with the wind blowing a gale from southern fields, laden with the melody of singing birds and humming bees, and fragrant with the odor of ever-blooming flowers, a a morning full of life and joyous concord, so much so, that Aunt Eliza, intoxicated with its loveliness and the prospects of a palatable breakfast, drifted una-

"THEN THEY SAT DOWN TO BREAKFAST."

wares into its harmony, and went about tidying up her house, and singing:

"Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' ter carry me home,
Swing low, sweet chariot, comin' ter carry me home."

Presently the crisped skin and delightful odor of roasted pork reminded her that the ham was done, and after fixing everything for breakfast she arranged her toilet, which was so prim and neat that there was nothing about it to remind one of her anté bellum rearing, save the bandanna handerchief wound about her head, from under which a few gray hairs straying along her temples gave her a matronly appearance that was graceful.

This done she went quietly to the bed, and bending over it, touched the parson and he awoke. Rubbing his eyes, he looked up at her admiringly. How like an angel she seemed, as a sunbeam, struggling through a crevice in the wall, fell across her face. Smiling upon him, she said: "I's got it ready Phil."

He rose, dressed himself hurriedly and went to breakfast with a bible in his hands, from which he read the LI Psalm and prayed. Then they sat down to their morning meal. The flavor of the ham sharpened their appetites; but it was too hot to eat, so they sipped their coffee and waited for it to cool, laughing and talking the while of other times when ham with them was not a rarity.

Meanwhile Ned's wife discovered her loss and accused him of its theft, which he confessed. To say she was angry is putting it mildly; but he quieted her by telling her that if he succeeded in learning something new about hams, he would be made head cook of the palace Dining Rooms, with a salary large enough to buy her a dozen mandolins; but he would buy her a new piano the first thing.

"My! What a flight one's fancy takes when it springs from the hopes of him we love, and Ned's wife was no exception to the rule, when she caught images of herself seated at an upright piano, in a corner of their one room palace singing "Home sweet home."

She was persuaded, and, with her husband, she walked over to Uncle Philip's, Ned dreaming of being made head cook of the Palace Dining-Rooms the while and she, queening it at an upright piano. In the midst of their illusion they arrived at the house of the parson and rapped lightly on the door. Aunt Eliza answered the call and led them back to the kitchen, which served as dining-room also, where the old gentleman was at breakfast, and upon which he was so absorbed that he had not missed his wife, neither had he observed her return with the company; but, thinking her still there, he said:

"Ah, 'Lizer, dis am rich! Yer'll haf ter thank dat youngster's cur'osity fur it."

Ned's wife understood him thoroughly, and, giving Ned a pitiless look of scorn, she exclaimed .

"Duped by dat villun!" and, springing toward the table in a fit of frenzy, she seized the ham and threw it out into the yard, where old Towser, the house dog, lay. He grabbed it and ran off. Ned stammered out a protest, and Uncle Philip replied :

"Why, my son, yer never tuck me serious, did yer?"

It was many a day before Ned could look his wife in the face, and when he did she hissed between her teeth: "Molasses Cured Ham."

April Fool.

April Fool.

WHEN it comes to fiction, Ernest Jones, of Estell, Mississippi, is an artist with decided advantage over any one I ever knew. He has clear conception, vivid imagination, easy expression and descriptive faculties that are wonderful. In fact, he is a genius with great concentrative powers. Perhaps his greatness lies in his patience; for it is said he never considers a story complete till he has gone over it many times—fifty or more, perhaps.

It was not in the nature of things for one so gifted to remain unknown to Fame, although he might be spurned by Fortune, and I am but telling a simple truth when I say to you he was familiarly and favorably known to every intelligent person in the State, and that his wise and witty sayings passed among the common people as proverbs. I remember with pleasure the force with which one of his quaint sayings struck me. It was this: "Ignorance is not

the source of all misery, nor knowledge the source of all joy."

This and many other of his sayings interested me to such an extent, that I traveled five hundred miles to see him; and, as I had not the means with which to pay the common carriers for my passage, I performed the journey a-foot. In common language, tramped it.

I arrived at his home before sunrise April the first, 1870. I found him at breakfast. He was an old man, but wore his seventy summers with that ease and grace which bespoke him not more than fifty years of age. I felt at ease under the hearty welcome he gave me, and we became friends on the spot.

His good wife was a being of loveliness, who had cultivated the virtues of hospitality for sixty years, and yet there was not a mark upon her features to trace the ravages of time, save the gray hairs that strayed along her temples from under her sun-bonnet. Smiling benignly upon me, her attention could not have been more motherly if I had been her only son returned from a long season of prodigality. While I was washing the dust from my person, she prepared me a dainty little repast the President might envy.

You must pardon me if I pause to speak of that breakfast. How can I forget the china bowl, with its pure Jersey milk, the plate of honey, bunch of grapes and loaf of pure, sweet bread of that good woman's

own kneading—all placed on a table whose white cover rivaled the beautiful fabric of Irish damask? This, with an odorous bunch of violets in an urn near by, gave the place a cheerfulness I shall never forget. My appetite improved as I ate, and, while I was being refreshed, the old gentleman was preparing for my further entertainment in a novel way. To be brief, he had arranged to show me the lady of the flowers at her baths.

My curiosity grew ungovernable with the expectancy of so fair a scene. I blush to say so, but it is true; and, since truth is the essence of goodness, you will excuse me. Because of the fervency of my desire, the old gentleman led me forth as soon as the meal was over. He, leaning on his cane, and I, walking erect, went down a long lane, at the end of which there ran a brook of clear, cold water, and along its border a meadow stretched out before us, while to the left of the road and somewhat above us, there stood a water-mill with its large wheel turning slowly over. Here we lingered, listening to the murmuring water falling among the stones below, till he, all of a sudden, raised his head and said:

"Hush! Listen! Don't you hear her bathing in the mill pond? See! This is where she unrobed herself." And, pointing to the earth, he showed me where she, in untying her apron strings, dropped daisies in the grass; and then to the maple trees,

where she hung her emerald robes; and further on where, in shaking her head, the dog-wood blossoms, which graced her hair, were scattered in the air.

Hurriedly we ran to the mill pond and gazed into the placid water; but saw nothing but a school of minnows that went gamboling on its brilliant sheen.

Then I turned and looked wistfully into the old man's face, and he cried:

"April fool! I meant to show you the beauty of our vernal scenery, with the dew upon it!"

The Reminiscenses of the Flask.

The Reminiscenses of the Flask.

MANY years ago a friend of mine gave me a flask of pure extract of grapes. About four o'clock in the afternoon of the memorable day I placed the flask on my table; and began arranging my toilet for the most enjoyable event of my humble existence. It was my wedding day. I was to have led my ideal woman to the alter, and then gone on through life in pursuit of happiness.

Having dressed myself, I turned to my companion, the flask, and found in it a hideous wine colored serpent. My first impulse was to bruise its head, and to this end I struck it several blows on the neck, but to no purpose. It grew to enormous proportions, coiled itself about my legs and buried its deadly fangs into my throat. Thus entangled in the coils of the demon; for such it really was, I fell prostrate on the floor of my room, and lay there for a long time; so long that my bride despaired of me and died of a broken heart.

I have made innumerable attempts to destroy that serpent, always with the same result. It still lives. At last I gave up to it. Then it took up its abode in my raiments, and devoured them. It began on my pantaloons, and ate them away. Then it attacked my coat, my hat, my vest, my shoes; In short everything I wore, but my shirt, this it creeped over and left its slime upon. Under these depravations my costume took on a hideous aspect. I became its most abject slave; and its imperial excellency demanded of me a most humiliating service.

On its great parade days I had to stand around in conspicuous places, dressed in the scraps of garments upon which it had made its meals; with my shoes turned in opposite directions, my hands thrust into my pockets, my tattered coat hanging awry from my shoulders, my crownless hat pulled over my eyes, and its envenomed slime dripping from my napped and unkept beard.

At one time I was a respected pastor of Grand Avenue Church; that serpent took a liking to it, and began to gnaw away the pews, the floors, the walls, the roof, and ate them all. Then it began on my *bible* and stopped not till it had swallowed the sacred *Scriptures*; these gone, it estranged my friends. I was now left alone with it and for other companions of whom you will learn more as you read.

One day I roamed about without it. To my

great surprise I had lost it, or rather it had lost me. I blush to say so ; but it is too true, I was ill at ease, sorely troubled over my loss, believe me, long as sociation with even a viper makes its presence a pleasure ; and its absence misery. I began to search for it. Here, there, everywhere I sought the accursed thing. I found it at last in a corner swallowing my pocket-book. For this ingratitude it seemed ashamed and crawled down a crevice in scarlet earth.

I returned to my room and found that the flask had found a voice. No sooner had I entered than it began to go over its history, which in many respects resembles mine. The comparison was so identical that I flew into a passion and smashed it to atoms. Imagine my surprise to find it serenely smiling on my table a few hours afterward. I have done many things to suppress it ; filled it with gold and threw it into the sea ; and many other things equally as destructive ; and yet the thing survives.

I guess you would call this the survival of the fittest ; truly, to me, it is the pre-eminence of the flask. I am ahead of my story. I would have you hear the *Reminiscense of the Flask.* It still occupies its place on my table and yields to nothing but a cork-screw. Shall I draw the cork? Your silence consenting I draw it. This done the flask began its discourse, as follows:

"Once upon a time I took it into my head to

make a pilgrimage of the world. I wanted to do it in a way that was novel and romantic. So I cut my retinue down to such a number, as is consistent with he times and age in which we live.

"All things decided on, I walked out one fine morning to take a last view of my early home; and to say adieu to early friends. As I walked along Noval Avenue I met Philip Debauchee, Willie Rawdydaw, Elbert Bacchanal and Minnie Chatterbox. They were, at the time, strangers to me; but being congenial spirits we were soon fast friends. Minnie was the conversationalist of the gay company; and I walked along the Avenue with her, admiring her gay and gaudy clothing, airy manners and flights of witty sayings, of nonsensical things.

I told her of my intentions, and that ere long I would be far away, on the trackless billows of the relentless deep. She informed her companions of my resolve; and they implored me to allow them to accompany me. I listened to their importunities and it is needless to say they composed my retinue.

"We procured a nice little yacht, "The White Swan," and renamed it Rawanaw; and after painting it a bright crimson, we tore away its white sails, and replaced them with wine-colored ones. We then made up a cargo of such necessaries as we thought we needed, and on the 24th day of February A. D. 1872,

"I WALKED ALONG THE AVENUE WITH HER."

our little vessel sailed out to sea. The day was a beautiful one indeed.

> Fair day disclosing sceneries bright,
> From early dawn till night came on,
> Beaming upon my raptured sight—
> But thou art gone! But thou art gone!

"The southern sun swung upward and touched the gates of heaven. They stood ajar; and I saw, or fancied that I did, the angels rush out to take our bearings. They hovered on the crest of a white cloud which drifted over us, as we cast about for our course. This found, they wafted us a long farewell and swept back to the gates of heaven. One of them lingered longer than the rest, and fixing an anxious look on me, she with her index finger pointed upward and vanished. I knew her well, and her memory haunts me till this day. Who can forget his mother?

"My companions now saw that I left the shore with much reluctance, in spite of my firm resolve, so they gave me a wine colored beverage, flavored with mint and lemons, sang songs and played stringed instruments, they said, to quiet my nerves. All of which I did not hear; for my heart was far away in the clouds, there near the gates of heaven, where I fear it will never be again.

"We sailed on. The days grew into months, and the months into years; but that first day has

never returned. Occasionally I thought I caught glimpses of it but it vanished. Still we sailed on, further and further away from the haven, on and on, we knew not where; till the sea grew rough, the winds raged, and the storms ruled the deep.

"Our yacht lost its rudder, its anchor, its sails and its masts. We now drifted in the relentless waste of ocean, a wreck. Then it was, when we were all but famished, we drew our coats from our backs and held them up to the elements for drink; as we went drifting on and on, under the shadow of the wing of death,

"It seemed impossible for us to sink; for Debauchee by the mysterious cunning of the mariner kept us afloat, rottening on the surge of the awful deep; but Minnie, poor soul, fearful of the waves that swept our hull jumped overboard and was lost.

"You must not imagine we had all rough weather; for there were some days upon which there fell over all the sea a dead calm, and others when there was just enough wind to make it easy sailing; it was on these days, that the stately ships of the world swept by us with their white sails all aswell with the propelling breeze; and the great waves of the ocean breaking themselves on their sturdy prows.

"You may be sure I wanted to go with them; but when I gave expressions to this thought, my companions would taunt me, shake their heads, and say,

"Ah poor fellow! He is wandering, losing his mind. He knows not those are phantom ships, on an imaginary journey." And again they would drench me with the accursed beverage.

"One day as we lay in one of those calms of which I told you, lamenting our loss of drink, I saw a dark wave spread out over the ocean like a cloud. I soon found it to be smoke, rising from the stacks of one of those mighty ships from my native land. Presently a carrier pigeon dropped a scrap of paper in our wreck of a yacht. I sat gazing at the winged thing, which took a human form and lost itself in the distance. Then I turned me to the message. It waswritten in these characters: H. F. L.

I remembered them well; long ago they were engraven on a gold ring which my mother gave me on my twenty-first birthday. They mean hope and faith.

"That message was from my sister; for she alone knew of the whereabouts of the ring. I fancied that she had sent the ship to rescue me. It bore down upon us, nearer and nearer it came, till its buoy floated out within a few feet of us, then a large bird, as white as the driven snow, excepting its wings, which were black as ebony, lighted on the buoy and turned its eyes full on me. I thought I saw written on its wings under a halo of gold *Hope*. This was enough, my rescuer had come, I leaped into the sea

and grasping the bird with one hand and the buoy with the other, I was sustained. The bird fluttered and the buoy dipped and floated, I clung on—

> Just clung on and floated with them,
> O'er the endless trackless main,
> Till I heard my national anthem,
> Breaking on my ears again.

After many days the grand ol Steamer, *Courage*, for this was its name, cast its anchor in the port of Reformation. I went ashore and walked across the country to this place. Imagine my unspeakable surprise to find my old companions of the yacht here awaiting me. No sooner had I entered than Debauchee began looking for the serpent of which he told you. He found it at last stuffed with his bible, and the guilty thing to escape ran down his throat." Here Debauchee grew indignant; thrust in the stopper and the *Flask* stopped.

The Voodoo's Jack.

THE VOODOO'S JACK.

SAMBO has some queer ways; and he is slow in his abandonment of old customs and ideas. I say this from personal knowledge derived from close and intimate relation with him for forty years. Since I could remember, and, I am reliably informed for many years before, the man of mystery was the man of honor with him! that the vague, uncertain and enigmatical commands his attention. And now, that I am talking to you of a family secret, I am reminded of my brother Bill's misfortune.

Perhaps you know my brother Bill,

"Never saw him!"

Then you will enjoy this little story:

When I was a boy corn husking, in the state of Georgia was an event; and we looked forward to it with delight. Many a time I have seen four or five hundred bushels of corn piled up before the old plantation crib- with a hundred or more men, big, black, noble sons of Ham, gathered around it singing plantation songs and shucking corn by the light of the

moon, or pine torches, while prim and tidy damsels were quilting in a cabin nearby, animated with the commendable rivalry of finishing the quilt before the corn was husked. Ah me! how my memory lingers around those departed pleasantries; chief among which was the wrestling match after the husking.

