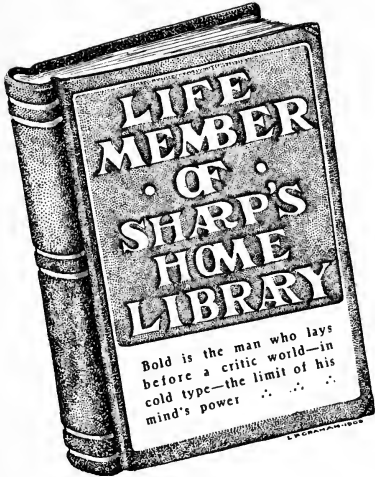


HENRY BOURLAND

The Passing of the Cavalier

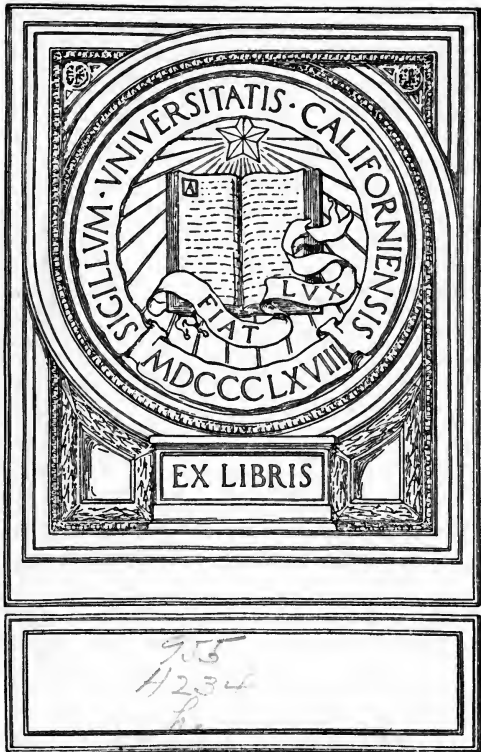


ALBERT ELMER HANCOCK



Bold is the man who lays
before a critic world—in
cold type—the limit of his
mind's power ∴ ∴ ∴

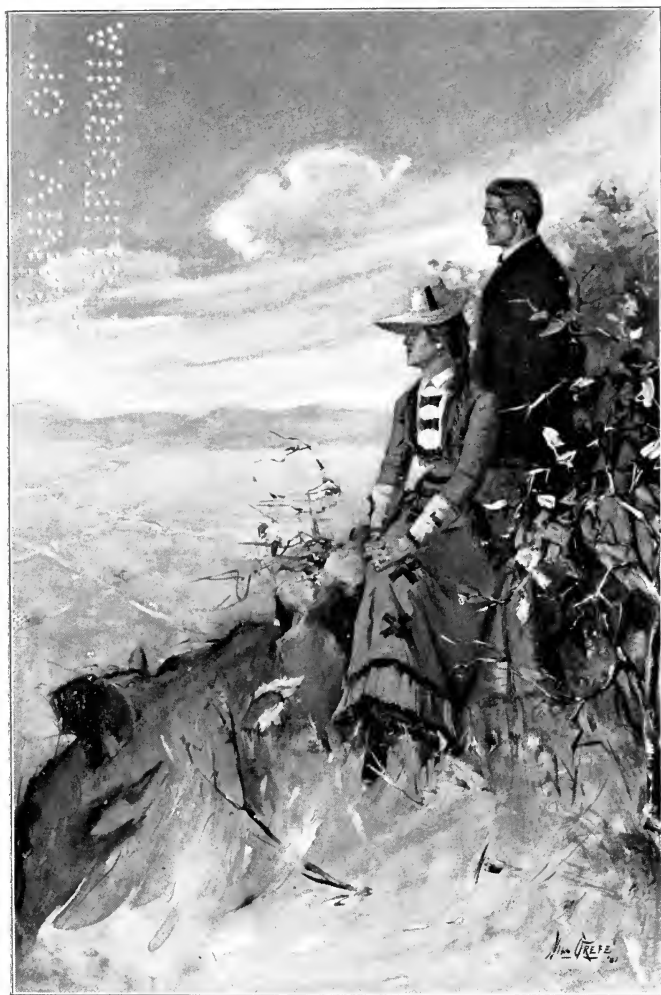
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HENRY BOURLAND

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“A child’s toy house it seemed, from the heights.”

HENRY BOURLAND:

THE PASSING OF THE CAVALIER



BY

ALBERT ELMER HANCOCK

!!

New York

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ALPHABET

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To my Father

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FOREWORD

A QUARTER of a century has passed since the Civil War, and the era of reconciliation has come with the new generation and the judgments of impartial historians. This book is an endeavor by one bred in the North to write sympathetically the annals of a Virginia family, and to show how, amid the conditions following the war, it was impossible for the wealthy planters to recover their status upon the old basis. In its broader aspect the story is a symbol of the extinction of the Southern aristocracy and their ideals and traditions as social forces. The scene is localized in Virginia, but the events give a composite picture of what took place in the South at large during the years of the Reconstruction. In one sense the narrative is fiction; but in another and truer sense, for most of the incidents have warrant in fact, it is a history of general conditions turned into the concrete. Other books have been written on this subject; but no Northern writer of fiction, so far as I know, has gone out of his own environment and has taken up the case of the Southerners for the purpose of learning and writing absolutely from their point of view. I have here tried to see and feel everything with the eyes and prejudices of the cavalier

and the advocate of the lost cause. Such an attitude does not, of course, tell the whole story ; but it does put one in sympathetic touch with the other half of it. And that, I am sure, is a great help in the search for the truth. Long ago Daniel Webster said that if the two sections only understood each other, there would be no conflict. It is the essence of tragedy that often we can understand only after the clashing of arms.

A. E. H.

PHILADELPHIA, 1901.

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BOOK I

THE HOUSE UPON THE ROCK

CHAPTER I

THE FIRING ON FORT SUMTER

BEFORE daybreak, on the 12th of April, 1861, the hush of Nature's peace brooded over the fair lands of Virginia.

The sun rose lazily while the east was a gorgeous confusion of vermilion and shimmering gold. The mist began to dissolve in the warm breath of the south wind, and the denser masses of cloud drifted with the upper currents of air toward the north. Two hours after dawn the sun shone down from the clear, candid glow of the sky, and the glare of the light awoke the drowsy sluggards in the village of Brayton.

Through the diaphanous vapor which still lingered along the ground, the church spires, the town hall, the clustered houses, gleamed with the iridescence of opal. The trees gave the jewel a setting.

Brayton lies along the banks of a stream that sweeps a few miles below into the James. And this stream, the Lacamac, marks the line where the tidewater lands begin to slope up toward the jagged bastions of the Blue Ridge.

A bird of passage saw in the country below a vast mosaic of color; fields and woodlands, patches of ploughed furrows, flecks of spring's yellow and green, blotches of stubble and fallow land; and interlacing all, with sinuous threads, the rusty-hued roadways and tawny watercourses.

When the town clock struck nine there were many signs

of life in the valley. A locomotive screamed along the foothills and silenced its own echoes; oxen were dragging clumsily at the plough; slaves, watched by Argus-eyed overseers, were harrowing, planting, hedge trimming, or clearing the pungent fields. Near the village a gang of men, lazily laborious, were repairing the ramshackle bridge.

At this hour the gentlefolk were beginning the day. Over at Rockingham a young farmer was dressing with solicitous care; it was his marriage morning, and his relatives at Leeds were preparing to entertain the bride during the honeymoon. A planter from Cameron was riding into Brayton in search of a runaway slave. The Cravens, of Harlan Hall, accompanied by the pomp of postilion and outrider, were dashing along on a ceremonial visit to their neighbors at Larchmont Manor. Indeed, on this bright April morning the people of Virginia, at work or at pleasure, were planning and performing—endeavoring, like the rest of the world, to make life worth the living.

Beneath the surface, however, there were volcanic rumblings.

Late in the forenoon a young man rode on a well-groomed horse over the Lacamac bridge into the town. His age was near twenty-five; by the length of his stirrups one would say that he was tall—six feet at least. His hair was black, his complexion dark but pure, and there were some finely chiselled lines in his profile. Yet his eyes caught and held the attention; for, in spite of a genial kindness of countenance, they suggested a phosphoric, inflammable nature; they flashed fire—such sparks as the blacksmith hammers from his anvil.

His body took the graceful motion of his horse without the apparent exertion of a muscle.

As he rode along through the main street he spoke to a score of acquaintances at least; and the affability of his greeting softened the dignity of his bearing like grace notes slipping into a stately theme.

In front of the Court House green he called to a negro lad.

"You, Tom! Come here. I owe you something. How much is it?"

"I dunno, Mars' Henry," the boy replied with mushy accent.

"You young scamp, you know it's only a nickel. You think by not knowing you'll get a dime out of me, don't you?"

"Ya-a-s s'r," he admitted, stupidly honest in his roguery.

The rider tossed a dime to the ground, and ordered the boy to go wait for him at Vinton's.

He went to the post-office, and afterward made some purchases, — a box of imported tobacco for old Ebenezer's birthday, a yard of yellow ribbon, and a bottle of sprain liniment, at his mother's request, for a slave girl who had wrenched her ankle.

Arriving a few minutes later at Vinton's, he dismounted, gave the horse Scot a caressing pat, and handed the bridle to the lad in waiting.

He entered the lawn through an iron gateway overgrown with honeysuckle. The atmosphere was redolent of spring blossoms and the vapor of dew. A crab-apple, one soft profusion of pink, cast a gauze-like tint upon the grass, and gave to the senses a feeling that was too glorious to be mere ease. It made one wistful. In the background there was a comfortable brick house, covered with ivy, on the porch of which a young lady sat reading.

He walked slowly up the path, stealthily almost; but the girl heard his steps, and looked up from her book.

"Good morning, Miss Elsie." He stopped, hat in hand, in an attitude of deference.

"Good morning, Mr. Bourland," she replied, with a pleasure that spoke in the flush of her cheeks.

"I am Hermes to-day. I bear a message." He held forth a note.

"Won't you stop awhile?"

"It would be impossible to do otherwise," he returned, bowing low, with an exaggeration of courtesy.

The note was read quickly.

"Tell Eleanor I shall be glad to come. I was hoping

she would send down for me this week. You know I never refuse an invitation to the Hall, particularly in springtime. Don't you remember last year?"

"Yes," he answered carelessly. "What are you reading?"

"Oh! it's only poor 'Uncle Tom's Cabin.'"

"Elsie!" he exclaimed, with a sudden rise in temperature; his eyes showed, if not anger, the first phase, irritation.

"Sir!" There was a haughty drawl on the last letter.

"You know that book is an insult to my father and yours, and to your country." His temperature was rising higher. "It is an infamous libel. We ought to ignore such a book in contempt."

"But it won't poison me," she protested. "Anyway, you read it yourself." The glint of her eyes enforced her argument.

He saw that he was hanging himself in his own logic. He bit his lip with vexation; but she came to the rescue with an act which betrayed her feeling for him. She picked up the book and flung it three yards away on the floor.

"I won't finish it, if you don't want me to read it. It's a stupid book, after all," she said, yielding a skirmish which she had already won, and looking down abashed in her blushes.

Somehow he didn't enjoy this sort of victory; he loved to assert himself, to dominate, but this little skirmish with its willing surrender, suggested an undesirable responsibility.

"I had no right to speak so," he added apologetically.

He meant that as a safeguard, a refusal of the responsibility; but she took it as a tidbit of masculine tenderness.

They talked about trifles for half an hour, and then, after promising to ride down the next afternoon to escort her to Bourland Hall, he rode away.

A group of idlers, sitting in the shadow of the railroad station, who were whittling pine boards and talking politics, caused him to rein in his horse; of all the good things

in this world, Bourland enjoyed most a political argument.

And there never was in American history a more pregnant moment for such discussions. Lincoln, a man of untested genius, had just been inaugurated, and many men, judging him as a mere politician, doubted the sincerity of his inaugural address. To most people in the South, he seemed a scout, who, with false pretences, was leading the unwary into the ambush of the abolitionists. In Virginia, however, there was a strong inclination to support him in his endeavor to preserve the Union.

A man who had whittled his shingle into the shape of a tomahawk was stoutly defending the President's character.

"What's the use, Sandy," he urged, as with a single slash he cut the handle of the tomahawk in two, "what's the use of slinging mud at a man on mere suspicion? He's our chief; and I say, back him till he proves himself a hypocrite. When a man stands on the Capitol steps in Washington, and, in the face of the whole country, declares he doesn't intend to interfere with slavery, I don't reckon he means that he will. At any rate, give him the benefit of the doubt."

The man Sandy (he had put his pine board aside) squared around to his opponent, and with eyes that flashed the certainty of a logical triumph, raised his index finger as a gesture for point one.

"Listen to me, and shut up till I get through. Lincoln hates slavery, doesn't he? Nobody denies that. And there's going to be a rumpus; that's just as certain, ain't it? Now, when the fight comes, you don't suppose he's going to sit on the White House porch, a-smoking Havana cigars and drinking mint juleps in the shade, do you? He's got to take sides, one way or another, and you don't suppose he'll go with the South for slavery, do you? Answer me that."

"That's right, Sandy, lay it on," cried Bourland, getting down from his horse. "They voted us down in this county the other day, but we'll get the best of it before long. Give him a dose of states' rights and John C. Cal-

houn." He spoke genially enough on the surface, but behind his words there was a venom that bit like acid. "There's no use talking," he added, unconsciously assuming the attitude of an orator, "you can't have peace and security in the house while there are sneak-thieves about. Look at John Brown and his land pirates; just think of them."

"But, Mr. Henry," said the Union man, with deferential reserve, "didn't the government string him up in a tight collar?"

"Suppose it did. What are the Yankees up North doing to-day, but making pilgrimages to his grave, and vowing vengeance, as though he were a saint and a martyr! They are only waiting for a pretext to fight, and by the Lord we'll give them one before long, the meddling shopkeepers!" There was bitterness in his words, and his half-closed eyes concentrated more keenly the glitter of his passion.

"Oh! I hope we Virginia folks can keep the peace a while yet, as we have done so long," protested the Unionist.

"The gentleman may cry peace! but there is no peace," continued Bourland, quoting from an old school declamation. "'The war is inevitable. Let it come! I say, let it come!' Those deathless words are just as applicable to-day as they were when Patrick Henry, our great Virginian, uttered them within the sacred walls of St. John's church, one hundred years ago."

Some of the idlers began to clap their hands. The applause was of that half-jocular, half-serious kind which comes from an audience too small to give the effect of great enthusiasm.

There was in this scene something typically Southern. Many of the men there had voted a few days before in town meeting, instructing their delegates at Richmond to stand by the Union; for at this phase of the crisis Virginia was decidedly conciliatory; nay, more, pronouncedly against secession. But scarcely a man in the group was free from the influence of this young aristocrat and of his

family prestige. They paid him a peculiar measure of deference because he was the son of John Bourland, and the grandson of Henry Harlan Bourland, and gave promise, in his own person, of becoming worthy to bear that name. It was a survival of feudal leadership in the nineteenth century.

During the silence which ensued, the ticking of the telegraph instrument was distinctly audible. Suddenly the operator, behind his wire screen, gave a yell.

"Great Scott! here *is* news!"

Everybody turned.

"*Bombardment — Fort Sumter — begun — four o'clock — this — morning.*"

The words came singly; the crowd rushed to the window.

"*Anderson — refused to surrender — Beauregard opens fire from Fort Moultrie. Fort Johnson — joins — attack. Flag shot down twice. Surrender — expected — hourly.*"

One man cried out the word "traitors," but in the excitement no one heard him.

"*Bells — St. Michaels — St. Phillips tolling — Streets of Charleston — full of people — singing 'Dixie Forever.'*"

"That's all," said the operator, leaning back in a daze and breathing in gasps.

"Hurrah!" shouted Bourland, throwing his hat into the air. "Bah! the Yankees'll never fight. They are afraid of their shekels." He began to whistle "Dixie," mimicking at the same time a negro walking for a prize cake.

"Come on, boys! Gray jackets over the border!" he shouted, waving his hat, as he gave word to his horse and galloped away.

CHAPTER II

A FAMILY AT HOME

ON the following afternoon Miss Vinton, accompanied by her squire, dashed out of the village of Brayton. They plunged into the obscurity of the covered bridge, and the lady, refusing to check the pace, whipped her horse, and galloped out into the light ahead of him.

"You'd never make a cavalryman," she said tauntingly.

"I am going into the infantry," he replied, unresponsive to the banter.

"Will you let me ride Scot when you are gone?" The brisk ride tinted her face with vermilion dyes; the wash of air made it glow with warm joy.

"Perhaps," he answered, with the irritating inattention of one thinking about remote things.

The vermilion paled slightly; the girl jerked her horse's head petulantly, and the two rode on in silence.

In the distance, firmly set upon a high ledge of rock, Bourland Hall, with its white columns and low-lying wings, glimmered among the trees. The road, inclining upward, ran through the meadow-lands until it was hid in a long archway of maples.

Elsie rode a few yards in advance. Bourland looked at her thoughtfully as she sped on, raising a cloud of dust, which the sun flashed into the golden brilliance of an aureola.

A killdee, with plaintive cry, darted across the space between them; its voice suggested a human distress.

Bourland put spurs to his horse and overtook her. She averted her face wilfully.

"Elsie!" But the familiar name and the tone of conciliation were of no avail.

"Elsie," he repeated, "what are you thinking about?"
"Of how many red strawberries grow in the sea."
There was an impudent toss of the head and a pout of the lips, which made the answer fascinatingly perverse. He rode closer, and bent toward her.

"Tell me not, sweet, I am unkinde
If from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind
To war and arms I fly."

The words were certainly the most gracious of peace offerings; but the trace of the mock-heroic in his voice was a flat defiance flung at her pouting lips.

She knew the rest of the stanza, and she reined up for him to continue; but as he did not, she whipped her horse and dashed ahead once more.

They came to the cross-roads, where the parish church, covered with creeper and moss, was almost hid in a cove of willows. The arched windows, flaming in the sunlight, flung back the radiance of brazen shields. Deeper in shadow lay the churchyard, mottled with headstones and tablets; above them a gray atmosphere, heavy with the hush and solitude of unbroken peace.

A few furlongs more of open air and sunshine, and the riders entered the long arcade of trees. On both sides the fences were laden with honeysuckle and clambering wild grape; beyond stretched acres and acres of sprouting wheat and tobacco. The patter of the hoofs, as the horses galloped into the twilight, broke the stillness like the beating of drums. Robins, come with spring, fluttered out of the grass and took flight to the fields.

By the roadside stood the smithy, the fief of Theophrastus, the plantation blacksmith. From within resounded the cheery tinkle of hammer and anvil, and through the window came the gleam of red and yellow flames that paled into blue and nothingness in the weird interior.

An old negro appeared in the doorway.

"Good evenin', Marse Henry," he said, bowing; then, seeing the lady, he ducked still lower, but very clumsily.

"'Rastus, the war's begun, and the Yankees are coming down to set you free," shouted Henry, gayly.

"Dose Yanks bettah stay tuh hum an' mine dere own mush an' kittle bilin'," he growled.

"I think 'Rastus could knock out both Greeley and Garrison on the stump, don't you?" said Bourland to his companion.

"Are you sure we can win?"

He smiled patronizingly. "Sure? I'd wager Scot against a rabbit skin. The Yankees won't fight long; they can't keep their hands out of business long enough to carry a musket. They don't know how to shoot, anyway."

The great crisis obscured their petty differences, and slipped in as a truce between them.

Soon they came to the quarters, the cabins of the field hands; two parallel lines of brick boxes, each with its one room, projecting chimney, and four square windows. Morning-glories trailed over the walls. Bandannaed Dinahs curtsied in the doorways; pickaninnies, gambolling under the trees like monkeys, turned large white eyes upon the riders, and ran, chattering and pushing, after the horses. At the end of the quarters stood two higher and larger houses, one the infirmary, the other the home of the overseer.

An old darky with a gray beard of corkscrew curlings hobbled down the steps of the infirmary into the road.

"Here, Eb, here's what I promised you. I forgot to give it to you yesterday." He flung down the imported tobacco. "How many years old are you? Ninety-nine?"

"Tank you, young massa; no, sah, on'y sebenty-fo'h, sah." He hobbled back to show the gift to two other recuperating negroes on the porch.

A few rods farther, up a steep pitch, a turn to the right, and Bourland Hall was revealed in the foreground of a picture.

It was a stately home, built from an architect's design, and with the added charm of a history. The land upon which it stood was a ledge, a natural shelf, several hundred feet above the valley. It commanded views of long

range to the north, west, and south; while on the east it was backed by the slope of a mountain. The Indians, in former times, had used the ledge as a lookout and a signal station; and there still remained memorials of Indian camps in the neighborhood.

In the reign of James I. the patent for three thousand acres of land had been granted to a younger son of the Bourland family, but the tract remained untenanted until after the battle of Naseby, in 1645, when, fearing the vengeance of the Rump Parliament, Charles Bourland left his estate in the weald of Kent, and emigrated, with his family, to his Virginia lands on the Lacamac. He bought assent to his title from the Indians with fifty blankets, a case of axes, and six ploughs, and he smoked the peace pipe with them under an old oak that still stood upon the lookout. There, generation after generation, increasing in honors and wealth, the family remained. Just before the Revolution, William Bourland, the fifth in the American line, conceived the idea of building an imposing mansion on the ledge; he drew up his plan and ordered his slaves to manufacture the bricks.

The central portion was almost completed when the Revolution brought the ambitious purpose to a sudden halt. But in the next generation the building was finished, according to the original design, by Henry Harlan Bourland, who added the wings and the connecting corridors. John Bourland, the seventh inheritor of the title, was now the master of hall and estate, which embraced something over two thousand acres of land, and employed one hundred and fifty slaves. He was one of the richest and most influential planters in Virginia.

Bourland Hall was a majestic specimen of colonial architecture in the classical manner. Broad stone steps led up to the entrance. The façade of the main building, capped with a triangular roof projecting like a visor, and pierced by the symmetrical windows and the strikingly hospitable breadth of doorway, was partially concealed by four huge Doric columns that rose, gigantic in strength and stature, from the level of the portico. On each side, fifteen feet

distant, and joined by the passageways, were the two wings — plain, square, and regular.

It suggested to the stranger the council chambers and capitol of a miniature republic. Severe, stately, substantial, it was built to stand, and it stood upon its massive foundation of rock, a defiance to time.

“Are you glad to be at the Hall again?” asked Bourland, as they rode through the stone gateway.

“I don’t know whether I am or not,” she answered frankly. “I think you are just too vexatious for anything. I don’t understand you at all.”

“I don’t think I do, either. Perhaps going off to war is the best thing for me.”

“Oh!” she exclaimed, and the simple utterance might have meant a dozen things.

They were so busied with themselves that they did not notice the rare beauty of the lawn; the lone-standing oaks, the chestnuts, and tulips, grouped in sixes, and sometimes in sevens; the sweep of verdure, spotted by beds of syringas, hydrangeas, and huddled profusions of rose trees; the granite boulder, which, in some prehistoric time, had rolled down the mountain-side; the solitary myrtle beside it, needing only June’s wooing to blush like a maiden; the spring-house, white walled, with mossy roof, in whose interior a spring bubbled up into the dim atmosphere, and then flowed, under a rustic bridge, to the pond below. It was a landscape in which an artist had given only a few suggestions to Nature.

Hearing the approach of the riders, the father, mother, and daughter came out to receive the guest.

Eleanor Bourland was just reaching the end of her second decade. She was almost tall. A pallor of countenance, a translucence of skin, gave to her face a spiritual delicacy. A stranger’s first impression would be that her nature was reserved, shy, timid; but strength of character spoke out of the violet depths of two loyal eyes.

“I’m so glad you came,” she said, descending the steps to greet her friend. “Did you have a pleasant ride up to the Hall?”

“No, — not at all. Henry was so taken up with fighting that he had to begin by fighting with me.”

“Well, then,” put in Henry, “I have begun very badly, for I was badly beaten.”

After the girls had gone in, John Bourland called his son aside.

He was a man of distinction, every inch of him; smooth-faced, heavy browed, tall, and straight — as straight as the Doric column beside him. The black silk stock and the black broadcloth suit added, in appearance, five years to his actual three score.

“What is the last report? Hush!” he whispered, pointing toward his wife.

“Sumter has surrendered,” the son answered, with seriousness; a mood in marked contrast with his reckless ardor of the previous day.

“Confound it! what a hot-headed lot they are down there in Charleston. There is no retreat now, I fear.”

“Fear?” answered the son. “What do you mean? The despatches say the Gulf States are wild with delight. What’s the odds, father? It is bound to come sometime; a few years will not matter.”

The old man, leaning against the column, was shaking under the stress of emotion.

“I hoped I should not live to see it.”

A sweet voice aroused them both.

“Won’t you tell me? I want to share it with you.”

She had quietly slipped upon them, and had put her hands upon their shoulders.

It was an unforgettable face. Hair white as floss silk; eyes beaming devotion from a countenance made tender by wrinkles and fine veins; a voice that trembled from failing health, from the strain of years. She was a wife, a mother, the mistress of a hundred dusky children, the uncomplaining servant of a thousand duties. A painter in the eighteenth century, say Sir Joshua or Romney, would have drawn her as the Mother of Love, courageous, weary.

The two men looked at each other, but the father spoke.

“It has come at last. Fort Sumter has surrendered, and the war is begun.”

She turned without a word, walked to an arm-chair, and, dropping her face into her hands, she broke into quiet weeping.

Henry crept up to her and touched her softly on the cheek. She looked up, fearfully, and the rays of love through the tears were glorified like light from a gem.

“And you will go?”

“Yes, mother, I will go.”

“I could not ask you to stay,” she said bravely. He bent over; she kissed his forehead and whispered, “You shall go in God’s name.”

The day was melting into twilight. The dome of the sky, brushed by a drift of shimmering patches of lambs’ wool, hung brooding above — an immeasurable sweep of lucent sapphire. Off toward the south some wandering clouds flung rose tints from their fringes; while the mists, creeping up the mountains, drew their robes over the hush that slumbered among the pines. Deep in the sunken depth of the west the sun shot up a few last pulsations of golden radiance, and then, withdrawing his tints of gorgeous hue, left the earth to the solemn vigil of the stars.

A quail, hid among the trees, warbled his plaintive call for “Bob White.”

Down in the valley the stretches of field and woodland, as the night fell, resigned their form and feature, and glimmered beneath the obscuring veil of the darkness. Out of the gathering gloom twinkled the lamps of Brayton — a constellation of earthly lights.

The three sat upon the veranda, silent as the silence of the nightfall.

Within, the girls had descended, and Eleanor was playing upon the piano. It was an old church hymn, that of the militant marching to their final triumph. Some English musician, whose soul had been stirred by the solitude of a dim old cathedral, had touched, in a moment of inspiration, the chords that voice the lyrical cry of the

servants of the church after the years of battle for righteousness' sake. Henry awoke from a revery to find that he was humming the words —

“Ten thousand times ten thousand,
In sparkling raiment bright.”

The music unclosed the eyes of his inward vision; he saw a white-robed procession, marching slowly, steadily, triumphantly up the stony steps to the resplendent gateways of pearl; and, as the multitude moved onward, the strains, at first with laborious, irregular effort, broke forth at last into a crescendo of jubilation and victory —

“Fling open wide the pearly gates
And let the victors in.”

The player within was under the spell of the martial spirit. Bourland began to think of the crusaders, and to liken their cause to his own; for it was invested with holiness, and called for devotion and service. The ideas that stood behind it he had heard from his boyhood, from lips that he revered, even from the ministers in the churches. He had learned the principles, too, from statesmen who were held in universal honor. Once, when a small child, he had heard the great Calhoun, in his clear voice of almost feminine sweetness, speak upon the doctrine of states' rights. At the close of that speech his boyish brain glowed with admiration; he realized, as by revelation, the meaning of logic. The experience made an indelible impression upon him, and had colored, like a dye, all his later thinking.

Yes, he was a Southerner, heart and soul; and now that events had forced the crisis, he was ready to fight for the integrity of the political institutions that had nurtured him, that had been bequeathed to him by his ancestors as a heritage.

He was disturbed in his meditations by the gentle approach of the mother. She put her arms about his neck and drew him close.

“My boy, my only boy,” she murmured, “how can I let you go?”

“But you must, mother. It is my duty.”

It was now quite dark. The stars, prompt for the night watch, had taken their posts in the sky.

CHAPTER III

THE PORTRAITS OF THE ANCESTORS

THE picture, on the next evening, as the Bourlands and their guest sat around the table, would have aroused the enthusiasm of Rembrandt.

A high room, wainscoted in oak, with mullioned windows; a buffet in mahogany; a fireplace, on the mantel of which stood two silver candelabra ("presented," the host occasionally informed a visitor, "to my grandfather, in '69, by the Duke of Pemberton, who spent the shooting season here"); on the walls game pictures in steel, a pair of antlers, and two swords crossed behind a shield. In the centre of the table stood a shaded lamp, which threw a strong light on a sweet ham drenched with Madeira and other delicacies, and which toned the illumination down to the chiaroscuro of the Dutch master.

A negro butler, in green broadcloth, served the table.

The alarms of war had brought to the elders a mood of funereal quietude; and Eleanor, too, was sober and meditative. Henry and Elsie, however, rattled and prattled at each other with thoughtless levity: he, pursuing a vein of banter; she, affecting an arch perversity.

The two that morning had taken a cross-country ride, and she had returned sparkling like a sunbeam among the ripples of a stream. To-night she was thoroughly happy, radiant.

"I think I shall ride over to Lexington to-morrow," Henry suddenly announced.

"Oh! let me go, too," Elsie pleaded eagerly. She felt herself to be a daughter in the house, and therefore privileged. Eleanor had been her playmate from earliest childhood, and John Bourland was her godfather.

"Oh, pshaw!" replied Henry. "I'd have to leave you there, for you couldn't stand the ride back."

"Who took the Burtons' untrimmed hedge, I'd like to know, when a man had to go around through the gate?" she retorted.

"It was certainly a woman; a man would have had more regard for his horse."

More such tit-for-tats, pleasantly acrimonious, passed across the table.

"What do you want to go there for, Henry?" his mother inquired fearfully.

"Governor Letcher is up from Richmond. I want to get from him the promise of my commission in the army and authority to get recruits."

This sounded like energetic action; it came like a shock. A tenseness contracted the lines about the mother's lips. The father spoke, after a short silence, with decisive bluntness.

"I want to see you, Henry, after supper, in the library."

The seriousness of his tone quenched all ardor for further prattle.

"The Dresden service to-night, Azariah," said the mistress to the butler. And he brought, with much solicitude, the precious china from the closet, and afterward the steaming tea urn.

Even the tea could not induce a social mood. The father arose, and the son followed him across the hall into the library, while the ladies remained to wash with their own careful hands the dainty tea service.

The walls of the library were lined with books; legal volumes in sheepskin, the English poets and essayists in half calf, a set of Ree's Encyclopædia, bound volumes of the *Southern Literary Messenger*. American, English, and French magazines were in evidence on table and shelf.

The son, in an attitude of filial respect, waited for the father to open the conference.

"I'm glad to see a change in your mood, Henry," he said. "The first day, at the prospect of war, you were boyishly exultant and hot-headed; but later you began

to reflect and to realize the awful seriousness of the situation."

"True, sir! And that was only natural. But I have no change of opinions, or weakening of resolution."

"Have you considered all the consequences? Just think of Virginia in the event of war; it will be the bloody field of the struggle, lying as it does between the North and the South. It will become a human shambles."

"Oh! it's got to come. It's got to come sometime," the son broke in with vigor. "And for us the sooner the better; for every year the Yankees are getting stronger. Let us have done with all this bickering and ballyragging between the sections; let us cut loose from these Yankee fanatics and shopkeepers, and go on our way, in the paths of our ancestors. If it must come to a fight, and it must, let us quit talking and bragging, and fight like men. We shall win; I'm sure there is blood and courage enough in Virginia to defend the state from invasion. Besides, I think the Yankees will back down and let us go."

He made many gestures in his eagerness for action.

The elder man bowed his head and covered his face with his hands, like one at holy communion; then, after a moment, he lifted his face upward and murmured:—

"O God! Make us wise!"

He now took the lamp in his hand, and, throwing open the folding-doors, led the son into the next room. The light revealed a stiff, spacious parlor. The furniture was of mohair and mahogany, heavy, old-fashioned, and rather scanty. On the wall, in frames of ebony and gilt rococo, bearing the signatures of Kneller, Sully, and Peale, hung the family portraits.

They were a sober-looking group of men, full of intelligence and dignity, in military uniform, in the long gown and wig of the bar, in civilian broadcloth, with high black stocks. Their eyes peered down through the silence upon the living intruders.

"You spoke just now, Henry," the father began, "of our ancestors, and of our duty to follow in their steps. Here we are in their presence. In one sense they are

dead; but in another sense they are alive, for they live in us. That man there on the left, as you know, was a Knight of the Golden Horseshoe; the one beyond was killed at the battle of Camden; your grandfather was the friend of Washington, an intimate friend, a frequent visitor to Mount Vernon. This one," and he pointed to a civilian, "did more than any one else to prevent the acceptance by Virginia of the South Carolina Nullification; he served his state; he was also with Jackson at New Orleans. There, my boy," pointing to a military figure in gold braid, "there is your uncle and my brother. He fell under the walls of Chapultepec. We buried him, at night, down there in Mexico, and his body was wrapped in the stars and stripes. It is the symbol of our national union and greatness. I have fought, too, for that flag. I honor it, I love it. And you, Henry, you applauded when it was shot down at Sumter. You want to help tear it down yourself."

The young man stood still with a stoicism that repressed his ardent feelings; for he had been reared in a knight-hood which demanded and obtained a reverence for the fifth commandment. But not knowing, by direct experience, the emotional life that came with the earlier days of the Union, having grown up in the decades that were embittered by sectional strife, and, moreover, being by temperament a modern Hotspur, he did not share in the tragic dilemma of his father. He felt himself logically secure, and his logic made him aggressive. When the spasm of anguish in the elder man had passed, Henry began a cannonade of argument.

"The times have changed, sir. Were these men alive and here to-day, they would stand resolutely for the rights of Virginia. The flag is but the symbol of the *compact of sovereign states*; and this flag has been seized by a faction, a political party, whose only right is their might, and whose so-called patriotism is only a mask which conceals a despotic purpose. They mean ultimately to interfere with us, to destroy the civilization of the South, — a social institution which is ours by the original compact.

They are the real disturbers of the peace, the destroyers of the Union and the flag."

John Bourland, though a lover of the Union, was nevertheless a planter and slaveholder; he felt, therefore, the full force of the logic.

"But," replied he, catching at a possible reply, "they have done nothing as yet; they have broken no constitutional law; they have invaded no state. Did not President Lincoln declare in his inaugural address that he intended to maintain the Constitution inviolate, particularly in regard to slavery?"

The impatient son, tugging at the leash of filial deference, broke out with vehemence.

"Oh! father, you don't see the signs of the times. These abolitionists have done nothing as yet because they have not the power, and delay only makes them stronger. As for Lincoln, he must be a blind optimist, a foolish dreamer. He talks of toleration; but how can he or any other man maintain toleration when behind him there is a pack of yelping jackals eager and ravenous to feed upon the dead body of our institutions? Besides, is he not himself bitterly opposed to slavery? Did he not recently, in his Springfield speech, say, with all the virulence of Garrison or Phillips, that slavery was radically wrong?"

The young man's face was scarlet with the pent-up zeal. He could not restrain the impulse to clinch his argument and silence his father's plea.

"Answer me this, sir! Did not Lincoln say, not long ago, that the Union could not endure half slave and half free?"

He raised his fist and brought it down with terrific force on the open palm of the other hand; the blow must have stung him, but he did not feel the pain.

"If we strike at all, we must strike now, or in the end be ignominiously crushed."

The father saw that he had lost his case, and he began to prepare for a compromise.

"I'm older than you, Henry, and I have seen far more

of the world's sorrows and miseries. I know the past; your ideas of the future are very uncertain. South Carolina has been too often a braggart and a brawler, and this act of the last few days may only result in her humiliation."

It was a defensive appeal.

"Never, sir, never. This time the whole South is behind her. The firing on Sumter may have been rash, but it was an act of decision, and it was right."

Young Bourland stamped his foot with the assertion.

"Oh! Harry, Harry, I realize in your voice and in your anger only too well the hot blood of the South. It is going to get control of things, and God only knows where it is going to bring us."

Two impulses, like Roman wrestlers in the arena, were struggling in the old man's breast for the mastery. He began to plead anew.

"Let us not be rash; let us wait a little and go cautiously. It may be, I fear it must be, that I shall have to join with you in the end; for I will not desert my state. But before I do, before I consent to let loose the passions of war and hate, to bring the horrors of hell upon this commonwealth, this garden; before I move to haul down the old flag from its proud position above us, I must see that there is no way to avoid it. Let us try reason and conciliation once more."

The son saw he had gained the victory, and his ardor cooled. He had demonstrated his proposition, and now he added the corollary.

"If you wish to be wise, you must not reason, you must act. These abolitionists are as unreasonable as Turks. Just remember what John Brown said the morning he was hanged; his authority, he declared, came from God Almighty. That's just where Mahomet said his authority came from when he wanted a sanction for burning and butchery. Don't you recall, too, that John Brown, before his execution, refused to pray with our minister, and called him a heathen to his face? And who is this bandit? Why, he's the hero, the martyr of the Yankees; and they are singing to-day around his tomb:—

“‘John Brown’s body lies a-mouldering in the grave,
But his soul is marching on.’

As though, forsooth, he were a Saint Louis. And where is his soul marching to, pray? Why, right down here, to trample on our rights, to tear up our plantations, and to put my mother and sister, your wife and daughter, on the same level with their black cooks. The Yankees are coming, too. Father! you talk of the flag; I stand for the preservation of our home.”

The father had no occasion to draw himself up into proud erectness; he stood in that attitude habitually. But he said, with quiet, pathetic resolution:—

“I am yet the head of the house and can maintain its honor. When I am gone the inheritance will pass to you. While I am alive, however, no invader shall cross the boundary of this state and find me passive. But, Henry, I cannot, we cannot strike the first blow. Grant me this much. Wait awhile. Let us not attack, let us defend.”

Henry hesitated, and then agreed to the compromise.

“Well, father, I will do that. I will wait. But when the time comes, we shall act as one.”

The two, the old man of the past, and the young man of the future, both Southern in essence and in love, clasped hands, and the intense strain of the clasp was the seal of the compact.

Unconsciously they glanced at the portraits.

The room in which they stood seemed to become all at once mysteriously peopled. For a moment the figments of the imagination, under the illusion of the feelings, obscured the sense of reality. There upon the wall, dimly perceived, hung those portraits of the dead, gazing fixedly at the living. The time, the place, the dramatic incident, linked that moment with the far-reaching years and deeds of the past, and conjured the ancestral guardians of the spot, so silent there in their antique frames, to come once more to life, and to speak. But the fancy soon gave place to the fact. The painted faces retained their inert stolidity, and looked down, as they had looked for years, upon the occasional scenes of family affection, social hilarity,

or funereal grief, without sanction and without reproof. Yet the spirits of the dead ancestors were there; not cribbed beneath slabs of marble, nor confined within the unbroken silences of vaulted tombs; but, through the genius that descends from the fathers unto the sons, they dwelt in the chambers of immortality, in the deep, inscrutable depths of the souls of the living, and their voices whispered a faint "Amen!"

CHAPTER IV

A TOWN MEETING

THE rain during the night had brought a renewed freshness to the air; and the winds, playing with a musician's touch upon the trees, had shaken down the bud scales until the ground was a fairyland of pink and white. The faint odor of blossoms, the damp exhalations of grass roots and mould, the delicate aroma of the sap, oozing everywhere from the swollen branches, filled the atmosphere with that sweet irritation which, in the springtime, stirs the senses, intoxicates the imagination, and prompts a lover to dream of his absent lady and to build his unsubstantial castles in Spain.

Miss Elsie was unhappy. The glory of that April morning was no solace. The nectar of spring, brought without stint by every breath of the wind, — an offering to appease the most wrathful of Junos, — carried no balm to her vexation of spirit. She was disappointed. A slight pout on the lips told the story.

The key to this feminine psychology was the fact that Henry, after proposing a ride, had suddenly changed his mind and had run off to Brayton for war news.

The young lady, left alone, had fluttered the pages of three books; she had rippled the piano keys to the humiliation of a Hungarian Tanzweise; she had played with Tam, the woolly house pet, until she was tired and the dog was lame; and now she sat upon the veranda steps, tearing to pieces some daffodils which a black youngster had brought from the pond.

This miserable war was spoiling her pleasure and plans.

Eleanor came out with a sewing basket and sat down in an arm-chair.

"What are you doing, Eleanor?" asked Elsie, throwing the shreds of the daffodils at Tam's nose, who winked and fled.

"Embroidering some handkerchiefs — for Henry," she answered, with an embarrassment that betrayed a thought under cover.

Elsie began to examine the squares of linen; in one corner were the initials, H. B., and beneath the family motto in thin letters, NE OUBLIE.

"Don't muss them, please," Eleanor said nervously, gathering them in.

"Oh, I won't hurt them. Why, what's this? these aren't for Henry. Oh! S. B. and the family motto, NE OUBLIE. Why, what cousin is this for?"

She looked up, and saw her friend's face flushing to the first tints of a poppy.

"Why, Eleanor," she pursued, "you never told me anything about it."

"I—I—haven't told anybody yet—except mother." It came in words of ashamed exultation. Little devils of envy tormented the other's soul.

"Is he to be a soldier, too?"

"I don't know; but he must be if he wants these." This time the timid voice was firm.

Elsie had a flashing vision of the motive that makes a man brave; and another—of her own self-centred self. An accusing angel whispered something beneath the reach of hearing.

At that instant John Bourland came out upon the portico, exclaiming, "Here comes Harry at breakneck speed."

All three looked across the fields into the valley. The horse and rider were tearing along like a racer nearing the tape; they disappeared into the arch of maples—and then, after some moments of suspense, the rapid beating of hoofs announced their approach. The horse whirled around the curve, stumbled up the pitch, and staggered through the gateway.

"They're coming!" shouted the rider.

"Who?" all three broke out in unison.

“The Yankees. Lincoln has called for seventy-five thousand volunteers to invade the South.”

The fabled Gorgon could not have changed them more quickly into stone.

“Father, remember our compact. We are to have a meeting in Brayton this afternoon to take action.”

Full realization broke the spell of the sudden stupefaction.

“I remember, my son. I shall be with you.” The answer was quiet, restrained. For three days John Bourland had prayed to the God of Peace; now he must turn to the God of Battles.

Fort Sumter had been bombarded on Friday; it surrendered the next day. The news of its fall drove the temperature of the whole country, North and South, above the boiling-point. In Charleston, the people became hysterical with enthusiasm. In Virginia, however, there was a strong conservative sentiment for the Union. Once already the state had refused to secede and join the Confederacy, and the commissioners of Virginia, at that moment, were in Washington, to plead with the President for peace. But the resolute Lincoln sent them away, after proclaiming his definitive determination to enter the insurgent states, to occupy the federal properties, and to collect the legal revenues. Immediately afterward he published his famous call for volunteers to suppress the rebellion. This prompt executive measure immediately crystallized the sentiment in Virginia, and it gravitated, by natural law, to the Confederacy.

In the afternoon father and son rode down to Brayton. After some debate they had come to an amicable agreement. John Bourland, whose age really incapacitated him for active duty, reluctantly consented to remain at home; but the son was to enlist at once and represent the family in the field.

This responsibility aroused in Henry a new measure of pride, and he went cantering down the road like the Cid Campeador against the Moors.

“I forgot in my excitement, father, to tell you of the

skirmish last night up at Harper's Ferry. The commandant evidently got scared, and he tried to destroy his guns and ammunition. Some volunteers stopped him, and he ran over the border to fast music. So we score the first and the second points." Then he added, "I don't think the Yankees will make much of a fight."

"Don't make a mistake about that, son. You don't know them as I do. I have seen them fight in Mexico. Besides this, Lincoln is an unknown quantity as yet. He may surprise you. I think he is a man of nerve and purpose, in spite of his jokes."

The streets of Brayton were thronged, and every moment the crowd increased. Planters and farmers from the outlying districts filed in, bringing their wives and their children. Squads of small boys went parading up and down the main street, headed by juvenile chiefs. Slaves, crab-eyed with amazement, stood around, watching their masters' horses. The stores were closed. Pedlers were selling the Palmetto rosette. There was a great deal of talk, — grave talk from the wise, and much swagger and bluster from the reckless. The saloons, of course, were centres of congestion, and through their open doors came forth a confusion of tongues, boasting and reviling the Yankees.

The Court House green became ultimately the chief centre of gravity.

The building was of the classic style, a miniature imitation of the Parthenon, with whitewashed walls and Doric columns of brick rounded with plaster. Bulletins, legal notices, offers of reward for runaway slaves, were pasted on the façade. The interior was deserted; the meeting was to be out-of-doors, and the crowd awaited the tolling of the bell.

The Bourlands walked across the green, receiving nods of recognition, usually deferential, and they joined a group of excited men.

A man was reading from a New York paper, several days old: —

“The South in self-preservation has been driven to the wall, and forced to proclaim her independence. A servile insurrection and wholesale slaughter of the whites will alone satisfy the murderous designs of the abolitionists.”

“What fire-brand paper is that, Stevens?” asked Mr. Bourland.

“It’s nothing but the truth, if John Brown’s a specimen,” protested a man named Dale. “I tell you, the very devil has got loose among some of the niggers since his raid.”

“Yes,” broke in a third. “Talk about freeing the niggers! good Lord, you might as well open hell gate.”

“Of course we can’t permit that,” said Mr. Bourland.

Just then the bell began to ring the hour of assembly, and the crowd gathered around a platform of boards set upon trestles. Mr. Bourland had been asked to preside, and he mounted the elevation, followed by other representative men.

He called the meeting to order and opened it with a short speech. There was a pause after each sentence, as if he were choosing with care every one of his words.