Then we were not bothered with hair culture, powdered faces, complexion of skins, separate cars, political economy and college curriculums. No sir; they were no concern of ours, however we had rules and social customs among ourselves and our festivities were, perhaps, unexcelled by any known to modern times. The cause of this, I suppose, was due to the long stretch of toil between the festive seasons. Our holidays came like a glass of water to those who cross the Sahara in caravans, or like a crust of bread to the stranded mariner whom the sea has cast ashore.

I remember those long excursions we used to take from one plantation to another, in wagons drawn by oxen. We were as happy in those as you would be in an excursion of Pullman palace cars, drawn by the finest locomotive in the land; and, so far as brother Bill was concerned, the rules of a corn husking were the acme of civility. Glorious times those! I kinder liked them myself. But even here life had its reverses. Often we camped in the vale of sorrow, while our despised rival bivouacked in the

sunny orchards; where, the day before, Fancy pitched our tents. Envying them their transitory fortune we often sought their ruin in underhanded ways and schemes that were mean. It was in one of these schemes brother Bill had a close call for his life.

It happened in this way; on a farm belonging to Burk Devons, about five miles west of Jonesborough, Georgia, there was once a big corn husking; and the neighbors had come from far and near for an enjoyable time. Conspicuous among whom were brother Bill and Nancy Jane Sweetsom.

Brother Bill was carriage driver for a rich old farmer who lived hear, by the name of Sherrod Gay; and Nancy Jane Sweetsom was house girl for another old farmer not far away. She was a beautiful octaroon, of agreeable and pleasing ways and engaging manners; and Bill was ebon hued but handsome, standing six feet three inches in his socks. He was an imposing figure when dressed in his fine clothes of home-made jeans, and basking in the sunshine of Nancy Jane Sweetsom's smiles.

On this particular occasion Bill and Ben Buster were selected captains of the husking; and, as was usual, a line was drawn taut across the center of the corn pile and the number of men divided equally, one-half of them going with Bill and the other going with Buster.

The husking began, each side striving to shuck

their half of the corn before the other. Immediately after the husking the captains were to wrestle; and the one that threw the other, the "best two out of three," was to have the exclusive company of the prettiest girl at the husking that night.

The husking was but the work of an hour, and then the wrestling came and held the crowd spell-bound and speechless until expression broke into applause for the victor. Now, Buster was as much in love with Nancy Jane Sweetsom as Bill. And she, true to the proclivities of her sex, encouraged them both.

They were masters of the wrestling art. Buster was not as large as my brother and not near so tall, but he had broad, massive shoulders which were a little round and gave him the appearance of stooping as he moved about. He was five feet five inches high, weighed one hundred and ninety pounds, and was something of a giant himself.

You may be sure the battle was a royal one; for more than an hour they tugged away at each other; but Buster being lower than my brother, brought his mighty shoulders into play, and won.

Then Bill, humiliated and sad, skulked away to and adjoining farm. There he met uncle Jery Wiser and told him his tale of woe. Now, uncle Jerry was the man of mystery in that community; or in plantation parlance, a conjurer, and to him brother prayed

expectingly for relief; and the old gentleman promised him all he prayed for. What is it the man of mystery will not promise? There is not an ill the body is heir to he cannot cure; and in the affairs of the heart, his jack is all powerful. It would not only protect him from the designs of evil men, but it would enable him to go unharmed among the most ferocious animals, and to hold in his hands the most poisonous serpents or reptiles. These were the general powers of the jack; but when made to order, he usually added any special powers his patrons might desire. Bill wanted a jack, of course. A master one, with all the general powers and a number of specialties. To secure these he had to take the man of mystery the following ingredients, to-wit:

"A lock of hair from the north side of Buster's head.

"A piece of nail off the east side of his little toe.

"A piece of nail off the west side of his great toe. All died in the blood drawn from the left side of Buster."

For a long time I was curious to know how Bill ever found these parts of Buster's person; but lately I have been told by the authority of mystification in these diggings, "Dinah, the sauceress," that all Bill had to do was to catch Buster prone upon the earth with his head toward the north, and the cardinal points of his person would appear.

At last Bill turned up at uncle Jerry's with the required ingredients, and was soon invested with his JACK. Thus equipped the man of mystery told him to catch a black snake, skin it alive, tie the hide around his body, and he would be thereby enabled to fling any body in "ole Georgy dat didn't have a longer hide uv a similur snake den hizself." Of couse uncle Jerry thought Bill would never catch the snake and thus he would have an excuse for the nonperformance of his jack.

Jack in hand, Bill began at once to look for his snake, and with a singleness of purpose that was commendable, he never lost an opportunity of looking into brier patches and out of the way places, in short, every where fancy suggested a black snake might be found. At last on a sultry summer evening he met with unusual success with his search.

It was June 1, 1870. They had passed out of Jonesborough, over Flint river, up the big hill that forms its western bank, and were jogging along the dusty highway, when suddenly Mr. St. Clair met them in a bend of the road, and bantered Mr. Gay, Bill's boss, for a horse trade. While the two men were discussing the points of interest in their horses, Bill got down from his seat in the buggy and began to eat a few of the black-berries, that were bursting of sweetness in a patch near the road. While thus

engaged, the cracker of the whip he carried got fastened to a big brass button of his coat.

The bargain was struck between the two farmers and they drove off down the road to Mr. St. Clair's. Mr. Gay, appreciating Bill's weakness for the fruit of the brier, said to him, "Bill, I will drive on and wait for you at Mr. St. Clair's. Help yourself to the berries." "Thank ye, Boss, I's sure gwin ter do dat."

Presently the two men passed from view and left Bill to his feast. He was now pretty full and stopped to wipe the perspiration from his face, when to his great delight, there lay before him the object of his long search, the snake, in a persimmon bush just a few feet away, charming a blue bird. Relying on his faithful jack, he began at once to approach the snake, and the snake intent on catching the bird, paid little attention to him. The snake, however, was one of those combative kind known among us Negroes, as "De coach whip." A long, keen, blue black fellow that ties himself around your ankles and whips you to death.

Bill was after that snake and the snake was after its prey; and, just as he lunged for it, the snake leaped for the bird, missed it and fell, to use Bill's words, "curwollop between his feet."

There was surprise in the brier patch and a hasty getting away. The bird flew to a neighboring tree

and warbled a song of joy; the snake did as all wise serpants do. Bill ran for dear life and somehow found his way to the public road, and was limbering along leisurely when he looked back and saw the whip dangling behind, and mistook it for the snake.

Then it was he reached up and got his hat, and leveled down to it. My! what a race. The whip, flying up and striking him occasionally behind, gave him energy and he flew. Crazed, he ran into Mr. St. Clair's drawing-room yelling, "Snake! snake! snake! Take it off! Take it off!" and fell sprawling to the floor.

Then Mr. Gay stooped down and untied the cracker of the whip, and Bill realized what had happened; but he swears the snake was after him.

A Mad Man's Love Affairs.

A Mad Man's Love Affairs.

ON the 31st day of December, A. D. 1880, there was organized, in the little town of Elmwood, "The Story Tellers' Circle." This association was a rare and unique thing, with the pleasure of its members as its only object. It had a few simple rules, which were rigidly enforced. So congenial were its members, however, that they bore the penalty of broken laws without a protest.

I remember one rule that was invariably broken by most of us. That rule required one of us to commence, on the evening of December 31st, and tell an original story; and to tell it so well that none of us should fall asleep during its narration. The story was to close at midnight. Upon its conclusion there was always spread a supper, for which the story-teller had to pay should he fail to keep us awake.

Each of us had paid the forfeit of a dull story. I should have said, all of us had failed but Bill Simmons, for the lot had never fell upon him. December

31, 1895, marked the close of an unusually joyous Christmas tide. We were in the club-room and the roll was being called, to which all of us answered promptly, "Here."

After this the lot was cast, and it fell on Bill Simmons. He was by no means a talkative man, and there was not a scintilla of humor in his nature. No one expected a story of him, and so we prepared to make merry at his expense. Hence, we fell to discussing the bill of fare, and, after a half dozen points of order and as many ballots, we succeeded in making this selection: Seven loaves of bread, ten dozen oysters, ten broiled quail, salt, pepper and pickles, and a few other little necessaries, such as wine, whiskey and cigars. Of these we ordered twelve quarts of wine, three gallons of old Bourbon and a hundred cigars. The reason for this is obvious; we wanted to possess our spirits with diligence. There were ten of us, and, with the exception of Bill Simmons, a merrier ten never entered a club-room.

At 8 o'clock the gavel fell, and the president said: "Gentlemen, you will please come to order. What is your pleasure to-night?" "Regular order," was the demand. Again the gavel fell, and Mr. Simmons was ordered to deliver his story. He took his seat on the grand-stand, and we held our breath, while the comical obliquity of our features betrayed our feelings.

Said he: "Mr. President and brethren, for the want of a better story, I present to you a Mad Man's Love Affairs.

You all remember my old friend, George Dobey? He was a singular character; and his career was eventful. A few days ago I passed his tomb and found written thereon: "Here lies George Dobey, the story teller, who never but once designedly told the truth." To see the good name of my friend so foully besmirched vexed me, and I then and there determined to give the world his true biography. Having so decided, I began at once to look for the incidents of interest in his life, and after a long and vexatious search I was able to find nothing authentic but the marble slab at his grave, and its strange inscription. Too true it is that our lives are as transitory as the fall of snow flakes, and that memory's tablets are broken while they are being formed.

Nevertheless, I was resolute, and with the aid of my memory began my self-imposed task by writing in bold letters on a sheet of Fools' cap paper "George Dobey." To save my life I cound not think of another word.

"Your Fancy!" cried many of us.

"I have none," said Simmons. I can deal only in cold facts and truth; and if you will listen, these you shall hear.

In the midst of my dilemma, I heard a gnawing in a corner of the room, and walking over to whence it came, I kicked an old valice, when out there ran a mouse and dropped a scrap of paper. I looked at it and saw written thereon, "George Dobey." I opened the valise and found a bundle of old papers labeled, "Facts about George Dobey;" eagerly I began to investigate its contents.

The first thing I found was a letter addressed to my brother Joe. I held it up to the light and read the post mark.

The ragged edge of the envelope told how eagerly it had been opened. With no less anxiety, I drew out the letter and read what follows:

No. 17 Ivory Street;
ATLANTA, GA.,
May 10th, 1890.

MR. JOE. SIMMONS,
Stoneville, Miss.

DEAR FRIEND:

To-day while on my return to Atlanta, I met with a sad but thrilling incident. Just as I turned into the high road which passes through East Point to Atlanta, I saw a run-a-way horse hitched to a buggy, in which a woman sat holding on bravely to the reins, in the vain effort to stop the frantic animal, which came on at a frightful speed.

In less time than it takes to tell it, the buggy was thrown against a tree and one of its wheels knocked off. Then she became frightened and in her terror, grabbed the dash-board. By this time I had gotten out of my buggy and was trying to stop the mad horse. He turned abruptly to the left, and the front part of the vehicle struck a stump and was broken from its shafts.

The woman was thrown to the earth, her left wrist being dislocated and her right side severely bruised. The horse ran a few paces further and stopped of its own accord. About this time a man came to my assistance. We lifted the lady into my buggy, and he took charge of the horse. I then drove off toward East Point.

About a mile down the road, whence came the horse, we came across a man, by the wayside, apparently insane. The lady told me he was her affianced friend, that he was with her when the horse ran away from him; and at that time he was pefectly sane.

I managed to get them back to East Point, where a physician was called in and they are now being cared for. The lady will recover but the man, never. Believe me, these unfortunate people are none other than George Dobey and the woman you were to have married seventeen months ago.

Sincerely I am yours,

Tom Smith.

I was now in the middle of a mad man's love affairs, and I determined to know all. To this end I examined minutely every paper in that valise. There were a great many, but I shall call attention to only a few of them here. There was a letter from a lady, in answer to one from Joe, which, excepting the heading, read as follows:

"DEAR FRIEND—Your letter calls up the joys of long ago. When there is no hope of a better to-morrow, how readily we turn from the adversities of to-day to the felicities of yesterday; and were it not for the bitter fate that foiled our hopes, the recollections of a day that is gone would be a joy forever.

"Believe me, there has not been a day since our betrothal in which my heart has not been wholly yours, unalterably so; and yet I fear I am so environed as to make it impossible for me to grant your request. The morning after that awful night I went to Vicksburg to be with you in your illness. I found you unconscious, and the doctors and Mr. Dobey insisted on my returning to Stoneville, which I did that night.

"The next day Mr. Dobey handed me the Daily Item, a paper published in Vicksburg, in which was written this announcement: 'Mr. Joe Simmons, of Stoneville, Miss., died last night at the City Hospital. His death marks the close of a bright, joyous and exemplary life. A host of friends mourn his loss,

and we sympathetically join them in their bereavement. He will be buried this morning at 11 o'clock, from St. Andrew's church.'

"Life was now a burden, and I had no desire to bear it at Stoneville; so the day after the cruel publication I found myself fleeing from the scenes of my sorrows in a widow's garb, and in due course of travel I arrived here and took up my abode with my aunt. Some time after I arrived at my aunt's, Mr. Dobey became a suitor for my favor, and I, thinking you were dead, gave my consent; but before the day fixed for the wedding he became insane, and has since been in an asylum. He is much better now, and the doctors say that if they could restore his memory of persons, they should pronounce him well. He fancies that he has killed a man, and, strange to say, his dead man is yourself.

"He has lucid intervals, however, and since hearing from you I have been thinking of securing a release. I would like to have you go with me; may be your presence would revive his memory and put him on the road to speedy recovery. Will you go?

"Hoping you will accommodate me, I beg leave to subscribe myself,

"Yours faithfully,

"Ellen Glenn."

Of course, Joe went to see her. They met in Atlanta, and went directly to the asylum. There

they learned that Dobey was much better and recovering rapidly. The physicians said: "We have been thinking of taking him over the old scene with Miss Glenn, in the hope of restoring his memory of her. We hope Miss Glenn will consent to this?"

"Certainly," said Ellen, and the doctors began to discuss their plans with her. While they were thus engaged Joe went up to see Dobey. He found him reading an old manuscript, which he had written during his better days. He was then seemingly sane. He received Joe in the most cordial manner, and they were soon engaged in a pleasant conversation, which lasted quite a while. Presently, however, Joe rose to leave, and Dobey, rising also, caught him socially by the lappel of the coat and said:

"During my little talk I have learned to like you. You resemble some one I knew years ago, but I just can't remember." Joe was silent, and he kept on, as if talking to himself: "You a-r-e, 're, 're—I can't recollect. I guess I don't know you, but I like you and would intrust to you my treasure."

Joe suppressed his surprise with a smile, as Dobey began wrapping the treasure in an ancient newspaper. After which he held it out to him, saying as he did so:"

"You will bring it back to me occasionally?"

"Certainly," said Joe, placing it in his inner pocket. Then Dobey raised his head and their eyes

met, but he knew not his rival. They shook hands and parted.