“Fellow-citizens,” he began, “I speak to you after serious meditation and earnest prayer. The breaking of family ties is a mournful tragedy, and Virginia is still a proud member of the old family of states. At this moment, from causes known to you all, the integrity of our statehood, the permanence of our social and political institutions, are threatened with danger; perhaps, though I trust not, with destruction. We have sought to avert the conflict. Our commissioners have pleaded with the government at Washington for peace; but their efforts have been vain, and they must return to us with naught but their clear consciences and their frustrated hopes of conciliation. This week — to-morrow — an invading army may cross our boundaries. Our friends in the South, to whom we are bound by the closest ties of feeling and tradition, are calling us to join them to maintain those rights, — individual, state, constitutional rights, — without which there is neither honor nor self-respect. I have

loved the Union and the flag; but now, it seems, the two sections have come to the parting of the ways, and if I must advise, I speak in sorrow and anguish; but my hand must point toward the south."

He raised his hand slowly and indicated the direction.

The gesture from a young man might have seemed theatrical. But the aged face, the reserve of emotion, the reluctant decision, endued it with the impressiveness of religious awe. The faces before him, for an instant, shone with the sober illumination of a consecration service.

His applause was a moment of deep silence.

A lawyer with conservative views followed. He believed in states' rights, and he intended to stand by his own state. But slavery was an indefensible institution, and, in attempting to maintain it, the South was only building a weak dam that sooner or later would be swept down by the ever increasing tension of liberty and progress. He begged for further deliberation and delay of action.

Outcries of disapproval greeted his remarks, and his plea was as futile as the notes of a flute amid the resonant blasts of an orchestra.

The next speaker was a man of vehemence and fire. He had not come there, he said, to deliberate. He had come to act. He had been in the North, and had heard the insulting harangues and boasts of the abolitionist demagogues, flung at the South from a safe distance.

"Now they say," he shouted, "that they are coming down here to make good their words. Well, let them come. We're ready. For my part, I vow, by every drop of blood in my veins, that when these seventy-five thousand mongrels cross the Potomac, when the men of the Old Dominion go out to meet them, I will be in the front rank to drive every scavenger son of them back to his northern dunghill." He stopped short. "Mr. Chairman, I move we instruct our delegates at Richmond to vote for secession immediately."

It was the old story of the *mobile vulgus*. The higher instincts, roused by Mr. Bourland's judicial calmness,

gave place to the passions of hatred and revenge; and the last speaker's brutal energy charged that body of men until it responded like a nervous organism to the play of an electric battery. Shouts, wavings of hands, flying hats, were faint manifestations of the frenzy.

The speaker sat down in triumph.

During the excitement a messenger pushed his way to the platform and handed the chairman a telegram. He rose, and the paper, indicative of news, commanded immediate silence.

"A despatch from Richmond," he said, with voice infirm. "The House of Burgesses this morning, by a vote of eighty-eight to fifty-five, passed an ordinance of secession."

The crowd broke and scattered. In twenty minutes the stars and bars were floating from the Court House flagpole, and a brass band, followed by men, women, and children, was marching up and down the streets, playing "Dixie" and the Southern "Marseillaise." Men were seized by the shoulders, lifted bodily up to doorsteps and barrels, and compelled to make speeches. Cannon were booming with thunderous echoes. The church bells were bellowing mad peals of war. Bonfires were kindled in the streets, and the air was full of powder and smoke.

In the meantime, while all this enthusiasm was in effervescence and motion, Henry Bourland, behind a plank stretched across two barrels, was enlisting recruits.

CHAPTER V

THE CAVALIER RIDES OUT TO WAR

“OH, I ’low you is cap’ble nuff, Mis’ Bourlan’, but I’se his own ole mammy. You jes’ lemme ten’ ter lookin’ aftah his things. I’se a-done his sewin’ sence befoh he wuz bawn, an’ I reckon I kin get him ready foh de wah.”

It was a protest from Ruby, the dusky despot of the home. Two days before, a yellow envelope containing Henry’s commission as lieutenant in the armies of the Confederacy had come by post, and the sad-hearted mother had begun the preparations for her son’s departure. But when Ruby interposed, she resigned the task reluctantly, yet with a certain relief. For while she plied her needle, in her mind’s eye she saw continually those garments pierced by a small round hole and stained dark red. The thought haunted her, too, that she might be preparing a shroud.

At last the evening came for Henry’s farewell. He was to ride down to Brayton after supper and join his squad, which left early the next morning for General Magruder’s camp at Newport News.

It was a solemn affair, that last supper at home. John Bourland outwardly was calm; the mother, by biting her lips, checked several sobs; and Eleanor, cherishing a double fear, was silent with a double pride, as she looked at her brother in his gray uniform, and wondered if Major Shirley Brookfield wasn’t just as handsome and as noble.

Elsie was still there. Doubtless she should have gone home; but she lingered, unsated, like some epicure at a banquet table.

During these last few days Henry's conduct toward her had been somewhat enigmatical. Within himself he felt a mental burden. His mind was vexed with an indecision. He could not cast her out of his chamber of desire entirely.

She was such a charming, stimulating creature ; so full of vigor, of a power only partially aroused. There was a magic in her unconscious acts which stung his senses, and made him quiver with delicious pain. And yet his calm judgment told him that, although for several years they had been skirmishing with more or less serious zest, he could not ask her to be his wife and at the same time feel fully satisfied, feel that he had made no mistake.

After supper he asked her to go out of doors for a ramble on the lawn. He had come to a decision at last.

The breezes lay hushed in the lap of languor. In the far west a new moon was drifting downward among the stars. The air was redolent of the night dew, the essence of withered blooms, and the gentle aroma of the pines. The call of a wakeful bird gave to the silence a note of isolation, and filled the darkness with an almost human pathos.

"Well, I've got to leave you all," he said carelessly.

"Oh, Henry!" It was a protesting cry of grief.

They were standing by the stone wall that edged the lawn like a parapet. The village sparkled in the distant obscurity.

The spirit of winsome perversity was gone out of her. There she stood, athletic in body, yet with all her selfhood made ready to resign itself to his will. The dimness of the starlight hung around her like a gauze.

He wavered in his resolution. Perhaps, after all, she might be his real romance maiden. If she had come to him that night suddenly out of the unknown, he might have been drawn to her, as one, casually wandering, is drawn by the sight of a rarity of nature.

But she stood against the background of the past.

And there, plaguing his vision of her,—pestiferous insects,—hovered those trivial things which so easily

destroy an enchantment, which had, indeed, tainted his chivalrous reverence for her. Ah! if he could only blot out that one recollection, he might forget the trifles,—that time when, entering a room unexpectedly, he caught her reading by stealth a letter, carelessly left about, from another girl. That single act had pricked the bubble of his joy. It had poisoned his memory. He distrusted her character; he could not ask her to be his wife.

“We have spent many happy days together, Elsie,” he continued, drawing the words slowly.

She answered with nothing but the upward turning of a face that became luminous with expectation. He strove to repress a thrill of emotion. He meant, as gently as he could, to perform an unpleasant duty, to close the door of his life and leave her standing without. It were best to do it now, before going away. He should not let her cherish a delusion. His sense of honor, after their past relations, told him he must speak.

He paused a long time searching for the pleasantest way.

“We have been children and playmates together. But now the war has come; it will take me away and will break our comradeship.”

“But you will come back?” She had not yet divined his meaning.

“If I survive, of course. But I shall be different; so will you. We cannot ever again be the same. Our bit of romancing had better end now.”

He meant to be deft, and suggest his thought with delicate amenity. The words were apt enough, doubtless; but the effect was spoiled by the nervous utterance, which enforced his meaning brutally. They came forth like the wheeze of a pump.

His intention, now evident, struck her like a blow. And the face which was softened for other confessions, was suddenly contorted with intense pain. She did not have time to think. She acted from that inner prompting, the substance of personality, which in unexpected crises unveils the real character. Her countenance, a moment

before mildly radiant, burned with fury and belied the sincerity of her response.

"Romance?" she blazed out. "You mean comedy! Do you think I'm in love with you? Why, I've simply looked on you as an amusement—a pastime," she repeated hysterically, "a pastime, that's all."

"I'm glad to hear that," he replied. But in his heart he knew now that she did love him, not with mere affection, but with a passion rare among women.

They went back to the house shortly afterward; she, attempting with ill success to be jaunty; he, feeling like a well-intentioned fool.

As soon as they reëntered the Hall she bade him good-by and went upstairs. In the seclusion of her room, all alone with herself, she gave vent to a rage so intense that it was sublime, poetic. It left her physically weak, holding the shreds of a handkerchief in her trembling hands.

Bourland was not destined to see her again for a long time.

After entering the house, he found his father alone in the library, looking over some papers.

"My son," said he, "since I can't do any fighting, I'm going to help the cause in another way. I purpose to subscribe for a large number of Confederate bonds; but I will have to put a mortgage on the estate."

"That's right, sir. Everybody must help in this conflict. I knew you would do that."

He stood, very handsome in his gray and gold, before his father's admiring eyes.

"I want to take your height before you leave, Henry."

The door jamb showed the marks of an old family custom—short scratches in the white paint with dates and initials. It was the supreme court of appeals regarding family stature, and it held the archives of several generations.

Henry backed up against the wall, while the elder man notched the height.

"Not quite up to your uncle, my boy, but two inches above your grandfather. There's not one of you who ever got up to me," he said proudly, pointing to his mark at

six feet two. "I think you had better let me take your place."

"Oh! you were mustered out years ago, sir," replied the son, banteringly.

"You impertinent scrub," the father retorted. "For thirty years I was the best fencer and swordsman in the three counties, and, by Jove, I believe I am yet. Here, you young braggart, take this foil and defend yourself. I'll show you who is mustered out." He went to a closet, and took out a pair of foils. "En garde," he shouted with mock seriousness. "I'll show you a trick yet."

They fell to furiously.

"Parry in quarte, my boy. You've forgotten your first principles; then follow with a riposte. Hold! there, I claim the first point."

The old man's eyes sparkled amid his heightening color. He was breathing vigorously.

"You young fellows don't fence as we used to; it's a lost art. Come on here, again," he called, pressing forward. "Disengage! no, not that way; cut under and one, two — there, a hit. I claim another."

On the next attack, Henry, by a double, deceived his father's counter parry, and scored a point. The old man was nettled.

"Pshaw!" he cried. "That's an old trick. I'll show you one worth four of that. En garde."

By a quick motion after a parry he swung the foil in a circle over his head, throwing open his own defence, and with a lunge which his opponent could not anticipate he struck Henry squarely over the heart. His face rippled into smiles.

"It's risky," he ejaculated, gasping for breath. "But when it succeeds, it's a death warrant. The stroke is an old French one; they call it 'the carnation,' and it was invented by a duellist of the days of Louis Quatorze. He killed thirty-seven men, I believe, and then the poor fellow had to die in his bed. Dear me," he added musingly, "I thought I had forgotten it. I learned it at Paris in '32."

The humiliation of Henry was obliterated by his father's satisfaction and pride. "I yield," he said, delivering his foil like a conquered knight.

Just then the door opened; Mrs. Bourland and Eleanor pushed their way into the room, cautiously followed by a negro.

"What's all this rumpus?"

"Oh! I've just been giving this young swashbuckler a few points in fencing. Three to his one, mother; he can't down the old man yet. Here, Sam, go down into the cellar and bring up a bottle of that '52 Madeira."

Sam came in with the wine, which the master poured out with a hand still trembling from the exercise. "Where's Elsie?" he exclaimed.

"She's gone to bed with a headache," answered Eleanor.

"You take that glass then, Sam, and drink a toast to the success of the Confederacy."

"Yaas, sah! An' death and damnashun to de Yanks. Da's wat dey sez down to Brayton, sah," he added, as if the strong word needed an apology.

"I drink to the safe return of Lieutenant Bourland," murmured the mother.

While they were drinking they heard the stamping of hoofs upon the gravel path.

"That's Jim with Scot," said Henry, putting down his glass. "It's time to go. Be brave, little mother. I shall soon be back."

"God bless you, and go with you and guard you," she said with fervor. Her lips were cold with the fear that deep affection brings in moments of danger.

"Don't you want me to go?" he asked with a smile, bending down and looking into her eyes.

"Some mother's son would have to take your place; the Bourlands can't skulk."

"Keep face front, Harry," was Eleanor's last word; then she whispered in his ear, "If you come across your friend, Major Brookfield, you can call him brother, if you wish." There was the glint of water in her courageous eyes.

"You minx!" cried Henry, "why didn't you tell me that before? Here are six for him." He kissed her repeatedly.

"Now don't worry, any of you," he added gayly as he went out the doorway. "Worry won't stop a bullet."

The women stood upon the portico, while the two men walked down to where a negro, dressed in his best, was holding two horses by the bridles.

"Henry, my dear son, this may be our last time together. If anything should happen to me while you are away, remember that my last charge to you is to stand by the Hall. You are the last of the direct line of the Bourlands. When you fall, the house falls. A stainless name and an ancient home are in your keeping; don't let either ever go out of your possession. Remember, my boy, that, if nothing else, your father can leave you an honored name."

"Don't fear for me, sir," he answered, deeply impressed at the parting.

They clasped hands with a pressure that is the sign of strong men's love. The younger mounted his horse, feeling for the first time the full weight of his responsibility. It was like a treasure that burdened the owner.

"Take good care of Mr. Henry, Jim," the mother called out.

Henry waved from his saddle a farewell greeting, and gave rein to his horse; but after he had gone a few paces, he checked him. Eleanor called and asked if he had forgotten anything.

"No; nothing. I was only taking a last look."

Thin sheets of cloud were drifting beneath the heavens. In the rear distance the woodland of the upper hillside, now almost fused with the darkness, gradually slanted up toward the summit, which bore, like a tiara of resplendent gems, the stars of the Pleiades. A brisk wind stirred the trees into the droning hum of many inarticulate voices. In the midst, upon its base of rock, its dimly defined edges enclosing the brighter outlines of cornice and window and column, secure seemingly against the forces of nature and time, stood the old Hall.



“ His mother and his sister, who were sending him forth to fight for them, with heart-breaking Godspeed.”

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
LIBRARY

It was the symbol of an expiring social order, set there, amid the broad-stretching acres of fertile land, the very heart of a small, feudal community. It was the visible embodiment of a mediæval idea that still survived; the idea of the divine right of a master to rule, and the divine obligation of a slave to obey. The system which it represented had virtues which, amid human complexities, still made for social order; but it was fraught with horrible abuses. In the past it had served the world well, but the world had outgrown it in the nineteenth century. It was an anachronism — this system of slavery in a land of liberty, and the rising tide of freedom and human brotherhood was threatening its destruction.

But Henry Bourland, as he rode away to the war, was not indulging in general reflections. He looked back at the stately mansion, upon the hallowed playground of his childhood, upon the scenes that had nourished the deepest affections of his life. He saw his home, to him the most sacred spot on earth. And now the idea on which it was founded, the ambitious efforts of the ancestors who had built it, and the laws of the land that sustained it were threatened with extinction at the hands of predatory aliens. And his last glance, too, as he turned for that last look from his horse, touched his heart more deeply, provoked his courage more fiercely, than these dangers; for he saw, framed in by the doorway, against a background of streaming light, the figures of two women, his mother and his sister, who were sending him forth to fight for them with a heart-breaking God-speed.

His hand clutched the hilt of his sword. He put the spurs to his horse, and soon the watchers heard only the rapid clatter of hoofs, beating and echoing down the dark avenue of trees.

BOOK II

THE PRISONER OF WAR

CHAPTER VI

THE BATTLE OF GETTYSBURG

IN June, 1863, General Lee, who had recently beaten the Union army in two defensive battles, made an aggressive move. Elated by his victories, and persuaded of further successes, he planned a campaign to invade the North, capture Washington, conquer a peace at the capital, and establish forever the independence of the Confederacy.

It was an audacious design, but the temptation was well-nigh irresistible. The Army of the Potomac was demoralized. Richmond was safe from attack. The Federal government, in sore straits, was harassed by increasing opposition. At home, the Copperheads were active and virulent; abroad, the French emperor was plotting with Mexico, and threatening international complications; while in the English Parliament, a strong opposition was clamoring for British assistance to the cotton states. At the least count a victory for Lee on Northern soil would be followed by European recognition of the Confederacy and the consequent gain of belligerent rights.

There was also a tactical inducement. In the southwest Vicksburg was menaced by Grant, and Lee's diversion might save it from capture.

For two years, Henry Bourland had fought in the Army of Northern Virginia. He was a major now, having been repeatedly promoted for signal bravery. At Antietam he led a charge, which, after a hand-to-hand struggle, had captured a Union battery. At Fredericksburg, with a small force, he held a bridge of vital strategic importance until the close of the battle. Wounded in this engagement, he was sent home on a furlough. But the joy of his return to the Hall was quenched in sorrow; his mother was no longer there to greet him.

He was soon back again in the army, and when Lee began his northern movement, Bourland marched with his regiment through Maryland and passed up the Cumberland into Pennsylvania.

The soil of the alien country, north of the line, gave strange thrills to his steps. At first he was surprised to hear the natives speaking precisely the same language. The consciousness that he was an invader gave him sensations far different from those aroused in defence of his own land. His thoughts, at times, ran back to his school books, to Hannibal descending upon Rome, to Cæsar crossing with his legions into Gaul.

The Confederate army broke up into segments and scattered over the country. A large force moved against Harrisburg, while other detachments were ordered to tear up railroads, burn bridges, gather supplies, kidnap negroes, and levy tribute upon the larger towns.

Bourland's regiment was on the far western rim of the field of operations.

One afternoon, while foraging, he stood in a farmer's yard, offering payment in Confederate scrip for some cattle which his men were driving down the road. The farmer bitterly protested against such enforced legal tender.

"Oh," said Bourland, "our government will soon be redeeming it in gold."

"It will never be worth its weight in brass," angrily replied the man. But he took the paper, declaring he would paste it over some broken windows in the kitchen.

Bourland walked away. He had no relish for such business, even if the victims were Yankees.

An orderly came dashing up the road. He reined up his horse, gave the salute, and said impassively: —

“You are commanded to take all your men to Ackerly at once. Orders have come to concentrate with all possible haste.”

“Why, what’s in the wind?” asked Bourland.

“The Army of the Potomac is coming up after us,” he shouted, already several yards away. “Hooker, they say, has been superseded by Meade.”

“Changing commanders, eh?” mused Bourland. “Well, that’s bad — for them.”

In one hour his men were on the march. At nine o’clock they reached the division rendezvous. Several regiments were already there. The ranks broke; the soldiers plied each other with questions; groups of men became debating societies. Rumors, speculations, emphatic assertions, made the air buzz like a quilting bee. There was nothing sure except the vague certainty of imminent battle.

“Get the men to sleep at once. We’ve got a long stretch to-morrow,” the officers went around saying to the sergeants.

It was the last day of June. The air was balmy, and the soldiers lay down on the grass, and slept under the gauzy canopy of the stars.

Bourland was wakeful. His mood was buoyant, as if he were being lifted on the crest of a wave. The great test was coming. Soon, he doubted not, the battle would be over, and they would be marching on Philadelphia, en route to Washington. The others, officers and men, shared his confidence.

At last he fell asleep. Obscure panoramas, clashing and clamorous, drifted into his dreams.

The reveille awoke him. It was still dark. He shook himself limber. The men took their places in the ranks. The columns began to move. Soon from the rim of the horizon a bloodshot eye surveyed them sullenly like a

somnolent monster disturbed, while the eastern sky grew into the gracious smile of dawn.

All through the morning they marched steadily. The sky above was a serene azure. Reverberations of thunder rolled in from the front. The horses began to snort. The men went hurrying on all through the afternoon, at intervals slackening the quickstep.

At nightfall they saw a village in the near distance. They spurred the last stretch at double speed. The place was filled with jubilant soldiers. News had come in. The advance-guards of the two armies had met, and the Confederates had swept the field. Two Yankee corps had been annihilated, and the village of Gettysburg was held by the Southern troops.

The tired veterans cheered. They bolted their food in the nervous excitement.

Bourland studied a map by the campfire. They were still miles away. "It will be all over before we get there," he said peevishly. "We can't possibly reach the field before to-morrow evening." Fate was cheating them of their share of the glory.

Pickett, their commander, came around with his staff, inspecting and making short speeches.

"Keep cool, boys," he said. "We'll come on the field like Blücher."

The next morning the regiments were again marching before daylight. There were few laggards. In the hurry they broke step, pushed each other ahead. Men, stepping aside to drink from their canteens, ran to regain their places. The prospect of action relieved the pain of blistered feet.

All morning the thunder peals rattled under the blue roof. The soldiers could see the smoke rise and expand into clouds. All afternoon their ears were dinned with the rattle of musketry. They began to smell the scorch of powder. It stimulated their nerves like quickening drugs.

From time to time couriers brought despatches. The news, altered by repetitions, ran down the lines followed by cheers, like fire along a fuse.

“We’re lickin’ them into smithereens.”

“The Union left is broken.”

“Ewell has driven the Yankees from their intrenchments.”

“The Louisiana Tigers captured two batteries on a hill this morning.”

“To-morrow will finish them. Hooray for Dixie and Uncle Robert!”

At last they came within sight and hailing distance of the rear-guard. They passed over the field of the first day’s fight. It was strewn with guns, clothing, motionless bodies in blue and in gray. The wounded from the second day’s battle were borne past them on litters. A long wooded ridge, before their faces, shut off the scene of contact and dispute.

Orders came to halt and bivouac. The men, curious to see, began to grumble.

“The fighting is over for to-day. You’ll get a bellyful to-morrow. Take all the rest you can,” said the sergeants.

They camped behind the woods, three brigades, intact, restive, jealous.

Bourland’s weariness softened the earth into a bed of down. He slept soundly. Early the next morning he walked up the ridge to the crest, taking a message.

The air had been cleared by the night breezes. Below him lay a shallow valley of meadows, grain fields, and orchards, scarred, crushed, shattered, as if a cyclone had swept through in a fury.

A straight road bisected the battle-field with sharp, ochreous definition.

“It’s the dead line,” thought Bourland.

Across the valley was another ridge. A Union regiment, like a gigantic thousand-legger, was cumbrously crawling along the sky line. Campfires smoked faintly in the bright sunshine. With his field glasses, Bourland could see the Yankee soldiers squatting at breakfast; he caught the glint of their coffee cans. He discerned the deserted, immobile engines of the artillery. He distin-

guished a group of signal service officers examining the Confederate lines. Above the green of the slope rose the white shafts of a cemetery, and in the northern gap of the valley, like a dam, lay the village of Gettysburg.

A Confederate officer came by him, and stopped; they shook hands and exchanged names and regiments.

"Did you come up with Pickett?" he asked.

Bourland answered in the affirmative.

"Well, your boys will have a chance to-day. The report is that you are to charge the centre."

He described the operations of the last two days.

"The first day," he said, pointing backward to the northwest, "we struck the advance corps off there. They fought desperately for eight hours, but in the end they ran off like geese and left us the field and the town. We ought to have followed them up; but we didn't. Uncle Robert was too cautious. We got a splendid position here, however, along this Seminary Ridge. Our delay gave the Yankees time to come up and re-form on those heights opposite, Cemetery Ridge I think it is called. Their line, as I make it out, is in the shape of a hand sickle with the back rim toward us. The point over there on the north is Culp's Hill. The Louisiana Tigers took it, but couldn't hold it; out of two full regiments only three hundred got back. Down there," he continued, pointing to the southeast, "is the other extremity of the line at those rocky eminences, the Round Tops. The hard fighting yesterday was for them, but the Yankees stuck to them like fly-paper. Lee's plan was to push back both ends and bend the sickle into a circle."

"Didn't we do it?" asked Bourland, eagerly.

"No, by guns, we didn't! The fight yesterday was a stand-off with a slight advantage for us. Do you see that peach orchard and that wheat field in the direction of Round Top? A Union division came out too far, making a salient angle with the main line. We drove them back, and they returned thirteen times. Great God! you never saw such slaughter. They tell me you can walk across that wheat field on dead bodies as

stepping stones. Look! look! Here comes Uncle Robert himself."

"That's Pickett and Longstreet with him," added Bourland.

They watched the trio closely. Lee calmly pointed out an umbrella-shaped clump of trees in the middle of the Union line. Pickett shook his head with ready understanding and assent. Longstreet was inattentive, kicking the grass as a gesture of ineffective protest.

"I reckon Longstreet doesn't approve of it," said the officer.

"Why not?" asked Bourland.

"It's too risky, and it means too much business for the undertaker. I suppose this is the plan: having failed to drive back the wings, Lee will send Pickett with his fresh brigades to smash through the centre and cut the Yankees into two. Word came last night from Jeb Stuart. He's back of the Yankees somewhere with twelve thousand cavalry. As you fellows break a gateway through the Union centre, he will swoop down in the rear and meet you. If you can, you will smash into the Yankees like a wedge and split them up. It's awful bold; but if you do it, the Union army is a goner."

The conference of generals broke up. Lee mounted his horse and rode away. Pickett went off joyfully, while Longstreet looked upon the ground, nodding many negatives.

Bourland glanced again across the valley. The sunshine lay over it warm and smiling. He wondered if this was his last day on earth.

He returned to his regiment. The rumor was before him, and shortly after came the definite order. Pickett's brigade with supports was to charge the Union centre.

"Well, I'll make my will again," said an officer of Bourland's mess. "I've got less to leave than last time."

"Longstreet doesn't want us to go."

"Oh, hell! He's an old woman. Send him to the dressmaker."

“Some of us will never need another tailor.”

“*Dulce et decorum pro patria mori*,” some one said jauntily.

At ten o'clock the files were formed and marched to the woods that covered the crest of the ridge. They were ordered to halt there and lie down upon their arms.

For three hours they waited the command to advance.

About one o'clock there was a sudden roar, which unfolded and spread with rattling reverberations. Immediately a hundred guns followed with a hundred voices of applause. Soon afterward a blaze and thunder of defiant reply resounded from across the valley.

An artillery duel was preluding the drama of battle with an orchestral fanfare.

The atmosphere was filled with strident music at the sustained pitch of climax. Shells flew over their heads in screaming fits of delirium tremens. Grape and canister ripped the trees and brought down a rainfall of leaves and splinters. Fragments of iron, as if with teeth, gnawed their way into the bosom of the earth. The missiles burst, screeched, snarled, and then died into quick silences. The powers of the air were holding a clamorous council and dispute.

The soldiers behind the crest were protected by a natural earthwork.

“That's the trick,” said a man at Bourland's side. “We've got them guessing. They'll exhaust their ammunition before we charge.”

Bourland looked on intently at the fascinating play of the maddened energies. The air was filled with balloons of smoke. Huge phantoms of vapor drifted scornfully northward, out of the midst of which shells like flaming hearts flashed and burst and tore their entrails.

The atmosphere bit and stung with the fumes of nitre and sulphur.

The long line of artillery across the valley bayed brutally like packs of angered bloodhounds, separated from their prey by a river. They showed yellow fangs. They thrust out scorched, bleeding tongues, and drew them

back instantly. The masters stood beside them, urging, encouraging, aggravating their fury.

The sun was darkened by grim densities out of which fell continually a hail of minute meteors. The hills shook and shrugged their shoulders. The earth quivered and trembled in its bonds.

One by one the Yankee dogs of iron ceased baying, as if their throats were raw beyond the power of further utterance. The guns were evidently silenced.

“There goes Pickett,” cried a soldier.

Bourland looked through his field glasses. He could see their commander riding over toward Longstreet's headquarters. Pickett stopped, saluted, and said something. Longstreet made no answer, except a bowing of his head. Pickett then turned to his staff officers, who rode off to the divisions.

The order ran down the line to make ready for the advance. The men sprang up as if suddenly unleashed.

Eighteen thousand soldiers crept out of their concealment in the woods and marched to the open field. They carried their guns at right shoulder shift, and moved with the precision of a dress parade.

The Yankees, more than a mile away, discovered them and divined their purpose; for they rose up from their breastworks with a ringing cheer of admiration, and a long line of waving caps stretched from Cemetery Hill to Round Top. Then men and caps disappeared behind a bristling fringe of muskets.

Bourland's eyes were fixed on that clump of trees shaped like an umbrella. He hoped to reach the shade of it. He had already won his spurs; but perhaps he was now going to win a monument.

Slowly the Confederates advanced. Halfway across they paused to take breath. The ranks were broken in climbing a fence, but they were quickly re-formed. The march continued with the steadiness of a machine's motion. Above their heads flew a covey of iron shells to protect their forward movement.

The silence of the Union batteries was reassuring.

The ammunition, doubtless, was exhausted, and the guns therefore were eliminated from the forces of defence.

Suddenly the Yankee cannon denied the supposition in flaming negatives. Grape and canister, shot and shell, tore great gaps in the advancing column. Men dropped like stalks of wheat under the scythe, and lay prone. The ranks closed up; not a man spoke, not a man faltered.

Bourland strode on automatically ahead of his men. He looked steadfastly to the front. He saw the low rise of the intrenchments, the spikes of the projecting muskets, the set, stony faces peering above them like a row of carved heads on a museum shelf. But these he knew had brains with diabolic intentions.

His eyes became as heated coals in their sockets; his breath sucked his throat dry like a sponge; his muscles seemed to stiffen and grow heavy. He moved like a mechanical toy.

The Union artillery spoke again with challenging, contemptuous, red defiances. The smoke drifted down over the Yankee soldiers and breastworks.

Before Bourland's eyes the field became a blur. Memory lifted a curtain in the dark chamber of his brain. He saw, as through a window, the old Hall, his father and sister standing on the veranda; and far beyond, leaning out of the skies, the dear, pallid face of his mother reaching downward with outstretched arms. Ancestral voices murmured vaguely, "Henry Bourland, we are watching you."

When he again became fully conscious of the world without him, every noise had ceased. There was an awe-inspiring, puzzling lull, as if Nature had stepped in at the last moment and commanded a truce.

They desired no cessation of hostilities. They were bent on Washington and a conquered independence.

The ranks continued to advance. They were nearing the invisible, indeterminate line. Bourland wondered when the infantry would begin to shoot. The muskets in front of him seemed to be holding their breath. He

thought of his men. He must reassure them. A stray reminiscence from the apostle came to him; he uttered it, coupled with a modern phrase of the soldier.

“Steady, boys. Quit you like men.”

“We’re as cool as icicles. Lead on, Major,” muttered a sergeant behind him. He noticed now the firm tread of his soldiers. It tightened the clutch of his own nerves. The umbrella-shaped clump of trees was only a hundred yards distant.

The iron fringe of musket barrels in front suddenly shot forth a silken fringe of flame. A ribbon of smoke hid the stone wall and the strange faces behind. It lifted slowly and revealed the defenders in the hysterical motions of reloading.

An order ran along the Confederate line to halt.

“Make ready!”

The row of gunlocks clicked like the ripple of tuneless piano keys.

“Fire!”

The soldiers delivered a single discharge.

A man rushed out ahead of the column. It was General Armistead.

“Think of your hearthstones, boys, and give them cold steel,” he shouted, waving his sword as he sprang forward.

The ranks made a rush for the stone wall. Another line rose to meet them. The formations were now utterly broken. The invaders leaped over the intrenchments. It was no longer a battle; it was a fight, man to man, and the stake was self-preservation.

They spat each other with their bayonets, and men doubled up like jack-knives, and rolled on the ground in convulsions. They clubbed their muskets and swung bludgeon blows, until heads were cracked like walnuts. Tardy words of surrender were thrust back into throats with points of steel. Many in the clash lost their weapons and took to the primitive, unarmed instincts of grappling and thuggery. Some, seeing that further struggle was useless, dropped down and lay opossum-like on the grass. Oaths, wails, shrieks, commands, cheers, yells, — a clamorous an-

archy in pandemonium, — relieved the tension and murderous horror with their drowning accompaniment of sound.

“Come on, boys,” cried Armistead, at the critical moment, when the line of impetus hung vacillating. He pushed his way thirty paces through the Union defenders and fell, mortally wounded.

“I follow, General,” cried Bourland. He caught a standard from a falling color-sergeant, and he reached his leader just as he fell. He planted the flag at his head, the high mark of the Confederate flood tide. He bent over to catch his last words: —

“Don’t let them beat us back,” gasped Armistead, like a true Anglo-Saxon.

Something struck Bourland in the shoulder and swerved his body to the right. He saw much in an instant. Two gunners were rushing at him with ramrods ready to swing. He felt the sense of the end. But he wanted to die in the shadow of those trees. He started to move toward the right. A horror paralyzed his limbs. A man, three feet away, lay on his belly swimming. He was trying to get up. A bayonet was spitted through his abdomen, and, rising, he rode the musket like a hobby horse, screaming the scream of the damned. The picture was photographed indelibly upon Bourland’s retina.

He closed his eyes. The blow of a club struck him on the leg and broke it. He threw up his hands. The next instant the other gunner beat his skull with a ramrod. He fell prone upon the ground.

He seemed to ascend into the dark, starry skies, amid the ringing of a thousand bells. He groped helplessly in the vagueness. He felt again the impact of a violent force. He whirled, he seemed to fall into an abyss. The faint resonance of multitudinous cheers stole into his waning consciousness. He swooned.

CHAPTER VII

IN THE VALLEY OF DEATH

THE firing became sporadic and finally ceased. The battle was over.

The concussions of the artillery had shaken the vapor out of the atmosphere, which hung over the fields, a gray coverlet of the shame. But before nightfall, the mist, the smoke, and a slow wind drifted down through the cleft of the hills, and the valley of abomination lay bare to the sky.

The hush of a deserted tabernacle spread over the land. The departing light fringed the canopy of clouds with trceries of silver, and embroidered its folds with hues of pale emerald and mother of pearl. Deep in the west the effulgence of the sun transfigured the world with the glory of the ancient shekinah.

The calm of lonely silences grew into peace. One looked upon that battle-field, and then put questions to God.

It was too stupendous to be the deed of men. It seemed like the visitation of some cosmic catastrophe; as if some blazing comet had swept close to the earth, and with its heat and incalculable speed had scorched the green fields and blasted the lives of a multitude.

Eight thousand men lay dead, and thrice that number were wounded.

But as one passed into the midst of it the illusion of a cosmic catastrophe gave place to the reality. It was not a tragedy of fire, but of blood. Everywhere, in broken heaps and scattered fragments, were visible the instruments,—the swart engines of destruction, cast-away muskets, dismantled cannon cooling their rage, jagged bits of

iron shells, once screaming with fury, now silent, inert, powerless.

The destroyers had marked each victim with a sign; some with small, dark spots, welling the ruby stream of life from hidden sources; others with mutilations more brutish, shattered bodies, shattered limbs, shattered skulls, bearing red brandmarks like cattle led to the slaughter. All the green earth, in road and stream and meadow, had received a bath of blood.

The bodies of the dead began to swell; the flesh to grow livid and purple. The wounded lay still, or crawled among the corpses, which, a few hours before, had been comrades, and which were now mere débris of the orgy of hate. It was a vast tableau, with the grim power of the Gorgon.

At last the night fell, and darkness veiled the horror from the eye. Then the senses were stirred through the ear. Out of the void came low wailings, hushed by the immensity of space; frail cries of helplessness, like the twitter of birds,—an intermittent, discordant miserere of human pain.

As the chill of night descended, Henry Bourland came slowly, slowly back to life. At first he felt only an ill-defined sensation of identity. It was devoid of all ideas of the past, of time, or place. Yet it was dimly distinct from other vague sensations of touch and sound. Without volition, he opened his eyes. The moon was just rising above the hills, gibbous and pallid as lymph. The mist, faintly luminous, crept over the field like a body of slow-moving water. He had no more conception of personal entity than one of the lower forms of animal life. He was lying, it seemed, in the depths of the ocean, on the soft, chill ooze, like a squid with its tentacles stretched on the sea floor. He could see, by turning his eyes, the projecting rocks, the level bed, spotted with sea monsters and submarine shrubs. He could discern other forms, with torpid motion, floating, gliding aimlessly. Feeble sounds, piercingly audible in the water, beat on his ears. He lay there without movement.

The glare of a burning barn, from the south, dissolved the illusion of the sea depths. It aroused the latent thought of earth and revived a clearer notion of self. Memory, a confusion of experiences, without relation or sequence, worked in his brain like a dream. Other ideas followed more coherent; the images of mountains, horses, a play-room, a great house in a garden of trees, the forms and faces for whom he felt even now a personal affection.

The vaporous fumes withdrew from his mind and left him with definite impressions. He had recovered the past up to his childhood.

Suddenly a clear idea flashed out of nothingness. Ah, yes! he knew now where he was. He had been hunting with his father, and they had camped out for the night. He remembered now their supper of cornbread and partridges roasted on a steel ramrod, the brandy and water in tin cups, and the shake-down of leaves. How chilly it was! The fire must have gone out. He recalled his father's rheumatism; he must get up and kindle the camp-fire again. He willed to move, but could not. Something lay on his chest.

"Father!" he called.

There was no response.

He made another effort to turn, and this time he succeeded. A cold liquid dripped on his face. He pushed against the burden. He saw now, to his horror, a strange visage, with ghastly eyes staring into his own. From the mouth fell thick, jelly-like drops.

He associated this horror with a murder of which he had once read, and which he had always vividly remembered; it was a tale by Poe.

"Who are you?" he asked stupidly. There was no answer. He realized by a simple inference that he was lying under a dead man.

One by one the lost links of memory were replaced in the chain. He began to compare facts, to form a judgment, and with this mental power he gained full control of his reason.

At last he recalled the battle, the charge, the leaping of

the wall, the flag, the fall of his general, the blows from the gunners.

He was aching all over, in every bone and limb.

His first intelligent act was to push the dead man aside and free himself. After that he examined his situation in detail. He had fallen into a clump of sumach bushes at the foot of a rock, and the branches had broken the force of the fall.

Over on Seminary Ridge the campfires of his comrades, those that were left, burned in a long line. Here and there on the field were points of light, moving like fire-flies—doubtless the lanterns of those searching for the wounded. Shouts and songs came from above the rock. He imagined that the Yankees were celebrating their victory.

Some one moaned near by, and Bourland recognized the voice instantly. It was Tom Rawlins of his own company.

“Is that you, Rawlins?”

“Thank heaven, Major Henry! Are you alive?”

“Just about, but not much more.”

“Can you crawl over here, Major? I can’t move.”

Bourland, after finding by experiment that his leg was broken, was able to grope his way around four dead bodies, and to reach the spot where his comrade lay.

“I guess I’m almost done for,” gasped Rawlins. “I’ve got moonlight in my lungs; I can feel it bite.” There was will power in the wan smile of his face. “Did we break their lines?”

“I’m afraid not. They seem pretty happy back there,” replied Bourland.

The wan smile died away.

“We did our best, anyway, didn’t we, Major?”

“I don’t believe any men in the world could have done more.”

“I’m so sorry for Uncle Robert,” murmured Rawlins, as if to himself. A moment later in another tone he said: “Major, come closer to me. It’s a pretty wide bed, isn’t it? I reckon I’ve only got a few minutes more.”

They lay there talking and looking up at the sky. The diminutive stars were melting in the increasing moonlight.

"I'm afraid I've been a pretty bad fellow in my time, Major Henry; not so wicked as worthless. Can't—can't you repeat some kind of a good verse? It'll let me slip away easier."

Bourland tried to recall the golden texts of his Sunday-school days, but it was very difficult to remember them. No one he could think of seemed suitable. He thought of funerals, of the prayer at the burial service. Tears moistened his eyes as he faltered out a passage that came to him:—

"He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.

"In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also."

"God save me, for Christ's sake," broke out the dying man. "Do you think He will, Major?" he asked.

"I think He will, Tom," replied Bourland. "I don't think God will damn any man, no matter how bad he was, who walked across this field to-day."

They lay silent after that for some time, and finally Rawlins muttered, scarcely loud enough for Bourland to hear, "Good-by, sweetheart."

The other man closed his eyes like one before something too sacred for alien sight. But Rawlins spoke up again.

"Do you really think, Major, that after we die we still go on?"

"I feel sure of it, Tom."

"Then," said the comforted fellow, "if you ever get back home, go down to Roanoke and ask for Molly Spence, and tell her that I've gone on, but that I'll wait for her. I hated to leave her, Major Henry, and go to the war, 'deed I did; but she said I couldn't have her if I stayed at home. Just tell her not to mind. I've only gone ahead on an earlier train."

The promise that Bourland gave broke through a sob.

"Tell her, too," the man continued, "that I died in a foreign land, but I fell face front."

A quarter of an hour passed; both watched and waited.

"Come nearer, come close, Major. I'm going," said Rawlins, steadily, putting out his hand.

Bourland grasped the hand, and felt a tremor come out of it. There were two or three gasps, followed by a half-choked rattle, and when he raised his head and turned toward his comrade, he saw a white face and two eyes gazing peacefully at the stars.

Bourland placed the soldier's arms crosswise over his breast, took a few trinkets from his pockets as memorials for his friends, and then crawled away. It was too lonely, too horrible, to lie beside a friend's cold corpse.

Near by he came to another member of his company. He shook him and called out, "Jim." It was no use to talk to him, he was stone dead. He had been shot through the left side and through the mouth. The lips had contracted and showed the grim teeth locked fast by a tetanus. His fingers were tightly clutching something, which proved to be a little black case with an inner rim of gilt; the daguerreotype of a young woman with bared shoulders, and curls bound with a black veil.

The effort of movement had weakened Bourland considerably. Up to this time his body had been one dull sensation of pain. Pangs more acute now began to localize themselves about his wounds. He realized that in addition to his broken leg, which burned and smarted like corrosive acid, he had been wounded in the shoulder. The action of his muscles in crawling had torn away the dried blood and reopened the wound. It was a raw laceration, like the bite of a wildcat. The blood began to flow again, and the shoulder to sting as if needles were excoriating the flesh. His head ached violently now and hummed with the confused murmur of a beehive. He felt exhausted, and he lay down again, helpless.

In drowsy meditation he scanned the situation. It was improbable that the hospital corps of his own army would

reach this side of the field. If, therefore, he were rescued at all, it must be by the enemy, and he would become a prisoner. He had seen the gleam of lamps, but none, as yet, had come near him. The relief corps had evidently passed him by, as he lay there unconscious, thinking him dead. That explained why there were so few wounded men about him. Immediate aid, in any event, was therefore uncertain. Every moment, as it passed, left him weaker.

He found himself less able to collect his ideas. It was impossible for him to stanch the blood flow from the wound, and the thought came to him that he was bleeding to death. It did not disturb his calmness and courage; he was not afraid to die. But when he recalled his father and sister, their grief at his loss, the knowledge that he was the only son and the last of the line, that with him a noble family would become extinct, a natural impulse of family pride and responsibility began to burn like an inward flame, and with it came a desire to be saved. While he was thus meditating, however, a lassitude dulled his senses, and he fell asleep.

Some time later he was awakened by the sound of voices. He opened his eyes, and the first sight that met them was the blinding flash of the moon. He lay as in a waking trance. He could not get a grip on his will.

Several men and two women were standing not far away. A man, bearing a lantern, approached and dropped it rudely down into his face.

"He's dead, as dead as Peter," he said decisively, and turned away.

Bourland with effort gathered enough strength to moan and to raise his hand.

"Hark," he heard one of the women say. "No, he is alive yet. He moved his hand."

They all approached him. A young woman bent down and put her hand on his forehead. Bourland, as he felt the touch, and saw the graciousness of her eyes, had a new conception of humanity. The pain of his wounds seemed to lessen.

"Can you speak?" she asked, in a voice as gentle as the croon of a lullaby.

"Yes, I am hanging on yet, but I think I'll soon slip away." He endeavored to smile.

"Oh, he's done for, Miss Randall. He won't live until morning. We've already spent too much time on these fellows. We ought to look first after our own men." The man, dog-tired, growled his protest.

Bourland's new conception of humanity was balanced with another. In his pride he spoke no word of pleading, nor was he conscious that his face showed any emotion. But the girl, bending down again, must have seen a mute appeal in his countenance.

"Take him up," she commanded. "Carefully, now; any rebel is worth saving who came across this field to-day. Besides, he's an officer," she added, giving a military reason for her act of mercy.

Bourland's face was a wan smile of gratitude, and in his weakness tears started in his eyes. He tried to speak.

"Save your strength," she said with compassion. "It may be a long time before your wounds can be dressed, and you haven't much left. Please give me your name and regiment."

He gave both, and she wrote them down in a note-book. The men carried the litter to the ambulance.

CHAPTER VIII

A ROMANCE IN A HOSPITAL

ONE morning, the following August, Henry Bourland lay on his invalid's cot, impatiently counting the strokes of the clock.

The halls of Gettysburg College had been turned into hospitals, and in one of the rooms of the dormitory Bourland had endured the six weeks of midsummer. The heat had been intense; day after day the sun blazed down upon the earth, hot as the flames of a gun-barrel, and the wounded man fretted himself into a condition of neurotic languor. He had narrowly escaped the loss of his leg. The surgeons with their usual zeal for beautiful operations, and in the fear of blood poisoning, had recommended amputation. But Bourland grimly declared that his legs had been comrades in life, and that death should not find them divided.

Amid the irritations of heat and slow recovery there had been some soothing experiences. The Yankees, he found, were really human beings; they had shown him nothing but kindness and good-will. Indeed, when it became known that he was the gallant young officer who had carried the flag up to the "high-water mark" of the Confederate invasion, they treated him with a courtesy and a solicitude that shamed him, and put to flight all his former prejudices against them.

"Why, they've got the manners of gentlemen," he muttered to himself one day, after some delicate act of consideration.

During the first weeks he had shared his room with a Quaker from North Carolina, who, against his will and principles, had been conscripted into the Confederate

army. He was a queer individual, thought Bourland ; but he soon discovered him to be a man of unusual intelligence and sweetness of temper.

His conversations with Bourland gave the young aristocrat a new view of the war—a conception which made him reflect and revise some of his narrow opinions.

“It’s the rich man’s war and the poor man’s fight,” the Quaker declared one day.

“It is the struggle of a noble people for their rights and their liberties,” replied Bourland, with eloquent assurance.

“Thee’s mistaken, friend. A few aristocrats want to live at their ease while their fellow-men labor. So they preach that slavery is a divine institution and necessary for the continuance of the South. The truth is, it is a diabolic oppression, and necessary only for their own selfish and idle vanities. What about me and thousands like me? What have I, a storekeeper in Guilford, to gain by this war?”

“Your self-respect and honor, which is more than gain,” answered Bourland, with a trace of contempt.

“Tut, tut, friend! God will decide that. This honor is only the pretext and sham of demagogues. But I bear thee and thy kind no ill-will, even if I was hung up in the strappado and forced into the army. But thy cause is iniquitous, and it is doomed. God’s will shall prevail in the end.”