Joe returned to the office and found the plans all arranged for the trip, which were the reproduction of some of the scenes through which Dobey and Ellen had passed on May 10th, 1890, the time fixed for which was the next day. Ellen, refusing every attempt of Joe's to renew their former relations, till after the trip, returned to her Aunt's and Joe to his hotel.

After supper Joe went to his room and began to inspect Dobey's treasure, which was simply a diary giving in detail every incident of his life, from his majority down to May 10th, 1890. He read along carelessly till his eyes fell on the date, December 31st, 1889, and curiously through the remainder of the diary, of which the following is an extract:

"It was December 31st, 1889. The wind was soughing through the electric wires overhead, and occasional flakes of snow fluttered down from the clouds which hung above, as if they were the mantles of the storm waiting to be shook by the Monarch of the elements.

"Such was nature's sombreness on that eventful night; I was in Vicksburg, standing in the doorway of one of its mammoth piles of architectural beauty, amusing myself with the faces that passed and the stories they told unawares.

"In the midst of my amusement I looked up, and who should I see but Joe Simmons, Bill Prior and Tom Smith. They gave me a friendly shake of the hand and passed into the edifice where I was standing, which I then found to be a saloon, behind the gaudy screens of which I heard the click of the glasses and saw the smooth and oily liquor moving and sparkling therein.

"That you may not think me one of those *litee* fellows, who take their wine in secret, and display their degredation from the open door of the gutter, I make this confession: I went into the saloon and satisfied my convivial propensities by partaking of the hospitalities of those among whom I found myself.

"After the drinks, Tom took me aside and gave me a little sketch of the social world. Said he: 'Joe is a groom; I am his best man, and to-morrow is the day of the nuptials.' At which I, arching my brows and twisting my mustache, said: 'Ah, indeed! Surely a man might well be jovial on his wedding day, set; and turning to the bar-tender, I ordered wine, whiskey and cigars. While these were being prepared, I asked Tom who the prospective bride might be. He pushed back his coatsleeve and wrote on his cuff the initials, 'E G., of Stoneville.' My what a revelation! It was to this woman my heart had surrendered its soul. Unknown to her, it is true, but none the less so, I loved her, and the consuming fire of that passion now

went darting through my being like an electric bolt.

"I stood there a moment in suspense, stirring my wine and imploring the devil to give me a device to foil the wedding, which he did instantly. This was the place, the time, and the means were at my command. I took advantage of them, and held the flask to their lips till a late hour.

"I knew they were to leave for Stoneville on the late train, so at 11 o'clock I left them carousing in the saloon and went to my room. Here I disguised myself, and, an hour later left for the station—a typical Southern Negro of ante-bellum times, with a faded umbrella stretched between me and the inclement weather, and a dilapidated carpet-bag swinging from my left hand.

"Thus attired, I arrived at the station within a few minutes of train time. Pretty soon my friends came, and Tom called out:

"'Tickets for three to Stoneville."

"Then I shied up to the window and said:

"'Boss, gimme er ticket ter de same place, please, sah.'

"'Well, old man, where is that?" said the agent.

"'It am de same place dese gents am gwine, sah.'

"He then threw down the ticket and I handed him the change.

By this time the train came steaming in we got aboard, and were soon flying towards the north.

But I am ahead of my story; for while we were boarding the cars, I slipped my hand into Joe's pocket and filched his ticket. Why I disguised myself, and why I stole the ticket, I know not, unless it be that the hand of the Spirit of darkness, leads his votaries as determidly as does that "Divinity which shapes our ends."

Tom and Bill passed into the ladies car, Joe into the smoker, and I followed him. Presently the conductor entered and began to take up tickets. He reached me first and said in a playful way: "Well old man, whar am yer gwine?" Hadding him my ticket, I said: "Dat tells de tale." He took it and passed on to Joe, and said: "Tickets." Joe felt in his vest pocket for his ticket, but it was not there; then hurriedly he felt for it in the other pockets of his apparel. but found it not. I sat puffing away at my "corncob" pipe contentedly, and enjoying the confusion of my rival.

The conductor said: "Take your time, sir, and find your ticket by the time I return," and passed on. After a while he came back and still Joe had not found his ticket. Then the conductor pulled the bell cord and the train stopped. Whereupon, aided by the porter, he led Joe to the door and helped him out into the cold and bitter night. I got off on the other side and the train passed on.

We were now alone. There was no moon, no stars,

no light, nor sound of anything save the stealthy tread of the snow climbing down the frosty air. Here was an opportunity. I paused a moment listening to the hitherto unknown spirit of my being, whose persuasive eloquence urged me to deeds of violence.

Had I not a motive? When did love endure a rival? Where is the man who dares not stake all on the woman of his affections? If any such there is he is unworthy that Divine thought which evolved itself into a woman. The ideal woman! Oh, thou admirable, adorable being, with thee how sublime is man, without thee what a wreck he is. Thus the demon persuaded me as I went groping through the darkness in quest of him, my soul abhorred. Presently I heard him treading in the snow, and instantly I reached for my revolver. On he came, reeling through the darkness like a lost soul from the bottomless pit. There was steel in my nerves, and my heart burned like molted iron. I was prepared. On he came, till suddenly the clouds parted, and the stars glinted on their towering thunder-heads, the moon peeped at me over the trees—all glaring as if they were the eyes of the infinite God, while the angel of peace took the record of my wicked thoughts, or so it seemed.

Still he came on, and turning his haggard face up into mine, with his peculiar innocence, said:

"Hallo, niger! What are you doing out tonight?"

"Been ter watch meetin', sah."

"Where is your church?"

"Er bout three miles down de road, sah."

"Is there not a house near than that?"

"Yes sah, 'bout er mile 'cross de woods."

"It freezes! Take me to a fire."

"Alright boss, diser way, sah."

So saying, I took him by the hand and started off through the woods, where, I knew not. After wandering about for a long time we came back to the railroad where it intersects the country road. Here we found a shed and a cotton seed house with an open gable. I climbed into it and buried myself in the warm seeds. Joe tried to follow me but he was too drunk. He simply fell back to the shed floor, with a thud.

Again, that demon entered my soul and urged me to violence. He whispered, "by aiding the elements a little the frost will do for you what you have not the heart to do for yourself." I went back to him, slipped his ticket into his pocket, and gave him more whiskey. After he had drank, I, pretending to be helping him into the seed house, pulled his coat off. This done, I crawled back into my den like a wild beast to his lair, and began meditating upon the "survival of the fittest."

In a short while, a glaring light fell along the snow, the ringing of a bell and escaping air and steam

reminded me that the south-bound express had stopped. Several persons got off the cars, with whom were Tom and Bill with lanterns. They began at once to look around as if searching for lost treasures. Pretty soon they found Joe, and gave a shout of joy. Walking up to him they pulled him by the shoulder, in the vain effort to wake him. Failing in this, Tom raised himself to his full height, with a stare of unutterable horror, and said: "He is dead!" There he lay upon the shed floor, with his ticket clinched in his hand and the froth upon his lips, the victim of a social drink.

Then a physician whom they had engaged placed the faithful sphygmograph upon his wrist and its unerring register indicated that he still lived. They placed him upon the cars and were soon flying away toward Vicksburg.

The next day I returned, and that afternoon Ellen came. Together we went to see Joe, and found him still alive, but seriously ill. The physician admitted none to remain with him but Tom, Bill and myself. So I advised Ellen to return to Stoneville, and saw her off on the midnight train. I shall never forget her mein when we parted. Her passion, too deep for vocal expression, was lost in the stare of a broken-hearted woman whose idol was shattered.

That night I sat watching beside Joe till a late

hour. As near as I can remember, it was three o'clock in the morning when I left him.

Walking down Washington street I met Edgar Wiloby, the local editor of the Daily Item. I took him into my confidence, threw an eagle into his purse and dictated a crude little obituary of Joe, which appeared in the paper that morning. I hung around the press room till the paper was run off, which was about five o'clock a. m. I secured a copy and hurried to the station where I boarded the train for Stoneville, at which place I arrived about nine o'clock that day. I immediately walked over to Ellen's. Reserved and calm she met me at the gate and seemed aware of my errand. I handed her the Daily Item—not a sound escaped her. Silently the tears trickled down her cheeks and fell upon the paper as she read. I advised a change of scene and the company of a lady friend, in whom she could confide; than whom none were better than her aunt, who lived at East Point, Georgia.

This was a difficult task, but after much persuasion, I succeeded, and she left on the early train the next day. As the train pulled out, I felt relieved and breathed easier. I remained there a few days and then left for Chicago, Cincinnati and other places, finally winding up at East Point.

Here I began my suit in earnest. I told Ellen of my passion, and at last won her hand; but her

"SILENTLY THE TEARS TRICKLED DOWN HER CHEEKS AND FELL UPON THE PAPER AS SHE READ."

heart had been irretrievably given to another. It is useless to attempt a description of my happiness. Language is a poor medium of expression, when love is the theme. In the midst of my felicity, I secured a horse and buggy and drove out over the country.

It was a bright spring afternoon. The forest trees had taken on new leaf, through which the dog-wood and honeysuckle blossoms could be seen swaying in the gentle breeze. There the birds flitted, warbling songs of joy; the bees buzzed, and the herds went browsing over the field, all presenting a scene I shall never forget, for they seemed a complement to my wooing.

We drove down the road till we came to a cool spring. Here we quenced our thirst, and stood a moment watching the minnows play in the branch. It was a delightful place—a place where one might want to linger, looking backward, perhaps, to other times, when childish loves, with turned-up pantaloons and lifted skirts, scared the trout from under the maple roots and dreamed of the coming years; where older children might pause a moment till fancy, responsive to extravagant desire, could catch a glimpse of the gilded gables of castles in the air; and where aged ones might review in their retrospection images of the things they used to know.

Intoxicated with my dream of happiness, I assisted Ellen back into the buggy, and was about to

take my seat beside her, when she saw a wild rose and desired it. As I turned to secure it a large hawk, in pursuit of a quail, darted suddenly over the road with its long wings brushing the ears of the horse, at which he became terrified and dashed down the road frenzied of fright.

At the top of my speed I ran to overtake him, but to no purpose. On and on he went! The mad horse, with Ellen, lost himself in the distance."

Thus ended the diary. Joe laid it aside, lit his cigar and walked out for a stroll. Perhaps it was better for Dobey that his condition was such that it appealed to Joe's pity; otherwise, there might have been a duel. As it was, Joe was anxious to have Dobey remember him.

The next day all concerned in the restoration of Dobey's memory were astir betimes. The doctor secured horses and buggies for the trip; one for himself and Joe, and one for Dobey and his nurse. They were to drive down to East Point and leave Dobey with Ellen, who was to decoy him into a drive over the old way to Gum Springs; and the others were to follow, keeping at a close distance behind.

All expectancy, Ellen was waiting for them on the front veranda, when her aunt came to her and took her affectionately by the hand, and began to narrate this superstitious story:

"Ellen, dear, I have a presentiment. Something

is going to happen. You know the old clock in the east room, adjoining the parlor? Well, it was placed there many years ago by my great-grandmother, Beatrice Glenn. Weatherford, the great Indian chief, was very fond of her, and used to bring her presents from his trophies of war. On a sunny day in June, 1810, he met her under that old oak there, with the dead top, and presented to her this clock. She gave it the place of honor in the east room, and there it has remained since—a mysterious indicator of evil. To my own knowledge, it has refused to keep time for thirty years; and yet at unwonted times it strikes twelve, and not a tick nor stroke more. Always after these strange freaks of the clock a tragedy happens, in which some member of the Glenn family is closely connected.

"I remember last year, when you and Mr. Dobey went out for a drive, the old clock struck twelve, although it was three in the afternoon. I would have told you before, but I knew you would laugh at what you are pleased to call my superstition, and make fun of the haunted clock. I warn you now not to go out with this man to-day. No good can come of it; for at three o'clock this morning the clock struck twelve."

She turned to go in-doors, and the doctor and his party drove down the lane.

Ellen met them at the gate, and in company with

Dobey, she walked up the long walk, under the ancient forest trees, along its border, when suddenly the deep, sonorous strokes of the clock chimed out the hour of twelve.

Instantly Dobey's mind returned and he knew all. A superstitious fear seized Ellen, and she paused under Weatherford's tree and gazed at her companion.

He held out his hands to her and said.

"Ellen, don't you know me? I am Dobey; George Dobey!"

Then there was a crash of falling timber, and a huge limb, falling from the tree under which they stood, struck Dobey on the head and felled him on the spot. Ellen swooned and fell in Joe's arms. All was over—Dobey's wounds were fatal.

As Joe sat in the east room, after the doctor had dressed Dobey's wound, he held out his hands to Joe and said :

"Joe, forgive me! You will find my confession among my papers. It is true—every word of it."

He then turned his face to the wall and the silver cord was broken. Thus was he gathered to his father's, and that strange epitaph written on his tomb.

Again the clock struck twelve, the gavel fell and Simmons had his supper at the expense of the CLUB.

Home Missions vs. A Cock Fight.

Home Missions vs. a Cock Fight.

EZRA BEDLOW, of Sunny Side, was as fine a speciman of humanity as ever worked six days a week and went to church of Sundays. With the exception of his weakness for game chickens, there was not a better Methodist in that section of country. At least, that is what Ned Spriggs says of him; and the little Uncle Ned has forgot of Sunny Side memoirs is not worth knowing.

Commonly speaking, Ezra was not a gamester. He was never known to bet on anything but a cock fight, and that was long before he joined Ebeneza church, some twenty years ago. Since then he has evaded the promptings of his conscience by using the word "lay" instead of "bet," and only under great pressure would he even do that; but sometimes, when chance was out of the question and gain certain, he would "lay" a little. He had a single game cock, however, upon whose fighting qualities he would lay his birthright

Uncle Allen Ward, a neighbor of his, had an equal affection for the amusement of the pit. Uncle Ned knew him also, and when spoken to concerning him always gave this reply:

"Aren't 'herent of close communion? He'd walk er mile ter run er pig from er duck pond in which he'd 'merse all de pretty gals uv de 'munity. Er good man', sah, ter de outer linin' uv his Sunday coat."

Now Uncle Allen was Road Overseer of the Sunny Side public road; and public office was no more a "public trust" to great Cleveland than to him. That section of the road worked by the thirty men under his control was known, far and near—by every man, woman and child within forty miles of Sunny Side—and there was not a traveling salesman south of the Ohio river who did not have that piece of the public domain stamped indelibly on his mind. I am sure you need no lecturing on the subject of roads; that when you find one which has had the valleys raised, the hills leveled down, its crooked ways made straight, and the straight way leading through cultured fields, by running streams and blooming orchards, where the songs of the harvester, the laughter of youth and the prattle of children proclaim the ease of rustic life, you may feel that you are in a community that may well congratulate itself on having made advancement in the arts of civilization. Still I am persuaded that before you can enter fully into the appreciation of

good roads, you should see Uncle Allan's road ; then I am sure you would vote to change the Constitution in such a way as to make it a felony for any man not to give a tithe of his daily earnings to the cause of good roads.

Uncle Allen's road led through the red hills of Simpson county, and a finer scope of country cannot be found in central Mississippi. He had worked on this road since the days of Reconstruction; and at last had succeeded in getting it well and thoroughly drained, with a prominent ditch in the middle and minor ones on the sides, with rolling ridges between and a few pine "punchings," as he called them, laid across the boggy places.

To be remembered, the road should be gone over. I see it now as plainly as on that moon-lit night when I, with a span of donkeys hitched to a road cart, stalled on the slopes of hickory knolls on a down-hill pull.

It was toward the middle of a sultry summer day and the men were at work on the road ; or rather I should say, they were amusing themselve by narrations of the coon fights, 'possum hunts, fox drives and other adventures of the chase through which they had passed ; and by pitching occasional shovels of sand at the holes in the common highway, when the little incident I am thinking of occurred.

Uncle Ezra and Allen both were on the road that

day, and the boys, knowing the zeal with which they always push a debate, had been trying all the morning to draw them into discussing infant baptism; but to no purpose. They were not in a talkative mood.

It was now about twelve o'clock, and a half dozen or more dinner horns were echoing among the hills. Their appetites were awakened and they passed from labor to refreshment, some of them stopping on the way to consult a conspicuous gentleman who was among them. For you will remember, wherever and whenever two or three of the colored brethren have met together for the advancement of the public weal, there is generally one in the midst with a grievance; and he was there in the person of envious Bill.

It appears that, some time before, Bill had joined the church on probation; and the religious side of his nature being a little shady, Uncle Ezra had had his name struck from the rolls thereof. From that day Bill had sought for the besetting sin of Uncle Ezra, and found it to be chicken fighting; and, thinking this a good time and place to verify this fact, whispered to one of the boys:

"De old hypocrit 'll bet his life on er chicken fight."

Whereupon Dennis Jones walked across the road with his dinner pail in his hand and said aloud:

"Boys, I don't know much erbout er coon fight, but I's jist gwine ter tell yer sompen. Uncle Allen has

er bird over de fence dahr dat kin jist whip anything dat wears feathers." About this time a beautiful gray rooster flew upon the fence, flopped its wings and crowed. Dennis said, "Dat am de bird; ain't he a bute?

They were now in front of Uncle Allen's house, which stands on an eminence overlooking Strong River, and because of the many oaks in the yard, it is known as Oak View.

The men rushed to the lawn for a nooning under the trees. I should have excepted Uncle Ezra, for he was quietly leading his old gray mule to a convenient place to mount him, when some one of the boys heard him say, as if speaking to himself, "I 's got er little cock dat kin jist run dat chicken inter Strong River," and yelled it out to the crowd. Upon which many of them came running back and among them was Uncle Allen, who, in a defiant manner, said, "What's dat 'bout Strong River?"

"Oh, nothin'! Only I 's got er cock dat kin lick yourn; dat's all."

Pshaw! pshaw! Brer' Ez.; yer knows dat ain't so."

"So, er not so, ef I wuzn't de stewart uv Ebeneezer M. E. church I'd lay my yallow yearlin' dat it is so."

Now, Uncle Allen had long coveted that yellow yearling, because of its Jersey pedigrees, and hav-

ing confidence in his "Irish Gray," as he called his rooster, he was tempted, and fell; for he said, " I 's 'bout ez good as you is, an' bein' de deacon uv Little Zion don't keep me from layin' anythin' yer wants ter dat it aint so."

"Look here, Brer' Allen, yer ain't seed my chicken, has yer?"

"Nawp."

" Well, I 's gwine ter bring him down fur yer ter look at."

"Dat's right, Uncle Ez.; bring him down," cried many voices together, as he rode off down the hill with his heels sticking to the sides of the mule and his arms churning the air.

He was not long in reaching his home, where he found a nice little dinner awaiting him. He ate it, and instead of taking his after dinner nap, as was usual with him, he went to his crib and began to shell corn and throw it around the door. Pretty soon a score or more of chickens were tumbbling over each other to get the corn; and among them was a beautiful black-breasted red game rooster. He picked him up and pushed him into a bag he had for the occasion. All the while, aunt Ellen, his wife, was watching him from a crack in the wall of their one-roomed log cabin. The last she saw of him he was jogging over Hickory Noles with that black-breasted red game under one arm, while with the other he was per-

suading the mule, by the aid of a club he carried, to quicken its speed. He finally succeded in urging him up to three miles an hour and reached Oak View about one hour behind time.

He found the boys pretty much in the same place on the road as when they knocked off for dinner, putting in the usual work, for a public road in Mississippi, leaning on their spade handles, smoking home-made cheroots, cracking jokes and discussing the "fuesibility" of cutting out a new road through the under brush, rather than fill up a certain mud hole about two miles away, and which they would reach some time in the next year. At this particular moment, however, Dennis had succeeded in getting the floor, or rather a *stump* by the road side, and was getting in a motion "Ter jurn de meeting (road working) tell de craps wuz laid by," when uncle Ezra's rooster, hearing another one crow, stuck its head through a hole in the bag and crowed in return. This was a signal for applause, and the crowd yelled a good old time country whoop. Presently it was more quiet, and some of the more active boys ran off to let uncle Allen know what was going on.

During all this time aunt Ellen had been doing some thinking herself. and,remembering that she had an invitation to the Woman's Missionary meeting that afternoon, with a request that she bring a fowl

as her donation to the festival, they were to give in aid of Home Missions. She, too, did as her husband had done, caught a fowl and put it into a bag. After this she hitched her filly to a road cart, and swung down the road toward uncle Allen's. But I am ahead of my story, let me return.

As uncle Ezra rode up the boys fell to discussing game chickens generally, and uncle Alan's specially, and tried in various ways to get uncle Ezra to untie the bag and show his chicken, but to no purpose. He was not quite ready. Uncle Allen had not come from dinner and he was waiting for him. To tell the truth he wanted him to "lay" his Poland China sow againt his "Yallow yearlin;" for he thought as much of his neighbor's sow, as his neighbor thought of his yearling; and as his black-breasted red game was "Simplee 'vincerble" there was no danger.

After a while uncle Allen came out, picking his teeth and seemed to have forgotten the chickens, until uncle Ezra said something about his yearling. Then he spoke up and said:

"I has er yearlin' dat kin put up ez good er fight ez my rooster, an' I rekens he won't mind backin' de Irish gray. I'll lay yer my yearlin' ergin yourns."

"No, lay your Polon Chiny sow."

"Veree well sah, de sow."

"It's er lay, bring er long yer Irish gray."

So saying, he clutched his bag a little tighter, and uncle Allen began to call his chickens. During these preliminaries envious Bill sat upon a stump by the road, with his doubled fist under his chin and his elbows on his knees, mumbling to himself, "Dis is de saint Ezra Bedlow, who sets in judgment on his betters. De Elder shall know dis ef I lives." Then a smile of satisfaction curled his upper lip into a grin which his satanic majesty, Moloch, might envy. About this time aunt Ellen came driving along the road on her way to the missionary meeting. She drew in her reins when she got near them, and uncle Ezra, bag in hand, walked across the road to meet her. Smiling blandly, he said:

"Well, old 'oman, which er way?"

"I's lookin' a'ter Home Missions, an' thought I'd jist drive by an' let yer know."

"Yes, yes! I had fergot de meetin'; dat's right, go er head. I 'spose yer wants some change?"

"Yes, Ezra, er little *change wouldn't hurt.*"

Anxious to get her away, he laid the bag with the rooster in her buggy, while he fished up a quarter of a dollar from his pocket. Handing it to her, he took up the bag, and she drove off, to his great satisfaction, for he would not have had her at the cock fight for all the Poland China sows round about Sunny Side.

Uncle Allen had caught his Irish Gray by this

time, and was ready. The men gathered around uncle Ezra to catch a glimpse of his black-breasted red game. The bag was soon untied and he drew him forth. Imagine their great surprise to find an old Muscovy duck instead.

Envious Bill then slid down off that stump, and, like a big boy who stubs his toe in a crowd, went whistling down the road, too big to show concern and two little to laugh. The rest of the men, however, took it good naturedly, and put in the best and only honest day's work that had been done on the Sunny Side road in thirty years.

It is barely necessary to say, while uncle Ezra was getting the change, aunt Ellen shifted the bags, giving him the drake instead of his rooster, and this was her "Home Mission."

The Jewel-Tailed 'Possum.

The Jewel-Tailed 'Possum.

SOME thirty years ago, when Bill Clemmings was more handsome than he is now, he went sparking with Julia Gay, a prim and tidy girl of forty summers to her credit, in the bank of time; and a daily income that promised as many more. She was of agreeable manners and thrifty to a fault, so nothing would do Bill but to fall heels over head in love with her.

In less than a week after they first met, he proposed, and she ruthlessly put him off till the next day. This afflicted him with all the tortures a sensitive nature is heir to. At best, the affairs of the heart are troublesome, and he now felt, not as one who walks on air, with garlands about his head, but as if he were so much corn passing through a mill hopper.

A thousand years which have passed, to some people, may appear as a day, or a song in the night.

I don't know much about that, but I do know a day of suspense to a man in love has a peculiar way of stretching itself into eons of time. Simmons must have lived a million years that night before he succeeded in persuading her to marry him at five o'clock the next morning. However, about half past three o'clock that night, she gave her consent, and he began at once to arrange for the turning epoch of his life.

There was a preacher in the house and after having secured his services, Clemmings began making those little changes in his toilet the occasion demanded. Nothing improves the facial appearance of a man so much as a clean shave. That was Clemmings opinion, so he went out to look for a barber. He met Joe Cade on the street and inquired of him where he could find one. Turning in his tracks, Cade said: "Yonder's one. " See him in de gas light by de corner wid er bag on his back." He left Cade and ran after the man with the bag, and overtook him just as he slipped it from his shoulder to unbolt his door.

Clemmings saluted him politely, told his business and explained his haste, all in the same breath, apparently. The barber directed him to a seat, by a wave of his hand, tied the bag to a leg of the barber chair, and began to make a lather. This done he honed his razor on a brick, in the jam of the chimney. He now untied the bag and drew out of it an opossum, lathered and began to shave it to the great

annoyance of Clemmings, and, because of which he cursed, raged and stormed at the barber, then cajoled, fondled and persuaded him alternately, but to no purpose. The barber simply looked at him and said: "No use Sah, dis varmint an' happiness is de same wid me."

He had now shaved off a place at the root of the opossum's tale about the size of a silver dollar. Which place he split open with his razor, and took therefrom a beautiful and dazzling diamond, about the size of the first phalanx of a man's thumb. Dazed at the lustre of the jewel, he leaned forward with his mouth opened, speechless of surprise, as the barber took the opossum to the door and let it go.

Instantly he returned, and Clemmings, having regained his self-control, asked him to explain his actions. The barber said: "I's ready ter shave yer now, but ef yer rather, I'll 'cite de story uv de possum wid de jewel in his tail." Clemmings preferred the story and he began his narration, which, stripped of its brogue, is as follows:

"At Richmond, when the Confederate idol, a government whose fundamental principles were States Rights and slavery, was crumbling and its cabinet being dismembered, an officer high in the government of its affairs, while passing from the capitol building, dropped this diamond and I picked it up. I would have given it to him at the time, had

not an incident beyond my control prevented.

"Instantly upon dropping it a courier from the Camp of Lee met him and they held a hurried conversation, in the midst of which, I heard him, who had dropped the jewel exclaim," PETERSBURG! RETREAT!" Before I could speak to him, he and the courier passed into the president's private chambers and I was left alone. Oppressively so, for somehow I felt the hand of Fate was upon me. There was a lull in the deep and sullen roll of artillery to the south of us; the day was waning, and the sun, like a blood shot eye in a gloomy face, went out. Then there were the breaking of fond ties, bereavements, the despair of strong men, the wailing of women, the hurrying to and fro in the doomed city by the populace, and the extinguishing of camp fires, as the last retreat of that valiant and most skillfully governed army, known in the annals of war began, and Hope skulked from the Confederate capital, weeping over the "Lost Cause."

"In the midst of the confusion, I returned to the quarters of him who had lost the jewel, and whose fortunes I had followed since the days of 'Bull Run.' He was my master and friend. I met him in the way and he directed me to take charge of his belongings and follow him. I bundled them together and then looked after my own, which were this razor and strop, my clothing and a pet opossum.

"The clothing was very dear to me, because it was the gift of my master. But my chief concern was about the jewel. Perhaps you would not have done as I did with it; but the most of us, in sudden danger, great calamities, and unexpected occurences often do the most nonsensical things, and I, to hide the diamond from the invaders, as well as from the pilferers of our own camp, split open the skin at the root of the opossum's tail, pushed in the diamond and sewed up the place. I then put it into a bag, threw the bag across my shoulder and joined the other Negro servants in the rear of the retreating army, which went to pieces, a few days later, at Appomattox in glorious defeat.

"After our reverses at Appomattox, I sought my master among the living and the dead, but found him not; so I put him down as missing and started for my home in Fulton county, Georgia. For weeks I tramped along the dusty road with that opossum on my back in a bag. On my way south, I passed many a camping ground and gory field, where, but yesterday, the bonny blue flag floated the gay and magical emblem of southern hope, and where the roll of artillery and the rattle of musketry, were but the music of a war dance; and now those battle fields are but waste and barren places where the chirp of a cricket makes one start, and where the memory of

many a maimed musketeer lingers over the legendary glory of the grandeur of war.

And there I would sometimes linger, and with such reflection as I was capable of, think of the nothingness of glory and the deception of fame; for what advantage has the renown of the warrior over the obscurity of the swain? After all, the heights of eminence are lost in mist, and the hand that has grown crimson in crushing human hearts, cannot resist the worm that assails it in the grave, and a generation hence, the descendants of the victorious armies, yielding to the eloquence of those of the vanished, will (for a jest and a smile) surrender all for which their wise men contended, and that which it took the lives of a million men to purchase, to say nothing of the arson, pillage and murder that ruined the homes of the non-combatants. Thus, I would ponder till mistress and her orphans, Dinah and the children went trooping through my humble brain. What other hand than mine was to support them in their bereavement? This thought would strengthen me, and again I would hurry homeward.

"One evening, when I was about three miles away, I came to a cool spring by the road. There I stopped for refreshment and rest. My! what an influence the scenery of one's early home has on him in after life. When, old and decrepid, he passes some

familiar spot where memory lingers, he renews old associations in dreams of what has been. I had no sooner drunk of the spring and bathed my face in the tranquil waters than all the old life came back to me; for it was at this spring I first met Dinah, and there it was our spirits wed. Busy with my recollections, I was filled with an inexpressible desire to see her; and, forgetting all things else, I rose and pressed forward.