After the departure of the Quaker, who was sent north to the prison at Elmira, Bourland often pondered his words. That one question, “What have I, and thousands like me, to gain by this war?” pestered his meditations. He had thought very little of others’ interests, he discovered. The Quaker’s plea had stretched the range of his vision beyond the limits of Hall and home. And although he felt no less militant for his own cause, he saw there were other interests at stake ; and this view, enforced by the incidents of his convalescence, allayed his former prejudice and bitterness against the Yankees.

The defeat at Gettysburg, and the news of Grant’s

capture of Vicksburg, which followed soon after, sobered his uncritical assurance; yet full of the spirit of the South, they did not quench his enthusiasm. His people he regarded as invincible, and he expected the ultimate success of Lee and the Confederate armies.

Just now, however, he was perplexed most by thoughts of a more personal character. Even war has its amenities, and this amenity came daily to visit the wounded soldiers. With all the pride of his birth and exclusive social standards, Bourland had struggled against this new menace, this alien influence. But his agitation, as he looked at the little round clock that ticked its eternal chatter on the shelf, was a most descriptive comment on his success.

To quiet the restlessness of his waiting this particular morning, he put his hand under the pillow, and drew out a letter. It was from Eleanor, with the only news from home for several months. Some one had got it passed through the Union lines. He had read it daily for a week.

“MY DEAR HARRY: Your letter, which in some way was smuggled through to us, telling us you were alive, came just in time to save father's life. The report of your death brought on another of his dreadful attacks. Oh! how glad we are to hope that we may see you again. Oh! brother, for more than two weeks you were dead to me, and now you have been given back to us, thank God. It is almost unendurably lonely here, now that mother is gone. Father will never get over her loss; he visits her grave every day. The suspense of waiting for news, and of getting bad news when it does come, is wearing us all down. Besides it is hard to bear some of our heart-breaks in silence. Dearest brother, my turn has come at last. Major Shirley Brookfield was killed at Stone River. He was stooping down to give a poor fellow some water when a bullet struck him in the left breast. He never spoke. Oh! my God! Harry, Harry! how can we endure much longer this terrible agony. No! I will not complain. I give him to my country willingly, I could not have loved him had he done less. I thank God in my tears every night for the brief love of his brave heart.

“You would hardly know the place now. It is much overrun with weeds. The slaves are gradually slipping off; five went last week, Andrew Jackson among the lot. He, one would think, should be the last to go. But many of them, when they see our distress, are more loyal than ever, and we shall not be left utterly alone.

"We are getting poorer, in fact, almost poverty-stricken, but we don't lose courage. Everybody thinks General Lee knows what he is about, and will bring us out all right in the end. It is hard to get medicine for father, and when we do get a little quinine, he won't take it. Send it to the soldiers, he says; they are doing the fighting, I'm no use.

"Conscripting has begun among the mountaineers and among the boys of sixteen and under. You will be surprised to learn that Elsie Vinton is engaged to a man named Clayton. I'm amazed at her choice. She was my friend, but I'm glad she didn't get you. This man Clayton, they say, is getting rich; he's a commissary in the army, and when he's off on a furlough, he goes around buying up diamonds and jewelry at low prices like a curmudgeon. How a woman in these times could love such a man, I don't understand. I see her rarely now. Give my best regards to Miss Randall. I never knew her well, and I have forgotten the incident of which she speaks; but tell her that God will repay her, though we cannot, for her kindness to you.

"Oh! brother, we send you our love and our kisses, father and I. I fear that soon they must come from me alone. We pray together every night, by your empty bed, for your safety. Father will use his influence, after your recovery, to have you exchanged; but he fears your bravery in Pickett's charge will make the Yankees want to hold on to you. The whole South has heard of you. Oh! Harry, we are so proud.

"Lovingly and devotedly yours,

"ELEANOR."

As he finished the letter, the bell in the college chapel began to toll ten strokes; soon after the rustle of lawn and quick footsteps were heard in the hallway. Bourland was more joyous now; the sudden throb of his heart was an ecstasy. He smoothed the sheets, set himself more decorously in his iron bed, and like a caged lion just before feeding time, he restively awaited his turn.

That rustle of lawn indicates, of course, that a lady was the cause of this impatient agitation. She was a girl of the village, Margaret Randall by name; one of the noble women who, in those days of stress, gave their time and service to the wounded. Her father was a surgeon-general in the Union army, and the daughter, used to a heroic atmosphere, had organized a village relief corps when the battle began around Gettysburg. It was she to whom Bourland owed his life.

At first he was simply an impersonality to her, a

wounded Confederate officer. Later the report of his bravery, and his connection with the dead general, Armistead, gave him a certain glamour of distinction. As she saw him oftener, his ideas, his manners, his unconscious acts, revealed to her that she had saved a member of one of those much-vaunted "first families" of Virginia. He interested her like a distinguished foreign traveller. It was the natural curiosity for an alien.

At last a chance incident opened the way for a personal intimacy. One morning, while he was yet too weak to hold a pen, he asked her to write a letter for him, and he dictated the address of his sister.

"Why!" she exclaimed in surprise, "are you the brother of Eleanor Bourland of Brayton?"

"I don't know," he answered with a smile. "There's not much left of me after the battle; I may be half a brother; but she certainly is my sister."

"How strange!" said the lady. "Why didn't I think of it before? Eleanor and I were schoolmates at Miss Harley's in Baltimore for two years. I never knew her very well; but one thing I shall never forget. It was on a half-holiday, and Edwin Forrest was in town playing 'Lear.' The girls all wanted to go to the matinee. I was ill and had to stay at home, and your sister stayed with me and read to me all the afternoon. I remember the book. It was 'Guy Livingstone.' We had to hide it from the preceptress on inspection days. I shall never forget her kindness. Didn't you ever hear her speak of Margaret Randall?"

If he had, he failed to remember; but he did not want to confess it. So he resorted to ruse and bold impudence. He put his hand to his forehead, as if he were raking his memory.

"Let me see," he mused. "There was Madge Terhune, and Grace Carter; and there was Claire Hollister, and Margaret Randall—oh! yes, I remember now; they called you the 'Angel in the House.' That proves it." His eyes shone with triumph and delight.

"I know you are feigning now. They never called me that. Admit it, sir, you never have heard of me."

He saved himself in a double meaning.

"I am a Virginian. I come from the state of the axe and cherry tree; so you see I cannot tell a lie."

She smiled, but did not force the question further.

It was the beginning of an acquaintance. After that they were no longer like nurse and wounded soldier; they became, gradually, confidential friends.

To-day she was a long time in coming to his room. The chapel bell struck eleven. Bourland grew uneasy. At last he heard a step.

She stood still on the threshold, framed by the doorway into a picture.

A slender girl dressed in the blue of forget-me-nots; her countenance clear, with a trace of frailty, showing the faint course of the delicate veins. From her eyes, as from limpid depths, a light seemed to flow and expand, like an ethereal substance.

Resting her hands on the uprights of the doorway, she leaned out of the picture into the room. To Bourland the air suddenly became tremulous and cool.

"Good morning, Captain; how is the bold rebel to-day? Oh! I beg your pardon. I mean Major. I do get you all so mixed up." The voice was a subdued contralto;—the note which one leaning down hears in the bubbling of a spring.

"Still rebellious," he answered, "but a captive; therefore I'm harmless. Won't you come in?"

His eyes were fixed upon her face as on a target.

"I can't stay to-day. The others have kept me too long."

The pleasure on his face grew into pain.

"I've just written a last letter for one poor fellow from Indiana. The fever has been too much for him; he will die to-morrow," she said sadly.

A pause without a word, while the clock beat out its hammer and anvil monotony.

"If I can't stay," she continued, walking into the room, "I'll leave these as substitutes." She put a handful of sweet-pea blossoms into a glass of water. "They

came from our garden. The other men wanted to have them, but I refused and told them they were for their betters." Her laugh filled the room and flew out of the window.

Pleasure loomed up once more, golden, upon his countenance.

She came to the bedside and put her hands upon his pillow.

"It is very hot. Let me turn it for you."

He raised his head and then fell back on the cool linen with a thrill.

"Did you pluck those flowers yourself?" he asked with an imperceptible catch in his throat.

"Certainly," she replied without the least constraint.

"Did you have me in mind when you did so?"

"Yes," came the answer quickly, frankly. "You and a good many other things," she added with the trace of an after-thought.

He reached out, took three blossoms, and then veiling his intention in an endeavor to catch their fragrance, he put them to his lips. But she saw the deed. In her embarrassment she turned to study the winter scene of a wall picture.

He waited until she looked toward him once more.

"They are magic herbs, and they give new life." Again he pressed them gently to his lips.

"Why, what a romantic rebel you are!" she broke out derisively.

"I feel my blood tingle with new energy," he continued. It was a presumption, tentatively put out, like a hand groping in the darkness.

"Well, if that's all you need to recover, I'll have our man bring you down some every day."

"There isn't any magic in a man. You must bring them yourself." The first phrase was uttered with nonchalance; the second with the authority of a conqueror.

"Indeed!" she cried out. "I must, must I? I must take my orders, too, from a rebel and a prisoner. Don't you think you are much too dictatorial and presumptu-



“ ‘ Why, what a romantic rebel you are!’ she broke out derisively.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42 43 44 45 46 47 48 49 50 51 52 53 54 55 56 57 58 59 60 61 62 63 64 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 73 74 75 76 77 78 79 80 81 82 83 84 85 86 87 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100

ous?" The quality of her rebuke was too complex to be defined; it was laughter with a tang of defiant resentment, and something more.

He looked at her, as at a gun sight, half-closing his eyes. He was taking sure aim. His words possessed a tacit, an esoteric meaning.

"You must do it; and you will."

Two scared rabbit's eyes quivered and blinked above two cheeks that suddenly turned as red as poppies in a field of wheat.

Neither, for a moment, could think of anything to relieve the tension.

"Did you bring me that book?" he asked finally, in a voice wherein carelessness and exultation strove for precedence.

"Yes," she answered huskily, almost inaudibly; and without looking at him, she put the book in his hand.

He took it, studied the title-page, apparently; and she, seizing the opportunity, slipped away.

"Good-by! I'm late," came to his ears, like an echo from the hallway.

The atmosphere of the room rose at once to its former intolerable temperature.

All that afternoon he lay reading the book. It was one of the latest volumes of the English laureate, the "Idylls of the King." He read on and on, until he came to the legend of Launcelot and Elaine; over that he lingered and mused. It seemed to him an allegory of his own experience. His mind travelled in a parallel line, bearing in thought this Northern girl, who had taken him out of the clutches of death, and who, as he confidently believed, was irresistibly disclosing, as a woman will to a man of strength, the untarnished treasure of a maiden heart.

He lay upon a delicious couch of rapture. He seemed to be floating in a warm, joyous sea—buoyant like an unfreighted ship just launched upon the waves to sail in quest of the land of El Dorado.

Then he read on until he came to the gloomy tragedy, the breaking up of the Round Table and the passing of

Arthur. He saw the heroic leader who had sworn to break the heathen and uphold the Christ; he saw him betrayed by his sinful queen, forsaken by his recreant knights, left all alone with a remnant, to fight that last, dim, weird battle of the West on the sandy wastes of the sea. He heard the gray king, overwhelmed, everything gone, striving to comfort the solitary retainer beside him with melancholy consolation.

“The old order changeth, yielding place to new,
And God fulfils himself in many ways.”

Bourland put down the book. The Quaker's prophecy echoed in his brain like ominous thunder, “The cause of the South is doomed.” And with that came the picture of his father, a knight of the latter day, old, feeble, his work done, passing mournfully into some misty land of Avilion; and the Hall, the dear old Hall—

A dark phantasmagoria slowly took shape in his brain: of shadows and forces of destruction closing about his home.

He threw the book aside and, unnerved by the long strain of confinement, he sobbed like a beaten child.

CHAPTER IX

A LOVER AND A SPHINX

THE next day, for some reason, Margaret Randall failed to make her usual visit to the hospital.

Bourland lay waiting — waiting — long after the bell struck the hour that hitherto had brought her, like Aurora, to glorify his days. He began to realize how necessary she was to his comfort. Momentarily expectant of her coming, with the sound of every footstep his heart-beats quickened into frantic rappings. And when the sounds died away in the resonance of the corridor, an emptiness oppressed him like a weight, and drained the vitality from his body and nerves. Into the dark void of his closed sight there floated the figure of the girl, resplendent with a divine womanhood. In his ears rang the echoes of her voice; the voice that, as he lay half-conscious on the battle-field, seemed to come from an angel of mercy; the voice that afterward had so often lulled his sufferings into delicious reveries; the voice that, as their acquaintance grew into confidences, humanized the angel of mercy into the variable girl, tender, perverse, elusive.

When she did not come, Bourland began to hear a little love-god, cradled in his own heart, crying like a hungry infant in the lonely darkness.

His longings were startled by a sudden fear. He remembered his words, her abrupt departure.

“I’ve driven her away,” said Bourland to himself bitterly. “She is no light-o’-love, to be won by boldness, dash, assurance. My audacity has insulted the dignity of love. Strangers — and only a few weeks! I have mistaken her kindness for a deeper feeling. I have taken

advantage of her defencelessness. Absence is her only protection against my arrogance. She is staying away. What else could a modest woman do?"

She took in his estimation a more elevated rank of gentility. He recalled how in the first days he had scoffed at the idea of her social equality; how he had mused on her charms as a merely diverting pastime; he—a member of Virginia's proudest aristocracy; she—the daughter of some Yankee doctor. He was inclined to revert now to his former prejudice as a consolation. "But," he considered, "I have not acted like a gentleman." He squirmed under the charge of an accusing conscience.

This mood became intolerable, and he sought escape from it. "Perhaps," he thought, "she is only detained by some duty at home. Several times before she has failed to come. She will be here to-morrow," he reflected, nibbling at a morsel of comfort. But it was a stony morsel, and gave him no sustenance. For the bell unfeelingly tolled off the hours of the afternoon, and the sleepless night and all the next anxious day, without bringing the lady.

The third day he was stung venomously by another suggestion. "Ah!" he thought, and the idea buzzed like a hornet, "she has another lover. That is the reason for neglecting me. Let a girl once be mastered by love for a man, and she will be absolutely heartless toward a rival. That's the woman of it. This lover is doubtless some hatter or tinker or jobber in the Yankee army—one of her own kind. Her love for him made her take pity on me. Yes, that's the reason she has left me. I've made a fool of myself. Well, I wish him luck."

He sought comfort in his social prejudices. But a frenzy of jealousy scorched him; the burning bed of Montezuma was more endurable. The vague image of the rival made his own love more intense and kindled his jealousy to a white heat, which finally threw him into a mental disorder. He had to clutch, at times, the iron bar of the bed for self-control.

The fourth day was more tolerable, even lighted by gleams of joy. "How stupid," he said to himself when,

after a reaction, a saner judgment prevailed. "How stupid it is for me to let my imagination run away with my common sense. This rival is a figment of my own foolish brain. I haven't the slightest reason to believe in his existence. The real cause of her absence is as plain as the sun. She really does love me, and therefore stays away. After my emphatic insinuations, how could she do otherwise and preserve her self-respect? She can't visit me now. She can't seek after me. She must be sought. God bless her! What a fine-grained lady she is!"

This conclusion came like a pardon to one condemned to be hanged. It made him feel anew the joy of living. He began to reënforce this last opinion with recollections of the unconscious acts, which undoubtedly betrayed her hidden emotions. He recalled her rapt eyes as he narrated his adventures in the field; the tremor of relief when he told how, while within the Union lines, he barely escaped capture and the death of a spy; the many occasions when his voice took on a lover's playful tenderness, and hers, in response, fell into a gentle modulation, a delicious croon of affection as if her mood were controlled by his own.

He was nibbling now at no morsels; he was feasting at a banquet of epicures. And the feast lasted all through one short joyous day. Then a new mood succeeding, he saw that this was only a Barmecide feast of the imagination.

The disenchantment came by a process of destructive criticism—an agnostic attitude of inquiry which soon drenched the golden glamour of fancy and viewed the whole matter in the frigid atmosphere of fact. Those rapt eyes—why, they were due simply to the absorbing novelty of his adventures; a girl reads an exciting book with just such rapt eagerness. And that tremor of relief at his escape—well, that was explained by his talent as a persuasive narrator; he recalled in this connection that he had once recited some ridiculous doggerel to a girl in such heroic tones that, at the end, she murmured an enthu-

siastic "how beautiful." And as for those modulations of the voice, those sweet croonings, now that he revived the circumstances, they always occurred when she, tired with previous visits to the wounded, came to see him last. Those delicious modulations of affection were merely the languor of weariness, and nothing more.

These confirmatory proofs having been examined by reason and common sense, and having been found mere delusions, the main premise, that she loved him, and stayed away for that reason, fell also into discredit. The first despair laid hold of him again, and a host of blue devils danced about their victim.

At the end of a week the situation was unchanged, except that he was totally exhausted by this morbid psychology, and didn't have enough vitality left to feel at all.

One night, just after the bell had struck two, the absurdity of this hospital romance broke upon him. It was but a nightmare, nurtured and fed by his physical weakness and his temporary seclusion from contact with the other influences of life. He was a Southerner; she a Northern girl: between them was an unbridgeable chasm. Besides, he was a prisoner, soon to be sent away to his pen, and there was little hope that they would ever see each other again. He swept away the romantic structure from his imagination as a child, after the joy of building, destroys its house of blocks.

And what remained after that act of destruction? The empty-hearted man, hungering, as men have always done with insatiable desire, for the eternally feminine. And there remained, too, in his mind, the unshakable conviction that he had found the eternally feminine incarnate in this Northern girl who, a few days ago, had stood there in the doorway, a portrait in a frame, and then, Galatea-like, had bloomed and expanded into life.

The little love-god, cradled in his heart, was wide awake, wailing, wailing for his nurse.

Two days later Bourland's heart thumped against his breast like a brazen knocker. Suddenly, without the

least premonition of her coming, the girl appeared at the door.

"Oh! I'm so glad," she said joyously. "I was afraid you would be gone, and I shouldn't be able to say good-by."

Bourland shut his eyes as before a blazing sun. The nightmare of the past ten days floated in the starry darkness of his veiled sight. He put his hand over his forehead as a test of his wakefulness. He opened his eyes and beheld the distinctness of the reality. He could not speak for joy; he dared not speak for caution.

"Well, Sir Rebel Haughty, aren't you glad to see me?" she exclaimed impatiently.

"Glad to see you?" he replied in the monotone of a daze. His eyes were focussed upon her face, and shot forth the gleams, hectic and hungry, of a starved wolf. Then he fell backward on the pillow. Waves of rapture broke over him like the surf of the sea. He quivered in every limb.

She came nearer and bent down over him.

"Have you had a relapse of fever?"

"Yes," he answered faintly.

He lay there as helpless as a new-born bird in its nest. She put her hand to his forehead and felt the throb, throb, throb of his blood, as it vibrated under the electric thrill of her touch.

"You still have a high fever," she said tenderly. "I expected to find you well. Nurses are of some use, aren't they?"

There it was, the same sweet voice. He feared to move, to speak, to look — lest something should break the magic of the enchantment. The air seemed flashing with sparks.

"Where have you been so long?" The prolonged vowel of the last word almost betrayed him. Within the little love-god was struggling to cry out, but he took it by the throat and choked its voice.

"I have been away with my mother. She was taken ill suddenly and ordered to the seaside. I had to go on the instant."

His eyes opened wide, and a gasp, deep as the depth of his past agony, escaped him.

"Then you didn't just *stay* away?"

"Just *stay* away?" she repeated. "What do you mean?"

"Because I offended you."

"Offended me?" Her face wore the bewilderment of one suddenly aroused from deep sleep.

"I thought I was rude to you."

"I don't remember it."

He scanned her face as a lawyer does an opposing witness. There was no trace of hidden thought, nor the slightest increased tension of the muscles.

"She hasn't had any idea of love in her mind," thought Bourland. Hope and Fear began to wrestle in his imagination.

"Look," he said timidly. "I have preserved the spoils of your last visit." He pointed to the withered blossoms in the glass. "They were very poor substitutes," he added, smiling.

"I should think so," she replied with a matter-of-factness that grated on his nerves; and then without more ado she took the glass and threw the flowers out of the window.

He had called upon her to stop, but with no avail.

"Oh! I'll bring you some fresh ones to-morrow," she said, speaking as a green grocer might do to a daily customer.

"Now tell me what you have been doing during my absence," she went on, taking the chair beside him. "Give a full report to your nurse."

"I have been thinking of your kindness to me."

"Oh!" she answered with a deprecating toss of the head, "that was an act of simple charity; anybody would have done the same."

Fear flung Hope upon the ground.

So, after all, she had merely been nursing an impersonality. It was only a modern instance of the parable of the good Samaritan and the wounded man by the wayside.

"That reminds me," she continued after a pause, "my father is home on a furlough and, hearing about you, he insists that this charity be extended. He knows your father. They were both Whigs and met several times at political conventions. Now that we have the son a prisoner, he wants, for his sake, to have you spend the last days of your convalescence at our house. It may make a pleasant change for you. He will have you paroled."

"You don't mean it?" cried Bourland, eagerly. "Oh! this is too much. You'll make a Yankee of me with your kindness."

"Of course I objected. But I gave in finally. If I hadn't been attending you, or if you were the only man in the hospital, it would be different. But it does look strange to take in a rebel when there are hundreds of our boys about, doesn't it?"

"Yes," assented Bourland; "but as a Calvinist would say, 'things don't go by merit in this world, but by election.'"

She did not pay much attention to the last remark.

"Do you want me to come really?" he inquired.

"Oh," she returned with a pretty shrug, "I'm not concerned in it. It's a matter between my father and you. He'll come to give you the invitation. I shall be glad to receive any guest of my father, and you particularly; for, to be frank, I have come to like you very much. You are the most interesting, perhaps, of all the soldiers in the hospital. I've enjoyed talking with you, and getting your Southern ideas; they are so different from mine."

He saw her standing on the other side of the unbridgeable chasm.

"Oh! what a fool I've been! what a fool!" said Bourland to himself. Gall seemed to trickle through all his veins and curdle the blood. The little love-god was gasping, suffocating, writhing.

"Now I must go," said Miss Randall; "I came in to see you first to-day, contrary to custom. But that is excusable. I was very anxious about you, because I have

had your case especially on my mind. Here are two of the latest newspapers."

She laid them down beside him, and put her hand again to his forehead, which was now somewhat cooler.

"Your fever has gone. Perhaps I've had a good effect upon you," she said, smiling sweetly, and looking into his face thoughtfully.

Then the sphinx turned and went out of the room.

CHAPTER X

THE PRISONER FAILS TO ESCAPE

BOURLAND awaited the father's visit with a certain solicitude. The next day Mr. Randall came and introduced himself. He was dressed in full uniform, and the insignia of his rank and his reserved yet genial deportment allayed the last aristocratic scruples of the Virginian. "He must be a man of high standing," thought Bourland. He gulped down an emotion of relief. Margaret seemed nearer than ever.

"I want you to come spend the last days of your convalescence with us," said the surgeon-general, after some preliminary conversation. "I remember your father well. We spent several pleasant evenings together during the Whig Convention of '56."

Bourland made a feeble protest against such excessive kindness to an enemy.

"My dear fellow," said the Yankee, "you know what the good Book says, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.' If we had only taken this command more to heart years ago, your people and mine would not now be at each other's throats. War is bad enough; let us take what pleasure we can out of it. I'll get you a parole as soon as you can leave your bed."

Bourland thanked him with effusive gratitude. Two days later he hobbled downstairs on his crutches, and was driven to the Randall home.

It was a plain, old, substantial house. There were scars on its bricks and ledges; for the Confederate sharpshooters had occupied it during the battle. The walls were marked by the dents of bullets and shells, the ivy had been torn away, and the woodwork in some places was scorched and splintered.

"You make me feel very much at home," said Bourland, after he had been there twelve hours. Before long he discovered a reason for their kindness.

"That was our only boy," said Mrs. Randall, showing him a portrait one morning when they were alone. "He would have been just about your age now, if he had lived. And I suppose he would have been a soldier too."

Margaret continued her visits to the hospital, and she was absent much of the day. The two men spent their time reading the papers and discussing the war issues. There was an absence of rancor in the attitude of the Union man, and before it Bourland's bitter hostility toward Yankees was shamed into a reluctant admiration. Previously he had scorned the Northern utilitarian ideal of life. But gradually his provincial eyes were opened to the sublime purpose of the North—the resolution to guarantee the unity of civilization in America.

It was founded, he began to discern, not upon jealousy and fanaticism, but upon conviction, necessity, and unselfish devotion to a conception of liberty too large for him, with his Southern traditions, to comprehend sympathetically. When the talk came to argument, he maintained his position with logic. And although he became less vehement in his opinions, his faith in the righteousness of his own cause remained unshaken.

All this while another matter gave him far deeper concern. Margaret, seen in her home, grew more and more adorable. Secretly, his visit became like the tortures of Tantalus. He watched her motions, listened to catch her words, strove to divine her thoughts, and hungered.

But she went about, utterly unconstrained, and treated him as she might the brother who was gone.

Smarting under the memory of his mistaken assurance of conquest, he was morbidly reticent about his own feeling, which had now grown into a consuming passion. Besides, he was a guest in the house, and the ease of opportunity to reveal his love only increased the timidity of his sensitive pride. A single word, a mere intimation of his single desire, might exorcise the gracious angel of

hospitality, and debase the rare, exalted spirit of this friendship of enemies. It might humiliate him as an ingrate, and he shunned such an indiscretion like the unpardonable sin.

She was frank and cordial — ominously so. She was always within reach, but beyond his grasp. She remained a sphinx, and his mute questionings were vain. She plagued him like the *Liebchen* of the poet Heine, who was more merciless than all the other maidens because she would neither love nor hate.

“Little love-god, you must die without ever being born,” murmured Bourland to the motherless little infant in his heart.

So the days drifted on, until at last the order came terminating his parole, and commanding him to report at headquarters. He was to be sent down to Fort Delaware.

On the afternoon before the day of his departure he went for a ramble with Margaret to a hill above the town. He had become reconciled to the idea that this was the end.

Halfway up the hill, his strength gave out, and they sat down upon a rock. He carried a copy of the “*Princess*,” which, that very morning, he had been reading aloud to her. As he opened the book at random, his eyes caught the first lines of that song of hallowed regret : —

“Tears, idle tears, I know not what they mean,
Tears from the depths of some divine despair
Rise in the heart, and gather to the eyes
In looking on the happy autumn fields,
And thinking of the days that are no more.”

He read the lines with low, deep-drawn fervor, and before he came to the last he knew that his lashes were moist, and that he, a soldier, was a craven lover. He dared not turn his eyes toward her ; he looked out upon the landscape, the fields of autumn, and they seemed overcharged with that divinity of the poet’s despair. He wanted to cry out for the mercy of God.

Above, the sky hung cloudless, save in the west, where a patch of fleece, silver-gray, tempered the rays of the sun.

The season was nearing the fulness of its splendor. Wide ranges of grass in the meadow, renewed by the September rains, sharpened the air with a pungent aroma. Everywhere—in field and lane and highway—the golden-rod thrust upward its multitudinous plumes. The trees ran the full gamut of color, and the leaves, in their spiral courses, were dropping reluctantly, at the wisp of the wind, upon the sear beds beneath in wood and copse. The birds of passage were faintly vocal. Thistledown, frail tenuous argosies bearing seed, went sailing off to nowhere on imperceptible currents. A vapor, deepening to pearl, incense from the altars of the dying season, rose and veiled the rim of the landscape like a diaphanous curtain. Charged with the emanations of decaying life, the air stung the breath like an etcher's acid. The blood bounded with unwonted speed, and then, after the spurt, gave way to a languor like the approach of sleep. All Nature was at one with the mood, and distilled with profusion the essence of melancholy. It was the close of her career, and as a fitting ceremonial she had decked herself in her grandest attire, and was passing in royal splendor.

They drank in, both of them, that divine essence of the scene; each in a silence. A word, lightly spoken by either, might have snapped the tension. At last he ventured,—not to speak,—but to repeat, “The autumn fields—the days that are no more,” and he unconsciously stressed the phrase as if that happiness might have been their own.

He looked at her sadly; she was visibly impressed.

“I'm glad I'm a prisoner,” he murmured. “A captive. It has given me some new ideas. It has given me a truer conception of your people and their motives. It took a bullet to drive it in, though. No, I don't mean that. It was a woman's kindness.”

Her face, he could see from her profile, was beaming with radiance; she was looking down, tearing idly at a tuft of grass.

“But still,” he continued, “I must fight for my own cause; for I believe it is right.”

“I couldn't—honor—you unless you did that.” The

hesitation about the word, and a subtle indecision in her voice, sent galvanic charges to the ends of every nerve in his body. His fingers twitched.

"Don't you feel any animosity toward me?"

"I suppose I ought to, but I don't." The tuft of grass was now entirely uprooted.

"Thank you," he answered. "I shall fight now more like a Christian." A pause. "Suppose I'm exchanged, and we come north again on another invasion; then I'm going to make you *my* prisoner." His blood began to burn his veins in his eager, suppressed excitement. His eyes made clear the ambiguity of his words.

Rose tints broke forth all over her cheeks; her drooping glances betrayed her weakness, and gave him permission to speak.

"Do you know the most beautiful lines I read you this morning? Do you remember the place where the princess is nursing the wounded prince; where he, in a delirium, proclaims his love; where, in a supreme moment, their two lives merge into one, fitting each other like perfect music into noble words?"

"Yes," she answered, trembling boldly. "I know the passage by heart."

"Suppose," he went on, manlike, recovering his composure, "suppose the prince had been a beggar, what do you think the princess would have done?"

"I don't know."

"What would you have done?"

"I should have loved him just the same."

The word "love" from her lips made him courageously militant.

He began to press the attack, and to force her to open her guard.

"Would you have loved a pauper?"

"No man is a pauper who can bring to a woman the riches of a great love. A true woman desires that more than princes' favors." She had recovered her composure, too, in this general defence of her sex.

He saw her heart open to direct thrust, but still uncer-

tain, he desired to fence for a surety. Oh! how inexpressibly sweet it was to him—this slow unfolding, this revelation of love. He was tempted to prolong it.

“I must leave you to-morrow — to go to some dingy old prison. Are you sorry?”

“I am glad you are a prisoner,” she replied with a dangerous evasion.

“Why?” he asked in surprise.

“Because.”

“Because of what?”

“Oh! just because. That’s enough. I plead a woman’s privilege.”

“But I must know that because.” He commanded like a martinet.

She broke into a laugh of mockery, and eluded him.

“Because otherwise, stupid! you would go back into the army and get killed. You are so reckless.”

“Would you care?” He leaned toward her, fiercely inquisitive.

She hesitated, until at last her wits protected her.

“Why, certainly I should, after all my trouble in nursing you back to life. I don’t want all my pains to go for nothing.”

She was concealing something under the persiflage, and he knew it. All aglow within from assurance and rapturous delight, he prepared for the final thrust. He leaned nearer and put his hand over hers, and said coldly, as if hurt:—

“Tell me one thing more. Was it trouble and pain for you?”

There was no evasion now. She sprang up like a startled doe, and rushed over toward the fence. She leaned against the rail, her bosom lifting rebelliously.

He rose and followed her, and then spoke—not like the fencer, but like the pleading lover, long denied.

“Margaret, I must speak. Give me one little grain of hope. Don’t send me away in despair. I love you.”

She turned her face toward him at the sound of the last words. The inward light that always played so quietly in

the depths of her eyes was radiant with the warm effluence of love. Her countenance glowed like the twilight stars, and pure gems of liquid beauty came forth from the irrepressible depths of joy. "Dearest," she answered, "have you not divined my love for you before this? You are very blind."

He bent down and drew her toward him, into the tender bondage of his arms; and in the strain she quivered, as if just relieved from a burden.

The sun was only faintly discernible through the gathering vapors. On high some floating clouds were rimmed with edges of purple and crimson and silver, while far, far, in the infinite depths of the heavens, clear and crystalline, there glowed with delicate faintness a pale field of chrysolite.

The chill of autumn came with the gathering darkness, and they started for home. On the way, while crossing a meadow, she stopped under a wide-branching chestnut tree, and, reaching her arms around his neck, she drew him down and kissed him—again—and then again.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, with a pressure of reassurance, "I was so afraid my prisoner would escape."

He wanted to fall on his knees and worship her, there in the dusky solitude of the low-branching tree, but she ran, with a joyous shout, out into the open air.

The next day he was sent, with a squad of prisoners, to Fort Delaware.

BOOK III

LOVE AMONG THE RUINS

CHAPTER XI

LEE AT APPOMATTOX

At four o'clock in the afternoon of Palm Sunday, April 9, 1865, Henry Bourland was sitting with some Confederate officers under an apple tree in an orchard just west of Appomattox Court House. It was a group almost statuesque with dejection.

His faith in the success of the Southern cause was now well-nigh gone. The last two years had brought anxiety, fear, and finally despair. Gettysburg had marked the crest of wave, which, since that defeat, had been slowly subsiding into impotence.

He had endured six months as a prisoner in the stone fortress at the head of Delaware Bay. There his active nature, pent within gloomy walls, chafed for freedom like the buoys tugging at their chains just off the shoals of the island. True, his jailers were reasonably considerate of his comfort, and the sour bread of captivity was sweetened by frequent letters from Margaret, which he must forego when he returned to his own army. But, in spite of all, he was restive to regain the field. At the end of half a year, he was exchanged. A lieutenant colonel's commission awaited him, and, to his surprise, an appointment as aide on Lee's staff.

He had followed the fortunes of the great chieftain all through those dreary campaigns in the Wilderness; those tireless efforts to check a far superior force of inexhaustible resources. He had seen the horrors of the blazing woods of Spottsylvania, where the wounded were burned alive; he had witnessed, from a distance, the diabolic explosion of the Crater, and he had shared the silent anguish of the leader when the debacle began, when, after Five Forks and Sailor's Creek, Lee, still unconquered, started with the remnant of his army, like a hunted fox, for the coverts of Lynchburg.

It was a heart-breaking spectacle, that retreat. The spring rains had turned the roads into vicious gullies of paste; the woodlands became swamps; the meadows, pools of water. Horses, wagons, and men sank into the earth as into quicksands. Provision trains were blocked and abandoned to the closely pursuing enemy. Cannons were spiked, caissons demolished, to hasten flight; railroads were destroyed and bridges burned to delay pursuit. The regiments became uncontrollable rabbles, and stragglers deserted at will. The faithful, hungry without the prospect of rations, often threw away the useless burden of their muskets.

At unexpected moments brigades of Grant's army appeared and cut off whole detachments, capturing thousands. In two weeks the Army of Northern Virginia, fifty thousand in number, lost in killed, wounded, and captured one-half of its men, and of that remainder only a fraction were able to bear arms. At last the bulwark of the Confederacy was shattering from the incessant pounding of the waves.

The original intention of Lee was to make for Danville on the North Carolina border, and to join forces with Johnston. But the pursuers on the south cut him off. Then he turned toward Lynchburg, telegraphing in advance for supplies. But Sheridan, with his cavalry, ran ahead and captured the provision trains. When Lee reached Appomattox, he was almost surrounded, his army had nothing to eat, and there was no hope of relief. He

faced two alternatives : a last battle with its futile sacrifice of his men, or a capitulation. On the ninth of April, in reply to a note from Grant, he rode over to McLean's house to discuss the terms of surrender.

The officers under the apple tree were now awaiting his return.

April was in her worst mood that day. Heavy clouds hung all over the sky ; a drizzle oozed out of the atmosphere, gathered on the leaves and dripped, dripped, dripped to the ground.

Near this group of officers the Stars and Bars hung down limp from a staff that leaned against the angle of a worm fence. A drum, flabby with moisture, when a man flung a stone at its head, gave forth a sullen grunt. A few paces away, a dozen muskets were stacked into a double cone. Beside them, under the cover of a tree, lay a number of soldiers, fast asleep.

The officers were talking of recent events, — the capture of Richmond, the flight of President Davis and his cabinet, the great fire which had burned half the city. They were discussing, too, the merits of Grant, to whom they referred, occasionally, as the Butcher.

"Well, he's used us up ; there isn't much doubt about that," said a captain, yawning and stretching backward.

"He'll pair off with Sherman," said another, scratching the ground with his scabbard. "They tell me he went down through the coast states like a prairie fire, and left behind him a trail sixty miles wide, as clean picked as our mess tables."

"We mustn't play cry baby," replied Bourland. "War is hell's game. It's not for the nursery. Grant didn't come down here for a dress parade, and Sherman didn't go to Atlanta on a cakewalk." There was an insuppressible languor in his voice, which showed that he was physically worn out. "But I wish," he added, "that we could have joined Johnston, and that Uncle Robert could have had one more crack at them, just enough to end with a flourish and a little salve." His set teeth, whiter amid his black beard, for he wore a beard now,

showed a spasmodic concentration of the last resources of will power.

"Here he comes," shouted a soldier, running toward the officers.

They all jumped up and looked down the road.

Slowly, laboriously, hanging his head, came a melancholy horse with his rider. General Lee was dressed in a gray uniform, fresh, unwrinkled, fastidiously neat, the coat of which was buttoned closely about the neck. A broad-brimmed felt hat was pulled down over the half curls of his hair. At his side hung the sword, with gold and jewelled hilt, presented to him by the state of Virginia. He looked neither to the right nor left, but with eyes upon the ground, he rode reluctantly, as if he were riding away forever from the dearest thing on earth.

Colonel Marshall, his secretary, came a few paces behind him. There were no other attendants.

Before he reached the edge of the camp the soldiers began to cheer, and to cheer more loudly as he approached. But he did not seem to hear them. They began to understand. The noisy greeting became subdued, and ceased altogether. They pressed forward to the roadsides—silent as the monuments that line the Appian Way to Rome. A feeling—not awe, not mere admiration, not religious reverence, not presumptuous enough to be sympathy—deprived them of speech and motion. As he rode into the files, they took off their caps. Lee, suddenly aware, looked up, saw the men, and took off his own hat. One man, bolder than the rest, broke out from the ranks; others followed, and in a moment the general was the centre of a circle of men, struggling to reach his hands, to touch his uniform, to lay fingers even upon the horse.

The discipline of manhood broke under the strain. They gave vent to sobs and cries. They turned and hid their faces in the grass. They sat down by the roadside and wept like broken-hearted women.

Lee's immobile countenance relaxed at the sight.

“God bless you, boys; you have been brave soldiers; now you must become brave citizens.”

He said but little more. It was dangerous for him to speak then; for utterance opened the gates of escape for his own feelings. The commander, now commander no more, hastened on; the fringes of his eyes were obscuring his vision.

Bourland and his comrades, standing upon the elevation of a road cut, saw this tragic spectacle. His face became chill with sweat. He looked at the others; the muscles of their countenances were twitching, and they were biting their lips or turning away their eyes. He felt that he must say something, or be swept off by his emotions.

“Well, our jig has knocked over the music now,” he muttered, blurting out the first words that came in order that he might endure the crisis.

Another officer was stabbing the drum head repeatedly with the point of his scabbard.

“Oh!” he shouted, “if he had only had an equal chance; if he had had enough men and enough food to put in their bellies, he would have driven Grant back to his tannery and licked him with his own leather.”

Hope folded her wearied and plumeless wings. The surrender of Lee was the end of the Confederacy; for he was the heart, the brain, the soul of it.

An hour later a soldier rode up to Bourland, and delivered an order for him to report at once to the general.

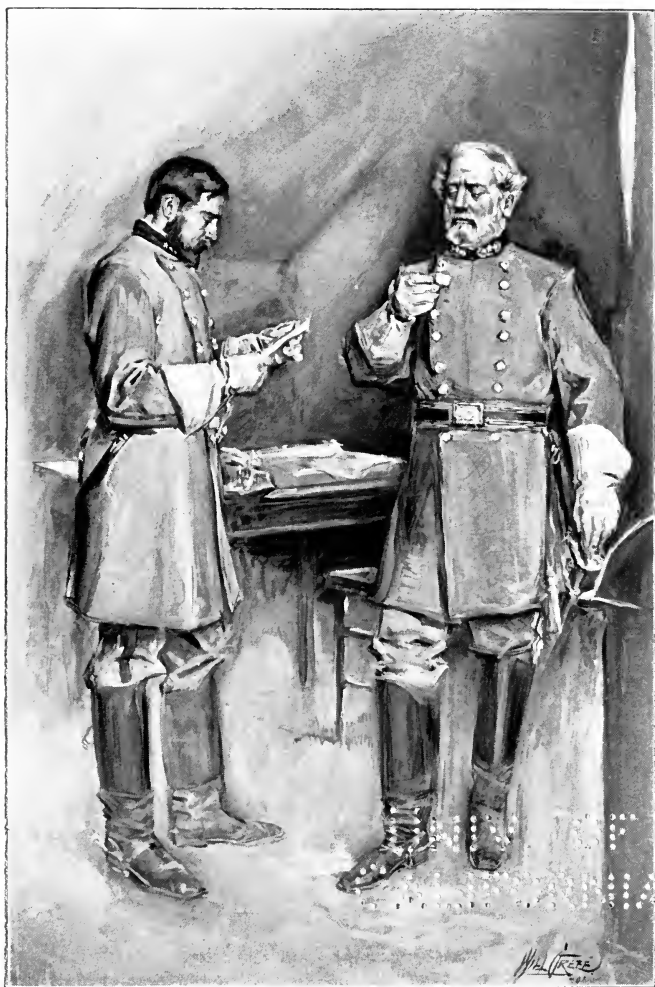
He went to his tent and rapped on the pole, as the sentry was absent. No reply came from within. The wind, just then, blew aside the flap of the curtain, and he caught a glimpse of a gray head buried in two hands. He stepped back, waited awhile, and rapped more loudly.

“Come in!” The voice was steady.

“General Lee!” said Bourland, with a salute.

“Colonel Bourland,” returned the other, with his customary reserve. He went to his secretary and took out a paper.

“I wish you to take a message to General Echols of the Army of Southwest Virginia. You will find him some-



“ ‘ I couldn't fight any more after this.’ ”

TO THE
MEMBERS OF THE
COMMISSION ON
THE STATUS OF WOMEN

where about Christiansburg. That is not far from your own home, is it?"

"No, sir."

"I want you to go at once. You need not return to the army. That will save you your share of to-morrow's humiliation."

"May I ask what terms he gave us?" The stress on the pronoun indicated sufficiently well the Silent Captain of the Union Army.

"General Grant," replied Lee very frankly, "has offered us the terms of a gentleman. He wants peace with as little humiliation as possible. We are to be paroled, and then the army will disband, and the men go to their homes. The privates lay down their arms; but all who own horses are to keep them. The officers retain their side arms and personal effects. I was much pleased with the conference in some ways. Men like Grant will do much to allay the sectional bitterness. He's a great general. If you had had him for your leader —"

"Oh! don't!" interrupted Bourland, "don't dare to say such a thing. If you had only had the men."

"Thank God," answered the other, breaking his official reserve, "I had men. And they *were* men. No commander ever had better."

He walked over to his secretary.

"Come here, Colonel. Let me show you something. It came to me like an accusation of crime. I couldn't fight any more after this."

He took out of a drawer a small pasteboard box, in which were a few grains of parched corn and a thin sliver of bacon. There was also this note scrawled in lead pencil.

"General Lee we luvve you and we will follo you til dethe. But we cant fite on nuthin, ower stummicks wont stand it. This is a days rashuns.

"Yours respectkfully

"A PRIVATE."

As Bourland read the paper he was aware that the soul of the man beside him was convulsing with emotion. He heard a choked sob.

"I surrendered after that. I had to ask Grant for food." The phrase was broken, and the words were wet.

Bourland wished himself away. He felt as Moses must have felt when he stood in the presence of the burning bush on Mount Horeb.

But the general soon regained his control, and his manner changed.

"Henry," the tone was almost paternal, "how is your father?"

"I haven't heard for some time. Then things were going very badly at home."

"I knew him well, though he was some years older. We were in the same corps in Mexico. I was present when your uncle was buried at Chapultepec. You have a good name, and your family has a noble history. Go back home, Henry, and build up the ruins. You can do it."

"I shall try, General. Somehow I cannot think that I am utterly beaten."

Lee placed both hands affectionately yet firmly on his shoulders, and looking him squarely in the eyes, he said with quiet enthusiasm:—

"Beaten? No! Defeat is only the birth pang of a heroic soul. Now you are at the sternest test of all. Be strong. Go home, and work and repair. Stand up, my boy, in the eye of God."

The words had all the impressiveness of a confirmation service. When Lee released his hold, Bourland felt as if a strong power had been withdrawn from him. Yet an instant later he became conscious of new strength in himself.

Lee sat down in his chair, and mused as if debating. At last he spoke again.

"Colonel, did you ever know why I appointed you on my staff?"

"I suppose it was out of regard for my father."

"Oh, no, not that. I don't make appointments that way. I had been watching you. I saw your fire and dash, and your genius for leadership. I thought perhaps I might get my Right Arm again; I thought you might

make another Jackson. We have never filled his place, Colonel."

Bourland took the unspoken rebuke; he had been weighed in the balances and found wanting.

"You've got the dash and fire that Jackson had," Lee went on; "you've got the irresistible *elan*, but—" here he paused, and his eye became searching and his voice stern—"you don't think long enough; you don't consider the alternatives before you act. You only see one side of things. Your enthusiasm runs away with your judgment. You've got too much imagination for a commander of armies. You ought to be an orator. Go home and grow wiser. We shall need you in Virginia before long."

"I differ from my father in that way," answered Bourland. "We are not all Hotspurs. I remember how reluctantly he took sides with the Confederacy. I jumped in by instinct."

"I can understand your father's reluctance. I had a similar struggle. It was a conflict of loves. I made my choice for Virginia, and I have never regretted it."

He got up quickly.

"You must be off. This is no time for such talk. Get the despatches to General Echols as quickly as you can. Here is a safe-conduct through the Union lines. Let me impress on you this last word, for I have it on my heart. You have fought for the state, stand by her in her distress. Don't desert her. Don't emigrate to Mexico or England, as some talk of doing. Good-by. Tell your father we have fought the good fight, and now it is all over."

Bourland shook his hand, and went out. He bade farewell to his friends, left a signed parole, and in an hour was riding away on his mission.