I had not gone far before, to my great sorrow, I discovered I had forgotten the opossum. Hurriedly I went back to the spring for it. The false thing had gone, where I knew not. Search for it was useless, so I resumed my journey. Returning, I had time for reflection, and my mind naturally turned to the jewel. Its value was sufficient to excite, even in my simply mind, mercenary considerations; but I had other motives for keeping it. My master had often told me that it was a talisman that protected the life of the man who kept it about his person; and, when imperilled, all the keeper of it had to do was to say, "Diamonds for life," and he was secure. I confess I desired to keep it because of the value superstition gave it rather than anything else. In the midst of my thoughts of the lost jewel, I arrived at the old homestead. It was not what it was when we, master and I, left it four years ago. The fences were all down, the fields laid waste, thistles grew in the gar-

dens, and where the mansion stood there was a pile of ashes and a naked chimney, that stood a towering ruin in the midst of desolation. I went to the cabin where I had left Dinah and the children. They were gone; all gone! I hung my head of grief; poor, naked, despised, bereaved and alone in the world, what charms had freedom for me! I turned to go away, and a hand touched me on the shoulder. I looked around and beheld him who had been my master, haggard, worn and broken, staggering under the rod of the Conqueror. His head was still up, however, and he tried to hide his emotion, but could not, and holding out his hands to me he stammered:

"I have lost the JEWEL!" fell upon my shoulder and wept like a child.

I made an attempt at condolence, but when I thought of mistress, Dinah and the children, and that they were gone from the old home forever, I too broke down and wept aloud.

After our first wild burst of grief was over we turned silently away and walked across the waste until we came to the old family burying ground, where, from among the weeds, a marble shaft rose, cold and gray in the dreary night, upon which the moon broke its beams and the shadows of occasional clouds fell like funeral palls. Here my companion fell to his knees and read the inscription written there. I asked him what it

was, and in broken tones he said: "Sacred to the memory of our kindred, friends and hope!"

Again I looked for some reminder of Dinah. Not even a wooden slab was there, to mark her sojourn in the hamlet of the dead.

About this time we heard distant thunder, and, looking off toward the southwest, we saw a dark cloud stretched across the horizon, and along its towering thunder-head the livid lightning ran. We hastened away in search of a place of safety, and, in crossing the field, we found an opossum in a persimmon bush. I bent the bush and pulled him down. Renewing our pace and running briskly, we soon reached the public road and came abruptly on a crowd of horsemen. With presented arms they cried:

"Halt!"

We threw up our hands, and I, holding on to the tail of the opossum the while, cried out unconsciously, "Diamonds for life!"

Instantly there was a report of fire arms, and old master fell dead in the road.

Our assailants were three Federal soldiers, two yankees and a Negro. They accused old master of being a Ku-Klux, and me of aiding and abetting his escape. They then demanded of me the diamonds, and I answered evasively, "O pshaw! yer knows I meant de 'possum." The Negro took the 'possum and commanded me to get up behind him,

as he mounted his mule. I did so, and they rode off rapidly with me and the opossum to Atlanta, and arrived here about 2 o'clock this morning. The Yankeeys rode on to the barracks, and the Negro hid the opossum under a tub and went into a hut near by, and I took the opossum (which, to my infinite delight, proved to be my pet one,) and hurried off with it; and for fear that the Negro soldier might come around looking for it, I was in a hurry to take the jewel from its tale."

By this time the barber had honed and stropped his razor, and, turning to Clemmings, gave him a clean shave.

After the shave Clemmings invited him around to his wedding. They were both happy—one in the possession of his jewel and the other in the ecstacy of reciprocated affection. Thus elated, they walked along the street together. Forgetting the past and anticipating the future, they might well be said to be living in the airy mansions of Fancy's building. Presently they came to the house where Julia was. Clemmings tapped lightly on the door and she opened it—rather, the door seemed to have swung back automatically to admit him—and she, leaning on the arms of the preacher, welcomed his coming. Tidy and buxom, she looked what she really was, the picture of health, in chignon hair and Dolly Varden skirts.

Clemmings could not resist the temptation; he caught her by the hand, pulled her to him and kissed her. He then stepped to her side and the preacher adjusted his spectacles. Then it was Julia looked up and caught a full view of the barber, and exclaimed:

"De Lord, bless my soul! Jim, is dat yer?" and leaped into his arms with a bound.

The barber cried, "Dinah, my wife!"

It was all over with Clemmings; but he managed to stammer:

"I thought yer wuz Jule?"

"Namp, dis am Dinah," said Julia.

Of course, you understand the jewel to be a link from the imaginary chain which Lincoln shattered when he signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

He Forgot His Head.

He Forgot His Head.

ABE had been paying court to Miss Nancy for some time; or rather he had been trying to gain her favor, and had so far succeeded that the public believed it was a mutual affair; for it was quietly whispered among the "Upper Tens:" "Dat ol' Abe's gwine ter marry de parson's gal."

Of course Miss Nancy told no one of her thoughts on the subject; and the only mention Abe ever made of it was that made by him over his cups in the "Mandolin Club Rooms," a resort of shady reputation, in Sportsman's Alley, where the colored gentlemen of leisure spend their afternoons at pool, *rogue et noir*, seven-up and dice or craps.

At this particular moment, however, there was a stay in the general business of the establishment, and the gentlemen were standing around befogging the place with cigarette smoke and discussing the characteristics of the beautiful women of the city.

Abe was a merciless individual and cared no more for beautiful young ladies than he did for the

hags of Sportsman's Alley. He assumed the role of a cold, matter-of-fact kind of a fellow; boasted of his celibacy and poked fun at the young men of the club who defended the good name of the women of the upper circle of Fair View society. Throwing his half smoked cigarette aside, cocking his hat on the back of his wooly pate and pretending to be utterly disgusted, he said:

"I 's got no patience wid de chap dat suffers hisse'f ter be pinned to er woman's Easter bonnet. He dos n't come up to de dignaty uv my contemp.' "

"Dat 'pends on who de angel is dat wears de bonnet," said Felix McGraw as he walked up to the table where Abe was, just as he was throwing all women kind off his mind, with a snap of his thumb and finger.

Continuing Felix said:

"I'll bet my plug hat dat yer could not hold yer own wid Miss Nancy Summers er week."

"Ha, ha, ha! who is dat parson's gal Nan? Yer jist watch me one uv dese Easter mornings. I'll have dat gal at my feet yet, an' when I gits her dar I wants all uv yer ter see how I's gwine ter spurn her" So saying he stuck his thumbs through the armlets of his waist coat, threw his shoulders back and strutted about the floors of the club room with a self important air that was really provoking.

And so it happened on an Easter morning, two years ago Abe, arrayed in his best clothing, his shoes smiling under a patent leather polish and his hands toying with a brazen headed walking cane, made his appearance at Foley Chapel, a church of the African Methodist connection that is making rapid advancement in the ethics of higher religious thought, and took his seat in a promineut place near the aisle.

The service began with singing, as usual; which was so rare and entertaining that I forgot to note the preacher's text; but I remember the theme of it. It was the same old story. The one that ever excites in me the keenest interest and the profoundest respect. The suffering, the death, and the resurrection of our Lord and Master, Jesus Christ.

I have heard the subject over and over again;and I am free to tell you that I looked for nothing new on this occasion. This is why, perhaps; I did not hear the reading of the text instead of the singing. The preacher had not said more than half a dozen words, however, before I saw that a master was in the pulpit and that he was making the journey from Bethlehem to Olivet appear in a new light to me.

His discourse was a conversational one; and he, appreciating the grandeur of his subject, and feeling the inspiration of the "Holy Spirit" led us along the the old familiar paths by the manger, out of Egypt in to Nazareth, through Galilee and Judea, stopping oc-

casionally to point out the places of interest to us as we passed. I remember distinctly, as we passed down the western hills and across the valley of the Jordan, he pointed out the Master talking pleasantly to the people as they made their way to the wilderness; or, returning, told him wonderful things of the man who clothed himself with camels' hair, preached repentance of sin, and baptized them in the river Jordan.

They spoke to Him in that persuasive way, which meant that He should hurry on and secure the blessings of the wonderful baptist while it was yet day, unmindful of the fact that He and not John was the Master.

Persuing his theme he brought us to the scene of sacred memory, where Christ stood in the midst of the river with the multitude about Him, while John, lifting his voice from the placid waters, cried aloud, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world!" and God declared from the heavens, "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well pleased."

After this he led us down through the treacherous jungles in the wilderness of sin where the Son of Man was tempted by the Prince of Night, thence up to the pinnacle of the temple, and on to the mountain top, thence down again through the fertile fields of dear old Galilee and Capernaum, thence by the shores

of the beautiful sea, and on and on through the valley of the shadow of death, where Christ made his pilgrimage, dispensing mercy, forgiving sins and redeeming a cursed world.

It was indeed a wonderful sermon. I shall never forget it. It pursues me like a Nemesis through all the meanderings of my sinful career, and seems to accuse me of the crucifixion. Especially so, when I remember the little scene he pointed out to us in Bethany, where the craven, fallen spirit of covetous man sought to appropriate to his own use the essence of an alabaster box, and, failing in this, bartered his friend, his brother, his Master and the salvation of us all for a few pieces of silver.

Climbing up to a premature climax, he told us all about that ungrateful Judas, who, forgetting the loving kindness of the Master, denied him the privacy of his three friends. Then, pausing in his discourse a moment, he said, "My brethren, you will excuse me a moment while I digress a little to indulge in a few personal remarks about this Iscariot;" and fixing his eyes on Abe with so much certainty that the eyes of the congregation were focused on him also, he exclaimed :

"Now, my brethren, behold the wolf in sheep's clothing, and beware of the man who sops his hand in the dish with you.

It was at this point that a big, old brother up in

the amen corner cried out: "Tell it, brudder, tell it!"

This seemed a signal for applause, or rather, as Aunt Rachel says, "Er witnessin' uv de Spearet;" for Sister Lucy began to reel and rock in her seat like a robin on the bow of an apple tree and to cry out, "Glory ter God in de highest; glory, glory, glory!" Then a few of the older ladies, forgetting their rheumatism, ran up and down the open space near the pulpit, exclaiming the while: "They persecu'ed our Lord!"

It was here that the preacher lifted his voice above the noise of the congregation and stormed away; and some of the more lusty ones of the crowd yelled back at him: "Preach, elder, preach!"

The commotion grew. Men, women and children rushed into the aisles and about the church, shaking hands and overturning benches. The service was now anything but pious—a riot pure and simple. It was evident that the preacher's theme had gotten the better of him, and, like a runaway horse, was at large; and he, getting tangled up with the high priest, the thirty pieces of silver and crown of thorns, roamed about the valley of Gethsemane.

Because of the pressure, Abe was crowded off by the door, and I sought refuge behind an overturned bench; and, with the exception of a sprained ankle and a crushed bunion, escaped unhurt.

It was impossible for the sermon to survive this

outburst of passion; so the preacher let us down by calling on Brother John to pray, and he opened up with an echo that made the welkin ring. After this, the service drifted along in the usual way, near the end of which a collection of seventy-five cents was taken. Then the doxology was sung and the meeting closed with benediction by the pastor.

Abe was too much effected by the sermon to speak to Nancy, but he took the preacher aside and said to him:

"Reverend sah, let me conglomerate yer on yer effort; it wuz sure fine, but yer wuz er little personal in yer 'marks."

"I don't understand you, sir."

"Well, I kind er thought yer ought not ter had called me er wolf in sheep's clothin.'

"Why, my young friend, I never thought of you; indeed I did not. I was after that Iscariot of a Judas, John Sloan, up there in the amen corner who kept on calling on me to 'tell it!' until he broke up the meeting and ruined the collection. There are many Iscariots in the world yet, my friend, and the trouble of it is, they have not religion enough to hang themselves.

"I am rather pleased to see you here. I assure you that you have an eternal welcome to Foley Chapel. Suppose you take a seat in the choir and train that fine bass voice of yours to heavenly music."

Abe was delighted with his success. He accepted the invitation to sing in the choir, and left the parson feeling confident that he had made a good beginning. On Tuesday and Thursday nights he met the young people at the parsonage for choir practice; and when on Sunday afternoons, he and Nancy blended their voices into song you may be sure the church services were decidely improved.

Abe was getting along so well with his sacred music that his friends came up from Sportsman's Alley to witness his success. For awhile it appeared as if the whole gambling fraternity were going to dissect the skeletons of their guilty consciences on the confessional. The singing of the choir was grand. And when the preacher said: "Let all the people sing," and those fallen sons from the Mandlin Club Rooms joined in with Abe and sang :

> "Let the lower lights be burning,
> Send a gleam across the wave,
> Some poor, fainting, struggling seaman
> You may rescue, you may save."

every eye in the congregation was moist.

Abe was so intent on building a favorable reputation with the parson, as a kind of foundation for his little flirtation with Nancy, that a half dozen or more Sundays passed before he entered fully upon the prosecution of his plans.

In short, the fine manners, child-like simplicity,

chastity and womanly air of the parson's daughter were so far above any thing he had ever seen or was accustomed to in Sportsman's Alley, that he was at a loss to know just how to begin; and McGraw was so cruelly sarcastic in his remarks that he wanted to be doubly sure that all was well before he began.

That choir practice was a delight to him, because behind it he could hide from his friend McGraw and gaze at Miss Nancy in silent admiration. Really she was an admirable woman. Few men could be flippant with her. There was something magnetic about her that commanded rather than won respect. Abe had tried a dozen times to ask her to grant him an evening's entertainment, when the choir was away; and as many times a peculiar sensation crept up into his throat and choked him into silence, and yet, when he was away in the secluded privacy of his own little room, he was continually perusing a dictionary in search of some rythmical word to rhyme with Nancy.

She felt an interest in him; but it was kindly, rather than affectionate. She, with her father, was trying to lead him through the choir up to a higher plane of life, and he seemed so much pleased with their effort that she was delighted and always welcomed him to the parsonage with a smile.

The choir with its smiling, sweet faced organist may not be the grand highway to heaven; but it is

not without its pilgrims. Nancy, however, had other qualities. She was thrifty and industrious to a fault, and her taste ran to landscape gardening.

Under her management the parsonage yard had been transformed from a dumping ground for tin cans, bones, barrel staves, scraps of paper and rags into a beautful garden. The lawn mower had been freely used and the even, smooth, velvety grass flanked with borders of ever-blooming roses, violets, pinks and other flowers was a sight over which one might linger with satisfaction and delight. That old hat, mildewed pillow and fragments of an old quilt that once protruded from the pane-less window sash the sturdy sentinels against many a stormy day, were now conspicuous by their absence.

I remember with pleasure, a little cluster of morning glories she had reared in front of that window to screen it from the rays of the morning sun. Her cunning fingers had trained them to form themselves into the shape of a human heart, and there they blowed and quivered of mornings like a passion flower.

It was a bright, sunny morning, the last Sunday in May, 1899, the wind came up from the South in refreshing little zephyrs, which just lifted the leaves of the trees, a mocking bird sat in a June apple tree near by warbling one of those inimitable songs a mocking bird only can sing, and the heart of morning

glories glowed with white, red and purple flowers.

Abe was returning from market and caught a glimpse of Nancy through those beautiful vines. She was reviewing the Sunday school lesson, and did not see him. He walked along slowly, and in a half dozen paces looked back as many times, and thought he saw in her ease, grace and beauty personified. About this time, McGraw passed along, and slapping him playfully on the shoulder, said:

"Beware uv de mornin' glories, many er poor fello' er bout here has lost his heart er foolin' wid dem vines."

"Pshaw, pshaw! go 'long dar, nigger! I ain't studyin' yer," said Abe as McGraw hurried on whistling:

"She was happy till she met you,
And the fault was all your own."