The mist had turned into a light rain. The horse stumbled along, and often sank above his fetlocks, so that his progress was slow. Twice, as Bourland passed through Sheridan's lines, he was stopped, his papers examined, and, after apologies for the detention, he was permitted to pass on. On the outskirts of the Union lines, he ran into a group of dismounted soldiers, doubtless stragglers, who

sat roaring drunk around a fire. An effigy, an old gray uniform stuffed with weeds, was hanging from the branch of a tree. They were pelting it with mud, and singing without regard to time or tune,—

“We’ll hang Jeff Davis on a sour apple tree.”

They attempted to stop him, but he, desiring to avoid all such, put spurs to his horse, and galloped away before they could reach their carbines. One belated shot cut harmlessly through the trees.

He hoped to reach Lynchburg by midnight. But when the night fell, he had to trust to the instinct of his horse, who, soon tired by the heavy road, moved at his own pace. The darkness loomed ahead like a barricade, and oftentimes he had to force his horse to push into it. Now and then the lamp gleams from a roadside house gave him a pleasant invitation, and only the thought that he was an official messenger kept him from halting and seeking rest for the night.

But if the air was blank darkness only, his mind was a dark chamber illuminated by a streaming procession of images: the scenes of the past weeks, the confusion of men, animals, and wagons, the piteous cries of the wounded, the last wails of the exhausted, the stern, set faces of the unconquered, as they plodded along on that terrible retreat. And then behind all these vivid pictures, the vague sense of the collapse; that all for which they had fought and bled for years, was a desolation, a ruin, a lost cause, and that the Confederacy, like a magnificent ship, launched a few years before, with colors flying, with jubilant music, bearing on her decks proud women and brave men, that this splendid vessel had been gulped down by the sea, and had disappeared forever. And he—he was a survivor, struggling for his own petty life amid the surge and swirl and gurgle of the waters.

There was one thought to relieve his utter dejection. With his mind’s eye he could pierce those clouds that enveloped him on all sides, and far above them, shining out of the serene depths of the heaven was a single star, and

behind that, haloed by its nebulous beauty, and beaming with a greater effulgence, was a girl's face, raining upon his tired heart, and tired head, and tired body the riches of her inexhaustible love.

As he rode up the steep pitch of a Lynchburg street, the bell in the town hall at the top of the hill was striking three.

CHAPTER XII

THE RETURN TO BOURLAND HALL

SIX days later, a man and a horse, utterly fagged out, entered Brayton at the western end of the main street. The inhabitants did not recognize Bourland; a black beard masked his features. And he too felt like an alien as he observed the changes in the old landmarks.

There stood the pump in the highway, and the watering trough, both in a state of collapse. The road was grooved by deep ruts, and strewn with refuse, paper, wood, crockery, tin. Grass grew in the crevices of the pavements, and forced the bricks out of the level. In several places fires had burned down dwellings and stores, and the débris lay where it fell. Many houses were boarded up and deserted. A few horses, hitched by rope harness to ramshackle wagons, stood with torpid docility by the curbstones.

While the horse picked his way among the ruts, Bourland looked for familiar faces. The glaring sign which formerly announced that John Souder sold flour and feed was scarcely legible. A strange man stood in the doorway of the china store. What had become of Sam Thomas? At the grocer's corner, where old Si Hawkins used to gossip with his worthies, — the pilferers of crackers and currants, — there was now no group of men, not even a man. Through the door of the butcher's shop the returning horseman saw a woman clumsily chopping at the meat block, while the customer, a lady in a respectable bonnet, looked languidly on. Five children were playing about the entrance. Few men were visible anywhere, and these were either feeble or crippled. Bourland went by

them without stopping to speak ; in his present mood he desired to avoid every one, to get home as quietly as possible. He had been away scarcely two years, but they seemed as thirty. The village was changed, like a man passed into the languor of decrepitude. The houses just stood—and no more. The war had accelerated the destructive forces of nature and time like a galloping consumption.

All the joy of his homecoming was chilled by the universal desolation and distress.

He spurred the tired horse down toward the bridge. It had disappeared. A few piles, rising above the surface of the water with their charred tops, told of its fate. A ferryman hailed him, and offered to take him across. He led the horse into a flat-bottomed scow, and held the bridle while the old man worked feebly at the oars.

After dragging his horse up the bank on the other side, he mounted once more into the saddle. From this elevation he could see,—and oh! how his heart burned then,—the Hall, the dear home, half hidden among the trees. There, there it stood, as of old, upon its ledge of rock, sheltering his loved ones.

At the turn of the road where the Mill Run empties into the Lacamac, he saw a negro fishing.

The stream brought back the memories of his boyhood. He, too, had fished in that water, and had dreamed away the mornings in the cool shadow of its willows. He had given it a name, the Guadalquivir. It took a moment to recall it and that romance of old Spain which had once caught his boyish fancy.

The negro looked up, stared with his great white eyes, and flung down his pole.

“Marse Henry, is dat you’s’e’f?”

“Why, hello, Pete! are you still around?”

“Gor’d bless my soul, is you alive yit, marster? Lawd, but I’s’e glad you’s’e back to we-all.”

He ran up, and trotted alongside of the horse.

“How are the folks at the Hall?” asked Bourland, eagerly.

“Marse John, he bery po’ly, sah. We-all in de quah tahs, we doan’ see him no moah. De house folkses, dey say he sick abaid, an’ doan’ talk much ; he jes’ look, look all de day up at de ceilin’, as ef he’s on’y waitin’ foh to go to missus up dyar. But Mis’ El’nor, she’s right peart least aways, she’s able to be about ; but in bery po’k sperrits, sah. I reckon she’ll be pow’ful glad you is cum back.”

“Thank God, father is still alive,” murmured the son.

Bourland, as he rode along, began to notice the lines of broken fences, and beyond these the fields, once as beautiful and fertile as gardens, now naught but acres of weeds and wild grasses, amongst which, faintly discernible, were the rotting stumps and stubble of the last crops.

“Why haven’t you boys done your planting ?” asked Bourland.

“Dere ain’t no mules an’ no moah hosses to plough de fiel’s. Las’ fall de Yanks, dey cum a-ridin’ an’ done tuk all de cawn in de cribs, an’ de hosses an’ de cows, al’ ’cept one dat Tube Cain try to keep, an’ dey didn’ tek dat one ’case Tube, he swing an axe, an’ say he brek de back-bone of de sodjer what try to get him ; he say dat Marse John sick, an’ mus’ have his fresh milk ; den a officer, he cum up an’ he say to let dat air cow by hisse’f. De sodjer, he swear a li’l, an’ look at de axe an’ at Tube Cain, an’ den he go off a-swearin’ moah. Dat’s de on’y cow on de plan tashun. I know, ’case I does de milkin’.”

“What do you live on ?” asked Bourland, mechanically. He was overwhelmed by the waste and dreariness all about him.

“We hed some cawn ’screted in de woods, which de sodjers didn’ snatch of, an’ de gyarden patch which dey didn’ tech. But we doan’ get much, an’ I allow, Marse Henry dat we’ll get moah, now dat you is come to home.”

Bourland entered the avenue of maples, the roadway of which was strewn with branches and twigs broken off by the wind storms. Some of the cabins in the quarters were closed up, others were gaping open and empty. The slaves who remained, men, women, and children, gathered about



“She stood leaning against a pillar, and looking hopelessly out toward the placid mountains in the west.”

CONSTITUTIONAL
AND LEGISLATIVE
PROVISIONS
OF THE
INDIAN CONSTITUTION

him ; he greeted them as cordially as his depression would allow, and then leaving them behind, urged his horse up the pitch to the level of the Ledge. He wanted to enter the Hall, undisturbed and alone.

He stopped before the gateway. He was overwhelmed anew by the signs of change : the disordered lawn, the rank shrubbery, the gravel paths almost obliterated by the grass, and, fronting it all, the house, stately in form, yet dingy through weather and neglect.

He started back as before an apparition.

A woman, unaware of his approach, had just come out of the door. She stood leaning against a pillar, and looking hopelessly out toward the placid mountains in the west. She was dressed in coarse, ill-fitting woollen stuff ; her hair was negligently drawn behind in a tight coil, revealing the full lines of the gaunt eyes, gaunt cheeks, gaunt countenance, pallid as the gray column beside her.

Could that be his sister ? Great God !

He conjured up the girl as he saw her when home on his furlough. She had crept upon him, the last night, as he lay dozing in an arm-chair, to steal a brass button from his uniform as a keepsake. He had pretended to be asleep. But through the fringes of his eyelids he caught the mischief in her eyes, the glitter of the diamond brooch at her throat ; he heard the clip of the shears, the rustle of her silk gown, the joyous shout of triumph as she made off with her booty.

But this woman, aged far beyond her years ; this wasted figure ; this dry, thin face ; those weary eyes, — dull with the despair of the goddess of Melancholia, — was this now that sister ?

He broke through the gateway, jumped from his horse, and with outreaching arms he ran toward her with a wild cry.

She turned ; she stood rigid as in a maze, and then with a cry shriller than his own, she rushed down the steps.

“ Brother ! ”

“ Sister ! ”

She came like a fawn fleeing before the hunters and the

pack. He felt the strain, intense, intenser; the tightening embrace of her arms; the unvoiced plea for protection; the gasp of joy at the return of the comrade.

He held her with full strength, yet tenderly. His lips touched her cold cheeks.

“And father, Eleanor?” he asked in a quivering whisper of inquiry.

Her face became beautifully sad. There were no traces of tears. Grief had long since wrung her nature dry.

“With mother. He went last night.”

The man sat down on the steps, and with his hands shut out the grim emptiness of space. He felt the sudden blast of an arctic chill. He seemed to be thrust into a cavern of ice and darkness.

He opened his eyes; the air swam with heavy particles that beat and stung them.

“Come!” she said, bravely firm.

She led him up the steps, across the portico, into the hallway, up the stairs, then onward to a door which she opened, and into a darkened room. They stood in the presence of their dead.

John Bourland lay in his bed, his arms gathered close to his sides. His hair was neatly brushed; the high forehead was bare and cold white. About his eyes were the dark-hued traceries of age, on his cheeks the carmine network of veins; around the mouth, the smile of painless death.

Bourland threw himself across the body. He could not weep; all his energy was gone.

“Too late! only a few hours too late!” he murmured repeatedly.

After a while he arose. Eleanor was seated on the edge of a couch where, during the weeks of watching and attendance, she had taken her sleep in snatches. He sat down opposite in a chair.

“None but the house servants know yet,” she said, and then she began her sad story.

“Father had been unable to leave his room for the last three months. Two weeks ago he had another attack,

and after that his mind wandered. The news of the surrender came ; but he didn't comprehend it. He smiled when I told him, and asked me to bring his sword, and when I did, he said, ' Put it away for Harry when he grows up.' For a long time he didn't say anything at all. This morning, as I lay here, he woke me up crying, ' Where's Henry, I want Henry.' I tried to quiet him, and told him you would soon be back. ' Oh ! I won't be able to see him, for I hear mother calling.' I bent over to catch the rest of the words, and I could see the light going out of his eyes. ' Yes, Mary, I'll come,' he said, and I think he mistook me for her. ' Tell Henry that he must keep up the old place, and cut the grass, and have the roof fixed. Tell him he must never let the place go out of the family. He's the only Bourland left.' He was quiet for a while, and I lay down again and fell into a doze. When I awoke his eyes were wide open, and he was gone."

The brother and sister remained talking of the past and its mournful details, and finally they arose to leave the room. Eleanor paused by the bedside, and, leaning over, kissed the cold lips. They descended the stairs. And there they left him.

Bourland now became conscious that he was fiercely hungry. It was four o'clock, and he had taken nothing since the early morning. Eleanor went to the kitchen to get him something, and he, left alone, wandered over the house. Within, there was little change, except slight evidences of wear ; the furniture, the decorations, always somewhat scanty, the books in the library, all remained the same. Only the silence, broken no more by the familiar voices and the familiar steps, the silence was eloquent with many faint echoes.

Eleanor called him into the dining room. He saw on the table some stewed fruit, black-eyed peas, bread, and an omelette. They told him a pitiful tale. He looked at his sister's starved body, and shook his head.

" Oh, we've managed to live," she answered, with no trace of complaint.

He left the table as soon as he could. He wanted to

hide from his sight those two vacant chairs. They seemed haunted.

He walked into the great parlor. The air was musty ; for during the past years there had been few visitors at the Hall, and the room had been kept closed. He sat down in an old arm-chair. Outside the day had begun to darken, and rain clouds were rolling out of the west. Through the openings of the Venetian blinds there came just enough light to cast a gloom into the atmosphere. His thoughts half choked his respiration.

He realized more forcibly than ever before how utterly alone he was in the world—he, the last of the great line, the sole survivor, who held the trust and heritage of the dead. There upon the wall hung the portraits, silent, grim, with their ceaseless scrutiny, the stern faces of his ancestors. He lived again that unforgettable scene with his father before the war, and the words revived in his memory, “They are dead, yet they live in us.”

And now the father was gone, and he was the solitary bearer of the name, and upon him had fallen the supreme duty to reconstruct, out of the wreckage of war and time, the prestige and the fortunes of his house. It was a sacred duty ; a burden, in a small way, like that imposed upon the prophets to restore the lustre of the house of David. Ah! could he do it? Could he labor and overcome, with his spent energy, the inert forces of destruction and change?

He walked around, and looked at each portrait, recalling its title to fame ; last of all, into the face of him whose body was lying in the darkened room above. The sight of their countenances, the memory of their deeds, was a stimulus, an admonition, an imperative revelation of duty.

The door opened ; it was Eleanor, stealing in upon him quietly.

“All alone, brother, in the dark?” she said gently, putting her arm through his.

“No, not alone, with you and with these others to watch us.”

He thanked God for this brave sister, this comrade beside him.

“I will not think that I am a beaten man,” he muttered to himself. And with that the last words of his commander, whose anguish was far keener than his own, rang among his wearied faculties like a reveille.

“Defeat is only the birth pang of a heroic soul.” A resolution took hold of his spirit, stiffened the fibres of mind and body, and turned his will to iron.

CHAPTER XIII

A PROBLEM IN ASSETS, LIABILITIES, AND LOSSES

A FEW rods beyond the lawn, nested amid the hush and whispers of the sloping woodland, lay the burying ground. The low stone wall was overrun with ivy, and on all sides, soldier-like in their stolid erectness, stood a file of cypress trees, which cast over the square plot their sombre shadows. Here, beside a sarcophagus bearing the Bourland arms, the memorial to the friend of Washington, Henry and his sister laid their father down in his last sleep.

The night before, Bourland heard a timid knock at the library door, and when he opened it, there stood an old negro, his black face covered almost to the eyes by his grizzled and wiry beard. It was Uncle Azariah, the patriarch of the quarters.

"Ef yoh please, young marster, old Aze wants ter know ef he cyarn' dig the marster's grabe," he begged with a pleading quaver. "I'se de oldes', an' I done digged de las' one foh missus," he added by way of argument.

"Thank you, Uncle Aze, I'd be glad if you would. Father's old friend, the minister, is dead, and you might read the service, too. You're a preacher, you know. And I don't want a stranger to do it."

The old fellow seized his hands, kissed them for gratitude, and sobbed, as he went away, "Gord bless yuh foh dat, marster. I didn' spected dat foh dis ole niggah."

In the morning, some friends of his father (there were not many left) came in their thread-worn broadcloths, and gathered on the portico, and talked with hushed voices before the service began. And the remnant of that feudal band, the dusky servitors, soon to be released from

all bondage, huddled themselves in small groups under the chestnut trees before the house. They wept and wailed, in their own manner, at the fear of death and at the loss of a kind master.

Two or three of the friends gave brief testimonials of the stainless life and character of him who was now far beyond their praise. A prayer, and then they carried him out of the house, across the lawn, to the little enclosure amid the cypress trees. Old Azariah, in faltering tones, read the service, and as he pronounced the "urth to urth," he dropped the handful of clay upon the lowered coffin. They covered up the grave, and left him beside his wife, there where he was forever safe from the pain and sorrow of the days to be.

For several days Bourland resigned his spirit to his grief. But as the time went by the physical torpor passed away, and his father's life became a beautiful memory, upon which his mind brooded with hallowed affection and love.

He followed the course of events in the South with a certain languid interest. Lee's army was now completely disbanded; Johnston had surrendered to Sherman, and President Davis was somewhere in the Gulf states, seeking to evade capture. Taylor, still unconquered, held Alabama; and in the southwest, along the Rio Grande, Kirby Smith was endeavoring to sustain a futile hope.

But Bourland knew that the South was beaten, honorably beaten; and that the career of the Confederacy was closed. He felt no impulse to resist further; he desired to have peace established, and to see the adoption of some settled policy of reconstruction. He was genuinely grieved therefore, when, a few days later, the news came of Lincoln's assassination. The day of peace and settlement, he saw then, would be long deferred. For bitter recrimination followed between the sections, and the wounds were poisoned before they could begin to heal.

He began, however, to examine into his worldly affairs, and to make definite plans for the future. He was not a good business man, Southern planters seldom were, and he

had only the vaguest notions of the condition of his inheritance. He believed that he and his sister were possessed of some property, which had once been of great value. But it had been depreciated by the war, and was doubtless burdened by heavy encumbrances. The last years had been unproductive, and what with charities, current expenses, mortgages, and purchases of Confederate bonds, it was quite probable that the estate had dwindled to little or nothing.

There was the land, two thousand acres, and the house. The slaves, formerly half the assessed value of the estate, even such as remained, were no longer his property; for the emancipation proclamation had expunged that item of his assets by fiat. So the two orphans found themselves left with the great ancestral Hall and its lands, encumbered by debts and obligations of unknown amount.

One evening, his sister beside him, Bourland opened his father's secretary, and proceeded to examine his papers. They first read the will. It bequeathed the property to the two children, three parts to the son and one part to the daughter, and it appointed Henry as executor, to hold his sister's share in trust, and to manage it at his own discretion. There were several recommendations, advising certain gifts to distant relatives and faithful slaves.

The bank book, showing at one time a credit of many thousands, had been balanced by cash payments, the last of which was made in November, 1863.

"Where have you got any money during the last two years?" asked Henry of Eleanor.

"We sold some tobacco and wheat; some which the raiders did not get," she answered with hesitation.

"But that wasn't enough."

"That man Clayton, Elsie Vinton's husband, came around once, and I sold him some of the diamonds," she admitted reluctantly.

The thought of it was a humiliation. The Bourlands reduced to such straits that the family jewels, the heritage of generations, had to be sold to a Shylock!

They proceeded to examine the minor papers; bills,

receipts, several small mortgages on neighboring properties, and a big package of Confederate bonds.

In a sealed envelope he found the principal object of his search — a memorandum of the mortgages on the plantation: one for twenty-five thousand dollars on the Lacamac tract of nine hundred acres, and another for fifteen thousand on the Mill Run tract of six hundred acres. The Hall, a note said, was clear of all encumbrance, as it was the father's wish that it should remain in possession of the family intact. A third tract, the Hill slope, embracing the uplands, the garden, and the woodland, was also held in clear title.

The Confederate bonds amounted to some thirty thousand dollars.

After a survey of the papers, Bourland took his pencil and worked out, as best he could, a complex problem in addition and subtraction. At the end of an hour, he was ready to report.

"Well, Eleanor," he said, leaning back in his chair, "here is an estimate of what we were and what we are."

She drew closer, and looked over his shoulder.

"Before the war the estate in house, lands, slaves, live stock, and some minor assets was worth one hundred and twenty thousand dollars."

"I think father told me something like that several years ago," said Eleanor.

"Now, then," he went on, "let us subtract the losses in slaves and live stock, about sixty thousand dollars, more or less. The thirty thousand dollars in Confederate bonds, these we can retain as keepsakes and proofs of father's devotion to the cause. That will leave us a balance of sixty thousand dollars.

"That isn't so bad," said Eleanor, calmly.

"But that isn't all. The two mortgages, amounting to forty thousand, will sweep away most of our equity."

"Oh!" said Eleanor, with the same calmness, "that's different."

"But at the worst they can only take the two tracts. What we really have is the Hall and the few hundred

acres in clear title, and the chance, if the South recovers, to redeem the land, after many years of struggle and hard work. I doubt if we can do it."

He looked off into vacancy. It seemed a desperate hope.

"It's almost ruin, isn't it?" said Eleanor, with a courageous smile.

"Yes, it is almost, — in fact, quite. For land values will surely depreciate, whereas interest on mortgages won't. We are swamped."

The smile of courage had not left her face.

"I can teach school, Henry."

"No! you won't," he cried, springing up. "We shall stay right here and fight it out—you and I. Father left it as his dying charge, and I'll stick to this place till the sheriff comes. You'll stand by me, won't you, Nell?" He rarely called her by this name.

"Until the end, Henry; what else have I to live for?" Her face was pathetically beautiful — with the beauty of sorrow veiled.

"Haven't you forgot somebody?" she inquired a moment later.

"No, Margaret will have to wait. I couldn't ask her to come down into this poverty. Will you help me make a place for her?"

He could see the struggle in her mind. It meant a harsh abdication of all that was left to her.

"Yes," she answered at last, "I will do all I can for you and for her." He little knew what it had cost her in self-denial.

"You dear girl," broke out Bourland, taking her in his arms. Then he added, as the magnitude of the task loomed up before him: "Perhaps I can't do it. Perhaps I had better give her up."

"No, don't give her up. I wouldn't if I were a man. I'd fight for her as long as I had any breath in my body."

And he began the struggle the next morning.

Difficulties balked him at the first move. It was necessary to commence planting at once. But he had no seeds, no money, and only one solitary horse. He could do noth-

ing at all without some cash, and he had none except a roll of valueless Confederate bills. While he was devising plans to procure a small sum, old Aze came up to him.

"Marster," he said, bowing low, "I thought as p'raps yuh didn' know, but las' year dar wuz a li'l' snatch o' tobaccy f'um de Run patch, an' de boys, dey sto'ed it in de raid barn, an' it's dar yit. Dey sez now dat tobaccy is high up, an' dar's a man named Clayton in de village, whut is gwine roun' a-buyin' of it."

"Thank you, Uncle Aze," said Bourland. He went to investigate, and he found a quantity of tobacco, somewhat damaged, yet salable.

He ordered his horse and started for Brayton. As he rode away he called out to Azariah:—

"Have all the boys about the front porch at three o'clock; I want to talk to them."

He found Clayton, who, knowing that tobacco just at that time was a good speculation, had opened an office as a tobacco factor. Bourland sold him all he had, without haggling, for four hundred dollars.

At three o'clock, Azariah, like a captain of raw recruits, led the former slaves before the Hall porch. Bourland came out to meet them. They were only a remnant—the loyal and the helpless.

When the war ended, the negroes were possessed by an unaccountable itch to go roaming, and many of them left their masters, and after tramping aimlessly about, they finally drifted into the cities and large towns. Bourland, the week before, had come across one old woman wailing by the roadside; she told him "dat her ole man hed left her dar, sayin' dat de cibil law hed ceasted, an' dat dere marridge was completed." Lured away by this mania for a change, several of Bourland's negroes had left the estate, remarking with much solemnity "dat dey wuz obliged to go to Richmon', sence de word hed come foh 'em."

Azariah lined up those who remained under the trees; there were nineteen in all.

"Tek off'n yuh hats, you brack raskils," he said sternly

to some of the younger ones, who shambled along. "We'se all heah, all dat's aroun', Marster Henry," he added, turning with a salute that was not military.

"Boys," said Bourland, "you are all free men now. You can go or stay, just as you choose. I am going to remain here and work the plantation, just as we used to do, and I want some of you to help me. I haven't got any money. I can't promise to pay you more than your board and clothes; but, if you will help me, I'll keep you until the end of the year, and then, if things turn out well, I'll see what I can do for you in the matter of wages. Now, those of you who will stay, step forward."

He gave them harsh terms. But he was not in a position to offer them anything better. It was a period of transition and uncertainty.

Eleven came forward; the others, mostly the younger ones, held back. Against these the wrath of Azariah burst forth.

"Whut's de mattah wif you niggahs, enyhow? Whut do yuh t'ink you'se a-gwine ter do, now you'se free? Jes' strut aroun' laik de tuhkeys in de bahn yard? You'se troubled, I specs, wif absence of de brains. I'se done los' all laikin' foh yuh."

"Let them alone, Aze," said Bourland. "They are at liberty to make their own choice."

Two more shuffled forward.

"Now, boys," the young master said, addressing those who had elected to stay, "you are still my men, and I'm going to do just as well as I can. Get to work now and clear up the place. Aze, I'll appoint you as overseer for a while. You others," he continued, "you can stay as long as you will work, but when you quit that you must leave."

That same afternoon he went again to Brayton and bought three mules on credit. In addition he ordered some seeds. It was his intention to plant six hundred acres in wheat, corn, and tobacco. He feared, with his inexperience, to undertake more. The rest of the land must, for the time, lie fallow.

Weary with his unusual labors, he sat upon the portico that evening debating a new question.

Yes! he must come to it. He must break up a part of his estate into small farms and sublet them to tenants. It was a drastic innovation. Planters in former times had guarded with jealousy the integrity of their inheritances. They refused not only to sell an acre, but even to rent small patches. "Keep your land, and your land will keep you," was an aphorism which every father impressed upon his son.

But the times had changed, and Bourland, amid qualms of pride, resolved to post notices the next day on the courthouse, offering to rent small patches of land on shares.

The landscape, from where he sat, brought back to his remembrance the night, four years before, when he came joyously home with the news of the fall of Sumter.

But what a change!

Then, — the stretches of sprouting field, the prospect of ease and plenty, the serene satisfaction of wealth and ownership and power. And now, — the wild acres, untouched, untilled, overrun with grasses, brambles, and noxious weeds, these, and worse than these, the invisible menace of the debts. The pride of ownership was displaced by the consciousness that his land was held in pawn, and that, in the end, for all his labor, he might be evicted from his own patrimony by the hand of the law.

He grew timid, distrustful, as he surveyed the task in its full magnitude.

At last he arose and went into the house. He passed into the darkening room where those monitory faces looked down from the walls, inexorable as the commandments on the tables of stone; and as he raised his eyes, he muttered with a fierce contraction of his muscles before those silent witnesses: —

"Yes, I shall stay and battle it out, right here, until the sheriff comes."

CHAPTER XIV

THE PRIVILEGE OF MARGARET

As the days slipped by, Bourland discovered that hard work was a real blessing. It lifted his thoughts out of the slough of his misery. It made him spiritually stronger. He abstained, indeed, as far as possible, from the work of his hands ; for he was yet a child of the tradition, sanctioned even by Jefferson, that manual labor degrades a white man. But there were a thousand and one things, requiring intelligent direction and careful supervision, that claimed all his time.

He was a unique figure among the men of his neighborhood. Those who returned from the army found their homes in desolation, their resources exhausted, their future political condition uncertain ; and so, bereft of courage, they resigned themselves to fate and the dispositions of the conquerors.

Bourland, however, soon acquired a measure of control over the chaos of his personal affairs. He made mistakes through ignorance, but when summer came in, he had several hundred acres under prosperous cultivation, four or five patches were rented on shares, and his obligations had been renewed with an extension of time.

In May, President Johnson, by proclamation, had reopened communication with the South. For Bourland that meant letters from Margaret, with their consolations and inspirations. He had not heard from her for a long, long time ; but his love had survived, had become a greater part of him by the trial. So when, at last, he got his first letter, he opened it with the expectancy of a pearl diver. He read it through once, twice, three times, and then, repeating the phrases again and again, he rode home like

one who had received the gift of eternal life. The air was refulgent with diviner light; the wind in the trees played diviner harmonies; the blue empyrean drew downward and enticed his soul from his body. He could feel his heart tugging at its strings.

"I have prayed God for your safety night and day, and every hour of the day. . . . I know how badly you feel, dearest, but I believe God has a purpose greater and grander than yours, for a reunited America. . . . Be of good courage, my brave lover. I am waiting for you, and I shall wait for you to come for me in your own good time."

He bent over and flung his arms about the neck of his horse. He caressed him with the tenderness of a child's patting. The sun beat into his face like warm rain. The birds poured forth the jargoning of their own sweet joys. Every color of the field shone with intenser hues. The desolation became a paradise of verdure and odorous blooms, washed by the golden radiance of a liberated passion.

He wanted to dismount right there, to build an altar, and burn a sacrifice and worship the deity of love.

He could scarcely wait for June. When it came, he snatched a few days from his work and started for the North. All the way to Gettysburg he gnawed at the tips of his fingers, and soothed the pains by pressing them to his lips.

As the train neared the town, he took a little box from his pocket a dozen times and gazed at it furtively. It contained a diamond ring. Before he left home, Eleanor had slipped it into his hand, and whispered, "Tell her it comes from me as a token of welcome."

The train came to a stop. He walked up the street. He was so nervous that he thought he reeled. He came to the house. He opened the gate. He walked up the gravel path to the steps. He saw that the door was ajar. He rang the bell and waited, as a runner awaits the signal of the starting. He heard the rustle of a dress come down the dark hallway, and, louder than that, the thump, thump, thump of his heart.

She came, and paused, looking questioningly at the bearded stranger. The light was behind him, and his face was in shadow.

“Margaret!” he mumbled, like a beggar asking alms.

His voice struck the long-silent chords into vibration. Her face suddenly began to illumine and shine out of an aureola.

“Oh! my Henry!” Her arms were about him, drawing him down, and at her lips he quenched his long thirst with limpid sweetness.

A moment, without sense of time; a sacrament too holy for words.

She led him into the room, and they sat down side by side, their hearts so voluble, their lips so laden with things that had longed for utterance, that the silence was eloquent speech.

“Oh!” she broke out finally with a single exclamation that exalted him more than a pæan of gladness. She touched him to reassure herself that he was not the phantom lover of two years’ imaginings. She touched him again to reassure herself that he was really delivered to her at last.

Then they began to pour out love lyrics. It was a gracious contest of troubadours, each praising and prizing the rival.

He thought of the ring, and took it from his pocket. The touch of it, as he slipped it on her finger, thrilled her as the chrismal rite of love’s ritual. She looked with awe at the glint of the diamonds in the setting of worn gold.

“Now,” he said gayly, “I have put my seal on you.”

A shadow of indecision hung over her face.

“Out with it. No secrets now, my lady,” he cried quickly.

“I’m just a bit timid,” she answered. “Your relatives have been such impressive people. Why, I’ve read lots about them in American histories. I’m afraid I’m coming into the family like a no-name, a Cinderella.”

She stopped, for his face wore a look of pain. He flushed as he recalled that first hesitation, that pride of

social prejudice. But with a sudden thought he arose, and bent low before her, as a liegeman might do before an imperial mistress, saying :—

“I think of you, Margaret, as Raleigh thought of his queen. But the gift of your love has knighted me, and has raised me to the height of your royalty.”

She took the homage at first with a little laugh of protestation, and then when she saw that his manner gave sincerity to his words, she felt a new joy in this vindication of natural dignity. That was an end of it; the tact of the gentleman had obliterated forever between them the irrational line of social distinction.

The entrance of the father and the mother put an end to love lyrics and troubadour tales for a time. They greeted him with the cordiality of kinship, and in a few moments the talk drifted inevitably to present political conditions.

“The Radicals are going to get control of things, I fear,” said General Randall. “And they will keep the kettle boiling. If Thaddeus Stevens and his crowd put through their reconstruction scheme, the South will get some bitter medicine.”

“We’ve heard a great deal about old Thad of late,” replied Bourland. “His endeavors to canonize the niggers into saints have irritated us beyond measure. I can only say for my people that just now they are as sensitive as bared nerves. We are beaten, but we feel that we have preserved our honor and our dignity. If the Radicals try to humiliate us, and subject us to indignities, there will be a great deal more blood shed, even if the war is over.”

“I’m afraid of them. It would have been all right if Lincoln had lived. I think the greatest desire of that man was, as he said, to bind up the nation’s wounds. His death at this critical moment almost makes one doubt that there is any such power as Providence.”

During Bourland’s visit the two men frequently discussed the problem of reconstruction and the return of the Confederates to their constitutional rights. It was in those days the all-absorbing riddle which every man put

to his neighbor. The wise counselled moderation and magnanimity. For the South lay bleeding, like a knight unhorsed in a tournament. If it were helped to arise with knightly courtesy, a speedy reconciliation of the two sections was more than possible. But the Radicals, led by Stevens, were clamoring for a policy of punishment and humiliation.

For Bourland and Margaret the days sped as if they were borne on the wings of the wind. He quaffed every delicious moment, like a parched soldier draining the last drops of his canteen.

On the eve of his departure, late in the afternoon, when the summer was in the full tide of June, and the fields of corn and wheat were burnished by the glow of warm sunshine, and when the clouds were drifting lazily across the blue heavens, they rambled up to that elevated rock, that shrine, where two years before, amid the animosities and charities of civil war, they had made the timid confession of love that had drawn their severed lives into a single impulse of being.

"I can't understand it yet, Margaret," he declared. "How could you fall in love with me, a cripple, brought half dead from a battle-field, and an enemy, too? It seems a miracle to me."

"Why, it was the most natural thing in the world," she replied. "It just grew like a little seed."

"Then you didn't love me at first sight?"

"Certainly not. Girls, sensible girls, never do that. We leave that to the men; it's so stupid, in spite of poets and novelists."

"Tell me how it all came about, dear, won't you? It will give me something to gloat over when I am absent."

She flouted such an analysis at first; but when he urged her again, she nestled at his feet, while he reclined upon a mound of turf.

"Well," she began, "in the first place, it was an accident. I heard some of the soldiers tell how many brave men had fallen in the Bloody Angle; and, after the regular hospital corps had gone over the ground for the

wounded, something prompted me, I guess it was Ruth, to go gleaning in that harvest of heroes."

"So, then," he broke in playfully, "you went out to glean for a man, a hero all your own?"

She tossed her head pertly.

"If you banter me, I shall not say another word. I only wanted to do all that a woman could at that dreadful time. If I had desired a hero, I should have had him long before I ever saw you, and he would have been a man in blue. There were plenty of blue heroes."

"But none so fortunate as a man in gray. Forgive me; go on, please."

"We found you and several others on the field," she continued. "You were all taken to the college. I almost forgot you, there were so many things to think about. But I came across you again in the hospital, and heard such awful reports of your peevishness that I thought you must be one of those pampered snobs. The surgeons were irritated because you wouldn't let them cut off your leg, and the nurses hated to go near you, because you were such an old bear. 'Well,' I thought, 'he must be a very superior person—one of these Southern aristocrats.' So, more out of curiosity than anything else, I went in to see you, though I confess I was rather timid. But I found you as tame as a pussy cat."

"I recognized you. You had saved me from death."

"You were so agreeable, that I put you on my daily visiting list. I found you very entertaining, and you had very distinguished manners. At times, even to me, you were very fretful. But I always noticed that when you did lose your temper, you became very quickly remorseful. Indeed, I found that I was a lion tamer, for with me you were as gentle as a bleating lamb. That made me very proud."

"You had a soothing influence," he confessed.

"Of course that excited my interest somewhat, though not very much. For you were a very narrow-minded rebel, and not altogether endurable, in spite of your manners. Then I discovered that you were a schoolmate's brother.

It was such a coincidence. It opened the way to more confidential subjects of conversation, and I learned how devoted you were to your family, especially your sister, and what an honest, loyal rebel you were. In fact, you changed my ideas about rebels. I thought before that they were either swearing braggarts or disagreeable snobs, full of conceit."

"And you changed my ideas about the Yankees. I thought they were hypocrites and fanatics. But hadn't you begun to care for me yet? Why, by this time I was madly in love with you."

"Of course not. But I will confess that unconsciously I began to shorten my visits to the other wounded men, and to get impatient—just a little bit, not very much," she protested, "for your turn. I saved you till the last as a reward for my other work."

"Now we are at the beginning, aren't we?" He was growing restive, like a captive animal before feeding time.

"No, not yet, I never thought of such a thing. You were still only a very interesting man. I remember very distinctly when it first came to me."

"When was that?" he asked, sitting upright.

"It was the day when you ordered me about so imperiously. I was scared, because I wanted to obey you. I went away feeling that it was you who had the power over me now. I can't analyze the feeling. I know only that my heart was a painful lump of gladness whenever I thought of serving you. I guess it's because I'm a woman."

"But you didn't obey; you ran off and left me in agony," he protested with a puzzled look.

"Then came the revelation," she continued. "I went home that day, and found that mother was obliged to go to the seashore at once for her health, and I found that—"

She hesitated, and dropped her eyes, as if about to confess something to her shame.

"Tell me all, dearest," he urged.

Then she looked up into his eager face and spoke proudly:—

"Though it was for my mother, I didn't want to leave.

I was afraid I should never see you again. Then I knew that I loved you."

He bent down to pay homage to the lips that had made such a confession. The rest of the story was told with delicious tremors of sacrificial dignity.

"But I did go, and all the time I was away I thought of you, and dreamed of you, and was afraid you would be taken away during my absence. And those fears were the sweet pangs of something being born. It was love at last, dearest. I used to talk to it, and press it close to me like a baby. It cried for you. I wanted to write you a letter, but I couldn't. When I came back, I didn't know what to do. How could I continue visiting you, throwing myself at you, it seemed, without losing my womanliness?"

"But you did come, you Sweet Heart!" he broke out impetuously. "You came with your cold-blooded indifference, which was only beautiful shamming."

"Don't call it shamming," she pleaded. "It was only a woman's compromise with circumstances. Call it rather a dignified reticence."

"But didn't you know that I loved you long before?"

"Why, no; how could I tell that? Wounded men in hospitals are always so awfully susceptible to nurses. They become weak-minded and sentimental there. Besides, you Southern men have got a bad reputation for passing fancies and fickleness."

"Don't you think it was a miracle, after all?"

"Well," she assented, "with all the obstacles, it does seem rather strange, doesn't it?"

He arose and walked about with restless energy.

"Oh, Margaret!" he exclaimed, "how I shall work, when I go back, to make things decent enough for you. But how can I wait so long? It may take years."

She looked at him with surprise.

"Years?" she repeated, as if the word came from an alien language.

"I have nothing to offer you now," he said sadly. "We are all in poverty in the South, and I wouldn't ask you to share that with me. I wouldn't let you. I want

to give you the home and position due to the wife of a Bourland."

While he was speaking she walked up to him, put her arms over his shoulders, and clasped her hands behind him; then, without any faltering or indecision, looking him bravely in the face, she said:—

"Do you think I am going to let you worry and fret and struggle alone? You say you love me, Henry, and now I demand the rights of that love, and that is my place beside you. You shall not work alone. If you succeed, we shall enjoy that success together. And if you fail, as God lives, I shall be with you in the worst."

"Oh! Margaret, I cannot consent to such a thing. You do not know what you are saying."

"Henry," she answered with firm yet lovable resolution, "this matter is not to be argued. It is a woman's privilege to name the day of her marriage. I claim it now. In September you must come up here again, and take me home to your Southland."

Before his eyes, all around, the landscape began to swim and melt into gray dimness. He saw only her,— a glorious, impalpable shining of soul-flame. He saw her as a messenger of hope and strength, that had been sent unto him. His ears caught the faint whisperings of the watchful Benevolence.

Then he became aware of the touch of her hands, the warm weight of her body, her voice muffled in by his breast.

"I think I can help. You won't deny me, dearest?"

So love made a new consecration upon that shrine of rock. Below, in full view, lay the valley of battle, now beautiful again with verdure and peace. As they looked upon it, this Northern girl and the Southern soldier, they felt that they were actors in one of God's divine healing processes.

CHAPTER XV

THE BRIDES OF LIFE AND OF DEATH

SEPTEMBER came, and before its close Bourland went north again for his bride.

Eleanor remained at the Hall. He protested against this, but she would not alter her determination. "Of course I shall stay," she said. "What Bourland ever brought his lady home to an empty house? Besides," she added with a pang that gave a tenseness to her smiling, "I want to be alone during my last days as mistress of the Hall."

An intruder was coming. Yes, she knew that. But without a word of complaint she fortified herself for the abdication. Yet she was a woman, and the thought of being displaced, of living under a stranger in her own home, was a cup of humiliation, bitter, hidden, perpetual.

She had taken daily counsels of her strength, and the self-conquests had disciplined and clarified the spirit into a finer essence, had mellowed her countenance into the supreme beauty of resignation. The wear and crush of sorrow had left her prematurely old—a girl in years with only the memory of frustrated girlhood. The strong passion of youth had taken wings, and had left her serene in the lucid dusk of romance.

The day came when, after their short wedding journey, her brother and his wife were to arrive.

Eleanor had begun to make the Hall ready for the new mistress; and she had done what she could to restore the aspect of its former splendor. But in spite of her efforts it remained, in her comparisons, a poverty-stricken house. She, who remembered so well the grandeur and ceremony of their earlier days, now felt that its glory was gone.

Her loving solicitude, however, had endeavored to

make it habitable and proudly decent. The carpets had been swept and swept, yet they would not brighten. The wall papers had been scoured with stale bread and dry cloths, yet they still remained dingy. The furniture had been rubbed, but it would not shine. And the linen, that sure symptom of domestic prosperity, sew and patch as she might, could not be restored to its former stiffness and gloss. Some autumn flowers and grasses added a touch of natural freshness and color to the rooms. But at the end of her exertions the Hall and its appointments remained in her eyes what gossiping neighbors call "shabby genteel."

When the hour approached for the coming of the bride, she went upstairs to dress for the reception. She opened the wardrobe where hung the ceremonial garments. It had received no recent additions. The close air was still redolent of camphor and Tonquin bean. Upon the shelves were lacquered boxes of sandal and olive wood, memorials of former affluence. Upon the hooks were the dresses of her mother's youth beside her own; lustrings, puce brocades, green and lavender silks smelling of attar of roses and antiquity. They would never again gayly rustle under the glare of lighted halls to the music of violin and harpsichord.

She chose a black silk with purple pin stripes, and in this, touched off with a black lace neckerchief and a medallion brooch, she descended to greet her brother's wife.

At last she heard the quick tramp of the horses on the gravel. The lonely sense of an exile, an outcast, took possession of her. Henceforth her life was to be a kind of sufferance, and she was to be homeless in her own home.

She went out to meet them as the carriage wheel scraped against the stone steps.

"Eleanor," Bourland called out gayly, "here's a sister for you, and she's very hungry."

She gave the bride a welcome instinct with the dignity and cordiality of a lady of Virginia.

“Oh, Eleanor!” broke out Margaret, like a schoolgirl, “I haven’t seen you for six long years, and here you are, your dear old self.” Then her voice became tenderer as she put her arms about her friend’s sorrow and loneliness, and embraced her like Ruth. “What terrible years they have been. Henry has been telling me of your heroism. You have been so brave and noble and helpful. And so much has been taken out of your life. Can’t I fill up some of the void? Can’t you take a sister into it?”

It was the sweet voice which availed more than the words; and Eleanor, whose empty heart was craving for affection of some kind, kissed her in the unspoken comradeship of that love which has been so rare among women.

“Oh, Margaret!” she answered, throwing off her reserve, “everything is very different now. It is so hard to be down in the world, to have nothing, when in former times one had so much.”

“Hush,” answered Margaret. “Don’t speak of that. Sometimes earthly losses are the greatest blessings.”

“Well, then,” cried Bourland, jocularly, to relieve the tension, “you don’t believe that when poverty comes love flies out of the window?”

“Poverty, sir?” answered Margaret, turning. “Do you know that you have been telling your wife great big fibs? Why, from what you said, I expected when I got down here to find a front yard all choked up with weeds and thorns, a house crumbling to pieces, with great cracks in the walls, doors swinging on one hinge, and broken windows pasted up with brown paper. That’s what I thought I should see, sir.” Then she looked into the landscape and exclaimed, with a gardener’s admiration: “Oh! but isn’t this glorious! How my mother would like to plant her flowers in such a lawn! Look at these trees! We thought we were rich with half a dozen. And these great big Doric pillars! They stand there holding up the house like four Titans. Don’t you ever talk to them and ask them how they feel?”

The brother and the sister were surprised at this unex-

pected appreciation. She almost revived their own enthusiasm.

As she gazed again at the scenery in another direction, her ecstasies broke out once more.

"Oh, what a view! It is a perfect picture for Corot. Tall trees in the foreground, with romantic shadows, and a pearl vista of the far distance. All it needs is somebody with a red cap and a crook to complete it. It is positively idyllic."

For a time she studied the prospect like a nature lover, but soon turning to her husband, she asked in grateful tones: —

"Did you mean to surprise me like this, dear?"

"Why, no," he replied rather sadly. "I thought I was telling you the truth. To my eyes everything is suggestive of poverty and ruin." He was thinking of that which was not visible in the landscape — the debts.

But under the spell of her happiness even these became less able to depress him. She had come like Aurora in triumph, and under her influence the whole plantation became illumined by the rosy brightness of dawn and the promise of a new day of gladness.

When she crossed the threshold, the spirit of enchantment went with her. The gloomy atmosphere of the house was permeated by a new warmth. The spacious stairway, the substantial woodwork, the severe, simple designs of the decoration, the heavy mahogany furniture, drew from her, one by one, exclamations of genuine delight.

"See here, Margaret," said Bourland, "this is all put on to ease our feelings. How can you say such things about a lot of old rubbish that a pedler wouldn't take for a gift?"

She defended herself like a true connoisseur.

"I love old things," she answered, "that show the marks of wear and service. To me they are all the dearer for their scars and scratches and faded colors. They appeal so much more to the imagination than new things with their glitter and gloss. New things are like young soldiers on parade, all very pretty for show; but when you want

something to venerate, you have to turn to the old veterans, and you love them all the more because they limp and drag themselves along in broken lines."

All this while the affection of Eleanor was awakening for the newcomer. She was to be no intruder, after all. Her coming meant simply that the house was to be more full of human affection — affection for each other and for the place itself.

They took her into the parlor last of all. She was deeply impressed by the portraits. Before them she spoke little, until, after examining them carefully, she said rather solemnly: —

"I don't wonder you think so much of your families down here. They aren't really dead to you; they seem to be still living with you, and looking on."

If the lips of those ancestors could have spoken, they must surely have given her a welcome into their kinship.

After supper Bourland and Margaret went out for a walk about the plantation, and Eleanor was left alone.

Her life, she felt now, was entering upon a new phase. Youth, with its hopes and promises, was passing away. She had missed its fulfilment; that fruition of love which the war had blasted; that completion of Nature's purpose in the duties of wife and motherhood. Her brother was more fortunate. But she did not begrudge him his happiness, although its lustre deepened the shadow in the void of her own sorrow.