Abe walked along the street in an absent minded kind of way till he reached his home. He met his mother at the gate and gave her a steak for breakfast and pork roast for dinner, hurried into his room and sat on the side of his bed. Sitting there alone he felt a strange kind of sensation, his heart quivered like the one of morning glories, and he said aloud:

"My, what a flood of frien'ly feelin' dat parson's gal 'cites in me! I wonders ef I's got heart's d'sease. I's sure gwine ter see Nancy ter day an' splane mysef."

Abe now began to arrange his toilet for Sunday

School. He repolished his shoes, washed his hands and worked on his finger nails for an hour, trimming and brushing them till he wore them off to the quick. He then began on his hair, and here is where the rub came. He brushed it down on this side, roached it up on that, parted it and looked in the glass to see if it was becoming; to his chagrin the part was gone; for his hair had away of crawling back together like lamb's wool. Then he brushed it back and tried it without a part. This would not do; for no gentleman of color can call himself well dressed whose hair is not parted. At last the happy thought came to him to give it a good coating of pomade, part it in the middle and tie it down with a pocket handkerchief for a while. This done, he went on with his toilet to a neat and tidy finish, got his hat and brazon-headed cane and started off for Sunday School just as the bells of the city began to chime out the hour of the afternoon services.

He had been so intent on making a good appearance, that the time had passed him unobserved. Thinking himself in time for Sunday School, he walked leisurely into the church and took his seat in his accustomed place, drew the lesson sheet from his pocket and began to scan the golden text.

The congregation, now began to crowd into the church, the members of the Mandolin Club turning out en-mass; and seating themselves, fixed their eyes

on Abe. He had forgot his head. There he sat the silent producer of suppressed laughter. The preacher seeing his predicament and the people sniggling behind their handkerchiefs and fans, said aloud:

"Will Mr. Bragg please step over to the parsonage and bring me a hymn book?"

Abe felt specially favored at this mark of attention, and pranced down the aisle of the church in his new "Prince Albert" suit, with visions of an afternoon stroll with Nancy, passing through his mind, and the people turning in their seats to gaze at that peculiar dressed head, burst into loud and fitful laughter. He met Miss Nancy at the door, and she exclaimed:

"Oh, Mr. Bragg, what is the matter with your head?"

Then he remembered the handkerchief, and reaching up for it. tore it from his bewildered pate, thrust it into his pocket, and shot down the pavement like a rubber ball thrown from the hand of a school boy, and that "Prince Albert!" Well, it rode the air like a swallow's tail.

A few weeks later there was a quiet little wedding up at Foley Chapel, in which the name of Nancy Summers was merged into Nancy McGraw. No one ever saw Abe Bragg at Foley's Chapel again. The last I heard of him he was blacking shoes in a

barber shop in Chicago by day, and taking lessons in hair culture by night.

Let us hope that he will find some hidden receipt in Nature's laboratory which will obviate the troubles that arise in making a Negro's toilet.

Splitting the Difference.

Splitting the Difference.

It was during the close of our cotton season, last year, when the little incident of which I am now thinking occurred. Owing to heavy rains and disastrous floods, the crops were generally short. Peter Stokes, an old friend of mine, was feeling unusually blue over the results. The prospects were anything but encouraging, and the melancholy aspect of Peter's features was appalling. Not knowing just what to do, he sat in his chimney corner whittling and whistling one of those plaintive airs that will sometimes involuntarily escape from the most of us.

That air is familiar to more people than Peter Stokes. Many a time it has struck the strings of my harp as a kind of requiem to the dead hopes of my castle-building; for the family purse, that is an empty one, is an unwieldy thing.

Since I could remember the Stokes people have been burdened with an empty purse, and the thing is beginning to tell on Peter. It is the direct cause of those long, deep furrows in his face, where misery

nestles as complacently as if it were a mouse of the vestry. With the exception of an old donkey, the purse was the only thing handed down to him on the demise of his father. An heirloom of his ancestry, it descended to him from remote times.

A few weeks ago Peter Stokes, the elder, died, and the day following this sad event his will was read. The family was a large one, and could not, as the will directed, all assemble about the hearth-stone; but there was ample room in the unfenced yard, which was a part of Willow Flats Common. So Peter, the younger, and a committee of three of the older members of the family were, by common consent, selected to hear the reading of it and to report its contents to the remainder of them. The committee gathered around the hearth, took fresh quids of tobacco, drew out their knives and amused themselves by whittling while the lawyer read the will. While this was being done their kinsfolk stood about the yard in little knots, the young people to crack jokes with each other and the older ones to discuss the family pedigrees, which they could trace, in a direct line, back into those dim and misty periods where your imagination would stagger and your memory lose itself in the corridors of time.

The will (a long and cumbersome document) was more an attempt at philosophical deductions on the nothingness of human glory, and the vanity of

man's achievement, than a will. It was full of such quaint expressions as this:

"My beloved kinsmen, remember that you, as did all men before you, and as shall all who come after you, came into this world clothed in ignorance, and the only thing over which you will have undisputed control shall be a shroud. Whatever your earthly possessions may purport to be, this item will finally be the sum total of them all. In this you may pose in state for a season; but, be not deceived, this world, with all its pomp and show, its gloss and tinsel, is but worm-wood and gall; and the worm shall survive *you*.'

"Let this admonish you to look well to our family motto: 'THE APPROVAL OF A CONSCIENCE THAT IS GOOD AND CLEAR IS MAN'S BEST POSSESSIONS'"

After this and many other absurdities similar in their conclusions, this codicil followed:

"Having remembered you, my kinsmen, in the above instrument, it remains my duty to give to my son, Peter, the purse of the family; and our beast of burden, which he will find running at large in Willow Flats Common, these he is to have, to his own proper use and behoof forever. My old friend, Steve Blackwell, is hereby made the executor of my last will and testament, without bond.

"In testimony whereof, I hereto affix my [SEAL.] signature, this 3th day of July, 1900.

"PETER STOKES, SR."

Perhaps the old man's death, his will and the short crops were, in some measure, the cause of Peter's depression; but not the only cause, for he had seen some of these things before. Unfortunate for Peter, he was looking beyond the teachings of his parents. He rather liked the blast of trumpets with which wealth, renown and glory herald their importance. Lord Bacon's philosophy took the ascendancy over that of his father's, and he was meditating a seizure of the forbidden fruit. It was the same old story: a thirst for knowledge; a reaching out after the unattainable; a discernment between good and evil, and a fall; for truly, "Much study is a weariness of the flesh."

If we were ignorant of the inalienable rights of mankind, and the enormity of the evil heaped upon us by him whom fortune has favored, perhaps we could not feel that we are an outraged atom of the universe; and, to the extent of our passive sensibilities, could run life's career with patience and be happy. These are the thoughts that flitted across Peter's mind on that eventful evening when he sat in his chimney corner whistling to his fallen spirits.

Presently he went to the door and looked out on the crimson of the western skies. The twilight of a clear December evening was on, and Vesper swung down the horizon. Standing there alone, he had a celestial vision. It always happens so. When some

"AS HE DROVE HIS TEAM OVER A BAD PLACE IN THE ROAD."

brilliant son of the poor escapes the thraldom of the unlearned, he follows the illusory cadence of the muses until Fate reminds him that it is by work, work, work, and not by the wag of an eloquent tongue, one gets his daily bread; yet Peter, still pursuing the delusion, dreamed aloud:

"The stars go down yon distant slopes,
Where the firmament, like a scroll,
By the touch of an unseen hand,
Seems fondly, carefully rolled.

"Perhaps they mark the pearly strand
Of Aden, the spirit's goal,
And gleam across life's stormy seas
God's beacon-lights to the soul."

In the midst of this miserable attempt at metrical expression, he heard the more musical and reasonable voice of Ike Stubb's ringing out on the evening air:

"Haw, thar! Look at yer, Ball. Come here, Lep. What's ter matter wid yer, Brandy?" and the whick, whack pow of his ox whip, as he drove his team over a bad place in the road. This done, he began to dance and hop about the road and to sing plantation songs, to the great surprise of Peter, for generally, Ike was as sedate as himself.

So Peter walked out to the road to meet him and learn the cause of his merriment. He reached the road just as Ike drove up, and said to him:

"Ike, what on earth is the matter with you?"

"'Kinley proxerity."

"What?"

"'Kinley proxity."

"What is that?"

"Don't know; dat's what Mr. Dale calls it."

Then he began to sing:

"I don't know just what's the matter,
'Ceptin' I'se lately made a hit,
Dat makes me feel dat happee, sah,
Dat I muss shake my foot er bit."

"But Ike, you forget you are a deacon of New Hope church."

"No, I furgits nuthin'; but I's too happee to be er-foolin' wid 'ligeon now. Dat's er spiritous matter, an' I's er feelin' like er fello' citizun."

He then pulled out a handful of new coin and said:

"Ef dat ain't er 'nough ter make yer feel like er gentlemun uv de worl', I'd like ter know what is."

Pleasantly surprised, Peter asked him where he got his money, and he answered:

"Sold my crap ter-day."

By this time Peter had reached his side, and the two walked along by the team, Ike speaking to his oxen occasionally the while. Ike's success reminded Peter of his father's will and the family purse, and he told him all about the old man's teachings and his

intentions; in short, he said he was thinking of going into the money-making business himself, but that it was hard for him to get the consent of his conscience.

After he had finished, Ike gave him some valuable advice on the subject of conscience. This is the Negro's natural element. If there is anything in this world he is proficient in, it is advice-giving. He takes to it like goslings to grass. I never saw one (and I have seen a good many) that could not give advice on almost any subject imaginable. They never say, "I don't know"; and, turning to Peter, Ike said:

"Look er here, frien'; ef yer 'spects to make money, yer can't 'ford to be er-foolin' wid yer conshuuce. No man dat makes money can. Yer jist turn conshunce over ter yer wife and let 'er go."

"Why Ike!"

"Git out uv dat rut dar, Ball! I knows what I's talkin' erbout. I ain't been in de money traffic thirty year fur nuffin'. I never 'mounted ter much tell I lost my conshunce."

"Why, Ike, I thought you told me your success was due to McKinley prosperity?"

"Haw, Lep! Pshaw, man; dat's what de merchan' said. 'Course, I knowed better."

"What did your conscience have to do with it?"

"Come here, Brandy; all tergedder, boys! I

tell yer dese am bad roads. What my conshunce has ter do wid it?"

"Yes."

"Well I'll tell yer: Spring 'fore las' when I gives Mr. Dale de las' deed of trust on my crap an' ev'ry thing else I 'pre-sed my conshunce er little an' lef' dat speckle ox, Lep, over thar out uv it.

"He axed me erbout him lots uv times, but I jist put er screw on conshunce and said, dat ox done died wid de hollow tail long er go. De frien'ship between dat merchin an' me went ter pieces on dat ox an' so one day erbout de middle of plantin' time he comes an' takes ev'rything I had but Lep. Den I goes down in the swamp an' drives him out, hitches him ter my plough an' goes er head.

" What did you do for something to eat Ike? "

" Well, I kinder scrapped around at night, an' de ol' woman peddled chickens in de day."

" What did Mr. Dale think of this?"

Don't know, never sot my foot in his store tell last week, when I drapped around to give him er friendly call."

" Did he have anything to say?"

" Oh yes, he wuz mighty glad ter see me, shook hands wid me an' quired 'bout de ol' woman. He axuley axed me ter take er drink wid him, an ' when I 'fused he gin me er ten cent cheroot an' begged pardon fur axin' er deacon ter drink."

"Mr. Dale is a very kind and obliging gentelman."

"Dat's what he is, or wuz, when he gin ter 'quire 'bout my crap."

"Of course you told him about your great crop."

"Not er bit uv it."

"Why not?"

"Kase I knowed ef I told him de truth erbout it he'd make de little balance I owed him kiver de whole thing. He can come nearer kiverin' er crap wid figers dan eny man I ever seed."

"Be careful Ike or you will slander a good man. There is not a better man in the county than Mr. Dale, his honesty is proverbal."

"Who said it wuzent! I wuz jist speakin' 'bout de way dat man kin sifur."

"Ike I will not stand this; you must apologize."

"Lem me 'splain myse'f."

"Very well, 'splain yourself."

"Well 'bout de time I got through wid dat cheeroot, er 'nigger' comes in wid er basket uv good things ter eat. Now I never had much use fur dese here town niggers, thep won't do; but dis one wuz so very handy, I kinder fell ter likin' him, kase after he'd spread out dat dinner, he sidled up to me and said: "De boss tol' me ter ax yer ter dinner, an' I

fotched yer de cream uv de kitchen. He whispered dat ter me an' straightway I had er fellow feelin' fur him, kase I skivered dat he had drapt his conshunce. He wuz nice too, an' fotched er cheer fur me ter set in. I sot down an' helpt myse'f. Arter erwhile de merchan' cames erlong an' sot down on de other side an' 'gins ter 'scuss ol' times."

"That was very unusual for Mr. Dale."

"Dat's what I thought at de time, and I kinder thinks dat nigger put him up ter it, kase erbout de time I wuz gettin' full of pies, cakes an' sausage, dat nigger brings er round cheroots and wine. We talked on erbout ol' times an' de merchan' tuck er glass of wine. Here my tongue slipped an' I said: "Boss I 'spects I'll make erbout three bales uv cotton dis year." An' he said: "Splendid Ike, splendid!" an' looked at me wid his big blue eys swimmin' er round in tears lik vi'lets under dew.

"Here I seed dat my conshunce wuz er gettin' onruley an' ter steady myse'f I wiped de sweat off my brow wid my coat sleave. Ergin de merchan' said:

"Ike we have been doing business together about thirty years."

"An' I said, "dat's right Boss."

"And not a jolt in our temper."

"Right ergin Boss."

"You remember there was always a little balance of five dollars left over.

"Dhar sure wuz, sez I."

"There are just thirty of them, Ike, which make about one hundred and fifty dollars."

"What yer doin' in dat mud hole Lep? Come here Ball!" Whick,whack, pow went the whip and Ike continued:

"Den he said ter me."

"Ike as you have been a good "nigger" and given me no trouble during all these years, I am going to knock off fifty dollars. Give me a hundred dollars and call it even."

"De next day I tuck him de three bales of cotton an' we settled like men an' I got twenty dollars over. Dat's what he calls 'Kinley proxerity. He den gives me er calicur dress fur 'Lizer. He stood in de door uv his store while I wuz loading my wagin an' spied ol' Lep over dar, an' said: "Ike that looks like that spotted bull you told me died of the hollow tail?"

"Den I told him how fur er year I tied ol' Lep out in de woods wid my conshunce, ter keep him off uv dat deed uv tiust. Dis wuz de truth erbout it, and we drapt de matter by laughing it off."

"Ter-day I tuck him seven bales of cotton more an' got ten cent' er pound fur it."

"And you call this suppressing your conscience?"

"Yer can put any 'struction on my 'marks yer want's ter, I wuz jist givin' yer er case in pint."

Here Ike stopped his team and said :

"Peter what ever come uv yer pa's ol' jack?"

"He is out on Willow Flats Common, why?"

"I wuz thinkin' dat I'd like ter give yer er trade fur him. What'll yer take?"