There was the future spread before her eyes — a quiescent sea with a haven of solitude. Her life was entering prematurely into the serener, unromantic days, when desires grow less; when dreams cease their vain prayers before the inexorable shrine of necessity; when the soul, less anxious for the morrow, is content to feed, like cattle in the pasture, upon the simple fare of Nature's daily offering.

Ah! how in that moment her heart cried out in its unvoiced language. But the voice of consolation, of the chosen comrade, the one voice that could satisfy the need, was hushed forever in a soldier's grave, far away on some lone hillside of Tennessee.

She went over to her piano. She leaned upon it. Often it seemed that the instrument had a soul of its own. She could speak to it and tell it her secrets, and it drew from her, like an unguent, the dolor of her inward bruise. It was a confidant, listening patiently with soothing responses. And it would never betray her; only echo, as from a grave, all her vain longings, softened, subdued, chastened into heroic endurance.

Unconsciously her fingers, touching the keys, slipped into the melody of that lover's hymn, that invocation which, in some rare moment, the barbaric German had written for those whose lives are transfigured into saintly resignation by the breaking of their hearts —

“O thou sublime, sweet evening star!”

She saw the star shining into that darkened room, faint, yet luminous in the far skies — the symbol of her lover's spirit, watching. It drew her away from the earth. In her reverie she was lured out of the eddy and whirl of time into a clearer, rarer atmosphere without motion or change. She was lost in a vagueness, into the mist of which, with mystic power, the soft, slow strains of the music entered like a balm; and she could feel that from that symbol, out of a region dimly descried, there came an effluence, a lucid stream, which washed from her soul the corrosive sorrow, the grief of severance, and the tang of this bitter solitude.

When the mood of reverie passed, her fingers were still gliding over the keys; but she had been lifted above the darker shadow.

Unawares Henry and Margaret had stolen into the room.

“Oh! I love that song so much! Won't you play it again?” asked Margaret, not knowing its significance to the player.

“Not to-night, please,” pleaded Eleanor, gently. “Some other time. It is so much like one's evening prayer.”

Margaret's intuition divined the motive of her reluctance, and with a deft phrase she drifted to other things.

After some conversation, Eleanor left the two lovers before a cheerful fire and went upstairs to her own room.

She entered it with a sensation strangely new, like that of a neophyte, passing for the first time into the silence of her oratory.

Weary after the day's strain, she sat down in an arm-chair. A delicious fatigue closed the avenues to all outward impressions, allayed her mental faculties, and left a dim consciousness to brood and gloat, with a miser's avarice, over the treasury of memory.

She was leaning upon the wooden railing of a bridge; the waters beneath gurgled in the darkness, and sped on. A long path in the sky gleamed with the showering stars of the Milky Way. The breeze bore from the fields the chill odors of an October night. There was a man beside her. He had just pointed out the rising group of Orion, and in the act had bent so close that some of her stray hairs had blown into his eyes.

"Eleanor!" his voice had changed from the cold science of astronomy to the tenderness of a man. "Eleanor, I have often wished that we might slip into each other's lives completely without — without even the need of words. I have hoped that my love might need no messengers, and that you might see, and know, and come to me of your own will."

Fearful of the duty that might soon call him to war, she laid her love upon the altar of his broad breast, and gave her life into his keeping. She felt the pressure of his clasp, which would not let her go, but which, by its own restraint, gave token of his deference to her frailty. She felt the sweet, inexpressible ecstasy of the voluntary imprisonment in his arms.

She awoke slowly, still under the spell of her memory. A chill in the air dispelled the illusion. She became conscious of the reality. She was alone in her room.

Ah! that life might be all dreams of desire.

She went to her desk, opened a drawer, and took out the secreted, the oft-fondled memorials: a cameo ring, a pocket picture of herself, a little note-book, and a bundle of letters tied with a white ribbon — gleanings from the battle-field.

She opened first the diary and read again the conversations which he, far distant in the field, had imagined himself to be holding with her. Some of them she murmured aloud, as if endeavoring to revive his voice.

“June 21st. We slept last night under the open sky. There was some firing on our left after dark. To-day a bullet cut open the pocket of my coat. It made my heart jump and think of you, Eleanor. I pray God for your sake that I may be spared.

“August 19th. We shall probably have a general engagement to-morrow. We have been idle so long in camp that the men are chafing to fight. I cannot reconcile this eagerness to dare death with love for those at home. It seems to me very thoughtless and selfish. War certainly does obscure all the human feelings. I feel eager to fight, myself, yet I do want to live. You know that, my darling, don't you? I shall not flinch, Eleanor. Don't misunderstand me. I love you passionately. Yet love must yield to duty, though it demand the death of love. I love you, dearest, far more than life, yet because I love you, I love my life. It is very harsh and ironical, isn't it, dear?

“August 21st. I am writing in the trenches which we captured at five o'clock. The surgeons are attending to the wounded. How the brave boys suffer! I am almost played out. Eleanor, you know I wrote you about Tom James. Poor fellow; he is gone. Oh! how I feel it. We had some warm words last night. It was my fault. I meant to beg his pardon; but now, I never can.

“October 19th. This is the one day in all the year for me; and you, my darling, you only, know the reason why. It's our secret, isn't it, dear? God knows how many times to-day I have seen your sweet face shining out of the midst of smoke and blazing guns.

“October 24th. We shall have another battle to-morrow. The Yankees have been reënforced, and we are in a tight place. If this should be my last fight, oh, my darling Eleanor, remember I fought for my country, and I died loving you. Good-by, my precious love, if this should be the end. Do not forget me.”

The entries stopped there. It was his last fight.

She put down the book, and untied the packet of letters, and read them, slowly; at the end of each, she pressed her lips to the paper, and kissed the spot where he had signed his name.

She was still reading when steps became audible in the hallway. Voices bade her good night. The bride and her lover then passed into the opposite room, and closed the door. She could see by the luminous trees that they had lighted the lamp, and that, shortly after, the bridal torch was extinguished.

She continued to read amid the oppressive night silence of the house, and when she finished, she restored the sacred treasures to their secret place in her desk.

She had not shed a tear. Grief had been condemned to a life sentence in the cell of her heart, and it was long since an arid abiding place.

At last she disrobed herself of her sable garments, and put out the light. She slipped into the cold, cheerless linen of the great mahogany bed. It had been her nest since her childhood. After a time she fell asleep in the lone silence of that vestal darkness.

BOOK IV

THE PROBLEM OF CALIBAN

CHAPTER XVI

THE RECONSTRUCTION POLICY

TWO years drifted slowly over the chaos of the Confederate states without bringing a solution of the political riddle. Reconstruction was still under debate, the Constitution was suspended, and the South was still policed and controlled by the armed soldiers of the victors.

Virginia, the eldest, and by tradition and achievement the proudest in the sisterhood of states, was deprived of her historic name. Her territory was designated as Military District No. 1.

President Johnson and the factions in Congress had been engaged in bitter quarrels over ways and means of reconstruction. The executive endeavored to carry out the policy of Lincoln — a policy which squared with the ante-bellum logic of the North, and which maintained that the Southern states were indestructible members of the Union, and that, since armed resistance to federal authority had ceased, they should therefore be permitted to resume the rights and privileges of statehood. But Johnson's vain and vehement personality, his lack of tact and statesmanship, his ill-starred genius for doing the right thing in the wrong fashion, defeated his cherished purpose, and threw the control of power unto the hands of Stevens and the Radicals.

It was most unfortunate for peace and reconciliation.

For Stevens was a narrow-minded partisan. He saw only one side of the case. Unlike Lincoln, who would have been a healing power, he was governed by a vindictive zeal. He assumed that the Confederates were traitors, and not honest men, and he advocated measures that were drastic, virulent, galling: the denial of all rights to the conquered, the confiscation of their property, political disfranchisement, and the control of the state governments by a revolutionary extension of the suffrage to all of the freedmen. Stevens had no practical knowledge of Southern conditions, and he approached the problem of reconstruction from the avenue of blind prejudice. His proposals were like salt rubbed into the wounds of the defeated.

However, under his leadership, in the spring of 1867, Congress passed the Acts of Reconstruction. These laws provided for constitutional conventions, and the readmission of the states; by a readjustment of the franchise qualifications they arranged furthermore for the government and control of the Confederate commonwealths by the unnatural method of negro domination.

To a people smarting under defeat, naturally proud, supremely sensitive to courtesy and insult, and to a class of men born and bred amid aristocratic conditions, this sudden subjection of the master to the political rule of his former slave was like throwing vitriol in his face. With Stevens and the policy of negro domination begins the problem of the race war in the South. And here, rather than in the conflicts of the field, is seen the really provocative cause for the long alienation of the sections.

The Reconstruction laws aroused in every Southerner one of two moods: either a violent hatred for the conquerors, or else a silent, apathetic contempt.

"Put the niggers over us, will they?" said Major Hilton, a neighbor of Bourland. "Well, they can do it. They've got us down, and they can kick us if they want to, I suppose. But I shall keep clear of their dirty politics." And he went home, bolted his door, and lived as a secluded misanthrope. He could avoid the humiliation and save his dignity by ceasing to be a citizen.

In June, 1867, Virginia was still Military District No. 1.

Though the election of delegates to the constitutional convention at Richmond had been fixed for October, there was widespread apathy among the whites toward all political concerns while the state was under military control. They looked upon Congress as a hive of fanatics, and they, like Major Hilton, refused to have any dealings with such a body or with its representatives. So they maintained the notoriously boastful attitude of "glorious inactivity." Some of the wiser men were fearful of the results of this negligence; for the times were dynamic with great dangers to the future of the state, and they sought to arouse their fellows to the sense of their political duties. Among these was Bourland.

"Half a loaf is better than no bread," he would say; "we may save something of our rights."

It was a practical argument, but he found it very difficult to awaken his neighbors to the threatening evils of negro domination.

One June afternoon, Margaret, while awaiting her husband's return, was out on the lawn among her rose bushes. Those flowers were her single luxury, and she cared for them as affectionately as a brood of children. June's warm wooing had opened the buds in profusion, and the air drank and swam in the fragrance of Yorks, Jacques, damasks, dainty teas, and heavy hundred leaves, while the light irradiated their delicate hues of yellow and white, cream and crimson. The noon had brought a shower, and the sun had not fully dried the grass. Margaret shook the raindrops from the petals, straightened the supports of the wind-blown branches, and drove out the insects from their too cosy nests of rosedown. She plucked a Gloria de Dijon in the prime and put it in her hair. She lifted to her lips a ruby Jacque that drooped gracefully on the stem. The touch thrilled her beautifully; it was so like the shrinking touch of a little baby's mouth.

The clatter of hoofs caused her to walk over toward the gate. Henry came galloping up the road.

"Well, sweetheart," he called out, holding up some-

thing that looked like a bottle. "I've got my booty. Has Major Hilton come yet?"

"Not yet. I'm afraid you are getting extravagant."

"There isn't much of this old Madeira left in Virginia. Chadwick had to poke all around his cellar for this one bottle. I want to warm up Major Hilton. I want to get him interested in this election."

"Oh, those dreadful politics again!" she exclaimed, with a gesture of jealousy.

"It can't be helped. This reconstruction business has got us by the throat. God helps those who help themselves, you know."

"But it takes you too much away from home."

"Well, better times are ahead, I hope. Hark! there they come. Take this bottle into the house. Be careful now, don't brush off the cobwebs."

A few moments later a carriage with wheels out of the plane was drawn by two ill-mated horses into the yard. A negro without livery was driving, and a middle-aged gentleman and lady occupied the rear seat.

"I'll have to be my own major-domo," said Bourland, greeting the visitors.

The guest apologized for the delay of his visit. "In these times," he said, "there is such a temptation to keep shut up."

The dinner was a very simple affair; the only thing reminiscent of the old days was that solitary bottle of wine.

The conversation drifted from local gossip to family affairs, deceased neighbors, newcomers, many of them from the North, who had moved into the country, and occupied the vacant farms or taken up the professions. Finally the talk turned upon the all-absorbing topic, — the future of the negro.

"The emancipation, in some ways, is a great relief," said Bourland. "It relieves us from a thousand cares. The slaves were a constant worry; every little thing, a burn, a fever, a broil among them, had to be looked after. Now they can shift for themselves; they are free, and so are we."

“But, drat the rogues,” said the major, “you can’t make them work. You can’t get half as much out of them as in the days when the lazy ones had fear of the whip. They are as saucy as parrots. The minute you say a word to them, they talk about their rights and rush off to the Freedman’s Bureau.”

“I’ve had a good deal of trouble with them, particularly the young ones. They are a restless lot. They want to clear off to the towns and hang around the soldiers’ quarters, doing nothing. You have to be stern with them. But I’ve got most of mine under discipline now. The nigger that won’t work around here gets his walking orders very quickly.”

“When I was down in Lynchburg last fall,” continued the major, “I saw hundreds of them, just loafing about. Outside the town they had put up some shanties of loose logs and tree boughs; there they slept at night, and during the day they hung about the streets, living on the rations of the government. It is worse at Richmond, I’m told. It is very curious to see how they are drifting to the towns and cities.”

“They’ve got their heads full of foolish notions. They still think that the government is going to confiscate our lands and give each of them a farm. So they won’t make contracts. They want to be ready for the scramble. I’ve heard them say that they ‘spected to be made gemmen jes’ laik de quality people,’ and that ‘dey wusn’t ’spectin’ to do no moah wo’k,” said Bourland, imitating, by his voice and expression, the impudence of the impudent negro.

“Oh! they are a harmless lot, Colonel,” replied the major. “An inferior race always is. They can’t stand competition with the white man. This talk about equality is all Yankee ignorance and nonsense. The niggers will gradually become extinct like the Indians. White labor will come down here, and drive them into the Cotton states, and finally into the Gulf of Mexico. Let the Yankees make a mess of this equality business if they want to.”

“No, I don’t agree with you. The niggers are not harmless. They’ve got danger in them, and they are a

menace to our safety. We white men have a greater duty to perform for the state than ever before. Years ago I laid to heart Patrick Henry's maxim, 'Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty.' We must practise it. This is a time when every white man should stand by his neighbors for concerted action. We are more fortunate in Virginia than farther south. The negroes do not outnumber us, and we have a chance to keep control of affairs."

"Well, I don't propose to have anything to do with this Yankee reconstruction and nigger politics. I'd rather go under than soil my hands with it. Let the Yankees do their worst. Time will tell who knows most about niggers: they, or we who have lived with them all our lives."

Bourland made no answer to this. He did not wish to arouse the major's feelings, and drive him to his mettle in the presence of the others. But he thought he could reach him privately by an appeal.

After dinner the ladies withdrew and left the men to their cigars.

"Well," said the guest, sipping his wine-glass, "this is a relic of the old days, isn't it?"

"Yes," answered Bourland, "and do you think, Major, that it is all which is left to us? Do you think the old times are gone beyond recall?"

"I don't know," he answered. "For my part, I'm discouraged; played out. I can't make things go. A hundred times during the last year I have been glad to think I have no children."

"I hate to admit," returned Bourland, dejectedly, "that we have lost our prestige; that we have actually gone under; that there isn't enough pluck left in me to restore things to something like former times. I've worked hard."

"Yes, Colonel, you have, and as the Scottish king said, you 'have bought golden opinions' from all of us in the neighborhood. We look up to you as our leader now. But personally I don't care what happens. All my ambition has gone. I reckon I'm like most of the rest; I've run to seed."

“You are a friend of mine, aren’t you, Major?”

“You needn’t ask that.”

“If you could help me, you’d do it, wouldn’t you?”

“You have only to command me.”

“I want you, for my sake, to come out of this lethargy, to become an influence — a political force in the affairs of the state. Here we are facing an election, and on it will depend the character of the constitution which shall rule us and our children. We must have conservatives make that constitution. In Virginia, if the white men all stand together, we can still control our own commonwealth. But the greatest enemy we have is men like you: these apathetic ones, who don’t care. My interests are at stake as well as yours; but without your help, I am helpless. These Radicals and niggers will swallow me up as well as you. I want a chance to fight — a chance to win back my own inheritance and birthright. But I can’t do it without my neighbor’s help.”

While Bourland spoke the older man was moving uneasily in his chair. He realized that he was wrong. He squirmed under the conviction of selfishness.

“I never thought of the matter in that light, Bourland. For myself, as I said, I don’t care a whip. I’ve sworn that I’d let the Yankees do what they pleased, and that I’d let them make a mess of the whole business; I wouldn’t raise a hand. But the old blood still seems to be in your veins, and you aren’t beaten down yet. God bless you. I’m wrong, and unmanly, and selfish. Go ahead. I’ll stand by you.” He held out his hand, with a sudden burst of emotion that expressed itself in an intense grip.

“If we want to save the state, Major, we have got to work like Anglo-Saxons, and,” he added, “endure like Jews.”

The major was silent, gathering his spent energy into a resolution.

“The last time I saw General Lee,” continued Bourland, “just after the Appomattox surrender, he gave me this as a parting charge: ‘Stand by the state. She will

need every man of you. Don't desert her in the hour of her greatest distress. You have been a good soldier for her sake ; now be a good citizen.' ”

“ I will, by God, I will,” said the major with a sincerity that flushed his face and made the oath a reverent vow of consecration.

Bourland dripped the last of the wine into the glasses.

“ To a white man's government for Virginia,” said he, rising.

“ Heaven grant it for her name's sake,” replied the guest, raising the glass with a tremulous hand.

CHAPTER XVII

THE COMING OF PARKER, THE CARPET-BAGGER

ONE afternoon, several days later, Bourland was returning dejectedly from Brayton.

He had gone down to interview some of the influential citizens, who were reposing in "glorious inactivity," while the Radicals — the carpet-baggers, adventurers from the North; the scalawags, place hunters of the South; and certain well-meaning philanthropists — were laying plans, in accordance with the congressional scheme, to capture the state government.

It was very difficult to arouse his neighbors to a sense of their duty and their peril. Bourland could not appeal to many of them, as he had done to Major Hilton, on the ground of personal friendship; he had to resort to argument. But argument seldom accomplishes much against prejudices. A great many men, indeed, were in no mood to hear reason. One man declared that he had withdrawn from active life, and that he didn't care a "leather" what happened. Another said that he had lost his country, and that he wouldn't take the oath of allegiance to another; he never thought much of "stepmothers." A third saw no prospect of success for the Conservatives; he wouldn't even vote at the election; he couldn't do it without a loss of dignity and without coming down to the "level of niggers."

Many trivial incidents, long ago forgotten, gave cause for indignant exasperation, and furnished excuses for this sulky lethargy. The Confederates, though defeated, demanded the courtesy due to American gentlemen. They felt that they had been treated like bandits and

branded as traitors. The closing of churches, the suppression of newspapers, the presence of "military satraps" in every town, the police system of alien soldiers and negro militia, — all these things, inevitable perhaps, clashed with their American ideas of personal liberty and stirred their bile.

But far more irritating than these incidents of military occupation were the Northern political prospectors who came streaming into the South, hurling abuse at the whites, shouting incendiary speeches, and arousing among the blacks a bitter animosity for their former masters.

The cities and towns were swarming with idle and arrogant negroes who were a menace to public order. Riots were frequent. It was unsafe to be on the streets.

"Let the Yankees finish up their dirty work; we won't try to stop them," was the last word of the sullen and the apathetic, as they went into their houses and shut the doors.

This afternoon Bourland rode home limp in spirit and in backbone. He was almost ready to turn away altogether from his civic duties. He sought only for a final justification.

At the crossroads he encountered a vagrant family of "poor whites," — a woman dressed in dirty rags, carrying a baby, and two boys dragging a cart full of junk and household furniture.

They said, in answer to his inquiry, that they had come all the way from Georgia, begging their food.

"Is your husband dead?" said Bourland to the woman.

Her face was as dry and crumpled as an autumn leaf. Her eyes were dog tired.

"More'n three yeahs," she answered without the slightest feeling. "Sherman's raiders shot him and set fire to our house. The lan' wouldn't grow nothin', an' we was livin' on roots. I'm a-totein' the children up tuh Louisville, where I've got a sister. I've hearn you kin git work there."

Five minutes before he had been in an irascible humor. He had been working for two years, and had little to show

for the effort; by the most rigid economy he had just met his obligations. The mortgages were still held against the estate, with two years less to run. The prospect ahead was lowering. The years which followed the war had been prosperous for some men; the prices of staples had been high, and there had been a great deal of speculation. But he had not improved his own circumstances a whit. He feared the future, if the Radicals got control of the government. For there was a nefarious purpose among them to raise the tax rate, assess the estates of the old families at high figures, and, if the surviving planters could not pay their taxes, to sell them out by the sheriff. So, when Bourland found that so many of his neighbors were content to let the Radicals take charge of the government, and refused to oppose them, he saw that his endeavors to recover his position and prestige would be futile.

But the sight of these homeless Georgia "crackers" brought home to him the far worse plight of others in his own land. And there were thousands and thousands just like them. The melancholy of his thoughts was replaced by a mood of Roman stoicism. He felt anew the responsibilities of his birth and leadership.

He rode past a field where some of his negroes were harvesting wheat. Old Azariah, who, in spite of his age, still retained his authority as overseer, came to the fence.

"Aze," said Bourland, "what kind of fellows are those niggers we took on last week?"

"Dey's jes' Alabama trash," he replied with a contemptuous emphasis on the epithet. "Dey ain't wuth a mess o' pehsimmons. I'se not suah dat it's a good dispensashun foh to put sech low count stuff to wo'k amongs' de Varginia qualities. Dey'll meck us trouble."

"Keep them at work, and don't let them talk too much."

"Lawd, marster, dey sasses me right back into my teef. Dey sez es dey wuz free men now, an' dey specks dey'll wo'k ez dey pleases — dey didn' cackerlate to stay 'roun heah long nohow; dey's a trabbling tow'ds de norf. I wishes dey'd move, foh dey destroys my dis'pline."

"If they don't obey you, send them to me. I'll settle their nonsense," said Bourland, as he rode off.

He was busied some time examining a fallow field which he desired either to rent or put into cultivation. As he returned, he saw from the covert of a clump of bushes a stranger riding up the road. The man got down from his horse, tied it to a fence post, and then called to the negroes in the field.

Bourland recognized the type of man; it was the first carpet-bagger to invade his estate. He was curious to see what the man was about, so he remained hidden.

The stranger had the nasal speech of New England. He took off his slouch hat, and wiped the perspiration from his forehead, and then leaned down on the fence rail. His head was covered with thick, oily, brown hair, and his beard was of a reddish color, bristly, like a seasoned chestnut burr. A wen, about the size of a Catawba grape, projected above his right eye. He was dressed in a suit of black broadcloth, loosely hanging about his ramshackle figure. He wore a narrow, black silk tie, and suit and tie would have suggested the well-to-do church vestryman but for a large penny-shaped bloodstone stud which glaringly shone on his shirt bosom. On the whole, his general appearance was very decent.

Bourland could catch most of his words.

"Gentlemen," he said to the negroes, who, at his call, drew near the fence, "whose place is this?"

"Marse Bourland's, sah," replied one, who continued to be the spokesman, while the others stared and listened.

"He was a rebel general, wasn't he?"

"Only a kurnel, dey calls 'im."

"Well, he was a rebel; that's bad enough. Does he own all this land?"

"Ya-as, sah; f'um de Hall down to de run, an' ovah beyant dose pine woods."

"That's a heap of land for one man to own. Hm!"

"Ya-as, sah; a heap o' lan'."

"Are you his men? I mean, do you work for him. Of course you aren't his men. You are your own men."

“Ya-as, sah; we works foh 'im, suah.”

“I'm a stranger in these parts. I'm rather curious to know what wages he pays you.”

“Ten dollars a month an' rashuns, sah. Be you f'om de No'th, massa?”

“Yes, boys, I am from the North. I'm an old soldier; one of those who fought to free you. Up north we pay men like you twice as much money for no more work. It's a shame you are cheated so.”

“Da's all we gits; we kyarn' git no moah.”

“Wouldn't you like to get more?”

“Reckon we would, massa; but Marse Bourlan', he very strick man; he say he kyarn' giv us no moah.”

“Nonsense. He wants to get rich out of you. What right has he got to this land? You and your fathers worked it and made it valuable. It ought to be yours. I don't think you nig—, you gentlemen are getting your rights. You ain't never been north, have you?”

They nodded a group of negatives.

“Well, boys, I'll tell you what the fact is: I'm your friend. Your best friend, and I come down here to help you get your rights. I've got lots of influence, big men, back of me up in Washington. And some of them said to me, ‘You go down in Virginia, and tell those poor souls down there about their rights. They are just as good as any men on God's earth!’ I had some business on hand, but it seemed to me like a call to duty, and so I came down here. And I'm going to give up my business, and stay with you till you get your rights. I tell you, I've some influential friends in Washington.”

The man stuck his thumbs in his vest, and stood back in a senatorial attitude. The eyes of the negroes widened with wonder and awe.

“Up north we treat you folks just like white men,” he went on. “Why, I've often seen colored ladies on the streets dressed in as fine silks as senators' wives wear. You don't see that down here, do you?”

“I ain't nevah seen no niggah gal in sich cloes in all my bawn days, massa.”

"Why don't you?" cried the man, with a sour excitement. "It's because these aristocrats have the silks and the fine horses and the wines. Yet you do all the work. Did you ever see any one of them work?"

"We does the work, massa, suah."

"Well, we are going to change that. We are going to give you folks a chance. You've been trampled on long enough, and some of us have made up our minds that we are going to put a stop to it. I'm one of them, too."

He wiped his forehead again.

"This persecution has got to come to an end. It's a shame. It brings the tears to my eyes when I see how a kind-hearted, affectionate race like yours have been made for generations the hewers of wood and the drawers of water. But you've got a friend in me."

They listened, dumbly, mild-eyed, like cattle.

"You never voted yet, did you?" the stranger pursued. None of them ever had.

"We are going to give you a chance before long. You are all citizens now with full rights to the ballot; you can make laws just like white men. Now what are you going to do about voting?"

No one of them knew what he should do.

"Well, boys, that's what I'm here for: to show you how to vote and get your rights. I'm sent down by the National Political Aid Society. We propose to form a party and run the state, make the laws and put you into the offices. Then you can make the white men stand around, I tell you. And every one of you can get a house for himself, and a patch of land, and can smoke his pipe like a gentleman. You won't have to work except when you want to."

It was a Mahometan paradise to their empty imaginations.

"See here, boys, look at this." He took a few twigs, and tried to break them all together, but he couldn't. "You see when there are a lot of them, you can't break any." He next took them separately and broke them in two. "But all alone, you can break them easily. That's

an object lesson for you. It shows you how to be a politician, and get power. United, we stand; divided, we fall. You must all back me up, and help me, and I'll lead you on to victory. Come nearer."

They all approached the fence.

"I want to enroll your names on the books of our society. It will cost you only ten cents to join, and you can have full privileges for that small amount. You can pay sometime when you come to our meeting in Brayton."

Each one gave his name, and, if he could, his age. The stranger put them down in his book.

"We shall have a meeting at Brayton next Wednesday night. You must all come to it. There you will get full instructions how to vote and get your rights. Don't be afraid. The soldiers will be there to protect you. If anything goes wrong, you just ask for Bill Parker. I'm your friend, remember, and I'll see you get justice."

Just then there was a rustling in the bushes, and Bourland suddenly appeared. At the sight of him the negroes looked terrified.

"There, you niggers, you get back to your work," he shouted wrathfully. They scampered off, without looking behind them, like scared sheep.

The stranger was disconcerted at first, but with egregious nerve he came forward, holding out his hand, and saying with great cordiality;—

"I believe I have the honor of addressing that brave soldier, that worthy foeman, Colonel Bourland."

Bourland drew himself up haughtily, and folded his arms before the proffered hand.

"You have the advantage of me," he said, still under the spell of his anger.

"Parker, William Parker," the other replied affably, and seeming not to notice the snub of the folded arms. "My name is not so historic as yours, I regret to say. Yours is a distinguished family, sir; noted in the annals of Virginia."

"Well, Mr. Parker, if that is your name, just get out

of here as quickly as you can. You are a trespasser on my estate, sir."

The other calmly maintained his position.

"I believe I am standing in the public highway," he said. "I do not think I have been acting contrary to any law. This is a free country, and every man has a right to free speech."

"Who gave you the right to enter a man's property and incite his servants to insubordination?" he asked hotly.

"Oh!" replied the other, with an amused grin, "don't call it insubordination. We are teaching them how to enjoy the rights and privileges of white men. They are entitled to, by the law. Besides, I am acting under orders from the Freedman's Bureau, which, I believe, has full authority round here."

Bourland, catching his anger, realized that he had no legal ground for complaint under the new régime. He was forced to silence. They could teach his negroes whatever they desired. He turned about, biting in his vexed lips, and walked away.

"Remember the name, Parker, Captain Parker of the 17th Massachusetts, U.S.A.," the man called out derisively.

Bourland did not turn again. If he had done so, he would have seen the man's face expanding with vulgar, saturnine triumph.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE BEGINNING OF THE LEVELLING PROCESS

AFTER the slaves were set free, there was no adequate reason for any alienation of the white and black races. During the war the slaves worked faithfully on the plantations of their masters, and most of them attested their good will and loyalty by devoted service during the darkest days of storm and stress.

But the scheme of reconstruction, which designed to control the revolted states by the limited disfranchisement of Confederates and the wholesale extension of suffrage to the freedmen, required implicitly, although not avowedly, a change in this cordial relation. It was necessary, for political purposes, to align the blacks in opposition to the whites, to make the emancipated slaves believe that their former masters were their natural enemies. And this alienation, in the course of events, was accomplished by carpet-baggers and scalawags.

These agitators were assisted by the enactment of the so-called Black Laws, — some ill-timed legislation by the provisional state governments, — measures drafted as a protection against the numerous vagrant and lawless negroes, who, abusing their new freedom, degenerated into thieves and disturbers of the peace. In general, they involved imprisonment or enforced apprenticeship for the idle and vicious.

In the North there was a great hue and clamor against this legislation.

“The rebels are going to reënslave the negroes,” the politicians shouted ; and the Black Laws became opportune texts for the demagogues, who with some show of reason aroused in the freedmen a fear of a return to bond-

age. In addition to this argument, they harangued their ignorant auditors about social equality, their own unselfish motives, the turpitude of the traitors, and they filled the imaginations of the negroes with false, delusive hopes.

The agitators, however, were not all rascals, nor even all selfish place hunters. There was a large body of devoted, sentimental theorists, who, urged by conscience and philanthropy, yet ignorant of the social conditions, came into the South with commendable missionary zeal. They gave respectability to the demagogues, for they worked with them for the same end, although with better incentives. The professed aim of both classes was the education of the negro to his new rights and privileges.

Within two weeks after Parker's visit, Bourland saw the result of his influence. The blacks began to grow restless, to grumble in an unwonted manner, to become impudent, and to show signs of insubordination. At night they went down to Brayton, attended the political meetings, held ostensibly by the promoters to instruct the negroes; but they came back quarrelsome, frequently intoxicated, and in no condition for work the next day.

He prepared for trouble, vowing inwardly that he would be the master, as his father had been before him, on his own estate.

Trouble came one day, with a humiliating conclusion.

One morning he ordered one of his men to wash the carriage. Later he found that the work had been done in a very slovenly manner. He called to the man, who appeared, sulkily leading a horse to the water trough.

"Sam," said Bourland, "I told you to wash that carriage."

"I did wash it; yuh kin see ef yuh look," the fellow replied, with that maddening insolence since become the privilege of the negro.

Bourland's irritation had been growing for a week. Such talk was new to him. He focussed his eyes on the man, and said sternly, "You go wash that carriage, I tell you, and make it shine so that you can see your face in it."

The negro went off muttering in negro fashion. When he got around the corner of the barn, to vent his ill-humor, he raised his fist, and struck the horse a vicious blow between the eyes. The dumb brute uttered a whinny of pain and reared, quivering with fear.

Bourland saw the act, and in an instant, seizing a whip, he rushed after the fellow and lashed him over the back till he fled into the stable.

"You dirty nigger, you," he shouted, his fury boiling over.

The man, to escape the blows, dropped on all fours and crept under a manger. His tongue hung out of his cavernous jaws.

"Let up, massa, let up, I'se a bad nigger," he bawled out with uncontrollable gulplings.

"Come out of there," ordered Bourland. "Stand up."

He shook the butt of the whip in his blinking eyes.

"If I ever catch you treating a horse of mine like that again, I'll tie you up, with a rope around your neck, and whip you till you drop. Do you hear? Go wash that carriage properly."

The negro obeyed, fairly jumping in his effort to get away. He muttered all the rest of the morning to himself.

The next day a soldier rode in through the gateway and inquired for Colonel Bourland.

"I am he, sir," said Bourland. "To what do I owe the honor of your visit?"

"I have a summons, sir," replied the soldier, touching his cap.

"A summons?"

"Yes, sir, a summons to appear before the Freedman's Bureau to answer a charge of beating a negro." He delivered the paper and galloped off.

Bourland, after reading it, crumpled up the paper and threw it disdainfully away. If the Bureau desired to see him, they could come up after him. He didn't intend to pay any heed to such interference with his domestic

affairs. He had simply given one of his men a well-deserved punishment. What right had the Bureau to meddle with the matter? Bah! he wouldn't pay any attention to it.

While he sat there, pestered by this incident, his first clash with federal or semi-official authorities, light footsteps slipped up behind him, and before he knew his sight was blotted by two hands, once soft as a damask rose — now roughened, like a sear leaf, by domestic drudgeries.

"Guess who it is!" the voice called out.

"Cinderella," he replied, without struggling to escape from the sweet blindfolding.

"You nasty man," she retorted, uncovering his vision, and visiting his cheek with a blow which affection curbed into a love tap.

She bent his chair backward, holding him suspended, while she leaned over in the posture of a shepherd's crook and looked up into his eyes. Her pouting lips almost grazed his own, and the air space between was charged with the electric sparks of a kiss.

"You are in trouble," she said, with a sympathy that would repay almost any anxiety.

He told her all about it.

"Oh, they won't do anything," she said. "Just go and explain it. What could they do, anyway? Put you in the chain gang?"

"I made up my mind not to go," he answered. "But they are your people, and for your sake I'll pocket my pride and go."

"I wish I could get you to say 'our people,'" she murmured. "But I can't blame you. It isn't the people up north, dear, it's the politicians. Don't go if you don't wish to."

But he did; that very afternoon he rode down to the Bureau. It was in a deserted corner grocery. The agent sat behind a desk, and was listening, as Bourland entered, to the complaint of a farmer.

"Provo," the man was saying, "I engaged two niggers to work for me under contract, but half the time they go off and loaf in the woods. I can't make them work."

They live in my cabins, and eat my vittles, and won't do anything. I want to send them off my place altogether."

The agent, with a pen thrust behind his ear, looked important as he answered curtly:—

"You can't send them away. They have helped plant the crops, and you've got to keep them."

"Then I want you to send some soldiers to hunt them up and make them work. I've got to have help. This is my busy time."

"I haven't got any spare men to-day. You treat your men right and they won't run off."

"But I want them now, I have to get my hay in," the farmer protested.

"Sorry, but I can't help you to-day."

"Then I shall send them off."

"You can't do that, I say," said the bureaucrat, pounding his desk with his fist. "Next man," he called out, waving his hand, while the farmer turned and went off cursing.

Bourland approached and bowed courteously.

"I have stepped in—" he said.

"It is this gentleman's turn next," the agent said brusquely, motioning him back, and pointing with his pen at a negro on the bench.

The black was dressed like a dandy, in an officer's long-skirted, cast-off coat, a white vest and pantaloons, and a scarlet necktie.

This was the first time that Bourland had ever been forced to give precedence to a negro. His anger was about to volatilize, but when he saw the attire and the pompous demeanor of the fellow, he broke into a smile.

"I beg your pardon," he said, suavely bowing again to the agent; "I didn't mean to intrude between you two gentlemen." The official flushed at the insinuating ridicule.

The negro pranced up to the desk and laid his silk hat upon it.

"I'se a deputy, sah, f'um sum gem'men livin' back in de kentry, an' I hab cum to axe yuh sum questions."

“All right, ask away.”

“Is we culled folk to be hi’ahd out foh fibe years?”

“Not that I know of. You can hire yourselves out if you want to. When you get a good place, you had better keep it.”

“Ef we wishes to buy a piece o’ lan’, kin we do it?”

“Certainly, if you have the money to pay for it.”

“I should laik to hab a piece o’ writin’.”

“What about?”

“A writin’ dat will gib me an’ my frien’s de permission to buy lan’.”

The agent wrote upon a sheet of paper, which he handed to the man, who thereupon departed, much pleased.

“Now, sir,” said the agent, turning to Bourland.

“I am Mr. Henry Bourland.”

The agent, nettled by Bourland’s former thrust, had devised a subtle revenge.

“Oh, yes, Bourland — Bourland,” he mused, “I ought to remember that case. Aren’t you the man who knocked down a poor colored girl?” There was a sneer on his face. “She has lodged a complaint against you.”

“What was the colored lady’s name?” asked Bourland, with absolute composure.

“I don’t recall it,” said the agent, with embarrassed hesitation.

“Suppose you look it up in your records.”

The man knew it was not there. He hid the blush of his thwarted vengeance in his record book. “Oh, here it is; I confused your case with another man’s,” he added, after a search to cover his retreat. “You are charged with beating one of your men.”

“And the cause?” asked Bourland.

“No cause given; just a case of anger and cruelty.”

“It is taken for granted, I suppose, that I struck the man for my own amusement.” His tone was now haughty.

“We don’t allow anybody to strike the freedmen. But since this is your first offence, I shall fine you only ten dollars.”

“But suppose I had sufficient cause?”

“The slavery days are over,” the agent retorted quickly, “and you planters have got to learn to treat negroes like men. You can’t take the law in your own hands.”

“Even when they act like brutes?”

“You are all equal before the law. We are here to protect the freedmen and guarantee their rights.”

“You do that admirably,” replied Bourland, with cool contempt.

In the meantime Parker had entered the office.

“Suppose,” went on Bourland, “that I refuse to pay this fine.”

“Then I shall levy on your property.”

“See here, provo,” interposed Parker, “you don’t fully understand this case. This gentleman here —”

“Thank you, sir,” Bourland said affably, turning to him. “Don’t bother. This man doesn’t want to understand. He hasn’t even inquired. You Yankees have got us down, and you mean to put the niggers on top. Why argue about it?”

He took out two bills from his purse and laid them on the desk. The agent put the money in the drawer.

Bourland still waited.

“That’s all. You can go now. Next time I shall not be so easy with you.”

“I think I will ask a receipt from *you*, sir.”

The man colored again; for again he was defeated in the play of hostile amenities. Bourland took the receipt, bowed courteously, and left the office.

But that bow was the graceful bending of a steel rod by the sheer force of dignity.

To those not born of the old South and its traditions, the incident may seem only a tempest in a tea-kettle, a mock-heroic duel with popguns. But to Bourland, with his arrogant instincts, this subtle beginning of the levelling process, this degradation of the pride of the aristocrat to the plane of his former slave, was like the loathsome, venomous sting of the tarantula.

He had fought in the war to maintain principles that

were logically defensible. And when he had been beaten, he had accepted, without rancor, the decision of arms. From the victors he had expected, if not magnanimity, at least the courtesy due to a gentleman.

Instead of that, however, he and his countrymen were about to undergo the humiliation and the intolerable insult of negro equality and negro domination.

He began to sympathize now with the advocates of the "glorious inactivity," the voluntary exiles, shut up in their houses, who refused to participate, even to resist, in the reconstruction. At least they did save their self-respect.

He rode home in a virulent mood, with jaws firmly set, clinching riotous language ; with his heart suffocating in bitterness and bile ; with his brain a seething turbulence of hatred and contempt for these vulgar conquerors.

CHAPTER XIX

THE ALIENATION OF THE BLACKS

ONE evening a week before the election of the constitution makers, Parker stopped Bourland in the streets of Brayton.

"Colonel," he said, touching his hat, "we are to have a rally to-night in Star Corner Hall. Maynard has come up from Richmond. He's a regular firebrand. I think he'll make some excitement; won't you come to hear him?"

"Oh, you don't want me around there," replied Bourland.

"Well, there'll be some rare odors in the room, for these niggers are a job lot of spices. But come along; you can stand it. It will amuse you."

He had nothing to do that evening, so he went to the meeting.

The relation between these two men was now superficially amicable. Parker apparently cherished no resentment for Bourland's contemptuous conduct at their first meeting. The next time they passed each other, he spoke affably, and Bourland returned an indifferent recognition. Later, Parker, with purposes of his own, forced a further investigation of the Bureau incident, in consequence of which the decision was reversed, and the fine returned with an apology to Bourland. Only through direct inquiry did the latter learn of the carpet-bagger's intervention.

"Perhaps I've misjudged him," thought Bourland. "He may be one of these misguided yet sincere missionaries."

So when they met again, he thanked him.

"Oh, don't speak of it; it was nothing," replied Parker with a deprecating gesture. "I had my reasons."

The election campaign had not aroused any particular bitterness, for the reason that the Conservatives disdained the agitators, and made no attempt to interfere with their actions. The registration of voters had been made by the Radical politicians, and there was unlimited opportunity for fraud; for the negroes were practically without local habitation or a name. Bourland had made some speeches, and with volunteer lieutenants had done a great deal of personal canvassing. But neither he nor his assistants could bring themselves down to the point of soliciting votes from the freedmen. Among these the agitators had abundant license to harangue and to embitter.

The whites, it was manifest, could not win the election by their unaided votes; many of them, as they announced, had failed to register. The only doubt of the result, indeed, came from the unknown measure of success of the Radical leaders in alienating the blacks from their former masters. As Bourland this evening, lured by curiosity, followed Parker to the political rally, he began to study his companion's character. The man's conduct was becoming more and more of a riddle. Beneath a surface of grim, fiery zeal there was a grim spirit of mockery and ironical humor. Apparently he did not expect intelligent men to take all his professions seriously.

The place of meeting was a musty room over a butcher's shop. Benches, without backs, were arranged on two sides of a single aisle. The gas-jets gave a livid weirdness to the black skins of the audience. There was a great deal of spitting, cracking of peanuts, ostentatious draughts at brown bottles, amid outbursts of guffaw that sounded like a tom-tom orchestra. Some few recent recruits in the political army sat timidly rigid, with white eyeballs all astare, as if their coming were a criminal act. Two or three burly Ethiopians, evidently men of light and leading (for they smoked cigars), walked up and down the aisle, counting men, pausing to speak to some, and to affect that personal interest which wins so much power for the ward boss.

Half a dozen soldiers, their muskets leaning against the wall, stood about the door.

Parker showed Bourland to a seat.

"Are you going to speak to-night, Mr. Parker?" he asked.

"Oh! I usually scatter a few pearls among the swine. But Maynard will make the hit. That's him up on the platform with the big nose."

Paper handbills were scattered about, all the words of which were printed in big letters, so that some of the negroes could spell them out more easily. An American flag, carried by a negro in soldier's uniform, was at the top of the sheet. Below were these party shibboleths:—

MEN OF COLOR!!!
 RALLY ROUND THE FLAG, BOYS!
 CITIZENS OF LACAMAC COUNTY
 MAKE ONE MORE BLOW FOR FREEDOM AND EQUALITY
 NOW IS THE TIME
 STAND FIRM
 VOTE FOR THE CONVENTION
 ELECT TO THE HOUSE OF DELEGATES
 WILLIAM PARKER, U.S.A.
 EZEKIEL SIMPSON, FREEDMAN.
 ON TO RICHMOND.
 GIVE THEM ANOTHER APPOMATTOX.
 DOWN WITH REBELS, TRAITORS, AND COPPERHEADS.

Shortly after eight o'clock the chairman, a scalawag from Georgia, called the meeting to order.

This Confederate renegade, after a few preliminary remarks, stating the purposes of the meeting, eulogizing the acts of Congress, the local candidates, and after making the usual platitudes about the glories of republican institutions, introduced the first speaker, the Hon. James Mallette.

Mallette had come down from Pennsylvania under the auspices of the Equal Rights League to assist in the Virginia campaign. He was a great admirer of Thaddeus

Stevens, and he confined his remarks to a fervent panegyric of the leader of Congress. He saw, and very craftily, too, that the negroes could be better controlled by the emotions which a picturesque personality arouses than by the discussion of any abstract principles. Stevens's health just at this time gave him a dramatic opportunity; for that stanch abolitionist, weakened by age and the strain of work, was nearing his end.

"My friends," Mallette began, "when I was last in Washington I saw an old man carried into the halls of Congress on a chair. His hair was white, and his head and hands trembled with infirmity. He has but a few more days to live. But I heard him say, with that kindly humor we all love so much in him, turning to the vigorous fellows who bore his feeble body, 'Boys, when you die, I wonder who then will carry me in here on their shoulders?' Any day, my friends, we may get the news that this great and good man, after sixty years of labor for the colored people, has passed from life into death. I scarcely need to name to you Thaddeus Stevens."

One of the bosses jumped up and led a vociferous cheering.

The speaker then began an account of Stevens's political career, which had been dedicated to the enslaved race. He had fought for their rights as for his own children; he had loved the black men with such ardent affection that he desired to lie with them in death, and he had given orders that his body should be laid away in a negro cemetery.

The account was phrased with a deal of sentimental though doubtless sincere gush. In those days a class of quixotic people, with ill-restrained imagination, forgetting that even in slavery days there were vicious negroes, formed a black cult and worshipped the freedmen as devotees worship the church martyrs. One of their first acts of philanthropy was to establish colleges to teach the liberated slaves Latin and Greek.

Mallette was one of these sincere sentimentalists. He ended his remarks with a personal appeal.

"When I saw Mr. Stevens the last time, I went up to

him and said, 'Sir, I am going down into Virginia to help the freedmen in their campaign, and I'm going to tell them about you. Haven't you a word to send to the colored people?' He gave me his quivering hand, and looked at me with those eyes in which the light is slowly fading, and said, 'Mr. Mallette, tell them that I may not live long enough to see it, but even if I shall be dead, I want them to stand back of me and the party that has given them their freedom.' That's what he told me to tell you, my friends. Now here is a chance to show your gratitude and make happy the last days of the good man's life. Will you send up to Richmond these candidates, stanch men and true, Parker, the old soldier, and Simpson, one of your own race, to carry out the policy of your great benefactor?"

He sat down. One of the black bosses shouted out, "Down wif de rebs, down wif de traitors," and from all parts of the room came the echoes, "Ya-as, massa, dat's whah we'll do! Down wif de rebs."

Bourland was compelled to admire the speaker's subtlety. In all the course of his speech he had not made a single bitter allusion to the Confederates, yet he had accomplished just as much as if he had uttered a violent tirade. It was a speech, commendable on the face of it, yet sure to widen the breach between the whites and blacks of the South.

The unctuous Parker then arose. As he stood there in his long black coat, he reminded one, on second thought, not so much of a church vestryman as of an undertaker. He was sleek and suave. But before he finished, his manner changed, and Bourland divined the secret of his influence over the negroes.

Parker began with an account of his own career and of his personal devotion and sacrifices for the people of color; he indulged in a great deal of cheap political rant, but suddenly taking a different vein, he became simple and picturesque.

"My fellow-citizens, you have all seen cows in the fields, those patient beasts who eat grass, and are milked for their master's profit. You have seen oxen, yoked to

the plough and the cart. Do you know, my brothers and sisters, that you have been, in your bondage, just like those oxen and cattle? You have strained and sweated and tugged for your masters; you, your wives, and your children, and all the pay you have got is the lash on your backs. But the chains of your bondage are broken, and now the time has come when you shall be the masters, and your oppressors shall be put into the yokes. Yet I tell you that your security can be assured only by the great party which I, by your choice, have the honor to represent. I take this leadership with humility, realizing my unworthiness. But I shall never desert your cause, never, until you stand equal in law and privilege to the bluest-blooded aristocrat of the land. By the scars which I won on the battle-field in your service, I pledge that even though I may be defeated in this election, I will never rest in my labors while justice is undone to you and all your race, and until your bright dream of liberty is a hallowed blessing of fact."

Some of the negroes began to shout and croon. The speaker then seemed to fall into a trance, his body and eyes assuming the rigidity and stare of one gifted with prophetic insight.

"O Liberty!" he exclaimed slowly, with the rapt fervor of a bard, "thou goddess of men! I see thee bearing in thy hands a lantern, walking in the dark corners and secret ways, awaking the souls of the oppressed for the dawn of the great day. I see thee, yes, thou art the holy one, with Love at thy right hand and with Mercy at thy left, coming to this benighted people to break their chains and dispel the darkness in which they have groaned and waited for this hour."

Sweat was running down the man's face; but still, crouching lower as the emotion possessed him, his eyes maintained their set, glassy stare.

He stretched out his arms with a Mosaic solicitude.

"Awake, my brothers, awake! The land of promise is spread around you. I will lead you against the Philistines."

The audience swayed as under the spell of hypnotic power; the shouts and croons grew into ecstasy and frenzy, and the bodies of many began to swing backward and forward as if in pain. Parker let the enthusiasm continue several minutes, and then he started to sing a hymn, in which all joined —

“Oh! mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord.”

The singing acted as a safety valve and saved an emotional riot. While it was going on, Parker looked over to Maynard, the imported orator, with a jealous inquiry which seemed to say, “Come, now, let us see if you can do anything better than that.”

As Maynard got up to speak, Bourland noticed that Parker slipped a morsel of tobacco between his prophetic lips, and sucked it contentedly during the following oration.

Maynard was a notorious figure in Virginia politics. He was known among the Conservatives as the “Skunk.” The rumor ran that he had been expelled from a Northern college for disgraceful conduct, and had then drifted to Boston as a negrophile. After the war he came down to Virginia, and seeing the splendid opportunity for his talents, he embraced the career of an agitator with the courage and audacity of a buccaneer.

“I’ve got something to say to you gentlemen,” he began, “and I’m going to say it right out. You’ve all heard of me. Your former masters have heard of me. I’m down here for business — your business. You ought to have homes of your own, every one of you. I advocate the confiscation of the properties of all rebels and traitors, and I believe that their land should be divided into small farms and given to you, whose sweat and labor, in the past, have given them their value. I want to see every one of you the owner of forty acres, a house, and a hundred dollars in cash. As for these aristocrats, I want to see them run out of the country, or else put to work.”

Then he went on, with rising fury, breaking out into a

tirade against the Confederates, whom he regarded as scoundrels and villains. What did the colored men owe to them? absolutely nothing. What would they get from them? absolutely nothing but a slavery that was worse than their former bondage. The only hope of the colored race lay in an alliance with their liberators and in the extinction of their former masters as political forces. The freedman by all the claims of gratitude and self-interest owed his suffrage to the new party, and only by its help could the colored people attain full freedom and social equality.

"The sons of the old Bay State," he cried, "laid in the swamps of Chickahominy and died to set you free. There are others in Massachusetts and in New York and in Ohio who will do the same to give you equal privileges with the white man; the same seats in the theatres, the same rooms in the hotels, the same schools for your children. When you enter a white man's house, you ought to be invited into his parlor. When you enter a hotel, you ought to be seated by his side at the table. You ought to drink with him at the same bar. Anything less than this is an insult to your dignity and your manhood."

He was vigorously applauded. "Dat's hit, massa, dat's what we wants!" came the response in all directions.

"Finally, my brethren," he continued, in words that were reminiscent of a Biblical injunction, "now that you have your enemies down, you must smite them on hip and thigh. Use every means that Providence has given you to defeat your former oppressors. Have confidence in each other, stand by your leaders, and give your enemies blow for blow."

Some white men, visitors like Bourland, were so angered at this incendiarism that they attempted to check it. A row was quelled only by the intervention of the soldiers. When quiet was restored, the meeting was closed with a prayer.

As Bourland went out, he stepped up to the officer by the door.

"See here, Sergeant, you soldiers down here have been

a pretty good lot. Do you propose by silence to ratify the speech of that last scamp?"

"He's a dirty blackleg," said the officer. "If you will enter a complaint, I'll gladly put him under arrest for inflammatory talk. He was arrested once in Richmond, but nothing much came of it."

"Oh, no!" said Bourland, "I'll make no complaint. He can roar on till doomsday for aught of me."

Just then Parker laid hand on his shoulder.

"It was a good meeting, Colonel, wasn't it?" he said with a sneer on his upper lip.

"Splendid!" replied the Virginian, feeling anew an utter disgust for this hypocrite. "It almost tempts me to join your party."

"Oh! don't do that, for God's sake." He laughed outright.

Bourland searched his inscrutable countenance. The man bore an easy nonchalance.

"Parker, what are you about anyway?" he asked with assumed affability. "What did you bring me around here for?"

Parker rubbed his finger against his nose and chuckled. "'Tain't quite so big as Maynard's, is it? He's a handsome beggar." Then he went off, humming:—

"Oh! mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord."

CHAPTER XX

A CONSEQUENCE OF THE LEVELLING PROCESS

Two days later, in the afternoon, Margaret Bourland went across the fields to visit an invalid neighbor, the wife of a small farmer who had taken one of Bourland's patches.

She found the woman fagged out, her eyes lustreless, her skin mummified with work and low feeding, her voice a disconsolate drawl.

"My old man has gone down to hire another nigger. Pete run away last week. I can't work; I wish I was dead."

The forlorn creature began to cry and rub her eyes with the bed sheet.

Margaret spoke a few words of comfort, and gave her the contents of a basket; and then, after an hour's stay, she started again for the Hall, distant somewhat over a mile.

A short cut by a footpath led across an open field, and then through a wood.

The autumn season was at the flush of its brilliance. Overhead gray scud swept joyously beneath the blue. The trees, shimmering in the gorgeous raiment of royal magnificence, swayed with graceful bendings, and the leaves, beaten by the flail of the breeze, were tumultuous with the resounding murmurs of wind harps. She stopped, thrilled with the gladness of living, to gather some purple grasses.

She came to the edge of the woodland and stepped across its boundary. The light darkened; there was a change in the tones. Beneath the symphony of aerial

music she caught the hush, the lonely, murmurous breathing of the forest — an impressive voice of sanctity like that which haunts the gloom of some ancient cathedral.

From a hidden perch came a full-throated hymn of praise from some lone chorister.

Margaret paused, drinking in the delight, the reverential calm of the solitude.

A brook ran through the wood. There was a liquid gurgle, recurrent as the beat of a pendulum, as it eddied among the rocks; there was a lilt in its melody, as it slipped along, as smoothly flowing as the stream of time.

She watched the play of color on its surface; the bronze glint of the sun, the silver sheen of diffused light, the crystalline clearness of smooth pebbles, trailing moss, and dark brown ooze in the bed of the water.

She was loath to leave, and lingered, while the brook prattled its unending narrative.

Overhead, invisible, sailed a trio of crows, cawing and snarling like disgruntled old beldames.

A rustling of leaves, the tramp of feet, suddenly broke her reverie. She turned, and beheld the bestial face of Black Sam, the Alabama negro, peering above a clump of bushes.

The caution of his movements froze her blood in its coursing. She arose quickly and went on her way. He began to move — to quicken his pace — to overtake her.

Her limbs lost their strength; she hurried to a tree for support.

Alone! alone! alone!

He was now within ten yards of her. Her impulse was to scream; but she restrained it. Suddenly the crisis gave her full command of her nerves. She looked at him with a face of composure.

“Hab yuh los’ yuh way, Miss’ Bourlan’?” he said, approaching.

“Oh, no, I just stopped here for a while to rest.”

“I’ll tek yuh home.”

“I can get home all right by myself,” she replied with determination. “You go about your business.”

"I ain't got no business," he answered. "I doan' wuk no moah foh Mass' Bourlan'. He done whup me, an' I lef' 'im. I'se a free man, an' jes' as good as Mass' Bourlan'. I doan' let no white trash whup me."

Her nerves were beginning to quiver under the strain.

"Da's a fac'," he went on; "I doan' let no white trash whup me. Da's a fac'. I'se jes' as good as Mass' Bourlan' hisself. I'se a free man."

There was an impudent leer in his face. She was terrified now.

"Da's a mighty peart-lookin' dress yuh hab on, Miss' Bourlan'," he continued, coming closer.

She saw his fierce eyes glazing, his breath quickening. She turned and attempted to run.

"Dat ain't de way home to de Hall," he shouted. "Hit's dis way. I'll tek yuh home." He pursued her, and put his hand upon her shoulder.

"Go away," she shrieked helplessly.

"I'se gwine to tek yuh home. You'se done tuckered out. I'll kerry yuh dah." He put his arms around her waist.

With her last strength she tore herself loose and darted away. Then her judgment forsook her. In her fright she seized a rock from the ground, and flung it at him with wild screams.

"Help! h-e-l-p! Henry!"

He tightened his clasp. His hand gripped her throat.

Suddenly the report of a gun rattled among the trees.

She did not hear it. As the brute released his hold and ran, she sank down in a swoon.

She regained consciousness slowly. She still felt that awful grip, as of a tightening noose around her neck; she saw only blank vagueness, out of which peered the glazed eyes, the ferocious white teeth of the monster, burning her cheek with his hot breath.

A man was bending over her, dashing water into her face from his hat.

She broke into the wild cry of a coyote, pitched at one moment up to the strident, and then falling into a low, human wail.

“Take it away from my throat,” she pleaded, rolling her eyes and grinding her teeth. “Take it away. I choke.”

She flung her arms about the man’s knees, as if they were the supporting tree; then, relaxing her hold, she began to beat him with her fists.

“Oh, you devil! Let me alone! Oh! oh! H-e-n-r-y!”

“It’s me, Mrs. Bourland. Your friend, Mr. Trymier.” He leaned down, and shouted the words in her ear.

“Yes, I know. Oh! please don’t hurt me. Take him away. There he is! Look! look!”

Once more the wild, helpless cry; she struggled and writhed and fought, and then sank back exhausted, a quivering mass of nerves.

He picked her up and carried her back to his house. His wife jumped out of bed. They laid her in it, sent the children for the neighbor across the road, and then tried to restore her. In half an hour she regained her senses.

Trymier got on his horse and rode up to the Hall. He found Bourland walking from the stables.

“Mr. Bourland,” said he, with an agitation only partly suppressed, “will you ride over to my house for a few moments?”

“Certainly,” replied Bourland, calling the boy to bring his horse out. “Is your wife worse?”

“It’s your wife, sir,” the man blurted out, in spite of a resolution to be tactful.

“My wife! Tell me what has happened, man!”

Trymier hesitated.

“For God’s sake, tell me quick!” He caught him by the shoulders.

“She was coming through the woods,”—Trymier’s face grew white, and he uttered the words with ominous reluctance.

All the country just then was horrified by the news of the recent outrage in Mississippi, where a black brute had captured a young woman, dragged her into a lonely wood, bound her to a tree, and had kept her there for a week.

An infernal picture flashed in Bourland’s brain. He

reeled backward, and blotted out his sight with his hands ; but the inward vision grew only to clearer outlines. Trymier came to his support.

“Bear it like a man, sir. I came in time.”

“Oh ! my wife !” the man moaned. He quailed, as if some one were ripping off the live skin.

“Hell on earth !” he roared suddenly, like one gone mad. A murderous fury flashed out of his eyes. “A nigger, a dirty black nigger !” He shook his fists at the blue heavens.

“Get my horse !” he cried, stamping his foot.

When it came, he flung himself upon it, dug his heels into its sides, and drove it ahead until it began to pant and wheeze. He could feel its sinews all astrain. The sweat began to pour out of its sides. The beat of its hoofs on the fallen twigs and leaves came like the cry of overridden souls. He held his seat with difficulty. All the trees appeared blood-red, rushing past him with cosmic speed. Once the horse, faltering, carried him into an outstretching bough, which cut against his face like a whip. He did not notice the pain of the slash ; he saw only that agonizing black spectre ; all the rest was a vague hurly-burly and chaos.

Once he turned his face to the skies.

“Oh, God ! It could not be possible.”

At length, he came in sight of Trymier’s house. He jerked his horse from the road, forced it to jump a fence, breaking the top rail, and then he cut obliquely across the open field. Trymier had been unable to keep up with him. One more fence, and he would be there. But the horse could not take it. It sank down exhausted on its knees.

With a leap and fling Bourland went over the rail, and rushed to the house.

“Stop !” cried a woman, barring his entrance, “you can’t go in this way. Sit down here and become calmer. She is out of danger.”

He seized the woman’s hands, horny with toil, and pleaded to go in. But she refused, until he could speak without agitation.

He entered the room softly, where his wife lay on the bed. She was breathing heavily, and her muscles were twitching under the uncontrollable excitement of the nerves. At the sound of his step she turned her eyes toward the door.

“Margaret !”

A look of shame distorted her countenance.

“Oh, Henry ! not you !” she gasped. “Go away, dear, go away.” She averted her face quickly, turning toward the wall, and hiding it in the depths of the pillow.

“Margaret ! To whom, rather than to me, my wife ?”

Then she turned to him, her eyes liquid with super-sensitive modesty, and whispered timidly :—

“I was afraid, dearest, that you—”

But he stopped the rest of it with a kiss. He gathered her into his arms and held her, as a strong man holds a child ; and she, in answer, put her arms around his broad breast, and hid her face again from his sight. He could feel the delicious tightening of her clasp, the strength of her feminine frailty, the mute confidence of security in the asylum of his arms.

He felt all the brute pride of a king lion guarding his mate.

There they lay, side by side, until the dusk drew on. Little by little she regained her composure. No one disturbed them until, somewhat later, Eleanor entered, and sent him out of the room.

Out of her sight, the ferocity of a brute, driven to bay, returned to dominate him like the delirium tremens. The maddening spectacle branded his brain fibres, and clung to his thoughts—an obsession from the blackness of hell. As he brooded upon it, his blood began to swell, to distend the veins, to scald his muscles, to cauterize the ends of his nerves. The vindictive fury of the savage grew to a passion that blinded his judgment and overwhelmed his will. He lost the restraining conscience of civilized man ; he became a stalking rage.

He snatched the farmer’s gun from its hook, and turned to the woman who watched him full of fear.

“Mrs. Trymier, go get me some powder and shot—buckshot.”

“Oh, Mr. Bourland!” she replied, “Trymier has gone hunting for him. Leave it to him, sir. The nigger can’t be far off. He shot him in the leg.”

“Stop talking. Go get me the shot,” he cried angrily. She obeyed him. He loaded the gun.

“Trymier’s out in the woods now, beating it with two other men. He’s got a lantern with him,” she said. “Be careful.”

He made no reply, but strode out to the woods. He saw nothing as he went—nothing except the branded vision leading him on like a demon. At last he did become aware that ahead of him was a swinging point of light. He joined the men without saying a word.

“I got him in the leg, I know,” said Trymier; “I saw him drop. He can’t a-gone far.”

“Search, man, search him out,” ordered Bourland, testily. “Don’t talk.”

His lips were tight set. His eyes took in everything, but through the terrible medium of that mind spectacle.

They searched the woods for an hour, and at last came upon him, lying close under a rock among some bushes. He crawled closer to cover and howled for mercy. There was a trail of blood on the leaves.

At the sight of him Bourland began to dance under the nervous derangement. “Hold up the light,” he shouted, as he lifted the gun. He hesitated to fire, lowering the weapon.

“Let me do it, Mr. Bourland. The Yankee authorities may make trouble for you,” said Trymier.

“Damn Yankee authorities to hell, and this nigger with them,” he said fiercely. “I was only afraid I couldn’t hit him; I’m shaking all over. Hold up that light again.”

In the meanwhile the negro had not ceased to plead for his life; but the night air only bellowed the pleas into the far skies, while the woods rang with echoes.

Bourland crept up to him; amid the gloom he could distinctly see the reflections of the lantern,—two bright

dots on the shining eyeballs. The man was so wedged in that he could not escape. Bourland took aim between the two eyes and fired.

Then he turned quickly away, and the men went silently home.

BOOK V

A MEMBER OF THE OLD GUARD



CHAPTER XXI

PARKER MAKES KNOWN HIS PURPOSE

THE election day came ; it brought a decisive victory for the Radicals. The destiny of Virginia passed into the control of the reconstructionists, whose duty it was to draft a new constitution, to submit it to Congress, and to apply for the readmission of the state to the Union.

There were rumors, of course, that the result had been accomplished by trickery and fraud — most of them vague. But there were specific complaints against the gerrymanders, and specific charges of illegal registration of the negroes. It was undeniable that in Richmond, the military supervisors, fearing the Radicals had not a majority, kept the polls open until they did obtain it. These, however, were only trivial incidents in the game of politics. There was something more important ; a study of the returns showed that the endeavor to alienate the freedmen from the white Confederates had been as successful as the dream of desire. Negro domination, under the guide and leadership of the carpet-baggers and scallwags, was an accomplished fact.

The case of the old planters and the old families seemed desperate. Even under the best conditions the chances of reëstablishing themselves were not inspiring. During the years just after the close of the war, it is true,

there were some who were sanguine, or at least hopeful. Staples had commanded high prices, cotton was still the commercial king, and there had been a great deal of financing and speculating on futurities—all of which had given a boom to trade. But a reaction had come, and a collapse was imminent.

Bourland kept aloof from all visionary schemes, however alluring. Like the shoemaker, he stuck to his last. He watched his plantation with the diligence of a spy. He practised the most rigid economy. He rented the unused lands to small tenants. He learned, with Margaret's assistance, to keep a book of accounts with rigorous exactness. But the figures, at the end of a year, were mute, inexorable records of a checked endeavor to advance. He had just lived.

He sat before the fire in the parlor, a few days after the election, facing in his meditations the prospect of this new régime,—a régime that would be inimical to his interests and probably tyrannous in its legislation. Except for his melancholy thoughts, he was quite alone. He saw his inheritance drifting away, like a storm-beaten ship parting its cables.

Eleanor slipped into the room unawares. She put her chill hands over his burning forehead.

"I think I can guess your thoughts," she said. She was of his blood and kin.

"Oh, yes," he muttered. "It is always the same thing. It just gnaws, gnaws, gnaws."

She sat down before the fire at his feet, looking into it mournfully.

"Suppose the loss of our home were not the worst possibility."

"What do you mean?" he asked, as one scared by a sudden awakening from sleep.

She simply pointed upward, indicating the room above.

"Oh! don't say that. It can't be possible. There must be some grain of mercy left for us up in heaven."

"Yes," she replied. "But some people do not get it until after death."

He began to walk in his agitation.

"Go up to Margaret, Eleanor ; watch her, do everything you can. Nurse her back to health and strength. Oh, God! we cannot spare her! We cannot! We cannot!"

After his sister had left him he sank again into an arm-chair, weak, enervated, trembling. He was overwhelmed with the appalling consciousness that he had become lacking in all personal force. He was not physically weary, yet all his boasted energy had transpired out of his limbs. He was reluctant to act, to move, even to shift his position. His will lay lax like a rope.

Some one came up the steps and walked heavily across the veranda. Bourland went to the door in response to the rap of the brazen knocker. At first he did not recognize the visitor, but a shaft of light soon illumined the face of Parker.

The sight of him aroused all the irritant bile in Bourland's nature. Ever since that political rally he had loathed him like the touch of a frog.

There was nothing to do now, however, but to invite him in. He did so coldly.

"This fire is warmer than your reception, Colonel Bourland," said Parker, with genial frankness.

"I beg your pardon," replied Bourland, whose repugnance, on second thought, had yielded place to his natural courtesy. He offered him a cigar.

"No, thanks. I'll stuff up my pipe. An old sailor and forty-niner and soldier like me gets used to it. I've never forsaken my first love."

Parker lit his pipe, lay back in the arm-chair, and stretched out his legs.

"Colonel Bourland, I want to have a little talk with you, just between ourselves. If nothing comes of it, I can rely on you to keep quiet, can't I?"

Bourland rather disdainfully assented.

"You never had any trouble with the authorities about that nigger hunt, did you?"

"I didn't expect to have any."

"Well, down there in the Freedman's Bureau you haven't got many friends. I suppose you know that."

"I could guess it, if I didn't know it."

"There was a good deal of talk about making you trouble, but I just squashed it. No! don't thank me. I have my reasons for everything I do, and I don't profess missionary love."

"Except for niggers," said Bourland.

"Oh, well, that's another matter; that's politics."

"Will you tell me something, Mr. Parker?" asked Bourland, showing, for the first time, an interest in the conversation.

"If I can."

"Were you a soldier, or, as rumor reports, only a sutler in the army?"

Bourland looked at him searchingly. The other man, with a serious mien, raised his hand as if to take an oath.

"Colonel, by all that I hold sacred, by the Bible that my mother put in my trunk, I was for three months a soldier, one of Lincoln's first volunteers. But the rest of the time I was a sutler."

He broke into a laugh, as if the truth were a joke, and the laugh turned almost into guffaw when he saw the surprise on Bourland's face.

"Well, you are the most honest hypocrite I ever saw," said Bourland, with disgust. "That is more frank than polite," he added, smiling.

"Oh! don't apologize. I haven't lived in polite circles."

"Why are you so ready to admit the truth, when you profess — otherwise?" Bourland asked with a bit of euphemism.

"Because I'm unknown down here, and my enemies don't know how to abuse me personally. I want to be abused, persecuted, as much as possible. That will make votes and loyal friends for me. You see, I throw open my weak side for you to strike."

By this time Bourland was interested, with the curiosity of a student of criminology.

“Where did you get the wound you talk of?” he asked.

“I got it honestly. I’ll tell you, but I’ll ask you to keep it secret. I never told anybody down here. I got it out in California in ’49, driving a man off my claim.”

“You’d make a good hero for a novel in the bow-wow style. You’d put Roderick Random to the blush,” said Bourland, amused.

Parker puffed away at his pipe and became reminiscent. “I’ve got reason to be smart, for I’ve learned heaps by experience. I never took to books. When I was seventeen, I ran off to sea, and sailed around the world. I’ve been in South Africa, Australia, India, and, I tell you, I have had a tough time of it—knocked about like a cur, and fed like a beggar. And yet,” he added, smiling, “the wonderful thing of it all is that I never have lost my sweetness of temper. But I’ve got my sore point. Don’t touch that, or you’ll touch the devil.”

A change in his voice and manner showed plainly that under the suave skin of the politician there hid a fierce, satanic personality.

“I’ve been talking too much biography, Colonel, and wasting time. Let me get to the point. I suppose you’ve come to realize that I’m a man of influence in this county. Before long I shall be a leader in the state at large. I’ve got a strange power, a kind of hypnotism, over the niggers. You observed that at the meeting the other night, didn’t you? My speech was more effective than that other wind-bag’s, wasn’t it?”

“It was very well done,” admitted Bourland.

“I shall be in a position to do you many good turns in the future, Colonel. I understand you desire very much to keep this estate just as it is. There are hard times ahead for you planters. You know what these Radicals propose to do. They have got control of the South, will occupy the offices; they’ll make and administer the laws; in fact, they’ve got you aristocrats by the throat. If they have their way, they’ll tax you out of existence, as well as gather up the swag.”

“Aren't there any honest men among you?” asked Bourland.

“I suppose there are some reasonably honest. But if that old fellow that used to go around with a lamp in daytime were alive to-day, I think he'd have to hunt awhile. That's my view of my political friends. The honest ones don't drift into this kind of politics.”

“I suppose it means ruin for our old families.”

“Yes, it means ruin. But I've taken a fancy to you, and I'm ready to play your life buoy. To come to the point: I'll make a proposition. I'll fix the tax assessors, who will rate you low. There's one thing. Then I'll let you in on some little deals, improvements where we can use your name. It's worth money, Colonel, your name is. There's a second thing. Furthermore, when the excitement dies down, you can see some new political lights. I'll get you a good sinecure with a tree on it that grows greenbacks for leaves.”

Bourland's face suddenly became white and cold. He saw now what a mistake he had made in tolerating the man's presence and talk. But having begun, he resolved to probe his infamy to the source of its corruption.

“What can I do for you in return? I have nothing to offer.”

Parker was watching him intently; but he did not read the signs aright. He mistook the cold indignation for the effect of temptation.

“I've got a wife,” he went on, “she's a very decent little body. To tell the truth, I like her. I've got some money, and before long I expect to be rich. I'm getting old, but I'd like to die respectable. I'm going to settle here, and make Virginia my home. But it's pretty lonely for her and for me, too, not to have any society. It's pretty hard to be snubbed by everybody except niggers.”

“How can I help that?” answered Bourland, puzzled at the strange turn of the talk.

“Well!” Parker hesitated, “suppose your wife or your sister were to ask us up here, and later give us a coming out among the F. F. V's. I'll pay all the bills.”

“Good God! man, are you a fool?” cried Bourland, springing up with a discharge of wrath.

Parker smiled like the villain in a blood-and-thunder play, as he said incisively:—

“It is either that or your ruin. Choose.”

“You are an infamous scoundrel,” cried Bourland, flinging the words like a glove in his face. “I am ashamed to think that I have tolerated you in my house. You insult me, first with your criminal proposition, and then you dare to suggest a thing that would bring my wife and my sister down to your nigger level.”

“Take care, damn you!” The satanic personality showed in his teeth and in the hiss that came through them. “Take care! Take back those words, or I’ll put you in the chain gang.” Bourland had touched the sore point. The mask of the suave politician was off, disclosing the infuriated devil of hate.

“I say you are a low-lived scoundrel,” repeated Bourland, slowly, and each word was as the lash of a raw-hide whip.

“You insulted me, down there in the road, right before your niggers. And when I went away, I swore I’d humble you before I got through, and I’ll do it; by God, I will! I will—by God!” The oath was registered in the shrill pitch of a steam whistle.

Bourland raised his hand, and pointed to the door. He was self-mastered again.

“I’ll go now,” Parker raged on. “It’s your house at present. But it will be mine some day. Then I’ll drive you away just like a ragged tramp. Look here!”

He took from his pocket a paper and flung it open.

“There’s one of your mortgages. I bought it with more good money than you will ever own. That’s for a starter. I’ll be master here some day, of land and house too.”

Bourland, with no thought of retraction, still held his position and pointed toward the door.

But Parker did not go without one more fulmination of hatred. He shook his fist at a safe distance, disgorging his words in sputters. “You damned aristocrats with your proud names, we are going to drive you out and

make beggars of you. We'll sell you out under the sheriff's hammer. We'll stuff your salt-of-the-earth pride down your gullets, and you'll be glad to feed with hogs. You'll show me the door, will you? May I burn in hell if I don't send you and your family to a place where there is no door. You mark me, and wait. I'll never let up until I get you under my feet and spit on you."

But Bourland, resolute in his pride and haughty contempt, would say nothing further. He went to the door and opened it.

Parker, overwhelmed by an impulse, tried to strike him as he went out. Bourland warded the blow by closing the door and pushing the man out.

Parker descended the steps, stumbling and swearing versatile oaths.

CHAPTER XXII

BY THE FIRESIDE

DECEMBER came, bringing a cold, winter sunshine of gladness into the Hall. Margaret apparently had recovered her strength, and the brave little woman, at last victorious in the long, slow, patient battle, was able to come downstairs again.

After the strain of the prostration, she looked as frail as a white angel. But when Henry led her into the library, and placed her in a great arm-chair before the wood fire, the flames, roaring a joyous greeting, tinged her cheeks with faint touches of carmine, and drew warm sparkles from the tender glimmer of her eyes.

The evening seemed like a return of the honeymoon. The rapture that comes with the sight of a precious thing, possessed in full title at last, took them back to the dear days of first confessions. They had been husband and wife for two years, but the black imp of disenchantment had not yet stung them with a single venomous dart. Love still shielded them in an impenetrable panoply.

After a time Henry fell into a meditation. Margaret could feel that a train of thought had slipped into his mind which she was not sharing; a sober, mournful train like a procession of dark-robed pilgrims. She knew that she should have her part in it.

"Madge," he said at last, "I do admire your Yankee pluck and grit. I wish I had more of it."

"Am I to receive another christening to-night?" she asked, looking toward him with luminous wonder. "You never called me by that name before."

"I am thinking of you in a new way to-night, as a little

woman who may have to learn a new rôle for the rest of her drama of life."

"I'm not sure I like all these nicknames."

"Oh, yes, you do. You are like a beautiful opal, always playing out new, rich colors with every change of the light."

"I hate inconstant creatures."

"It isn't inconstancy. It is infinite variety. Oh, I love to hunt new names for the many creatures you seem to be, all in one. My memory is a gallery of rare, priceless pictures. I close my eyes, the gloating owner of my treasures. I see Snowflake running across the lawn, pelting me after the first snow fall you ever saw in Virginia. I see Lady Dare dashing down the roadway on Black Arrow. I see the Witch disguised in pink silk. Don't you remember how much you debated whether you could afford that gown? God love you for the extravagance. I see, too, my Princess Imperial in purple, and that Señorita, dressed in black, waving as she dances, the ends of her lace mantilla. I see Sunshine tripping into the room the day I lay sick abed. I didn't want any other medicine. I see you always constant as the north star, my Lady Love. I think of you when absent as Sweet Heart. I murmur the music of the name with my lips. It always makes me feel like a big, strong, tireless man. Just think of it. I have married them all in one, a whole harem of beauties," he added, smiling. "I'm as rich as a troubadour's dream."

"We've forgotten all about Madge, haven't we? Poor girl! She is left shivering outside in the cold."

A December wind blew shrill blasts in the night. He looked very grave.

"Tell me about *her*," she pleaded. "I don't know her, but I am sure I could take her part in this mysterious drama you speak of."

He stared at the crackling flames.

"She is a courageous little lady, who must leave home and friends, and go off somewhere into the wild country. I see her dressed in rough chintz and coarse wool; not a

gentleman's wife, or a planter's wife, but the wife of an emigrant, a ruined man, who has to begin the world over again with his bare hands."

She arose, guessing his intention, and, feeble as she was, she went over to him, sat down upon his knees, and threw her arms about his neck.

"My brave protector," she whispered, "I have always been ready for such a christening. I like Madge better than all."

He told her some of the things which hitherto he had only let her know vaguely; the details of his financial obligations, the real significance of the new régime in politics, and finally the enmity and threat of Parker.

"I thought," he continued, "that there was a chance to fulfil my father's command. His last message to me was to stand by the Hall, and to restore the prestige of the family name. There were heavy debts, yet I thought I could pay them in time. But affairs are going to get worse and worse, and it will not be long before the planters with their great estates will be sold out. Some have been already."

"But how in this land of liberty and justice can they do that, Henry?"

"You mustn't expect liberty and justice when you have been conquered in a war. Your conquerors are going to look out for themselves. These white rascals, the carpet-baggers and the scalawags, will run things to suit themselves. They have already turned the niggers against us, and the niggers have got the votes to put them into power. They will loot the South, just like highwaymen."

"But how can they do it? Isn't there any law to stop them?"

"It is very simple. They can do it legally. They can make the laws to suit their purposes. They can fix the tax rates, for example, at any figure. We white folks own all the land, all the property. These blacklegs and the niggers own nothing. They will tax us; we shall have to pay or be sold out. The radical legislators will get the money, and spend it, appropriate it, steal it, just as they

wish. You can see the scheme beginning to operate already all through the South."

"But won't there be any honest men among them?"

"Doubtless, a good many. But in a democracy a few honest men can't do anything when their constituency is bent on plunder. They call this business up north reconstruction; but for us it means ruination."

"It's infamous," cried Margaret, stamping her little foot on the floor. "I'm going to turn full rebel this very minute."

"Don't do that, my Yankee lady," he replied, laughing, "you are too late. The war is over."

"There are lots of good people up north, dear, who don't realize this. If they did, they wouldn't allow it." Her unconscious instincts impelled her to plead for her own people.

"It isn't the people so much; they don't understand. It is the politicians. They are doing the dirty work. And they must not expect the South to become reconciled or to let bygones be forgotten. Oh, Margaret! I feel every day the hatred growing more intense in my heart. When the war ended, I didn't feel so bitter toward the Yankees. It was a square fight. But when they put these niggers over us, and when they let these rascals make ready to plunder us like brigands, while we have no means of defending ourselves, my blood begins to fume. Oh! how can a white man who has got any respect for himself endure this outrage and this ignominy. We are men with feelings; we are not stones."

His emotion forced him to his feet. He paced up and down the room.

"So you want to leave, Henry! You want to go West and start life anew. I am ready. But—" She hesitated.

"What is it?" he asked eagerly.

"I hate to have you run away from that scamp Parker."

"Oh! how I love you for that!" he cried joyfully. "You make me feel like a coward. It isn't like a Bourland to run away. If I should, if I should leave the place and go out to California, or down into Mexico, where so

many have gone already, I dare say the spirits of my ancestors would jump out of their graves, and catch me on the road, and hang me for a deserter."

"Don't you feel like a sentinel left on guard over your home? I should think you would."

"I do. I don't want to desert. But—" This time it was he who hesitated.

"But for my sake you want to go. You think that somewhere else you might make a home for me, and that here you are only keeping me on a sinking ship. That's it, isn't it? You don't want to drag me down?"

He remained silent.

"Tell me," she questioned, "if I were not your wife, if you were alone in the world, should you leave?"

He answered with reluctant frankness.

"No! I should stay right here, and battle it out."

"Then I stand between you and your duty?"

"But I have the first duty to you."

"No! I am a temptress, standing between you and your natural impulse, your first inborn duty."

He would not admit it.

"I want to see you sure of comfort. I can't win that for you here. Besides, here, where I am known, we have to keep up a certain show for pride's sake. But somewhere else, among strangers, we could be just ourselves, and live all for ourselves. That would be best, Margaret," he pleaded.

"Could you have any peace of spirit when you knew you had run away from your post?" She searched him so that he could make no evasion.

"Not entirely," he admitted.

"Don't forget your birth, Henry. Remember the motto of your family, *Ne oublie*. Remember your father's last charge. You cannot escape its obligation. If you turned traitor to such a trust, I would follow you, but I could not give you my full respect. I am proud to be a cavalier's wife, and I would not have him shirk anything for my comfort. Let us remain, dearest, and if it be God's will, let us go under, doing our duty."

He gathered her into his arms with all the exultation of that day when he clasped her as a bride in the little Gettysburg church.

“O that my father could have seen you and blessed you, Margaret. It would have made him happier in his grave.”

She had something more to say. Trembling in the weakness of her shattered strength, she reached upward on tiptoes, and whispered, fearful lest the walls should hear, some sacred secret.

His eyes shone with a chrism, strangely new.

CHAPTER XXIII

PARKER HEAPS COALS OF FIRE

A CHRISTMAS eve in old Virginia.

Oh! the pictures that rush upon the screen of memory to those who recall the glorious days of plenty, of hospitality, of courtly cheer.

Then the great Hall from the outside was a shining palace, illuminated to the very attic windows. Within it was all warmth and light and hubbub; the walls, festooned with evergreens and holly; the tables heaped with gifts and dainties that pander to the sense of taste; the chatter and buzz of hosts and guests; the wild shouts of the children at the festival of the family clan; hilarious blind-man's buff; timid forfeits; the patter and stealth of hide-and-seek, and, when the youngsters were driven to the cover of bed, the meditative games at the tables, the stately minuet and the reel; and, underneath all the effervescence of noise and jollity, the sweetness of life, the joy that passes understanding, the peace on earth, the good-will to men.

But on this Christmas eve in 1867 the main building of the Hall was as quiet as a charnel house. A remnant of the clan—a brother, and a sister, and an alien little wife—sat in the parlor at the corners of a doleful triangle. It was the time to be merry, and perhaps they were, in their own sad way.

The god of hilarity was holding court somewhere, for out from the north wing came the "sounds of revelry by night,"—the scraping of violin, the shuffle of feet upon the sanded floor, the thumping clap of hands, and, breaking in upon these undertones, the resonant voices of the

plantation negroes and their invited guests, shouting from the joy of the song and the dance : —

“Den fling away de rake an’ de hoe,
 Dis am de jubilee.
 De rain may come, an’ de win’ may blow,
 But bless de Lawd, I’s’e free.
 I’s’e free ! I’s’e free !
 Oh ! bless de Lawd, I’s’e free.”

“Well, I’m glad somebody is happy to-night,” said Eleanor, gasping in the stress of a sigh.

“Just wait until they get to the barbecue,” put in Bourland.

“I wonder what is going to become of them, these negroes, in the future,” murmured Margaret. “They seem to have no aim.”

“Oh! they are emancipated now, they will do wonderful things. I shouldn’t be surprised to see a negro in the White House before long,” answered Bourland with a sarcastic drawl.

“What do you really think, Henry ?”

“I think they are in worse bondage than ever before. They are free of their masters, but they are not free of themselves, their worse enemies. The Yankees have given them poisonous drugs for their ills. Real freedom is not license ; it comes only from discipline and obedience to the higher laws. Who is the freest man, the savage in the woods or the Englishman in London, who is subject to a thousand regulations and ordinances ?”

“But they can be civilized.”

“Wait ten, twenty, thirty years until a new generation grows up, untrained in the traditions of labor, obedience, and deference, and, mark my words, you will find them as useless and shiftless a lot of domestic animals as civilization ever tolerated.”

Margaret was silent. She did not share her husband’s pessimism about the future of the negro.

“This sudden emancipation and political equality, without any discipline and sacrifices,” continued Bourland, “is a crime against the eternal laws and processes of nature.

The slaves should have been forced to work out their liberty. Then they would have become prepared for its use. They don't appreciate it now. They think it means to do as they please, and they will please to do as little as they can and yet keep from starving. But this is no subject for Christmas eve. Put up that book, Eleanor, and be sociable."

The clock in the hallway struck eight.

Margaret slipped out of the room. She returned with a box.

"Here's a present for you, Henry. I want you to enjoy it now. You shall not smoke a single pipe during all Christmas week. I've hid every one in the house." She handed him a box of cigars.

He had long since confined himself to his pipe for economic reasons. He took the gift as a woman takes a present of jewels, and in a moment he was panting forth Havana smoke like a man reclaimed from suffocation.

Then they exchanged their remembrances, — a piece of dress goods, a pair of gloves, a scarf, a shawl — gifts all sternly utilitarian.

Shades of the ancestors! You who heaped your dear ones with luxuries in the days of fulness and plenty, did you not mutter shame upon such parsimonious giving as you looked down upon the scene?

Ah! but what forethought and calculations these gifts had occasioned.

Half an hour later a boy brought in the last mail. Bourland had sent him down to the office, for he had entered into correspondence with a man concerning the sale of the year's wheat crop, which was still stored in the barn. He was anxiously awaiting a reply. He had some interest money to pay the following week, and he was forced to sell. The answer did not come. But there was an unexpected letter from Brayton.

"My dear Mr. Bourland," it said, "my husband has been taken suddenly ill, and the doctor says he has little chance of recovery. He may not live until morning. He desires

to see you on a matter of great importance. Will you not come at once?

“Respectfully,

“MRS. WILLIAM MERTON.”

“It is too late to go to-night,” said Margaret. But Bourland had already gone for his hat and coat. In ten minutes he was urging his horse over the crisp snow.

To his great surprise, when he reached Merton’s house, he found the man and his wife dressing a small tree with berries, paper angels, and popped corn.

He showed them the letter. Of course it was disclaimed.

“It must be some fool’s joke, then,” said Bourland.

Merton shook his head gravely.

“I fear it is more serious than that. You know about these mutterings and threats of an insurrection of the blacks at Christmas time.”

“Oh, nonsense!” laughed Bourland. “Those same reports went around this time last year. It’s an old wives’ tale. The niggers are as meek as lambs.”

“You better stay here to-night,” Merton urged. “It looks dangerous. You know that shooting affair of yours has caused a great deal of feeling against you among the blacks.”

“I’d like to see the time come when I’d stay indoors for niggers,” he said contemptuously. “Good night.” And he rode away, ill-tempered because he had been made the victim of some idiot’s depraved sense of humor.

He spurred his horse, for he was impatient to be home again. As the animal galloped up the pitch on the other side of the Creek bridge, he jerked it into a sudden check, as if it were about to step from the brink of a precipice.

Great God! His heart thumped a tattoo in the painful vacuum of his breast.

In the distance ahead the heavens were a lurid shining. Flames burned above the rim of the trees. Sparks were shooting up into the cold sky.

He sat still, dazed for an instant, and then uttered a prolonged cry of agony. The horse started again in the

canter of a loose rein. Bourland brushed his eyes to sweep away a nightmare, but still discerning the whirling riot and glow, he lashed the horse to its top speed.

The letter, the threatened insurrection, recent incendiary fires in the neighborhood, — quick logic bound them into a chain and a dire conclusion. The Hall was burning. Imagination scorched his reason in a flash ; he saw the horror of rapine, plunder, drunken blacks, and the two helpless women in the centre of a pandemonium.

He shrieked a wild curse, shook his fist at the stars, and dashed on recklessly.

As he approached, he saw several men rushing on foot toward the house. He did not stop to speak to them.

When he reached the entrance of the maple avenue, he could see more definitely. He gave one great gasp of relief. It was not the Hall ; it was only one of the barns.

His horse, covered with frozen sweat, carried him into the yard. There he saw a clump of negroes, prinked up in their evening finery, standing with eyes staring at the crackling flames. Several white men were busy with buckets, but the flames were past all control.

“Get out the horses, you lazy rascals,” he heard a man shout to the negroes. Bourland looked in the direction of the voice. There stood Parker, talking like a fire marshal.

Bourland paid no attention to him. He saw first that Margaret and Eleanor were safe. They stood in the edge of the glow, wrapped in blankets.

With his aid and direction, the horses and all but two of the cattle were saved. The whinnies and bellowings of the frightened animals, and the roarings of the two poor beasts roasting in the building, made wild, cruel music in the night air. It was the barn in which the wheat crop was stored, and the flames smacked their lips and gorged their gullets like a gang of starvelings let loose upon a feast.

“You can’t save it. It is going like tinder.” It was Trymier who spoke.

“What’s that blackleg doing here?” Bourland asked, pointing to Parker.

“I don’t know,” Trymier replied. “He’s been acting very queerly.”

There was a mystery somewhere; it hung between the decoy letter and Parker’s presence. But where was the demonstration and proof?

He walked over to Parker, who stood well out of the reach and fall of the sparks.

“You’ve done a good night’s work, haven’t you?” said Bourland, eying him with a detective’s glance.

“I wish we could have saved all the cattle, poor beasts!” he replied, like a modest hero receiving praise. “But the house was saved, at any rate. I suppose you are glad of that? It was fortunate that I got here so soon. I sent men up on the roof to put out flying sparks.”

“Did you save the house for me or yourself?” Bourland made no attempt to conceal the sneer.

“Oh! as for that,” answered he, “I’ll tell you very frankly that I saved it for you first, and for me afterward. I’m not just ready for it.”

“I suppose you know that this burned barn will help you get it?” Bourland sought to draw him out.

“You don’t mean it. Was the wheat crop in it? Wasn’t it insured? That’s just like you slack Southern folks.” He gave a low whistle and fell to meditating.

“What are you doing about my place, anyway?” said Bourland, angrily, at loss for a further query.

“It does look suspicious, doesn’t it?” remarked Parker with a quizzical expression. “The fact is I was on my way up to your home to bring you a Christmas present. In these times of peace on earth and good-will to men, I like to be a Santa Claus myself. I knew you were having hard luck, so I thought I’d bring up the notification of the interest money that’s due on the mortgage, and as I’m short of funds, I thought, if you could pay a little in advance, I’d make a good rebate, and call it a Christmas present. That’s honest now. I brought a signed receipt for the amount in full.”

He took a paper out of his wallet to prove it, and with a grim leer, passed it over to Bourland, who, after examining it, uttered an exclamation of surprise.

“What’s the matter?” asked Parker.

Bourland looked at him triumphantly.

“You make the W in your first name with a very peculiar flourish, don’t you? A loop and an angle in the curve?”

“Oh, yes, that’s an old trick of mine. I got it from my grandfather’s signature whose name was also William.”

“Well now, my man, I’ve caught you, and if there’s any justice in this land, I’ll have you behind the bars. I can show you another W just like that precisely — a loop and an angle in the curve.” He opened the decoy letter, and showed him the supposititious signature of Mrs. William Merton. Parker started back, as if dodging a blow; but in an instant he recovered his composure. He took out his spectacles, calmly adjusted them to his nose, and leaned over the paper.

“It is like mine, isn’t it?” he said, bending close to examine it.

By a quick movement of the hand he snatched it from Bourland; then he sprang aside, crumpled it in his fingers, and before Bourland could recover himself, the paper was ablaze in the flames.

Parker coolly took off his spectacles, and said, while rubbing them with his handkerchief: —

“Of course I didn’t write that letter, and I don’t know what was in it. But the handwriting was too much like mine to be safe in the hands of my enemy; especially when he thinks that it might send me to jail.”

The mystery was clear, but the evidence was destroyed. The Yankee had been too quick for him.