"He is not for sale at any price, Ike."

"No harm in er feller axin yer, I hope. I's not er hankerin' a'ter my neighbor's goods, but I always had er weakness fur dat critter. Ef yer ever takes er notion ter expose uv him, I has fifty dollars fur yer."

"Peter now bid Ike good night and started back for his home. As he walked along the lonely road Ike's offer of fifty dollars would ever and anon flaunt itself in his face and taunt him with his empty purse. Again and again he turned the relative values of fifty dollars in gold and his father's old donkey over in his mind. God pity the rich man if gold disturbs his slumbers as it did Peter's that night. The next morning he was up betimes and went out to Willow Flats Common, to look at his donkey. He had not gone far, before to his great amazement, he found him by the railroad track dead. For a moment he was at his wit's end; then, remembering the fifty dollars, he started off for Ike's house

with a bound. He found him in his lot feeding his oxen, and said to him:

"Ike, I have thought of your offer all night and I have concluded to let you have the donkey at fifty dollars."

"Not now, yer ought to have tuck me up last night. Since I comes ter think uv it, he's too old.

"You are mistaken about his age, Ike. He is not over seven years, if that."

"Ha! ha! ha! what yer done wid yer conshunce?" Man, dat jack am fifteen years old, ef er day."

"No he is not. Go look at his teeth."

"I has er better way than dat ter prove his age. Whar's Mose? Mose, come here Mose!"

"Here me, daddie."

"How old is yer, boy?"

"I's eighteen, daddie."

"How you knows dat, son? Tell Mr. Stokes."

"Kase mammy says I wus born when Mr. Smith built the new gin house, an' I heard him say year before last dat he built it eighteen year er go."

"Right, son. Ah, Mr. Stokes, I told yer so, dat jack wuz er colt when Mose wuz er baby."

"There is fifteen years good service in that donkey yet, Ike." Said Peter, in one desperate effort to bring Ike around to a trade.

"Does yer think so?"

"I know it."

"Den I'll tell yer what I'll do."

"Yes."

"Split de diffence wid yer."

"Split the difference with me!"

"Dat's it, yer an' yer daddy has had dat jack fifteen or more years; I'll take de other fifteen an give yer twenty-five dollars. What yer say? Is it er trade?"

"As I am needing money pretty bad, I guess I'll have to take it, but it is a hard bargain."

"I has yer money here sah."

So saying, Ike counted out twenty-five dollars and handed it to Peter. He took it and demanded twelve and a half dollars more.

"Man, is yer crazy? Twenty-five dollars wus de price."

"No, thirty-seven and a half dollars was the price. I wanted fifty dollars, you offered twenty-five. Then we split the difference."

"No sah, we split the difference in time, not money. Yer have de money an' its er trade."

"It is not a trade; here is your money back."

"No, no, no! I makes no chilllun's barg'ins, its er trade. Mose, come here Mose!"

"Yes, sah."

"Son, yer go look fur dat jack, an' don't yer stop till yer has kotched him, do yer hear."

Upon this Moses started off to look for the donkey; Peter turned away, saying he would sue Ike; and Ike went into his house and sat down to his morning meal, with all the ease of a prosperous man, sipped his coffee and talked pleasantly to his wife, of his affairs; dwelling with satisfaction on his trade with Peter.

Leaning back in his chair and rubbing his hands, he said:

"Lizer, dat wuz the trade uv my life. De idee uv some folks boastin' uv superiosity. I got dat "Red Neck's" jack fur less 'an ha'f his value. He's worth er hundred ef er cent. Got him fur twenty-five."

About this time Moses came running in, and said: "Daddie the jack is dead!"

"What yer say?"

"Dead!"

"Who's dead?"

"De jack yer bought from Mr. Stokes."

Upsetting his coffee and stumbling over a chair, Ike rose, grabbed his hat and bolted out of the door. Running at full speed, he soon reached the station where Peter was. Some distance away from it, however, he saw Peter talking to a well dressed man, and just as he got in speaking distance of them he heard the well dressed man say:

"Split the difference," as he stepped into the

magistrate's office. Coming up to Peter, Ike said:

"Yer's er capitul joker; but I wants my money back."

"You want what?"

"My money. I sees it all now; its er joke an' no trade."

"No, Ike; its a trade and no joke."

Ike insisted that it was not a trade and Peter held that it was. But Peter was simply leading Ike along, and seeing his opportunity he said:

"Ike, since you say the donkey is dead, I'll tell you what I'll do."

"What's dat, boss?"

"I'll split the difference with you; give you twelve and a half dollars and take the dead donkey. What do *you* say?"

After a moment's pause Ike said:

"Well, dat's more 'an nothin', I'll take it."

Again it was a trade; and Peter handed him twelve and a half dollars. They now walked into the magistrate's office where the well dressed man was. He took Peter aside and they held a conversation in an undertone: but Ike heard him say "split the difference," and Peter say, "yes." Then they came back to the table and the well dressed man wrote a receipt which read as follows:

"Received of the Illinois Central Railroad Company seventy-five dollars for one donkey, which was

killed by the cars of the Company, December 22, 1900; said seventy-five dollars being in full of all demands by me against said Company down to date.

PETER STOKES."

Then it was Ike walked up to the well dressed man and said: "Boss, please tell me yer name?"

"Fred Sampson, Stock Claim Agent for the Illinois Central Railroad Company. Why?"

"Well, Mr. Sampson, yer is er mighty fine specification, but yer's ez green ez I is. Both uv us is duped by the trader uv dead jack asses.

Adam Shuffler.

"ADAM SHUFFLER."

ADAM SHUFFLER.

IN cunning, the Negro measures up favorably with the rest of the human family; and in dissimulation he is a "Past Master." He can give the Spaniards, the Chinaman or any other class of human beings points in this, the finest of arts. If ever he is placed on our diplomatic staff, where he can deceive with impunity, the world will be startled with the smoothness of his procedure. It is this trait more than any other, perhaps, that has kept him from being utterly ruined by his pale faced brother.

And now that we are alone; out of ear-shot of the vulgar; you and I, secluded from the prying gaze of the public eye, I will tell you of a little incident in the life of my old friend Adam Shuffler. I must exact of you, however, an unconditional promise that you will not tell it to another, living, human, being, because I pledged him upon my sacred honor, that I would never divulge it, except in a low breath, and that to a brother, professionally. Perceiving you to have been initiated I await your promise?

Ah, thank you!

Well, to begin with; Adam was of the old school. To use his own words, he was "one of de 'fore de war niggers, dat knows er white man."

He had been caught in the act, and brought in on the usual charge, "Chicken Lifting," tried, convicted and was about to be sentenced when, the Court, by way of amusement, asked him if he had anything to say why he should not be fined.

If I live till the end of time, I cannot forget the repentant aspect of his features as he rose to state his case. His was not dilitory pleas and demurrers, nor special pleas in bar and abatement; but a bundle of extenuating circumstances that was a defense.

Standing there, and wiping the sweat from his forehead with his coat sleeve, he said:

"Mars William, please read ter me dat little bit uv news what yer was readin' when I comes in here."

"Certainly," said the magistrate and, picking up the paper, he read as follows:

"Mrs. A. B Johston, widow of a gallant Confederate soldier, is in dire distress and want. Her house was burned last night. All she had went up in smoke. The White Ribbon Society appeals to a generous public in her behalf. Anything given will be thankfully received. Leave all contributions with Mrs. A. L. Dodd, and oblige.

Mrs. Annie Smith, President.

The magistrate laid the paper aside, and Adam said:

"Mars William, what did yer say yer foun' me?"

"Six dollars and cost, Adam."

"How much is dat?"

"Nine and a half dollars."

"Well, I's jist got ten dollars, yer take it an' give it to dat widow wid my complimentory. I aint er gwine ter see no soldier's widow suffer while I's got er cent. An' ef yer can get er little cookin' an' washin' fer Lizer ter do, I'd be mighty thankful' fur she aint got er dust uv meal in de house. I'll work dis here fine out, an' if de good Lord lets me live I'll let Lizer's hens raise de chickens we eats a'ter dis."

"But, Adam, there are six other charges against you; how about those?"

"I's nothin' more ter say."

"Why, the total cost and fines of these charges would be sixty-six and a half dollars, and it will take you thirteen months to work them out on the prison farm. Do you plead guilty to these charges?"

"I leaves dat ter yer white folks."

"The magistrate, feeling the force of Adam's sacrifice, folded up the other affidavits against him and filed them away as he said to Adam:

"The constable will take you to jail, I will not try you on the other charges to-day."

The officer led him away; the magistrate gave

his contribution to the White Ribbon Society; and a newspaper reporter, who was a silent observer of the little scene, wrote up a vivid description of Adam's action in the court-room, under this glaring head line: "A GENEROUS NEGRO."

That night every business man of the city read the story of the "Generous Negro," to his family, and the next day a subscription was started, not only for the widow, but for Adam also. All the other fines against him were withdrawn, his fine of nine and a half dollars was paid and a nice little sum was handed to his wife by the president of the "White Ribbon Society."

He used to laugh and tell me about it, always winding up with these significant remarks:

"I knowed I wuz playin' er trump card; but I had no idee dat I wuz gettin' er good name fur honestee dat would last fur ever. Dat wuz twentee years ergo, an' I's had spring broilers on my table ev'ry mornin' since. I tells yer dat de best place for de cullod brudder am in Mississippi, an' de best thing fur him ter do after he gits dar is ter git on de white side uv public 'pinion."

I hope this little narration of Adam's proclivities is sufficient to introduce to you our family trait, and relying on you to keep your promise and never divulge what I have told, I bid you a merry good night.

Hagar.

HAGAR

HAGAR was a peculiar, though good woman. When I say good I hope you will understand me, and not look for anything beyond the ordinary. I simply mean that there was not a particle of good within the circle of her environments which she did not absorb. From this point of view, she was as good as she could be. Like the most of us, she had her prejudices, and generally formed her opinions of people and things from hearsay. These opinions, once formed, were never changed. They were just so.

In this she showed her ante-bellum rearing, and reflected every sentiment of that high-minded and chivalrous people, who have allowed their opinions to so crystalize into a single idea that they are known the world over as the people of the "Solid South."

She was as much a part of this people as if her features were as white as monumental alabaster, and her eyes tinged with the blue of an April sky; and yet, she was as black as polished ebony.

Her form was not as graceful as some I have

seen; yet, from the view point of the anatomist, her physique was one which you might envy. She was about five feet high; half as wide out as she was tall, apparently; thick in proportion, and tipped the beam at two hundred pounds.

With her tin tub under her arm, she appeared to best advantage in her work-day clothes; with a handkerchief wound about her head like a Turkish turban, her skirts hitched up at the side and fastened with the strings of her apron, she stood, in her number ten brogans, a giantess indeed.

There were many things in her simple life worthy of the attention of the ethologist; but, as his is a science above me, I shall content myself with this simple story of her.

From early life she had collected from rumor reports of the acts of that class of our fellow-citizens commonly called "Red Necks," which had so biased her opinion that she viewed them with an evil eye. To be brief about it, she looked upon them as White Caps, murderers and assassins; and, if they were not cannibals, they were, nevertheless, savages who would apply the torch to a Negro's cabin, lynch him or burn him at the stake, with as much lightheartedness as school children would enter upon the gambols of a holiday.

These reports were highly colored with fiction, it is true, but she believed them, and hence she was

"WITH A TIN TUB UNDER HER ARM."

unprepared to give the Red Necks impartial consideration. This, I confess, was a bad state of mind for Hagar or any one else, and my apology for her is this: Her mental make-up had less of the divine than the human in it, and, leaning to the shady side of her nature, she fell into those little errors to which human nature is prone.

Actuated by these, she brooded over the annals of the Red Necks until they became the burden of her thoughts and the incubus of her slumbers; and, if she could have had her way, something out of the usual order of things would have happened. As it was, the expected occurred.

"Arson?"

No, not that! The winking at the law by us Americans, together with the license we give the favored few to do violence, has not so far advanced in its tutelage of our meaner passions as to cause us to retaliate with the torch; but we are improving. Perhaps the legacy we leave our children may, in the fourth generation, have this item to its credit. This, however, is not the theme of these remarks; and it is not necessary to dwell longer on the proclivities of Hagar.

It is enough to say that May the 1st, 1895, Mr. Trobridge moved into the community where she lived. She was away from home at the time, but she returned during the early afternoon, and her children met her

at the gate. Gathering around her, they, with moist eyes and ashen lips, whispered, "Red Necks!" and pointed across the street to where our brother in white had moved, whereupon she and the children hurried into her house. Once over the threshold, she shut and barred the doors, fell across the bed and cried, "Oh! Lord, de devil is done come."

Unmindful of her misgivings, Mr. Trobridge went about his business as cheerfully as was customary with him; and it is but doing him justice to say he was a broad and liberal-minded man, who was above the little racial prejudices that pervade inferior minds. He felt, nevertheless, that white men are above black ones by force of divine will—that it was not in the nature of things for Negroes to equal Caucasians; hence, he was above those little malicious tendencies Hagar supposed a Red Neck to have; and, thankful for the superior position in which the Master had placed him, he was trying to obey the command, "Go, ye, therefore, and teach all nations." With this thought uppermost in his mind, he took his residence among the Negroes, determined to treat them graciously. Unfortunate for him, however, he had a rosy complexion and a red neck. From this point it was but a step to the combative tendencies a Red Neck is said to have, she took it. Brooding upon these, she was soon as malicious as she believed Mr. Trobridge to be, and she meditated violence.

There was no getting along with Hagar. She was on the rampage from start to finish. Many are the misdemeanors she committed, all of which Mr. Trobridge, good-naturedly, overlooked. Thus favored, she developed a boldness that was menacing, and succeeded with her meanness pretty well in everything but one. She could not keep her boy, Sam, away from the Trobridge residence. Do what she would, he turned up there occasionally, and was quite handy in running errands and doing little jobs of work around the house and garden; for all of which Mrs. Trobridge paid him handsomely, and frequently gave him little bits of sweetmeats from her pantry.

But the thing that attracted Sam most was the billy goat the Trobridge boys, Bill and Tom, had. This goat had been taught to do all manner of tricks; and of evenings, when school was out and the work all done, the boys had glorious times with it on the commons behind the lot. They called the goat Sul., in honor of their ideal prize-fighter, John L. Sullivan, and because of the quick and sudden lunges it always made in the many fights they mischievously got it into. Using its head as Sullivan would his fist, the goat was a pugilistic gentleman of high standing among the boys.

This also was a source of annoyance to Hagar and furnished her with an additional pretext to taunt the Trobridge family, so she made it a point,

whenever she saw them on their front gallery with company, to stand in her door and yell to the top of her voice—and she had a voice—a big, sonorous, one that would make the welkin ring. With this voice pitched in its uppermost keys, she would call, "You Samu'l? Ef yer don't come er way from dat poor white trash, I's gwin ter beat yer gizart out en yer."

Now if there is anything in this world that will rasp a white man's soul, it is to be called poor white trash by a negro. This is usually his fighting piece, but Mr. Trobridge stood it pretty well. He rather enjoyed seeing Sam scamper away and come up through his mother's back-yard whistling,

> I don't want to play in their yard,
> I don't like 'um any more;"

and to hear Hagar's blasted scolding, "look er here nigger, don't yer come er foolin wid me, I has er mindter beat de liver out en yer."