He stood biting his lips, but in spite of himself his anger broke. He raised his riding whip to strike the scoundrel. But Parker’s hand caught his arm.

“No, don’t do it. I’d have to crush you right away. I don’t want to be forced to that. I want to draw it out more, through several years, perhaps. We’ll do it

quietly, as a piece of fine art. Really, you mistook my motives to-night. I've forgiven you, for a time, and I came up here to-night to heap coals of fire on your head." His face was a full smile of unctuous benevolence.

"You hell-hound!" cried Bourland, raising his whip again. "Get out of here, or I'll order my niggers to throw you out."

The smile darkened, yet his voice retained its suave, but only temporary, smoothness.

"What's in a name?" he said with a sneer. "A rose by any other name would smell as sweet. Well," and he gave a sigh of pain, "I've done what the good Book says, I've heaped coals of fire on my enemy's head." Afterward he added fiercely: "But wait. That will never burn, and some day I shall be its master."

He pointed toward the Hall, gloomily standing in the glow of the burning barn. Then he wheeled around and walked away, turning once to look back at his enemy and to chuckle complacently, "Coals of fire."

CHAPTER XXIV

A LIGHT GOES OUT

Two months pass in this history of a belated cavalier, and they bring new trials to the champion of a vanishing ideal, to the rear guardian of a departing civilization.

After that loss by fire, Bourland was unable to pay the claims of Parker's mortgage. It was promptly foreclosed, the Mill Run tract came under the sheriff's hammer, and passed, after a formality, into the possession of the carpet-bagger. To meet other obligations, to save the rest of his land, for without land he was utterly helpless, the Hall itself, hitherto clear in its title, faced the humiliating scrutiny of the money-lender; and to delay still further the day of eviction from his patrimony, Bourland was forced to give the stately mansion of his ancestors in pawn.

After he signed the papers, he went home and lay all night in a sleepless dream.

The Blue Devils of Despair, a crouching, malignant circle, creeping with Indian stealth and caution, are closing around him now. Nearer, nearer, nearer they crawl and pause, awaiting the signal from the Arch Fiend to overwhelm him.

It comes amid the mad riotings of a February night.

Outside of the house the air is a vast Cimmerian cavern under the black roof of the sky. Hail flies through the air in swooping, intermittent covies, and batters the walls of the house like a fusillade of bullets. Down in the valley there are strident wailings. The gusts and blasts of wind, now grappling at each other's entrails, now hurling their allied powers in unison, tear off the limbs of trees, uproot

ancient trunks, and fling them prone, like wrestlers in the arena.

Men are indoors to-night.

Bourland is pacing the parlor floor restlessly. He hears overhead the patter of light steps, and, at intervals, subdued throes of pain. In the room directly above several persons are performing the prologue to the drama of a new life. His part is cast for a minor rôle, and it is not yet his time to appear on the stage. He is nervous, apprehensive, fearful; often his breath catches and chokes him. The dread of a tragedy haunts him—the dread that the little life within the life may demand a life as the price of its coming.

“Yes, there is great danger,” the physician has told him. “But we shall hope for the best.”

Margaret, in spite of all promise, has not regained her full strength; her courage is there, but not the strength. Mother Nature, shattered so brutally by the horror of the woods, has never recovered her normal processes. And yet she cannot delay her appointed hour. It is to be a titanic struggle, Bourland well knows, when this young Jove, the first of a new dynasty, comes forth from darkness and silence into the light of this strange world.

There is an unwonted emotion in Bourland’s consciousness, a paternal pride, a sense of full manhood. He walks past those portraits of fathers and grandfathers with a new feeling of kinship. He is no longer the end link—the last of the line.

And yet premonitions of the future quench the radiance of that paternal joy into sadness. Where is the old glory and the inheritance? They are passing slowly, irresistibly, irrevocably into obscurity,—prestige and patrimony and opportunity. And the little newcomer, if he be named, must be christened a Lackland. There is no other legacy, none, except a noble record passed down from fathers unto sons,—a family history, — *sans peur et sans reproche*.

He stops before his gray-haired father’s picture. He stands; he folds his arms; he straightens himself up to

an impressive erectness. The lips in the picture are motionless, dumb; but he remembers how they used to speak, to smile, to pray. He recalls their solemn sweetness when they uttered the phrases of the sacred Book:—

“I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.”

Moisture dims the vision of his eyes.

Unaware, the door quietly opens, and Eleanor comes timorously toward him. Her countenance shows white fear and dark red eyes. She has no need to speak. He reads her unuttered tidings, and sinks into a chair, dizzy, faint, cold.

“Come now, Henry.” She puts her arm through his and leads him, as one leads the blind. He is conscious that the strength of his limbs is faltering. He dimly knows that he is ascending the stairs. It is a long, hard, upward climb. Twice he stumbles. He catches hold of the balustrade and feels a strain in his arm. At last he stops in front of a door; a knock, a voice, a silent opening, and from within low moans of agony and a child’s sharp treble.

Eleanor puts her arms around his shoulders, and in a whisper urges him to be strong; turning away, she pushes him over the threshold.

He sees the long coat of the doctor, a swart blur against the wall. At the other side of the room is a cradle, tended by a nurse. Between, on the bed, lies the young mother.

As she watches him approach, her eyes grow warm from an inward radiance. Her face, girt with the lustre of her tangled hair, outshines the light of the room. She tries to smile the reassurance of a lover’s love, and the gladness of a mother’s privilege; but shattered nerves have bound her upon a harsh rack, and the smile is dimmed through a mist of lucent tears.

He bends down and touches her lips. A child has kissed them, and they are softer, frailer, tenderer to the touch of his own.

"There are three of us now, dear," she whispers shrinkingly.

He brushes the hair from her forehead, and they talk face to face their inviolable secrets.

A change comes over her; a film crosses her sight; her head begins to shake; her muscles twitch in the throes of an on-coming spasm. Her body quivers as under the stress of electric stings.

The doctor hastily draws him away. He hears long-drawn moans and the anguish of writhing.

"It's another attack," says the physician. "I feared it. Be calm, Bourland. We have no chance now. Prepare for the worst. I'd rather cut off my right arm than lose her." He gives the crazed husband a strained hand-clasp. "Go look at the boy. You can't help this brave little woman."

The newcomer, swaddled in flannels, lies blinking at the light. As the nurse gives him over to the father, his feelings are a mingling of paternal love and embarrassment. The arms that hold him are as stiff as billets of wood, and seem grotesquely out of place.

The diminutive stranger winks and gasps and wails all at once. He is not used to this cold world with its glare and dazzle. He kicks impotent protests at his enforced entrance.

The doctor approaches hurriedly.

"You must say what you wish now."

The spasm has passed like a storm, leaving her serene and shining, yet visibly weaker.

"Isn't he a treasure, Henry? We shall have a little angel with us in the house now."

She does not yet divine that the dread messenger has already crossed the threshold and stands waiting. She is all wrapped in the gladness of the future of the wife and mother, two beings with a double joy.

Bourland bursts into convulsive sobbing. His ears are ringing with the cries of the Arch Fiend and his myrmidons. He stifles his anguish against her bosom. She understands now. She hears his agony as a call.

“Am I to die, Doctor?” The question is put bravely. He bows his unwilling head.

“Oh! I want to live a while longer, just a little while. Henry, pray God not to take me away just yet.”

The appeal of those sweet eyes, of that piteous voice, would move anything human upon earth. Up in heaven Mercy must be sleeping.

Bourland feels the last desperation of her strength as she strains him close to the lingering warmth of her breast. It is her voiceless plea to him for protection. She had saved him on the battle-field. His day of return has come, but he cannot save her now. He lies there like one upon a cross, yet with the passionate desire that the crucifixion might last forever.

“Oh! I cannot let you go. Margaret, my wife, I will not let you go.”

The rage of impotence masters him with an inward burning. He clutches her frail body in his full strength with a challenge of defiance.

But he is only a mere infant clutching a toy, which the inexorable nurse is slowly, surely detaching from his grasp. He is only a mote, suspended for a twinkling of eternity, in the calm centre of the whirlwind of fate.

But the dear victim has bent her desire to the Incomprehensible Will. She is all resignation now.

“If I must, I will go.”

Yet the unfed hunger of the mother's heart still leaves her reluctant.

“It is so hard, Henry,” she murmurs, “to leave you and the little one just at his coming. Call him Randall, dearest, for my sake, and tell him, when he grows up, that I loved him before I ever saw him, and that he must love me even though he shall never see me. And when you teach him his prayers, dearest, won't you ask him to say at the end, if only sometimes, ‘Good night, mother.’ I shall listen every night to hear. Oh! to think that all through his life I shall be nobody to him.”

Her voice quavers; she makes an endeavor to stanch

the flow from her heart's wounds with the courage of her sublime trust. She has no fear that death is an end.

Bourland has slipped to his knees and is praying. He offers his blood, his life, his soul as a sacrifice at the altar of omnipotence, if only she may be spared. She clasps his hand while he prays.

She grows calmer.

In the silence which follows, they hear the clock on the mantel.

Tick-click! tick-click!

The moments slip and drop into the irrevocable abyss. A long hour they watch her, and wait, still hoping.

But she is sinking fast.

She opens her eyes, and beckons Bourland to draw down. He catches the slower motion of her heart-beats as she whispers:—

“I'm glad, dearest, that there is a God. Don't grieve. There are mansions prepared for us in heaven, and Christ has gone to prepare the way.” The sweet peace which has made placid her features is broken as she adds regretfully:—

“But I shall be so lonely there until you come.”

Again he brushes away from her forehead the tangled hair. He anoints her cheeks, her eyes, her lips, with the tender loyalty of his devotion.

A short respite and again the attack of the spasm returns—the film across the sight, the distortion of the features, and the convulsion of the muscles. As the objects of sense recede from her consciousness, out of the stupor come the impressions branded on her mind in the past, incoherent, confused, in whispers and in fearful agonies.

“No, Henry! I'm not afraid of poverty—we shall have a rose garden, so don't run away. What would the child think?—I can go home alone—you mind your own business—help! help!—go away, you monster!”

Her hands beat the air fiercely in her efforts of defence. Bourland puts his face down into the rain of the blows. They are his last tokens.

Her breath fails and comes in gasps. She is suffocating inwardly. He encircles her again with the last clasp of his love. The struggle ceases. Her face is composed. The arms lie still at her sides. Her eyes are wide open.

The little mother is lonely now in the mansions of heaven.

CHAPTER XXV

BEATEN DOWN

THEY bore her to the square plot beyond the Hall, and in the shadow of the cypress trees they lowered her, a peaceful, fearless shining into the cold mystery of the grave.

Then the lonely man turned and walked back to the house. For him the world seemed to have come to an end; as if the doomsday, bringing the closing hours of time, had dawned, had passed away, leaving the earth a mere waste of spent glory, spent sunshine, and spent force.

For a while the currents of sensation were dulled before they reached his consciousness. He was scarcely aware of sound or motion, and yet, at every moment, he was intensely alive, intensely aware that he was a solitary survivor in the midst of a vanishing world, a reluctant straggler in a passing army.

The night hours were the dreariest; through the long watches he lay, hearing in the darkness the beats and strokes of the clock, the lamentations of the winds, the creaking of timbers, the mysterious, inhuman sounds that break the night hush of a vacant house. Sometimes he slept, and in sleep he found a refuge. But in the morning he woke only to find the day darker than the night.

One afternoon, when winter was making ready for flight amid a gusty commotion, Bourland went out into the air, hoping to walk himself weary; the sense of physical exhaustion was a soothing narcotic. He wanted to get rid of the hateful ghost of himself.

Overhead the drifting clouds lowered their dank cano-

pies of ashen gray. The brown skeletons of the trees were dripping moisture. All through the sinuous length of the valley there was trace of no living thing, and in the distance, masses of vapor rose from the village of Brayton, like smoke from a drenched fire. Far beyond, the clouds were shifting and parting, and out of a western shimmer of light and gold the winds escaped with unbound wings, and swept over the land with the boisterous joyousness of a spring prelude.

The faculties of Bourland's brain were losing their poise and balance from excessive brooding. His present situation was the worst one possible. He needed a change — something, anything that would allay the introspection of his mind and call forth the energies of his body. But where could he find distractions? What could he do? There he was, a gentleman's son, a Confederate colonel, retired by defeat, and chain-bound to a great house and an unproductive estate. He knew nothing about business; he was educated for no profession; he was debarred by the turn of events from a natural career in politics. Though still a young man, he was already a relic, a residue of the social order that had been broken up, and that was now slowly passing into historic antiquity. The bent of his mind, his training, the currents that stirred in the under deeps of his affections — all impelled him to cling to the ideal of his own people. The memorials of it were all around him. And that ideal, like the mirage, appeared his only means of rescue and salvation. Like a member of the old guard, under orders, his instincts and disciplined affections held him at his post.

But there was the future and the political gospel of the new dispensation! Behold!

Yes, he might face about and enlist in the new régime. It was quite possible for him to do that. He could repudiate his birth, his family traditions, the last commission of his father. He could forsake the honest calling of a gentleman planter, and join the rabble of carpet-baggers, scalawags, negroes; scramble for place and spoils; even

shake the hand of Parker, and with him aid in the glorious reconstruction of the South according to the Yankee programme.

Become a scalawag? Repudiate the past? As he tramped in his desperation over the scenes of his youth, recollections of that past lay on his mind like material substances.

Backward, backward flew his thoughts to the sunshine, the glamour, the irreclaimable magic of childhood; when all the known earth was his playground; when he and his comrades went roaming the hills like gods together, careless of mankind; when the world beyond his ken lay in the glow of his fancy, a fable land, an unexplored El Dorado, an unconquered Golconda, awaiting his entry and possession.

He looked around him. He lived again the raptures of those days, — the boy's wild pleasures, his enchanting dreams, his sensuous joys which, by the alchemic refinement of time, had been transformed into inalienable treasures of the spirit.

Not twenty yards away, where now stalks of mullein covered the field with their ugly spines, there, years ago, had grown the patch of strawberries. He could taste them yet, and bite into their plump redness. His memory was scented with their delicious aroma like a jar of lavender.

He could see his father, when the season made its first offering, pouring the rich cream over a luscious heap of them, and quoting the invariable words of praise, "God doubtless might have made a better berry than the strawberry, but God never did."

Once, — it was the first spring that saw him clothed in the pride of trousers, — for some little service, his mother told him he might pick a whole dozen of the berries.

"A dozen? How many is that, mamma?"

She took his hands, and counted one for each of his fingers and two for his thumbs. "Then one more for good measure. That is a baker's dozen," she added. He ran down to the patch, — barefoot that day by special permission, — and he trod carefully along the fur-

rows, peering under the leaves for the largest nuggets of sweetness. He put them in his hat, big as walnuts, red as poppies, sweet as honey; and when he had counted an honest count, one for each finger, two for each thumb, and one for the baker's good measure, he ran back to the spring house, washed off the sand, and ate them under the maples, two big bites to each berry.

That feast was a rubric on the page of his unwritten biography.

Over toward the left, in the shade of the willows, was the pond, drying and choking with weeds and rushes and slime. It appeared smaller now to his elevated man's eyes, much smaller than in those days when he and Tom Weston launched on its tempestuous waters the frigates and seventy-fours of the American navy. Poor Tom! He fell at Antietam. Bourland had reached him just in time for his last words; "Good-by, old fellow. It might as well be to-day as to-morrow. Write home and tell the folks I wasn't afraid to go."

As he turned toward the pond now, he could see the phantom comrade on the opposite bank, beside a pile of gathered stones, making ready for the naval duel between the *Bonhomme Richard* and the *Serapis*, which lay peacefully drifting in the wind.

"Ready? Let go!"

And the air whizzed with missiles until the British cruiser struck her colors. At other times it was the *Constitution* against the *Guerrière*, or the *Chesapeake* in her brave struggle against the *Shannon*. "Don't give up the ship," Bourland would cry in his sorest plight, whereupon Tom would hurl his British rocks and stones with greater zeal at the ill-fated vessel.

And when they tired of fighting by sea, they fought over the battles by land, now joining forces and moving against an imaginary foe. For Tom vowed he had done enough dirty work in upholding the Union Jack by sea, and he wouldn't be a Britisher on land. So they played Swamp-Fox Marion and Morgan, harassing the hated Tarleton without let-up; they defended Fort Moultrie

against an imaginary fleet, Sergeant Jasper leaping from the embrasure and planting on the ramparts the fallen flag, while the garrison cheered his audacity. Then, after a series of campaigns, they besieged Yorktown. Here they pressed a young darky into service and forced him to impersonate Lord Cornwallis, who (stick in hand) surrendered his sword and gave up the hopeless hope of subduing the colonists. And after the war was over, Washington and Lafayette shook hands before the victorious army and went off whistling.

Whistling! Would he ever forget the day when he first accomplished that ambition. He had long been envious of Black Pete's skill in the art, and he vowed he would learn. So one afternoon he hid himself in a clump of alders, and puffed and puffed, puckering his face into all sorts of mows and grimaces, and pumping the air with his cheeks like a bellows until his throat was dry and his head was dizzy. Then unexpectedly a shrill tone came. Eureka! In half an hour he was walking up the road warbling the "Mocking Bird," and shying exultant stones like the veriest ragamuffin of the woods. No Roman general ever went home in greater triumph. He whistled that evening at the supper table until his father threatened to send him out of the room. The threat quenched him, for he had already smelled the smell of Lucy-popovers in the kitchen. But he lay long awake whistling in bed that night, until he awoke baby Eleanor, and his mother ordered him to stop.

Baby Eleanor! She soon grew large enough to be a companion. He could feel yet the touch of her dainty arms against his shoulders as she tiptoed to kiss him gracefully when, for the first time, he permitted her to play squaw to his Indian chieftainship over on the landslide. After that day the waxen little ladies in the doll's house knew less and less of a nurse's tender solicitude. She joined her big brother, twelve years old, in the wild life out of doors.

The landslide had left a cavern in the hill, and there, so the story ran among the negroes, an Indian tribe had

built its campfire (one could still see the scorch on the rocks), and had tortured white prisoners at the stake.

But that tribe had disappeared, and a new tribe, which knew the zest, yet which did not practise the ferocities of tomahawk, scalping-knife, and death by fire, came to rule in its stead; a tribe friendly to the whites. For when, after the hunt, the young chieftain dragged home a dead deer (an antlered log) and gave it to his young squaw to dress (peel the bark), and when they cooked it on an iron spit over the glowing embers, when after the meal on this fresh venison they still felt the pangs of hunger, they scampered over to the Hall and dined with the white neighbors on civilized puddings and pies.

How the years sped during those days, dashing with the reckless ease of a mill-race in its narrow channel; leaving behind the glamour, the golden sunshine, the halcyon radiance of childhood; speeding on to the tortuous windings of graver cares, duties, responsibilities.

He remembered vividly the first day of his manhood. His father had gone with him to the top of a hill, whence, in the prospect below, he could see the distant limits of the plantation, and the Hall in the heart of it. He could hear his father's voice, speaking with an unwonted yet kindly solemnity:—

“Play days are over now, my boy. You have come to be a full man. There below you is your birthright and the field of your opportunity. Keep every acre of it intact, and let it descend to your son and your son's son. But remember, there is one thing that will make a man or break him—a woman. Be careful, Henry! Don't let your youthful fancies blind your best instincts. Make no mistake. You can't rectify it if you do, in this life.”

That admonition became the anchor of his judgment; it saved him once from drifting on the shallows of a dangerous shore; it saved him for that glorious love, that archetype of noble and beautiful womanliness, which had lifted him out of the battle of death, and taught him, amid the animosities of sectional strife, the ineffable sweetness of human benevolence.

She had come to him like something sent from above. He had brought her to the wreck and ruin of his Southern home, when the shadows of defeat and despair brooded upon the land like a starless void; she had come clad in the radiant whiteness of Hope, bringing the primal joy of dawn, and the strength, the courage, the promise, that glowed in the primitive Eden.

The ground he now walked had been hallowed by the touch of her feet; the house still shone with the lustre of her presence; the air still rang with the vibrations of her music.

But she was gone forever.

He paced the sullen earth with bowed head. He seemed to be dragging heavy, reluctant weights. In his helplessness he raised his arms toward heaven in mute appeal. Why had he been made to suffer thus? Had he done wrong? Was it retribution for sin? Was he under the ban of Providence?

Or was he only a mere pygmy, overwhelmed in the blind, clashing struggle for the survival of the fittest; a victim of Nature's relentless sacrifices at the inhuman altar of evolution, which demands blood, a drenching of blood, as an offering for an idea?

He felt no guilt, no remorse, no inward accusations. He had been beaten in a heroic defence of that which Nature herself had intrusted to him. After the defeat, the victors had forced a strange reversal of Nature's processes in elevating the ignorant, the incompetent, the vicious to the seats of rule and power. And as a first result of this letting loose of undisciplined savagery, had come that brutal horror of the wood, which, by its consequences, had robbed him of his priceless possession.

And even the rest must soon go.

As he thought of it all, this humiliating negro domination and its results, seen and foreseen, his nerves quivered; his blood, heated into a sudden transport, became a liquid passion. He grew fierce in hate with the hate of a hundred. Oh! that he had been killed in battle.

But he was alive; reserved for a slower fate.

And what should he do?

Forsake the old? Join with the progressionists of the new era? Turn scalawag, and give the lie to all he had honestly fought for? Confess treason, and as a repentant rebel share in the achievements of this new dispensation, this coming age of gold?

He never once thought of such a course except with contempt.

No! his course was like that of the stars. By the laws of his racial blood, instincts, and traditions, he must live. The stars might grow cold and expire, but they could not break their appointed laws nor swerve from their natural orbits.

No! he would stand as the Roman sentinel stood at his watch when Vesuvius poured her streaming tide of fire upon the doomed cities at her base. He would stand and perish, like one of the guard, unawed, unterrified; strong in loyalty and devotion to his own type, to his own race, to his family, to himself.

He had wandered while in the midst of these meditations to the spot where Margaret lay among his own people. He saw again in his inward vision the serene face, the white shroud, the fingers clasping the yellow rose, the frail form which Love had chosen for his tabernacle; for the glory of his Shekinah, the visible manifestation of the divinity of womanhood.

They had placed a slab over the grave, and on it was cut in deep, ineffaceable letters, the record of his proud privilege and the pledge of his unending devotion.

MARGARET RANDALL BOURLAND

WIFE OF

HENRY BOURLAND.

DIED 1867

AGED 27 YEARS.

IN LIFE, IN DEATH

AND

IN LIFE FOREVERMORE.

He turned away and staggered back to the desolate Hall. "Yes," he muttered, "Major Hilton was right ; and the others were right. There is no use to resist. The best thing to do is to go into your house and shut the door."

And for a long time the great world went about his business, but the door of the Hall was closed.

BOOK VI

UNDER THE BLACK FLAG

CHAPTER XXVI

A STRANGER ATTENDS A VENDUE

SEVERAL years later, at the hour of high noon, a horseman rode down the winding path that leads from the western foot-hills into Brayton.

It was just that time of year when the lilacs burst their purple cloves and spice the air with drowsy sweetness ; when the dogwood blossoms blush, expand and pale in the sun, until, from a distance, the trees gleam like belated mounds of snow ; when the buttercups, rise and peep out of the grass, tinting the green fields with a myriad of golden stars ; the time when the tanager comes, and tarries, and flits about in the sunshine, dimming the glory all around him with his flashings of scarlet flame.

The stranger rode leisurely, noting with interest the signs and marks of Time's touch : the broken palings in the fences, the weed-choked gardens, the deserted tenements, the old houses, out of plumb, repaired clumsily or not at all, and here and there a cheap structure, brand new.

He saw a few inhabitants in the streets, moving, when they did move, very slowly and without lifting their feet far from the ground.

“One might think all these folks down here had the

rheumatism," he muttered. "They shuffle along as if it were painful to use their muscles."

He reached the centre of the town. On the Court House green were a number of idle citizens. He counted twenty-one negroes and four white men. As he approached, he became the focal point of fifty lazily curious eyes.

The stranger, after inquiry and direction, rode to the Old Dominion Hotel, and dismounted before a half-dozen pipe smokers on the veranda. He asked if he were too late for dinner.

"No, sir," said the host, rising slowly from his chair. "You are just in time." He put his hand to his mouth like a trumpet and called out, "Here, you Jim!"

A negro appeared to lead away the horse.

"Let him eat a plenty, but don't give him any water for fifteen minutes," ordered the stranger.

"Ya-as, s'r," answered the negro in a single syllable, negligent and nasal.

"Have you come for the vendue, sir?" asked the proprietor.

"No! I didn't know there was one," the newcomer replied. "I'm on my way to visit an old friend, a Mr. Hewitt. Do you know him?"

"Oh, yes, indeed. Indeed, I do. He's the Yankee who bought Major Hilton's place. A fine estate that, in the early days; right in full view of the Hall. Mr. Hewitt is a perfectly respectable Yankee, sir. He minds his own business. I'm glad to see him enter my house."

"They haven't Ku-Kluxed him, then, I judge," said the stranger, with a smile.

"No, sir; he isn't that kind. Besides the Klan hasn't appeared in this neighborhood. But Mr. Hewitt's safe enough. He lets politics alone. Let me conduct you into the dining-room," said the host, with a ceremonious sweep of his hand, "Mr. ——"

"Anderson," supplied the other. "I hope you're well stocked, for I'm wolf hungry. I've been riding since daylight."

Anderson entered, and, without speaking to the three

men already at the table, he fell to without regard for the niceties of deportment.

When his hunger was half satisfied, he became aware that the others were talking of the vendue.

"How much did you say the mortgage was?" asked a man with a scrubby beard.

"Twenty thousand dollars," answered a man with a gray mustache.

"I don't believe it will bring more than a quarter of that."

"Oh, yes, it will; for there are two fellows here who want it bad enough to cut each other's throats. Clayton has got bags of money, now. He made it buying up jewels during the war. He says he's going to have that land. And Parker — they've had a spat, I believe — vows if he does get it, he will pay the devil's price."

"Parker has got the other tract, hasn't he?"

"Yes, and he's the craftiest scoundrel in this county."

"The other one is a good knave to his king suit."

"Well," answered the holder of the mortgage, "I don't care what they are, so long as they bid up the price. If I can get eight thousand out of it, I won't lose much. I bought the paper cheap."

"It's carpet-bagger against scalawag, and the colonel is bound to lose either way. That's the last of the estate, I reckon — nothing left but a snatch of land around Bourland Hall. The poor colonel! I'm sorry for him."

Anderson stopped his dining when he heard the name. "Bless my stars," he muttered. "I wonder if I heard right. Bourland Hall? Why, it was a Bourland who married my cousin, Margaret Randall, or else I'm much mistaken. Who is this Colonel Bourland, gentlemen, may I ask?" he said, turning to the speakers.

"He belongs to one of our first families, sir. He is one of the surviving heroes of Pickett's charge, than which no more heroic deed is recorded in the annals of history. I presume you are from the North, sir," said one, he with the gray mustache.

"The very same man," said Anderson, half aloud.

“Do you know him, sir?”

“No, I have never met him. I know of him.”

“Then you know nothing to his discredit, sir, I dare affirm. It grieves me to the heart to find myself forced to foreclose this mortgage. I have twice extended the time, but the colonel assures me he will be less able to meet his obligation a year hence, and he has requested me now to finish the matter, and have the agony done with. It is a sad spectacle to see our first families driven out of their ancestral homes. But it can't be helped, sir. We are caught in the toils of fate, and the vampires are feeding on our vitals.”

“There's many a good man gone under these last few years,” put in the third guest. “There's Major Hilton now. He's gone, and his widow, I understand, keeps a trimming store in Lynchburg.”

“Will Bourland attend this sale?” asked Anderson.

“Not he! He wouldn't show his face in town to-day to save his right hand. He comes of a proud stock, and he couldn't endure it.”

Anderson determined to attend this vendue. He had heard much of these forced sales, which, in the last few years, had been depriving the old families of the South of their landed inheritances.

At three o'clock he went to the court-house. A small crowd of natives and visitors, attracted by the prospect of bargains in real estate, had come to make investments, to buy in cheap properties, or to look on.

“That must be Clayton,” said Anderson to himself, regarding a man who was walking nervously up and down. “Got rich, eh, by buying up plate and jewels from impoverished aristocrats? Well, he looks it; an out-and-out shark.”

A bystander pointed Parker out to him. He was sitting under a tree contentedly smoking and following the motions of Clayton with an amused smile, half inward, half outward. It was the same Parker, with the external respectability, the undertaker's gloss, and the easy demeanor of confidence. He was now a judge in the county court.

Anderson walked up to him.

"I believe a part of the Bourland estate is to be sold this afternoon," he remarked casually.

"May be so," answered Parker. "If there's anybody who wants to buy it. Are you interested in the purchase?" He shifted his position in the chair. "Money's very tight around here," he added.

"Aren't you going to bid for it?"

"Well, I may take a hand if the thing goes off dirt cheap," he replied, gazing nonchalantly at nothing. "I might as well. I own most of the estate already."

"Is Mr. Bourland about here?" asked Anderson.

"Eh! The old dragon! Oh, no! he's up in his den snorting. But he won't be there much longer, for somebody is going to smoke him out."

Just then the sheriff mounted the stand, the crier rang his bell, and the auctioneer pounded with his hammer for attention.

A clerk read off the items, some minor properties in the vicinity, and they were quickly disposed of. The Bourland sale came as the climax.

"Now, gentlemen," called out the auctioneer, "we offer for sale the finest piece of land in Virginia, nine hundred acres along Lacamac Creek, arable, fertile, within short reach of the railroad. It will make a dozen fine farms. The land has been held for generations by one of the F. F. V.'s. It is historic ground, and only the necessities of the times have prevailed on the present owner to part with it. Who makes the first offer?"

For a moment there was no response.

"What, men?" cried the auctioneer. "The Bourland estate worth nothing? The land that has been consecrated by the aristocratic feet of a great family?" He spoke with a sneer, for he was an alien.

"You shut up, or talk respectful of your betters," called a man out of the crowd.

Parker stopped all acrimony by a prompt bid of five thousand dollars.

"Six thousand," called Clayton.

Then the two men began to run each other up.

"See here, Clayton, what are you up to? You are only putting money in another's pocket. I'm going to have that land," said Parker, with flat assertiveness.

"Oh! you are, are you? Well, so am I. I've had a grudge against that family for years, and now I'm going to settle the score. I'm going to have that land and the Hall, too."

"All right, then," cried Parker, savagely. "But you'll pay smash for it! Ten thousand," he yelled to the seller.

"Eleven thousand," quickly replied Clayton to the challenge.

"Eleven thousand five hundred," responded Parker, immediately.

Some one approached Clayton and began to whisper in his ear. Parker made a sign to the auctioneer, who, taking advantage of the scalawag's momentary inattention, closed the sale.

"The land is sold to Judge Parker."

Clayton broke out into an indignant protest, declaring he intended to bid again, while his distracter moved off, smiling.

"The sale has been made to me," said Parker, and he walked away.

Anderson left the crowd, and mounting his horse he rode down to the bridge. Following the directions, after a brisk canter of twenty minutes, he recognized the Hewitt place in the distance.

Hewitt had made a moderate fortune during the war by supplying army shoes to the government. Loving the freedom of country life, content with his present income, and urged by the demands of a constitution not too robust, he had left his home in Ohio, and with his wife and three children had emigrated to Virginia. The Hilton place had suited his taste and fancy, and he had bought it for a fraction of its former value.

Anderson was an old friend, a mining engineer, whom a company had sent down into Virginia to look for iron

or coal. Having finished his prospecting tour, he accepted an invitation to visit Hewitt before he returned north.

Their greeting was more than cordial. But Anderson could not restrain a query, fifteen minutes after he had dismounted.

"What freak notion has possessed you, old man? What do you want to bury yourself in a place like this for? I'd go crazy from loneliness in two weeks."

"Just you wait two weeks, Andy, and you will be so much in love with the place that you won't want to leave it. Wait until you get a glimpse of my strawberry patch. I got sick of business worries. Down here we have a chance to fall in love with ourselves. Flowers and fruits and vegetables, and no cares; reading, riding, hunting, and when you get to know them, some of the finest people in the world; here you have a chance to enjoy life."

"Speaking of fine people," said Anderson, "that reminds me that I saw one of your neighbors sold out to-day."

"I heard Bourland's land was to be put up. Who bought it?"

"There were two fellows after it, a smug-looking chap named Parker, and another fellow, not overclean, called Clayton."

"Which one got it?"

"Parker, I think it was."

"Poor fellow! I pity this man Bourland. He was a brave Confederate officer. The residents around here made a great boast of him; but he is going under slowly. He made a hard fight, they tell me, to keep up appearances; but like so many others of his class, since the war, he has been between the devil and the deep sea. He married some Northern girl, who helped to pick him up from Gettysburg battle-field."

"She was my cousin," put in Anderson.

"You don't say so," said Hewitt, with surprise. "Well, you've got a poor relation, but a very proud and noble one. He never recovered from the loss of his wife. He just sits

at home, and broods over her memory and over the lost cause, until, I think, his mind has become unhinged. You wouldn't notice it, though. He has become very bitter against the North; much more so than just after the war. For he feels very keenly the disgrace and the humiliation of this nigger business. You must be careful how you speak to him about politics."

"How does he live?" asked Anderson.

"Well, he and his sister just manage to exist. In the meantime the taxes and debts are gradually depriving him of all his land. There isn't much left now; only the Hall, a fine old place. You must go see it."

"If the lands are so fertile, why doesn't he get to work and make them pay?"

"It's because he won't do things except in the old ways. Those folks believe that manual labor is degrading to a white man, and he persists in playing the great planter or nothing at all. He's blind, more or less, to anything new. His father was a planter, and grew corn and wheat and tobacco, and he must do the same. But bless me, a man can't grow wheat to-day in Virginia at a profit. I advised him to go into truck gardening and poultry raising, both of which are quite lucrative; but he disdains the idea. 'What!' he said. 'Sell chickens? No Bourland ever sold chickens. Turn huckster? No, sir! Not I!' He won't be anything but a planter on the grand scale. So this is the end of him, for they are a doomed race. But he dies hard. He has a mania for keeping possession of his estate. He can't do it. The Radicals with the niggers run the South nowadays, and they mean to push these old families from their very hearthstones."

"I shall be very glad to meet him," said Anderson, "though I confess that my relationship is not very close."

"Oh, he will receive you all right; only be careful how you touch on politics. He's got a little boy, Randall they call him, his mother's family name, and Bourland and the sister are devoted to him. For a child of his age, he is one of the best-educated youngsters in the history of

secession that you can find in the South. His aunt drills it into him. She is more bitter than her brother, and you may not get a very cordial greeting from her. Come around here ; you can get a good view of the place.”

He led Anderson up a rise of ground, and there, through the trees, they could see Bourland Hall still standing on its ledge of rock, stanch, isolated, sullen, like the castle of some mediæval baron.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE OLD DRAGON IN HIS DEN

NATURE was again doing her best to revive the old-time freshness and glamour that hovered about the Hall. The spring morning; the avid sun sipping the dew upon the grass; the myriad flashings of diamond dots; the breeze swaying the violets and dandelions in shadow and sunshine; the blossoms from apple and cherry and quince sifting downward; the clear, pure atmosphere with its wash of cleansing sweetness—they all came with the season and called to the spirit of better days to return to his old haunt.

The Hall stood in the midst of it, still erect upon its foundations, yet changed in feature. There was despondency upon its face; the whiteness of its lines was stained with the drab of rain and weather.

The dog, Brand, was frisking about the lawn, barking away for the mere sake of the noise, and chasing squirrels into the safety of the chestnut boughs. He was yelping his irrepressible delight in the animal joy of being out of doors.

Suddenly out of the doorway came a man, flushed and angered. He ran down the steps, picked some stones from the gravel, and hurled them viciously at the innocent creature.

“Stop your howling, you cur!” he shouted with a peevish outburst of temper.

The dog whined, dodged the missiles, and ran for cover.

“Can’t I find quiet in my own house?” grumbled the man. He put his hands to his forehead.

A little child came running around the corner. “Oh, papa! Look here! I’ve got a little bird! He’s fallen

out of his nest, and can't fly!" His cheeks were rosy; his voice shook with the sweet excitement of a strange discovery.

"Go away! Let me alone!" the man cried savagely, without turning to look.

The iridescence of the child's joy flashed out. He stopped short with a burning in his little breast.

The man disappeared into the house.

The momentary glimpse has shown a change in Bourland's appearance. In years he is still a young man. But there are furrows in his forehead; his face is sallow; in the corners of his eyes are haggard shadows. The joints of his limbs are loosened; his clothes hang lax and wrinkled. His stature seems shortened by an inch or two; the lines of strength are bent. But beneath the splenetic ire of his eyes, one saw on closer observation a certain shyness—a timorousness and self-effacement—struggling with the old-time graciousness and courtesy of manners, and they brought the conviction of some inward tragedy, valiantly concealed.

These years of inaction, of morbid and melancholy brooding over things that had slipped into the irreclaimable gulf, had resulted in some degeneration of character. He was still the gentleman, the son of a cavalier. But that admirable irritability of nature which had made him a soldier for a cause, by the wear and tear of futile resentment, and by the enervating drain of idleness, had transformed the irritability of the lion into that of the querulous lynx.

Bourland, after reëntering the house, flung himself down upon a lounge. He began to read, but in a moment tossed the book across the room. His whole nature was a-quiver, vibrating restlessly like the magnetic needle of a binnacle.

Suddenly he arose again, went to a closet, and took out a brandy bottle. It was almost empty. He rummaged about seeking something else he could not find.

"Confound it!" he cried with petulance, "can't I keep anything for myself? Eleanor! Eleanor!"

She came into the room, but before she entered he had gulped down the raw liquid to the last drops.

Eleanor had borne the strain of those years far better than he. The constant solicitude for the details of the household, the care for the physical well-being of others, had taken her out of herself, had given her some relief from the corrosive memories, and had refined and calmed her nature. But yet below the surface there smouldered a resentment, more intense than her brother's, which, on occasion, could burst into passionate, feminine indignation.

She put her cool hands upon his hot forehead.

"You have a bad headache this morning. I can count your pulse in your temples. Wouldn't you better lie down?" she said soothingly.

"No!" he retorted sharply. "It's no use. I can't get that thing out of my mind. It kept me awake all last night. Can't you send Jim down and let him find out who bought it? It was that rascal Parker, I suppose; damn him."

His fingers clutched tightly at the arms of the chair.

"Why don't you ride down yourself? The air and the exercise will do you good," she suggested with an affectionate tenderness.

"What!" he exclaimed, breaking out into a fit of rage, "show my face down there and hear everybody say, 'There goes Bareacres'! You haven't got a bit of sense."

His petulance stung her.

"Well, don't sit around here all day growling like a caged bear," she answered hotly. "Go, get into the woods where you belong." She turned to leave him.

Her words brought him to his senses. A rebuke from the long-suffering sister always did, and his remorse was as quick as his anger.

"Forgive me, Eleanor. Come back. Oh! how my head burns."

She returned suddenly, remorseful too, after his apology.

"Don't mope around here, Henry. It makes you worse. Get out into the air. Go take Randall for a tramp." She

got his hat, put it on his head, and almost pushed him out the door.

Then he remembered how harsh he had been to the boy a moment before, and he recalled the unkindness with shame and with a return of fatherly affection. Randall had been as a candle flame of light in that dark house during those dreary years.

He hunted until he found the youngster, who, by this time, having forgotten his father's harshness, was cantering in the roadway on a broomstick hobbyhorse.

"Come here, Little Chap," the father called out kindly. "Let's go nip some birds."

To nip, in the child's idiom, meant to shoot with his wooden quaker gun.

The child dismounted from the broomstick horse and let it go graze in the grass. He ran to the house for his firearm.

They went down the arch of maples — the boy with gun over his shoulder leading the way, and the father following — in Indian file.

Bourland, interested in the child, forgot his own irritation.

"Sh!" he said softly, "look, Chap, look through the fence. There's a herd of buffaloes down there. Don't let them see you. Get down on your hands."

The credulous youngster crawled on all fours to the fence and peered through.

"I don't see them, papa," he whispered.

"They have almost disappeared in that clump of hazel bushes. Fire at them and drive them out."

The boy rested his gun on the rail, and took aim.

"Bang," he shouted, to make it go off.

Nothing happened, and the child was disappointed.

"I'm afraid," said his father, inwardly smiling, "that their hides are too tough for your bird shot. You will have to load up with ball next time. They've gone now. You have stampeded them."

So they rambled on, the father sharing the infantile delight of the child.

Two horsemen were discovered coming up the lane. They proved to be Mr. Hewitt and his guest.

"Bang," shouted Randall, pointing his gun at the riders.

"I see your house is guarded by militia," said Mr. Hewitt. "Since when has your place been under martial law?"

The father looked at the son proudly, and then answered the question by saying, in a subdued manner, "He hasn't much left to guard, poor boy."

But the introduction to Anderson broke in upon this melancholy vein of reflection. Bourland received the stranger with a baring of the head and with a dignified bow of deference.

"Colonel Bourland," said Anderson, with open-hearted frankness, "I am a Yankee. I have come down into your state to look for iron. I represent a company of men who desire honorable gain in the development of the resources of Virginia."

"Sir," answered Bourland, "such Yankees are welcome within our borders. I esteem it a great honor and privilege to invite you to share the hospitality of Bourland Hall."

Anderson's first impression had been warmed by the delightful comradeship of father and child. He was himself a great lover of boys, and he felt himself drawn toward his alien relative through the child.

At first Bourland was disposed to apologize in formal, infelicitous phrases for his reduced circumstances, adding now and then a vaunt of the former days of affluence. But as soon as he learned of Anderson's relation to his wife, his manner changed from reserve to warm cordiality. He went up to the visitor, with mist clouding his eyes, and shook his hand with quiet tenseness. He sent Randall on ahead to announce their coming, and insisted upon leading Anderson's horse by the bridle. And yet, beyond a question or two about Anderson's family and home, he made no further reference to that relationship.

Eleanor was waiting to receive them.

"This is Mr. Anderson, a relative of the Randalls," said Bourland, introducing the stranger.

"From the North, I presume?" said Eleanor, with the least noticeable trace of stiffness.

"Yes," answered Anderson, "but perhaps an immigrant into the South."

She scanned him with no cordiality, and he felt as if he were standing before a statue hewn from marble. Then by some insight which a tragic incident in his own past had given him, he seemed to divine the essence of her own sad history, and to read her courage vaguely in her face. His momentary resentment melted into tenderness and sympathy.

"You are just a trifle prejudiced against me, aren't you?" he asked with perfect good nature. "Can't you think of me, not as a Yankee, but as a man?"

"Are Yankees men?" she replied, softening the sarcasm with banter. "I mean gentlemen?" she added with feminine cruelty.

"I won't say," he answered with a generous lack of umbrage. "But if I have the opportunity, I shall hope to expel any doubt about it from your mind."

His courtesy made her a bit ashamed, and she sought for a defence. "I mean," she pursued, while a rose-flush came into her face, "would gentlemen ever revenge themselves on their conquered enemies by subjecting them to the humiliation which we endure?"

"That is a broad question, and you do not state the whole of it. But I may say for myself, that I do not believe in the present policy toward the South."

Glad of an escape, she extended her hand.

"Then there is no reason, if you think that, why we should not be good friends."

He took her proffered hand, tepid, roughened by drudgery to the harshness of well-worn velvet, and he held it an instant with increasing respect for her.

After some general conversation, Eleanor withdrew to solve the problem of a suitable dinner for a neighbor and a visiting relative; for Bourland would not hear of their

leaving until afternoon. Meanwhile, Little Chap was doing his part to entertain the guests.

Possessed of the spirit, so natural to a child, of exhibiting his accomplishments, he took his wooden gun and went through some of the motions of a drill.

"What battles have you been in, Sergeant?" asked Anderson, who was much attracted by the vigorous mischief of the little fellow.

"Bull Run," he answered quickly.

"How many men did you shoot?"

"Not many. The Yankees ran so fast you couldn't hit them."

There was a laugh, and Bourland tried to quiet this bumptious tot of a veteran.

He knew the events of the war like a catechism, the names of the Confederate victories, the great generals, and many of the campaigns. He had been well schooled in much unwritten history.

Anderson's conversation with Bourland revealed that the latter had taken only a passing interest in contemporary incidents. He had forgotten all about Black Friday and the panic in Wall Street. He knew only vaguely the details of the *Virginus* affair and the execution of her crew by the Spaniards. He had, indeed, followed the Franco-Prussian War, and could criticise the tactics of the armies. He expressed much sympathy for the French and much disgust for their stupid emperor.

Grant, he thought, had been an able and admirable soldier, but he was making a poor president. His conduct in the Louisiana imbroglio was a high-handed outrage, and sure to bear bitter fruit. As for the race battle at Vicksburg and the Hamburg riots, the North did not understand the conditions, and its censure was not worth noticing; the whites were unquestionably in the right. Yes, he did admit that the Ku Klux Klan had developed atrocities; but these were to be expected, and were the inevitable consequence of "putting niggers in control in the South."

After dinner Anderson made known specifically his

mining plans. He wanted to get the coöperation of some of the prominent Virginians, and he asked Bourland if he would accompany him to Richmond and make him acquainted with them. Bourland, who took no interest in iron and coal, offered, however, to give him his assistance.

"If I go," said he, "I shall insist that you take a look at our carpet-bag legislature, which is now in session. When you go North, I want you to tell your people what you see. If the decent folks up there only knew what was taking place down here, they would soon put a stop to it. The bitterness between the sections is far greater now than it was at any time during the war. If the Northern politicians do not soon get wisdom, God knows what will happen down here."

When Anderson left, he took away with him the impression that his relative was like some penniless, haughty, Spanish grandee locked up in his castle; a man capable of pouring out the fulness of a kindly, kingly nature, yet by the force of circumstances shut off from the world, and turned sour. Too proud in his exile to exhibit the pangs of his spirit, too broken-hearted to break the spell of irresolution, he lived upon the phantasmagoria of a past, that still gleamed in the hushed chambers of his brain.

Bourland bade his guests farewell at the gateway, and then, while Little Chap trotted along, holding his hand, he walked back to the house with his head bowed in deep meditation.

"Oh, look! papa," the boy called out, "there's a rose out already."

Bourland walked over to the bush. Yes, there was the first rose unfolding its virgin purity to the caress of the warm air.

"Do you know who planted that bush?" the father asked. The child did not; it was older than he.