In spite of herself, Hagar was getting the worst of it; and between the Trobridge family and Sam, she found worry enough to urge her to resentment. Gradually she worked herself up to desperation. At last she concluded, "dat er Red Neck wuzn't so much no how;" and she hankered after a personal combat.

Burning with this desire, she lay down one day for her after dinner nap, and soon fell to dreaming of cracked heads, pools of blood and the funeral of a

certain prominent citizen, from which she was awakened by the clock on the stroke of four o'clock p. m.

It was May 30th, 1895. All the neighbors of the vicinity had gone to the Decoration except Mr. Trobridge. In the 'after-malice' of her dreams she looked up and saw him in his yard, under an elm tree. His hat had fallen off, his paper lay loose on his knee and his jaw had collapsed. He slept. Then it was, she seized a large carving knife and hurried out with it under her apron. She crossed the street and crept along the side-walk by the board fence till she was near the point where he was. Here, through a crack in the fence, she caught a better view of him. There he was with his head dropped to one side, his shirt collar open and his red neck in full view. Was there ever a better mark for the assassin's blade. She crept cautiously on, reached the gate, lifted the latch and looked around to see if all was clear, she was alone with her victim; and save Sul., the goat, that stood near chewing the advertising page of the paper, there was no eye to see.

Nearer and nearer she came, took the knife from its hiding place and ran her thumb along its blade to test its edge. It was never sharper. Then crouching and leaning forward, she nerved herself for the fatal blow, when suddenly there was a lunge and a pile of ebon hued flesh lay along the earth, with a very much bruised head, from which there came

groans of agony and despair. These disturbed the sleeper and he awoke. Looking down on the prostrate form before him he thought she was sufiering of apoplexy; and, going to the hydrant, he turned a faucet and dashed water in her face.

This revived her somewhat and scrambling to her feet she said, "Thank yer sir; yer's sure been good ter me," and left his premises. Is it necessary to say the goat thought Hagar was after him, and accepted the challenge.

A Dollar's Worth of Conscience.

A Dollar's Worth of Conscience.

PETER SNELLING was accustomed to windows in the crown of his hat. Long before he came to his patrimony, his weather worn coat hung from his shoulders awry; his legs, always a little crooked, had taken additional curves. These, however, were thought to be due to the dip of his shoes. His pure English had lost its refinement in the slang of the slums; in short, socially speaking, his sun had set. *This was his wretched state when*, on the tenth day of May 1880, the executors of the Snelling Estate, handed over to him his legacy of twenty-five thousand dollars.

I remember him well. The day before he came into the Mission Station and took the pledge of the "White Ribon Society" and in a nice little speech emphasized his intention to lead a better life. Perhaps I gave him unusual attention, because of the light that beamed in the eye of our secretary, Blanche Burtrim, while he was addressing the meeting. Miss Burtrim was an unassuming; sedate kind of a person and during the short year of our acquain-

tance I do not remember to have seen her smile, and, were it not for the attention she gave the topers, who, from time to time attended our meetings, one would have thought hers a hard and unforgiving nature, void of the tender sentiments of affection.

Attracted by the smile that rippled across her face, I watched her through the whole proceedings of the evening's exercise to learn at last that hers was an affair of the heart, deep, lasting, eternal and that her king of hearts had taken the pledge.

The meeting closed and they walked slowly down the aisle, under the chandeliers together. She, with her face aglow in its triumph, looked on his haggard features and smiled; and when he gave her the assurance she had prayed for she laughed aloud. Oh! the music, the cadence, the indescribable grandeur and beauty Hope gives the visage when it laughs and chases Despair from the soul with smile.

I now determined to keep this young man under my observation; and you may be sure I was agreeably surprised while walking down Beal street, in Memphis Tennessee, a few days later to see a nice little sign, swinging before the main entrance of the office building of the city, upon which was written: "PETER SNELLING, Attorney and Counselor-at-Law." Later in the day, during my rambles about the city, I found him directing the renovation, repairing and painting of the old Snelling homestead which had

been closed for years. A fortnight later I received an invitation to a quiet wedding at St. Andrew's church, 22nd Avenue, Memphis, Tennessee. I went and saw groom and bride plight their faith over the bridal altar and pass thence to the pilgrimage of life. Need I tell you our Secretary married the toper, Peter Snelling.

After this, life hurried us along our different ways and I could not see them as often as I desired; but I heard from them occasionally, and the reports, I am pleased to say, were encouraging. They were in the lap of fortune, and the world smiled. Time passed and I heard that my friend Snelling had made a fortune by speculating in cotton futures. This, to be sure, was not bad news; but some how I shuddered when I heard it. How could I do otherwise, when I remembered the gidy heights to which this pursuit of fortune leads one; and how rapid the descent if fortune should frown; for he who gambles at stocks, securities and futures has no more certain gains than the man who plays at rouge-et-noir. The end is ruin. The years passed and things changed, the annals of which are not necessary to this narration. It is enough to say that my young friend, flushed with the excitement of the exchange, followed his associates to the club rooms; where champagne, wine and whiskey inveigled him to the giddy heights whence fortune takes its flight and the miserable wretch that

dallies with it must descend the slippery prescipice to the bottomless pit. Snelling began his descent with a blast of trumpets and a group of the boys, hale and hearty fellows, well met. Easily and imperceptibly to himself he went down until his name became a by-word.

Every one forsook him but his wife. She, like the gaurdian angel she was, hovered about him in his degradation; and in the hovel he finally designated as home, prayed for his deliverance. *At no time had he a definite state, but his tendency was generally down, till late one night he came in* from a wild debauch and fell senseless to the floor in a drunken stupor. She was sick at the time, but she nursed him into consciousness.

Then it was his thirst became unbearable and he plead with his wife for just one more drink, as one under conviction for crime pleads for respite; and she, yielding, gave him their last coin, saying, "take it Peter, it is the last of all your fortunes." Handing him a note also, she sank to their pallet of straw, of a broken heart. He gave the note a passing glance and dropped it to the floor in contempt. The note read as follows:

May 10th, 1895.

"Pete Snelling:

Your rent is six months in arrears. Unless

you pay it to-day, I shall have to put you out by force.

HARRY STONE."

Snelling paid but little attention to the notice, but with the dollar in hand he went out for his drink, and as he hurried along the street some truant school boys, meeting, him, began to sing:

"Old Peter Snelling!
Smell 'm, smell 'im, smell 'im,
Like a barrel's bung,
He smells of rum,
Rum, rum, rum."

He stopped to listen and the boys passed on, yelling, "Like a barrel's bung he smells of rum." till they lost themselves in the distance; but still the echo, "Rum, rum, rum," fell upon his years, like distant thunder.

His legs now refused to carry him, and he sank to the curbstone and wept aloud. Memory was busy with him, and it carried him back to the mission station, where many years ago Hope stamped on Miss Burtrim's face its triumphant smile as he took the pledge. It all came back like an avenging Nemesis to haunt him. He remembered the Snelling fortune—gone, all gone!—not a cent remained.

At last he felt the dollar Blanche had given him, and with it he resolved to renew the battle of life. "I will return and give her this," he said, and clutch-

ing it in his boney fingers, he arose and walked erect to their humble home, a converted man.

He found his wife on their pallet of straw where he had left her; and calling her by name, he said, "Blanche, I have a dollar's worth of conscience left, and it has brought it back to you." She answered him not. Then, bending over her, he lifted her in his ams and looked her in the face. She recognized his repentance. At the close of his plea for forgiveness, she answered: "Peter, again I forgive you all." These were her last words. Then the sun was darkened and a mourner went about the street penniless and alone; for the soul of Blanche Burtrim had passed to its reward,

De Eloquent Far'well.

De Eloquent Far'well.

EPHRAIM and Eliza were on the sunny side of what had been a stormy courtship. I suppose this from the fact that they were mutually attracted and, it is said, "true love never runs smoothly;" and because of the furter fact, that the Rev. Phillip Saunders, Eliza's father, was opposed "Ter low bred 'niggers' 'sinuating on the cullord 'stockracy." These were his words whenever he happened to speak of Ephraim.

It was for this reason more than any other, perhaps, that Parson Saunders sent his daughter, "Lizer, ter College," whence after two years hard study, about Eph, she returned with a certificate of proficiency "in de art uv hoecake making," and a smattering of the king's English.

The evening after her return Ephraim called to see her; and she, still laboring under her infatuation for him, gave him a hearty welcome. They passed a delightful evening, and ere they were aware the clock chimed out the midnight hour. It was time to go, and Ephraim was performing that painful duty.

"Dis am whar my 'gre's comes in;" he said, as he paused on the steps, took her by the hand and looked wistfully up into her face, with that peculiar swelling throat and trembling lip which we have all felt when framing our plea for love's first kiss, when Eliza, a little vain of her college training, began to talk of the elcquence of farewell; repeating, for instance, a nice little poem from the annals of Tuskegee lore, which, as well as I can remember, was in these words:

"Dah am times when one lingers,
When yer tongue done stood stark still,
Times when de touch of fingers,
Sends throu'h de heart er thrill,
When yer soul tugs at its burden,
Queries of de mystic spell:
Whose gwine er be in yer sweet thought
When I has said farewell?"

Instead of a kiss Ephraim now plead for a copy "Uv dem sweet lines;" and she scribbled them off and gave them to him. Placing them in his inner pocket, next to his heart, he retired.

How extravagant are the dreams of those who love! Was there ever a living, human, being as pretty as Eliza, when she stood on her father's veranda repeating "De eloquent far'well?" With her sparkling eyes and graceful airs, she was the delight of his wakeful hours and the idol of his dreams.

Love makes all things beautiful, and from

Ephraim's point of view Eliza was as lovely as the graces. He lay down and spent the night in dreams of her.

The next morning he was up and at work betimes with a light heart and an active fancy, such as reciprocated affection always gives. He was a horse jockey and worked at the stables of Mr. George Jones; and while he was a faithful servant, he was not a very active one. A kind of plodding fellow that cared nothing about the forelocks of time. For this reason Mr. Jones kept a close watch on him; but on this occasion he had groomed the horses, cleaned out the stalls, and was sitting on an inverted wheel barrow racking his brain in the vain effort to find some suitable rhyme, "Fer dem sweet lines of Lizer's," when Mr. Jones walked up to him and enquired what he was about. He told him of his last evening's call on Eliza, showed him her stanza, and with a sigh from his perplexed soul expressed a desire "ter 'muse dat parons's gal." Somewhat of a verse maker himself, and feeling a deep simpathy for Ephraim, Mr. Jones undertook to help him out; and so it was, he wrote for him these simple lines:

"Adie! It is never,
Farewell to you my dear,
You are present ever,
In fancy always near,
Bewitching with your manners,
Enchanting with your face,
Subduing me fair angel,
With your elegance and grace.'

Nothing could have pleased Ephraim better than these lines and he began to train upon them at once. He repeated them over and over again until he knew them as well as he knew his own soul. This done, he began to practice on the proper pose and gestures to be used in his rehearsal. No pains were spared; for this was to be the occasion of his life. There was to be no more quotations from the legendary annals of Negro lore; even those racy little lines:

"Ez sure ez the stump holds up de vine,
Yer am a lobley sweet-heart uv mine."

were forgotten, or rather crowded out by Mr Jones' compliments to Eliza's stanza. Ephraim was elated and, ever and anon, he would repeat to himself: "Gwine er courtin' like white folks."

Then pausing in his work he would say: "Lemme see ef I knows it," and go on:

"Er d'eu! it am neber,
Far'well ter yer my dear;"

"Dat am fine, 'ristocratic, I's sure gwine ter spread myself ter night.

"Yer is wid me eber,
In fancee al'awys near."

"Dat's what she is; wonder how dat white man eber kotched my thought. He's sure got er 'zernment."

These and a thousand other nonsensical ex-

"LEM ME SEE IF I KNOWS IT."

pressions fell from Ephraim's lips that afternoon as he went about the stable, happy in the thought that, for once in his life, he could give Eliza the entertainment her polite manners and station deserved. Mr. Jones, a thorough elocutionist, was an ideal teacher; and Ephraim was an attentive and eager student. He learned his lesson well. Their efforts were in every way a success. Ephraim was happy, and ere the sun was down he had arranged his toilet and was on the way to Eliza's where he arrived a few minutes after eight o'clock.

She was in splendid spirits and, as was usual with her, gave him a pleasant time In many respects the evening was the most delightful one he had ever witnessed. He was never in better humor; and his wit was fine. Filled with admiration for each other, they laughed—and talked—and sang; he growing bolder and she losing some of her coyness as the time went by.

The Reverend Saunders was busy, "'Paring a sermont fer de sinner "cong'egation uv Big Bethel," a church of Methodist persuasions down in Summerville, and hence did not disturb them with his frequent visits to the sitting room as was customary with him when Ephraim was present. But love in the flesh has a transient effect and joy is as rapid in its flight as time.

Again, the clock chimed out twelve, "Midnight!

an' I aint sed my piece yit," he thought, and arose to go. She rose also and, side by side, they walked slowly toward the door, she toying with his hat the while. They stoppped on the steps, and Ephraim, as directed by Mr. Jones, lifted her hand to his lips and kissed it, saying as he did so: "Miss Lizer wont yer conglomerate me wid er replication uv dem sweet lines 'bout de eloquent far'well?" She discovered that Ephraim, under a slight nervous attack, had mixed things a little; but she was cool and, anxious to please him as well as to coax him into popping the question, threw her soul into expression and said her verses.

Then it was that he, taking a dramatic pose, began as follows:

"Er d'eu! It am neber,
Far'well ter yer my girl,
Yer am wid me eber,
Ter de end uv dis big worl'
Disgustin' wid yer graceless,
Highfaluntin' gaze,
An' hantin' me fer eber,
Wid yer outdacious ways."

Surprised and disgusted with the poetic outburst of her gallant wooer, she gave him a pitiless look of scorn andin an instant she closed the door. Dazed by her sudden flight, he turned on his heel and stag-

gered down the steps, muttering as he went: "Well, now ef dat aint cur'ous! dah aint no tellin' 'bout er gal no how. Dat gal can't 'preciate good poems. She's jest' igno'nt, dat's all.

FINALE.

FAREWELL, AURELIA.

I stand in the crowded boulevard,
Where the city's horde goes by,
And many are they I follow
Down the pavement with a sigh,
For the like of her whom fate hath borne,
Forever and forever off,
Across the mystic sea;
The sainted one the angels loved,
And took away from me.

But nevermore will rise for me
Life's stormy seas above,
That radiant star which marked my fate,
The lady of my love,
For the angels envied her to me,
And o'er my azure sky they hung
The shadow of a pall,
Through which her orbs send not their beams,
Nor comes answer to my call.

Farewell, farewell! a last farewell!!
Incentive to love's dream,
Thou radiant being from whose soul
A thousand graces gleam,
And light thee to thine Aden home,
Where cherubs will embrace thee, love,
With ecstacies divine;
Yet know they but adore thee there
With passion less than mine.

"IN AN INSTANT SHE CLOSED THE DOOR."


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