"It was your mother, Randall. She has seemed to be very near us to-day. That was one of her relatives who was here."

"I like him," said the child.

"Come, Little Chap; let us take this rose and put it

on your mother's grave. I remember how she used to watch for the first one of the season."

He plucked it from the bush, and the two, hand in hand, crossed over to the plot of earth, shut in by the ivied wall and the cypress.

They put it in a cup upon the stone. The rain and the lichens had turned the whiteness of the slab of marble to mottled tints of gray; but the change of color only brought into sharper relief the name, the date, and the graven pledge:—

IN LIFE, IN DEATH
AND
IN LIFE FOREVERMORE.

"How will she know it's there, papa? Who will waken her and tell her about it?" asked the child, as they stood beside the grave.

"She isn't down there," answered his father. "She is up yonder, far beyond the sunlight."

"That's where God is, isn't it?"

"Yes, Little Chap. She is where God is."

CHAPTER XXVIII

A CARPET-BAG LEGISLATURE IN SESSION

A WEEK later — and during that week Anderson had ridden daily over to the Hall — the engineer and Bourland started for Richmond.

“We shall always be glad to see you,” said Eleanor, as he mounted his horse.

“The little jewel,” he said to himself, as he rode away. “Her dark days have brought out the real lustre of her nature.” He wished that she had used the singular instead of the plural pronoun in that farewell.

He thought of her many, many times upon the road, and even when the cares of business at Richmond claimed his attention, he did not forget her. He saw before him the sad face, yet so strong that it bore not even a mute appeal for sympathy.

Richmond had not yet recovered from the storm and stress of the war times. Few buildings had been altered for modern use, and half the city, destroyed by the fire that followed the evacuation, still lay a blackened waste, watched by the great white Capitol on the hill. As one stood on the ridge of Hollywood, and saw the shattered walls, and the pits filled with scorched rubble, and above these, on the slope and the heights, the surviving houses, the churches, the Capitol, and the stately White House of Secessia, one felt instinctively that here was a suggestive symbol of the Lost Cause — the blasted heart of the Confederacy.

Northern promoters in those days were looked upon with suspicion ; for far too many of them were adepts in knavery. But Anderson, introduced by Bourland, was well received

by the influential Conservatives, and to them he made preliminary business overtures. His plan, — following the initiative of the company which had reorganized the Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad, whereby New York and Richmond had joined hands to connect the great West with the state capital and the seaports, — his plan was to induce prominent natives to join with Northern capitalists in developing the mineral resources of Virginia.

Before the war there existed among the planters a blind and irrational prejudice which subordinated all interests to agriculture. They wilfully neglected the wealth of coal and iron beneath the surface, to cultivate, with far less profit, the resources of the soil. They had no imagination for modern material progress. Bourland inherited this prejudice with his estate. His father had grown corn, wheat, and tobacco ; he persisted in doing the same. The mining of minerals, he thought, was not altogether respectable ; indeed, he looked upon it as the work of ghouls — a desecration of the fruitful land. Though he accompanied Anderson on his mission, he had little interest in his scheme.

One day he took the Northern man up to the Capitol to show him a carpet-bag legislature at work.

The Capitol was an imposing building, a simple, massive structure of whitish granite, modelled after a Corinthian temple ; the façade looked upon the river and the lowlands to the south of the James. It stood in the midst of an extensive green, planted with oaks, elms, and poplars, in the shade of which scores of squirrels ran at large, and nibbled at the nuts thrown out by the idlers.

The sight of it aroused Bourland's pride and eloquence.

"The Virginian may properly exult in the state of his nativity," he said, dressing the thought in Southern rhetoric. "She has been rightly called the mother of presidents and the school of great statesmen. There you see the schoolhouse. I shall not weary you with a list of the great men who have made those halls famous by their silver tongues. History will record their names on her most glowing pages, and write their deeds beside brilliant rubrics with a golden pen."

These words, and others in the same strain, impressed Anderson with a peculiar pathos. The enthusiasm of his companion, particularly when he uttered the names of Lee and Jackson, seemed like the resurrection of something dead within the speaker's soul. When he spoke the former name, he took off his hat, and walked for a moment with bowed head, and with a simplicity of reverence for the beloved commander, recently laid to his last rest, that was beautiful to see. The thought that came to Anderson, as he walked beside him in the silence of awe, was that though the passion of a man for a maid may have all the full glamour of romance, the veneration of a man for a man is something closer to the divine.

"We have a past," continued Bourland, "of which we are not unjustly proud, and we have memories of our leaders in war and peace which we love to cherish. You are now going to get a glimpse of the new order of things, graciously granted to us by our conquerors, and called reconstruction." He pointed to the steps which led up into the Capitol, and he spoke with bitterness. "I cannot think of what is going on in there without recalling the time when Christ drove the desecrators out of the temple. To a Virginian, who must endure these days, the comparison seems no irreverence."

It was just before the noon hour. A group of idle negroes hung about the entrance, blocking the passageway up the steps. Several black pedlers were dispensing cakes, candies, and pop beer to the crowd.

A white man was coming out of the door. "Why, I know this fellow," remarked Anderson to Bourland. "Hello, Laffin," he said as they met, "what are you doing in Virginia? I thought you were Collector of the Internal Revenue in South Carolina."

The man smiled blandly, and replied in a low voice: "So I was; but I collected it. The claim was pretty well worked out when I left. I came up here to stake out another, but this is the hell of a state."

He sauntered airily down the steps.

Bourland overheard the remarks. Instead of being

angry, he looked pleased. "There's a specimen," he said, "a bird of passage. He doesn't even bring his carpet-bag."

"That kind of bird," remarked Anderson, without emotion, "is very common up north."

"We are not used to it," returned Bourland, with pride. "Before the war, our state governments may have been somewhat primitive, but they were economical and honest. We looked up to the men of repute, and put them in office."

As they crossed the threshold of the door, they heard a sound like the subdued bellow of a bull.

They pushed their way into the upper chamber of the House of Delegates. Bourland, on inquiry, learned the orator's name and the occasion for the excitement.

"It is Senator Blackberry Dudley, and he is giving it to the newspaper men," he told Anderson.

The senator was a negro about fifty-five years of age, and he spoke with vehemence and with a surprising fluency, though the words which he attempted to use were often sounds unattached to meanings. The newspapers of late had been printing exact reproductions of his dialect and solecisms of grammar, — in some instances caricaturing his speech and adding humorous comments. He was greatly offended by them.

"I jes' axes yoh gemmen f'um de papahs to treats me respec'ful," the speaker was saying. "Whut I sez heah, I sez ez plain ez any man; an' I doan' want my oratory disto'ted by repo'tahs. It am a stigmire on de honorable pohsition which I hav de honah to occupy. I stan' heah foh de people, de suvrain people of dis constitutional commonwealth, an' I demands my stipendaries."

"Give it to them, Blackberry," called out a white man from one of the desks.

"I refuses to notice yuh," he answered with dark disdain.

The remarks to the reporters had been a digression. He returned to his original speech, in which he was opposing the abrogation of the Disability Act, whereby Confederates were debarred from holding office.

"De bottom rail *am* on de top, an' we's a-gwine to keep

it dah. De men who fo't agains' de flag is not fit subjecks foh de makinations of politics. A frien' sez to me, sez he, 'It is time to bury de hatchet and smoke de peace pipe,' an' I sez to him, 'What respectable white man will offah me his pipe to smoke?' Let de white men once offah de men of colah de pipe of peace, an' den will we bury de hatchet; but until dat time comes, I abjure de men of my race to be on de vigilance, an' to keep de traitors an' de factions f'um guidin' de ship of state into de pitfalls of oppresshun."

He rambled on thus for some time, interrupted by frequent points of order; for the black legislators were martinets in this regard. At times the hall was a babel of Ethiopian tongues. The white men, and there were quite a number of them, did very little talking. They let the negroes do most of that; it was a cheap way of giving them a share of the privileges of office.

Bourland recognized among the few Conservatives a man whom he knew, and he introduced him to Anderson. The delegate showed them over the Capitol and gave them some details of the present political conditions.

"These fellows will talk all summer," said the man. "When they first met, several years ago, although the state was impoverished, they spent fifty thousand dollars to refurnish the house, buying six-hundred-dollar clocks, sixty-dollar chairs, a hundred-and-fifty-dollar desks, nine-dollar spittoons. Some of the furniture they carried off to their own houses. They spent three hundred thousand dollars for incidentals and gratuities. They appropriated a hundred thousand dollars for a bar which dispenses drinks on a credit that really ends in giving. They guaranteed and sold railroad bonds for roads that will never be built. They passed bills to support a militia which practically runs the elections."

"Why don't you put some of these things down in your note-book, to tell the people up north, Anderson?" asked Bourland.

He did not reply to the question; he asked, in turn, where all this money came from.

"Oh!" said the delegate, "they issue bonds on the state, and pile up debts which our children will have to pay. These bonds sell sometimes for twenty, thirty cents on the dollar."

"Can't you put a stop to it?"

"How? We are in a hopeless minority at present. But wait a little," said the Conservative, "the thing will run its course, and this negro domination and carpet-bag rule will become so unendurable that the South will arise and get justice, even if it takes a shot-gun. That time isn't ripe yet. Just now the North would interfere, for the Ku Klux has aroused too much feeling. We've got to stand it for a while."

The visitors entered the lower house, where an angry discussion was reaching its climax. The white leaders, carpet-baggers and scalawags, aided by an inner coterie of blacks, were endeavoring to drive through the legislature an omnibus bill, containing, among other things, provisions for a new school board, and a new regulation for the boards of taxation. Some of the negroes who had been ignored in the promised appointments were fighting against its passage. The Conservative minority were giving them aid.

"You see that man in the speaker's chair," said Bourland's friend. "A few years ago he was a shyster lawyer in the New York police courts. He came down here penniless at the close of the war, and no one has seen him do a day's work, except on political jobbery. Yet he now lives in one of the finest houses in Richmond. His position is worth at least twenty thousand a year to him."

The speaker was rapping violently with his gavel. Two negroes and one white man were talking excitedly to the accompaniment of menacing gestures.

"It am eddication, de knowledge of powah, dat I demands foh my constituents," cried out one of the blacks, "an' dis bo'd of commish'ners is to assuah dat dey gets it."

"And to do that you are going to tax the clothes off the backs of my constituents," replied the Conservative. "But in spite of that I should vote for this provision if

there was one chance in six that the money would ever go for education. It will never get halfway to the schoolhouse."

"Does de gen'man meck an insinuashun agains' de honah of de mem'bers of dis house," retorted the black, with blazing eyes.

"I calls foh de p'int of ordah," cried out another, rising majestically with his index finger held aloft.

"I desiah to be heard," spoke out a venerable negro with gray, shaggy hair. He stood like a Cimmerian oracle in a peevish mood.

"It am a good bill," he announced. "It am a bill to relieve de stress ob de times. My people air starvin' foh the want of vittles of de brain. Fum de darknes' of deir night I hears dem cry, 'Come ovah into Macedonia an' help us.' It am a good bill; I hab work foh de passage of it. But heah is de p'int of my fren's ahgument, — Who is to get de p'intments?"

"Dat's it," cried the chorus at his back.

"Mr. Speaker," said a Conservative, "I move that this bill, which concerns the schools of our state, be referred to a committee on orthography. You can't print it as it stands."

"Does you refer to de spelling?" asked the would-be commissioner.

The previous question was called after some further debate. The question was put, and the reading of the roll began. A member with a facial angle sharply acute voted against it. He was set upon at once by a white man.

"I thought dat's what you tole me las'," he declared.

"No, you idiot, change it."

"I hab change my 'pinion," he called out to the clerk.

"I desiah to vote *foh* de bill."

Jeers and laughter followed as the change was recorded.

The bill passed finally by a majority of four.

"This is the surface of reconstruction," said Bourland, as they left the hall. "It's only the surface."

"Well," said Anderson, "things are not much better up

north. These people are mere apprentices compared to Tweed and his gang, and some of our bosses in Ohio."

"Yes," answered Bourland; "but they are white men, and these are niggers. Just think of it: niggers as policemen, as directors of schools, as judges on the bench. You don't feel it as we do. You have to be a Southerner."

"The folks up north look at it from the point of view of theory, of abstract rights. They don't understand the question as a practical condition," replied Anderson.

"You mean they *won't*. Look," said he, turning fiercely upon his friend, under the spell of passionate irritation, "*When the men of the North are willing to stand by the logic of their theories, when they will give their daughters to black men in marriage just as willingly as to white men, then perhaps we shall have some respect for their arguments.*"

"Ugh!" said Anderson.

"There is a difference, isn't there? A black man isn't a white man. And yet we have to endure their domination. Oh, my friend! it was hard enough to be beaten in battle and lay down your arms, but this levelling process — it's like throwing vitriol into our faces."

They were standing beside the massive columns on the Capitol loggia. Bourland pointed toward the east.

"Do you see that church spire up on the hill? That is St. John's church, and it was up there, in the great days of our history, where Patrick Henry cried out with sublime courage, 'Give me liberty or give me death.' I fear sometimes that we Virginians have utterly lost the courage of our fathers."

He turned away and looked sadly at the James, winding through the green lowlands in the distance.

CHAPTER XXIX

FROM ARCADIA TO THE COUNTY JAIL

“Now, Mr. Anderson,” said Eleanor, coming out upon the veranda, “if you want to talk to me, you will have to come down to the spring house. I am going to churn the butter.”

The spring house! A maid at the churn! An afternoon of undisturbed seclusion with her! The prospect turned the engineer into a pastoral poet, and brought him dreams and visions of Arcadia.

“I certainly want to be with you, and to help do the work,” he added, jumping up with eagerness.

“Stay here until I get the things ready,” she replied, going into the house.

He sat down to rejoice and plan a campaign; for the Yankee, cool, energetic, masterful among men, had come to feel the timid tremors in the lady's presence, and he knew the meaning of this sign. He welcomed the unmanly exhilaration. It made him young again, boyish, eager to revive the old days of sweet foolishness.

He knew, too, when Bourland in Richmond invited him to stop over at the Hall on his way north, that, if he accepted, he would run head on into danger. But that fear was no deterrent. He plunged into the unknown, the unexplored, with all the zest of the Spanish adventurer seeking the land of flowers and the fountain of youth.

He had been there five days, deferring his departure, and cherishing designs and emotions that threw an enchantment over the full range of visible things.

That day after dinner Bourland had excused himself and ridden away on an errand, leaving the two alone.

An afternoon in Arcadia!

“How doth the little busy bee,
Improve each shining hour,”

he murmured softly. He hadn't much taste for poetry, but this verse had a good, helpful moral.

Eleanor reappeared in the doorway laden with utensils. “You may carry this bowl and this bag of salt,” she said. “Go down ahead of me. I shall follow you in a moment.”

He went, hugging the bowl and the salt bag.

She came a few moments later, bringing the dairy cloths and a wooden basin. She proceeded at once to business, rolling up her sleeves and tying on her apron. The compression of the folds flushed the skin of her bare arms between the blue veins.

He saw her through the haze of a pastoral idyll. He wished he had been more of a reader of poetry; an apt quotation would have helped him.

“Come now, don't day dream,” she said with a tone of playful rebuke. “We have work to do.”

He continued to sit, deliciously entranced by the “we” and the “work.”

“You are very thoughtless,” she continued. “You might have known that the churn must be washed.”

He sprang up and washed it clumsily. It was the old-fashioned kind of churn, such as one sees in the picture books of Mother Goose: a barrel in the form of a truncated cone, with a projecting paddle moving up and down like a piston.

While he was cleansing it, she skimmed the cream from the milk pans. Then she made ready to pour it into the churn.

“I'm nervous,” she said, seeing the liquid quiver. “I have never made butter in the presence of a gentleman before.”

“You never looked so pretty in the presence of a gentleman before,” he retorted effusively.

She didn't raise her eyes, but she replied with a subdued decision that, though she meant it kindly, made him twinge as if under a surgeon's lancet.

“Don't talk like that, please — to me.”

The emotion which came over him, after the first sting of the rebuke, was like that of a devotee before the image of the Virgin ; the feeling of awe before something remote, inviolable.

He seized the churn handle, working it up and down with the regularity of an automaton, except when his petulance gave it a vicious thump.

The water trickled from the spring and ran down the brick channel. It murmured a plaint of unending dole. He became aware how cool, how chilly, the atmosphere was. He studied the deposit of moisture on the white-washed walls.

She leaned, while he worked, against the whiteness of the wall, her face full of hopelessness, and calmed by the sadness of her abstraction. She seemed like one nailed upright for martyrdom. Some beads of vapor clung to stray strands of her hair, and a beam of sunlight, striking them, flashed out the iridescence of seed pearls.

He worked on mechanically — an engine in which the expansive force of the steam has been reduced by chilling.

“I think,” she broke out at last, “that I was rude to you.”

“No,” he answered, looking up, “you were not rude at all.”

“Unkind, at least?”

“No, not unkind.”

“What, then?”

“Cold,” he answered with the single, blunt monosyllable.

“Cold?” she repeated with no emotion. “I am always that.”

“No, not always.”

“When am I not?”

“When you talk about the past.”

She was supporting the burden of herself with her arms upon a ledge in the wall. Her face was bent upward, and out of the depths of her eyes the woe of unutterable emptiness seemed to rise on slow wings.

He stopped, his pity and his chivalry all a-bubble. He

was seized with the desire to go to her, to take her in his arms, to circle her face with a halo of kisses, and to offer a life-long devotion that would fill the void in her heart.

He stood stock still, as if petrified by the audacious thought.

"Yes," she said, coming out of her reverie, "you are right. I am not cold when I think of the past."

She relapsed into her inwardness, living the past over again.

"Is it anything you can tell me?" he asked gently.

"No," she replied, smiling with the sweetness of a child asleep.

"Then I shall never try to guess it."

He went on churning.

But she arose and went over to him, and put her hands upon his, and looked into his face with a deference that grew luminous and warm.

"I want to tell you," she faltered, "how much I respect you for that. It makes you seem as if you were very near to me."

She bit her lips to check her feelings. His face shone with a great hope, and his eyes spoke an unmistakable inquiry. "You must not misunderstand me. I mean that you are very kind to me, but that is all you ever can be."

He took the full blow of her answer without flinching.

"It is time to put in the salt, isn't it?" he asked, to relieve the tension, and he smiled with a double meaning.

"Why no," she said, glad to return to the dairying. "You don't put it in the churn at all."

She insisted upon relieving him, and soon the golden butter was floating in the pale liquid. They drained it, kneaded it with the wooden spoon to expel the water, and then padded it into the crockery bowl.

They started for the house, leaving Arcadia behind them.

"I think I shall go north to-morrow," he said. "Do you ever want me to come back?"

"Yes and no," she answered after a pause, and delaying each answer. "Yes, because I am very lonely, and you

brighten my life. And no, because I can bring nothing helpful into yours."

"I shall come again," he declared with quick decision.

Her look was glad and grateful, yet clouded with an unspoken negative.

"I shall come again very soon," he repeated. "Forgive me, a man must have his way."

In the meantime Bourland was riding into an unpleasant experience.

Just then the whole county was in a state of tremendous excitement. Three days before there had been a race riot in Brayton, in which two men had been killed and several wounded. In consequence men went about well armed.

The difficulty was only one of many such as happened in the South during reconstruction days. The federal military having been withdrawn, the carpet-bag government was upheld, on occasion, by militia of its own making, and frequently the troops were recruited from negroes. The blacks, unused to such responsibility, were often reckless in the use of firearms, and civilians were in constant danger. Disputes, resulting in clashes, often ended with fatal results. The provocation, it must be said, did not always come from the negroes. White men of the lowest class not seldom were boisterous, threatening, domineering. The sight of the negro soldiers, representing civil authority, enraged them.

The companies of militia drilled in the open air, and when they marched through a street, they demanded the middle of the road and the full right of way. Respectable and cautious people avoided them, but the obstinate and hot-headed refused to turn out more than halfway, in some cases not at all, for "a pack of niggers." The two races, morbidly jealous of their rights, came now and then into collision, and the tension was increased by foolish boasts and taunts.

One of these riots had just taken place in Brayton, and the atmosphere of high temperature had not yet cooled.

Bourland, constrained by a sense of dignity, like all men of his class, had kept aloof from interracial brawlings; but

this afternoon he was forced into one unwittingly. As he galloped down the road, he came upon a squad of black soldiers, who had stopped Trymier in his wagon, and were demanding a drink all around from a demijohn of whiskey which the farmer was taking home. Trymier refusing, they were on the point of assaulting him, when Bourland arrived.

A scuffle ensued, in which Trymier was first wounded. Bourland, drawing his weapon, began to shoot into the crowd, and in the *mêlée* one negro was killed outright. The others dropped their guns and fled.

With Trymier's assistance he put the body in the wagon, covered it with a blanket, and drove back to the village to report the incident to the officials.

The news spread quickly, of course. In a short time Bourland was surrounded by friends, who declared that, if any attempt was made to arrest him, they should release him by force. They offered to accompany him home as a body-guard.

"I don't think they will give me any trouble," he said. "Things are now in too excitable a condition. They know it will only lead to a fuss."

Parker, who was judge and political boss of the district, had absolute control of the arms of the law. But Bourland felt he was too crafty to use his legal opportunity against him. For such a procedure would surely produce a miniature revolution, and would bring the political leader into discredit. He felt that the carpet-bagger was wiser than his vindictive hatred.

"No," Bourland replied to the repeated offers of protection, "don't make any demonstration. It may bring on more bloodshed. Nobody will touch me."

It was dark when he rode homeward. He went, much depressed, for he was sorry to be embroiled in one of these petty feuds. Still he did not regret his action. He would not hesitate to do the same thing again in similar circumstances.

As he cantered into the covered bridge the bridle of his horse was seized in the darkness, and a voice cried out, "Stop!"

“Colonel Bourland, I have a warrant for your arrest. Dismount!”

“What is the charge?” he asked haughtily, maintaining his seat.

“Murder.”

The single word struck him like a blow on the pit of the stomach.

“You know it is false,” he cried angrily, whipping his horse.

“Do you resist the law?” the man called out, still clinging to the bridle.

Bourland, though passion clouded his judgment, had sufficient presence of mind to reflect that the slightest overt act of resistance would be a real misdemeanor.

“I shall go with you,” he said calmly. “Take me through Main Street.”

“I’m not such a fool,” replied the deputy. He gave the horse to one of his three negro assistants, and took a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

“The least disobedience, Colonel, and I put these on you,” he nodded, shaking the chains.

“Sir,” said Bourland, stiffly, “don’t forget that I am a gentleman.”

“I’m only obeying orders, Colonel,” returned the man, apologetically.

They skirted around the edge of the town, and went through a deserted lane to the jail.

In half an hour Bourland was locked in the solitary darkness of a felon’s cell.

CHAPTER XXX

THE RESCUE FROM THE LAW

THE step over the threshold of the cell had seemed like an entrance into the outer darkness of eternal damnation. The click of the lock, as it slipped into its mortise, lingered and echoed long after the sound had actually ceased. At first that was the only definite sensation of which he was conscious. All the rest was vague: the feelings of a man buried alive, and awakening gradually with a dizziness in the head, a burning in the breast, and the cold, sour nausea which comes from the fear of an imminent horror.

When his mind cleared, he became aware that he was leaning against a wooden bench, grasping the back of it with his hands.

Then he began to realize the truth. He, Henry Bourland, was in jail — locked in the cell of a criminal. Yes, he would be liberated, doubtless speedily. But he could never again reënter the world with the same untainted reputation. He would be haunted by this disgrace, and must henceforth be severed from other men by a kind of self-imposed ostracism, like that of a leper with his warning cry, "Unclean! unclean!"

But against this thought the integrity of his manhood rose in revolt. He was guilty of no crime.

No, he was not; that was true. But he was open to accusation, and he was in the power of an implacable enemy; a rogue vowed to his ruin; a rascal who had control of the machinery of the law and who could pervert its use for the accomplishment of personal ends.

Soon he became conscious that the next cell had an inmate. In a maundering fashion, a negro began to sing;

he was silly drunk. Poor devil! He was happy, apparently, and in his happiness and insensibility to shame, Bourland felt the degradation, the maddening degradation, into which he had been cast. He was a figure in a grim tableau of the levelling process.

A beam of light shot suddenly into the cell, like a golden shaft. There resounded the tramp and scuffle of feet in the corridor, — the opening and the banging of an opposite door, and then a diffusion of light streaming in through the peephole, and the thrust of a key into the lock.

Bourland did not move when the door opened, and the man stopped in the doorway.

“Humph!” said the jailer. “I was away when they brought you in. What are you here for? Slippery fingers or a drunk?”

Bourland made no reply.

The man came toward him, thrusting the lantern into his face. He started backward, as suddenly as if the prisoner had struck at him.

“Lord God o’ mercy,” he cried out. “Colonel Bourland! What are you doing here?”

“That is an embarrassing question, my friend,” answered Bourland, calmly. He told him of the incidents of the afternoon and of the arrest. The jailer whistled at the narration and looked solemn.

“I’m afraid Parker’s got you now where he wants you. Ever since the testimony of niggers has been admitted into the courts, no man knows what he will have to face. They’ll swear that daylight is a house afire. And with Parker himself on the bench, it looks —” he paused — “well, I wish I could say something cheerful.”

“Will you send word of my arrest to my home?” requested Bourland.

“Yes, sir, I’ll do that gladly. I wish I could let you out on parole; but that wouldn’t go on a murder accusation. But I can give you better quarters and make you more comfortable.”

He led him into a decent room — an office that was not in use. Very soon he brought him some supper and a

handful of books, one of which, "The Count of Monte Cristo," Bourland began to read after the meal. The jailer told him that he had sent word to his home and added, with a meaning expression, that very probably the messenger would stop to let some of his friends in town know of his incarceration.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said he, "if you had some visitors to-night, Colonel; and they may not send in their cards. If they do come—well, it don't matter; I've mended the doors before this."

At nine o'clock, in came Parker himself. Bourland heard him talking and storming about something before he entered the room. By the time he opened the door, however, he had regained his equanimity and his usual batrachian phlegma. The jailer followed him.

"You know better, Hawkins," he said very smoothly, "you know better than to put a man accused of murder in a place like this. You must keep him in close confinement."

Bourland continued his reading.

"He's safe enough here," replied Hawkins. "He won't run away."

"In a murder case," continued Parker, gravely, "you must be strict in living up to the requirements. If this laxity were to be known, you might lose your job."

"Let me lose it, then," answered the other, hotly.

"Mr. Hawkins," said Bourland, rising, "I think I should prefer returning to my former place. The atmosphere of this room at present is tainted with something foul."

He walked out, paying no attention to Parker, whose jaws worked like those of a man in a fit. But his rage was so great that his brain refused to give words to his tongue.

"Leave me the lantern, can you?" said Bourland, after he had returned to the cell.

"It's against the rules, but I reckon it won't do any harm."

Bourland resumed his reading; from his exterior no one could discern his agitation.

But Parker was not yet through with him for the night; for, a few moments later, Bourland saw an eye watching him through the peephole, and later he heard his tormentor call for Hawkins.

"Have you taken his weapons away from him?" he heard him ask.

"I wasn't here when he was brought in," replied Hawkins, sulkily.

"Go in and search him."

"I won't do it. I'm not going to insult a gentleman with any more indignities. He has been very courteous, and has given me no trouble whatever. Go search him yourself, if you want to see if he has any weapons."

"Give me the key," said Parker.

Bourland heard the clinking of the keys and the steps of the jailer as he moved away, and he could distinguish the motions of Parker as he stood outside, hesitating.

All at once the key was thrust boldly into the lock, and the door opened. Parker stopped on the threshold.

Bourland did not look up.

Parker sat down on the bench against the wall and looked at him as a vagabond looks at a full meal.

"It would be too bad to cover that noble face with a black cap," mused Parker, half aloud.

The picture of the gallows startled Bourland, and his face twitched slightly; but he restrained any further expression of emotion.

"It wouldn't be hard to bend that stiff, proud neck with — a rope."

Then Bourland looked up at him with a calm, yet defiant face, and Parker knew that, Indian though he might be in hate and revenge, he could not make his enemy quail. Parker began to lose his temper.

"Play on your king's majesty," he blurted out with a snarl. "But my day has come now. I've stayed in this county just to be where I could watch you. You drove me out of your house, as if I were a tramp, and you said you would see me in the chain gang. Now we'll see who goes to the chain gang. No, don't worry. You won't hang.

The chain gang is better; the pain lasts longer. Ha! ha!" He began to imitate the motions of a man working and dragging along his ball and chain.

But Bourland had resumed his reading.

This enraged Parker all the more. He went up to him and almost shouted in his ear:—

"Haven't you got any fighting blood left in you, you white-livered ——?"

At the last intolerable insult, Bourland sprang up, seized the lantern, and smashed it over Parker's skull. Then he closed upon him in the darkness. His fury was uncontrollable now, and he was in great danger; for a genuinely murderous passion was playing with him as the rapids of Niagara play with a floating bauble. With his strength once aroused, Parker was a stripling in his power. And the judge soon realized this, and began to cry for help. Hawkins rushed in and cried at the combatants to stop. His voice recalled Bourland to himself. By this time the inmates of the other cells were scared by the noise of the scuffle into shouts of terror.

Parker got free and slipped away.

Bourland, panting from his violent effort, attempted to tell Hawkins how it happened, but the man stopped him.

"Save your breath to pardon me, sir," he said. "I heard it all; I was listening at the door. I let you maul him awhile."

He brought a mattress into the cell, and the prisoner, tired in mind and muscle, soon fell asleep.

He dreamed that night that he was a pedler, selling old law books to farmers' wives, and that on the present occasion, having got into an altercation with a vigorous woman, he began to call her the scientific names of plants with a fluency which dated from his botany days at school. The woman, thinking herself outrageously abused, tried to hide behind her ten-year-old daughter, and implored her for protection; but the child began to cheer him, and say he was a brave soldier, and with this the phantasmagoria shifted, and he thought himself lying in a camp tent, dreaming a soldier's dream of home things, and kept irri-

tatingly half awake by the rumble and roar of cannon, until a ball rolled slowly into the tent and burst with a strange, subdued boom which awoke him, and his first thought was, as his mind hung poised between sleep and consciousness, why the ball in bursting did not shriek like a shell.

After an effort he laid hold of fact; he collected his thoughts and remembered that he was sleeping on a mattress in a dark cell—a prisoner. He recalled the incidents of the preceding day and of the last evening.

Just then the door of the jail fell in with a crash, and in an instant the corridor was filled with men calling his name.

His friends had come to his rescue!

They were rapping at each door; at last a man came to his cell.

“In here, Colonel?”

“Yes, here I am,” answered Bourland, who had now recovered the full use of his wits.

“This way with the axe,” the man called out.

Five swinging blows, and the door came smashing in. Instantly it was crowded with a group of his friends. Oh! in the lawlessness of that moment how gloriously the vision of comradeship swam before his eyes! Comrades,—his own people,—in defiance of the law,—for his sake!

Anderson was the third man to grasp his hand.

“Did you think we were long in coming?” he asked. “We wanted to make sure, and so we sent men through the neighborhood to bring in some of the farmers.”

“What time is it?”

“After three o’clock.”

“Come, let us get away,” called out a man who seemed a leader. “This rascal Parker may get wind of this and order out the militia. We want to avoid that. He’s a gritty customer, and won’t stop at anything.”

“Let us finish the job first, and string up those niggers. Where are they?” a man in the group cried out; and he and several others with axes started to break in the cell doors.

Bourland walked up to them.

"Don't; let the poor devils go," he pleaded.

"It may make matters all the worse for the man we have rescued," urged Anderson. The negroes had kept stone quiet in their dens, fearful of lynching.

"Well," said the axeman, "Mr. Anderson, you are the whitest Yankee I've ever seen, and I don't know but that your advice is good. Let's get away, men. We have rescued the colonel."

As Bourland stepped out of the jail doorway into the open air, he was greeted with cheers. A hundred men stood waiting for him, some of them watching Hawkins, who was blindfolded, and bound to a tree.

Bourland made a speech, thanking them for their allegiance and hoping for the dawn of better days in the South.

"The time is coming, my friends, when we must arise in our might and tear down the black flag."

"Let us Ku Klux Parker now," shouted one from the crowd.

"No; he's had enough for one night," responded Bourland; and then he told of his encounter with the carpet-bag judge. "Release that man; he was very kind to me," he added, pointing to Hawkins, "and let us go peacefully to our homes."

In the rose glow and candor of the dawn, Anderson and Bourland rode back to the Hall.

BOOK VII

THE RETURN OF THE BOURBONS

CHAPTER XXXI

A LINK OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE

THE next day Bourland was troubled with pains in the head, and before the end of the week he was prostrate with brain fever.

Anderson stayed on, and Eleanor and he watching night and day nursed the patient back to life. It was by the bedside of her brother that Eleanor first came to know the tenderness, the devotion, the inspiring patience of the rugged Yankee engineer. Often she felt herself breaking down, but his strength sustained her. In time she began to regard this man, whom chance had led to their remote home, as the incarnation of enduring power. No matter what the situation or crisis, he was always its master.

As for Anderson, during the period of anxiety, he never referred by word, look, or unconscious betrayal of thought to the emotion which, nevertheless, was uppermost in his mind. He obscured himself in service.

Yet in secret he did rejoice as he saw destiny weaving the thread of his life into the texture of that family.

It was a singular power that this reticent little lady of broken fortunes came to possess over the brawny Northern man of affairs. To the analyst the secret of that attraction might perhaps be inscrutable, a sublime mystery, like one of Nature's ultimate causes. Its occasion lay, doubt-

less, somewhere in that unwritten life history of his past, and it found a parallel in the power of the cold magnet over the hardened steel.

At last Bourland began to mend.

"Go now, my friend," said Eleanor. "My brother is out of danger. Your business has long needed your attention."

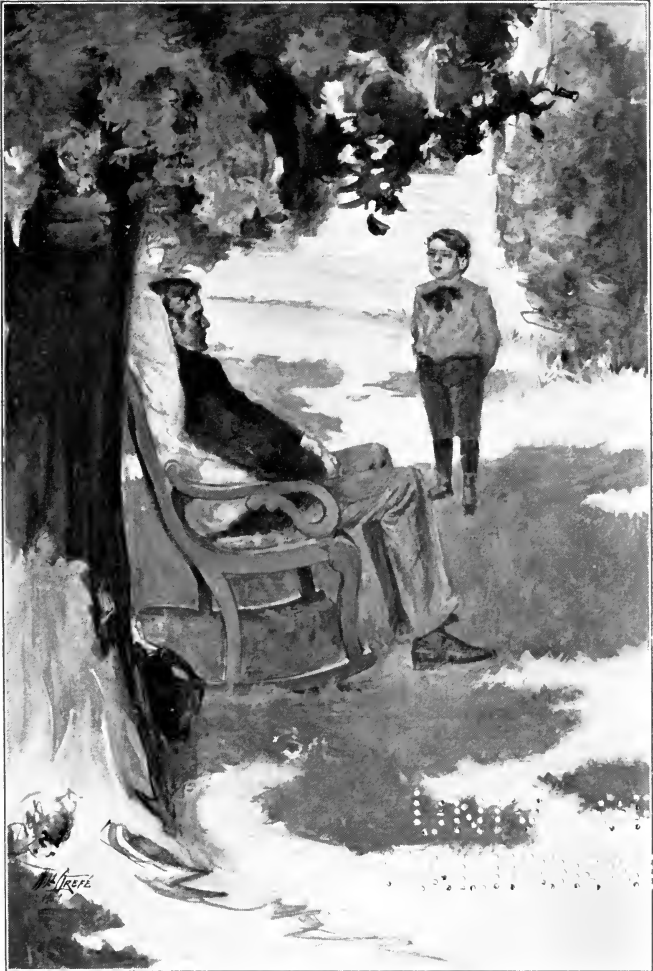
He shook an emphatic refusal. "That is only a money matter. The iron has lain in the rocks for ages. It will remain a few weeks longer, I guess. I shall not leave you yet."

She was glad that he stayed. She was so lonely.

By this time the racial feud and the agitation had subsided. Bourland's illness created a sympathy which made him immune from the law. The officials, who were mostly place hunters, made no attempt to arrest the leaders of "the committee of safety," as the rescue party styled themselves. The law became a paralyzed arm of injustice. As for Parker, for a long time he remained quiet and innocuous.

The summer had been for two weeks a glad visitor when Bourland came downstairs. They placed a chair for him in the shadow of the cool maples. He was weak still, and his lassitude let him drift off into dreamful revery. The atmosphere, to his closed sight, was the balm of a vanished June. The breeze stole upon him like languorous music and died softly in the hushed recesses of memory. Slumber lifted him with her wings, and drew him over the verge and up into the far beyond. He heard the murmur of a familiar voice; cool hands pressed comfort upon his burning forehead; a face leaned close to his own, and subdued the fever with warm, breathing lips; eyes, infinitely sad and sweet, grew moist with healing sympathy. Then the vision melted in the dawning twilight of consciousness, and dissolved in a mist of burnished haze.

The seclusion of recent years had transfigured that face in Bourland's remembrance — somewhat, one dare imagine, as the face of Beatrice was transfigured and clarified in the soul of the world-weary Dante. It grew to be, even



“... Aunt Eleanor says I’ve been bad, and must report.”

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more than those stern portraits in the house, a living presence among his thoughts.

He awoke just in time to catch a pretty picture. Anderson was pitching horseshoes on the gravel path, while Randall, trotting between the points, was clapping hands at a "ringer." Eleanor, in white apron, was sitting upon the upper veranda step, watching.

"Go tell him, Randall," said Eleanor, changing a smile of pleasure to sternness.

The child turned from the game with wry face and reluctant steps.

"Aunt Eleanor says I've been bad, and must report."

"Well, out with it, Chap," said Bourland, kindly.

"I said old Parker was a 'damn scoundrel,'" the boy confessed resolutely. "I ain't sorry. He is, for Mr. Anderson said so."

"Well, you go to Mr. Anderson and tell him he must do the punishing, then," said Bourland, patting the child's head.

"Oh, Henry!" cried Eleanor, in protest. Just then the black maid came to the doorway and rang the dinner bell.

In the afternoon, with Anderson's assistance, Bourland walked to a seat by the ledge. The time had come for Anderson to take his leave.

"I got a letter this morning," said he, "from the president of the company. He says that if I am not back in a week he will bring a sheriff's posse with requisition papers and drag me back."

"You have been a loyal friend to us. I cannot thank you enough. I feel like a bankrupt with nothing but unlimited assets of gratitude."

He spoke with deep feeling, and looked sadly out upon the open prospect of the fields.

"They were all-mine once, all the way down to the creek and over to the woodland. They have slipped away, and now I have only a few acres left, a mere garden patch around the Hall. My enemy surrounds me. I am as isolated as Robinson Crusoe on his island. A short time,

and the house will have to go, too." He looked up into the trees, and added, "Somehow, I don't care now."

"What are you going to do in the future?" asked the Yankee, to whom forethought was a cardinal virtue.

"I don't know."

That was the answer of so many of the hopeless in those days. They were born of the old era, with no versatility, and they could not readjust themselves to the new. So the stream of their lives drifted, drifted, until it slipped into the caverns of oblivion.

"I suppose I shall stay here with Eleanor until the end. We don't like the idea of deserting ship. Then God knows where we shall go," he added languidly.

The energetic spirit of the Yankee was irritated, for the moment, by the resignation, the melancholy fatalism, of the Virginian. He looked toward the Hall. It stood there as a barrier between him and his desire. A selfish motive prompted the wish that it might soon pass out of the family's possession. Then there would be a severance from the past, and Eleanor would be free and open to new impressions of him and his world.

That evening, by a drift of impulse which she did not seek to divert, he found himself alone with her. On this eve of his departure he was hungry for a token. He was reluctant to leave all alone; he wished that she might send away with him a little comrade of hope.

Late in the afternoon there had come a passing shower, followed by a brilliant rainbow and a glad renewal of song from the birds. The mood of joyousness which these had brought lingered with them both into the evening. The night was deliciously cool; the breezes washed the air to limpid purity; in the west, the moon hung above the rim of the mountains like a golden censer.

"I shall be very sorry to have you go," she said frankly.

"How deep is that sorrow?"

She thought a moment.

"As deep, fully as deep, as the shallowness of my present life."

"Then it is the past which stands between us? It is the past which no thoughts of me can obscure?"

"I cannot say that they have done so — yet."

The hesitation and the timidity with which she added that trivial word "yet" made his heart bound as if it had received the precious gift of hope. Her past had been to him a treasury with sealed doors. He had never knocked there for a glimpse of the interior.

"Oh," she broke out with a confidence that warmed him like a caress, "oh, you don't know how hard it is to face some questions! I think I revere loyalty as the noblest thing in the world and for me to turn away from — from the past, it seems like treason and dishonor."

"I have turned away from — a past; flung it away, and that has been my salvation." His words were half soliloquy.

"Oh, yes! I know. But yours was different. Mine was so beautiful, and yours was very bitter — a mistake."

"How do you know that?"

"Forgive me. I didn't mean to —"

"You are not intruding. I have no wish to conceal anything from you. But how do you know?"

"I don't know. I only conjecture. You are a very practical man, but in secret you cherish a need for high idealism. I have discovered that. You are very strong willed, very persistent, and when you take anything into your inner life, you do not let it go without fighting a terrific battle. You haven't known women very familiarly, and therefore it is easy for you to confuse a woman with an ideal. Am I not right?" Her wisdom shone through gracious smiling.

"Perhaps," he answered. "Go on."

"The rest I am not so sure about. But I imagine that for a long time you served and worshipped some woman with blind, unfaltering devotion. Then came an experience, — it had to come sooner or later, — and your eyes were opened. You found her, let me say, very selfish, very vain, like so many small women. You found your ideal was only a deity beautifully carven in stone. You

didn't break your idol. You simply turned away and refused to worship her further."

He mused for several minutes.

"You are not altogether right, although you are in the main. But I look back upon it with no emotion."

"Possibly so. But it has left a brandmark upon you. It has made life bitter for you; yet that bitterness will make the rest of it more sweet and beautiful. To a man with such an experience I think a woman would trust herself more confidently. She oughtn't to be jealous."

"And you?" There was an ambiguity in his question.

"Oh! Fate has been more kind and far more cruel to me," she answered, taking one meaning with a proud willingness to answer. "I never knew him to be other than I thought him; my dream of him has never been broken, and it never can be now. I think he is loyal in his grave."

He expected her to break down, but she did not.

"Don't you see," she continued with calm steadiness, "though it was never realized, I can never forget."

He bent toward her and whispered:—

"I don't want you to forget. I honor you more because you cannot. But don't you think you can still find room for me?"

He felt now that the final judgment would be passed upon him. As she hesitated to speak, he stood up before her, firm, undaunted, like a patriot facing the muskets that were to shoot him.

He loved her more fiercely as he saw her tossing helplessly on a turbulence of sweet, sympathetic indecision. But he would not urge his plea further.

"I can't say 'yes.' I don't want to say 'no.' I don't want you to go out of my life. During these last weeks I have come to admire you more and more. But it is—no, you must not interrupt your career. You must not set your tenacious purpose on anything so worthless—I am only one of the broken relics."

He came nearer, full of protesting affection.

“No, there is another reason which makes it impossible.”

He stopped, and begged for the reason.

She pointed toward the Hall, with its sombre front illuminated with pale rectangles of light—the grim stronghold of her last defence.

“I would never leave him alone. So long as the home is ours, I shall stay with him.”

Anderson stood face to face with a new revelation of the character of the Southern race. Bred in the North, where restless ambitions easily sever the home ties, he never before realized the strength of the Southern spirit of loyalty to the clan, to the family claim.

But it revived his courage and determination; for it was an obstacle that must soon be removed. The end of the possession of the home was near, and when that came, then there was hope that he could gain the homeless mistress as a bride. Then, and the thought aroused all the chivalry of his nature, then there would be need for him.

“That is a reason,” he answered, “which we can leave to time. I shall go back to my work and wait.”

She had neither the will nor the desire to thwart him further. She cherished from that evening a remembrance of glad gratitude.

The next morning he left them for the North.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE AWAKENING AND THE CALL

AFTER Anderson's departure, Bourland soon relapsed into his aimless life of inaction.

The surroundings of his own home were both destructive and preservative of the best in his nature. In one way they dulled and deadened all his executive faculties with the overmastering power of a narcotic. Yet in another way they fostered a contemplative loyalty to those things which were noble and sacred. The dying charge of his father, the melancholy tragedy of the lost cause, the unforgettable glory of that shattered love, and with these in the background, the remembrances of youth, affection, and pride, in the presence of these, as in a temple of prayer, he bowed and brooded like a refugee from a sinful world.

As a consequence, his thoughts were centred in an exalted life of the spirit, but his energies oozed away from an utter paralysis of the will.

For the patch of land that remained to him there was little need of an anxious watchfulness. Two or three servants still clung to the place, but the others had wandered away, and the songs of cabin and field were hushed,—the old songs,—hushed forever. With a little help Nature ran her course from season to season, and brought forth fruit and flower in ever decreasing abundance.

Except when chance brought him face to face with a crisis, like the recent riot, in which his energy and executive decision were forced into play, Bourland sat at home, like a hidalgo of old Spain, mourning a vanished glory.

There was one sunbeam in this charnel-house of dead memories. That was Little Chap, and he saved the human nature of brother and sister from extinction.

He was a precocious youngster, with much of the cherub in his nature, and a certain amount of the satanic. The father loved him for his pranks, kissed him for his misdoings, and spoiled him most outrageously, Aunt Eleanor declared.

"He can't go far wrong," Bourland would reply to her protestations. "He has the disposition of his mother."

At the age of three he was put into knickerbockers; on his fourth birthday, citing the precedent of young Henry of Navarre, his father poured some brandy into his milk; before he was five, he was an accomplished horseman, riding before his father in the saddle.

"The child will fall and break his neck," Eleanor cried, when Bourland leaned down from his horse, grabbed the boy by the coat collar, and swung him into the seat.

"Every gentleman's son should learn to ride and shoot," was his excuse. "You can't begin too early."

He was at times a vexatious little sinner, and often the affection of the father, particularly in his moods of tension, would give place to wrath.

One evening, for instance, when the three were in the large room, Bourland reading, Eleanor worrying over problems in household economy (she managed all affairs now), and Randall playing ball, the child made a mis-throw and struck his father.

"Don't throw that ball again. Put it away at once," said Bourland, vexatiously.

An instant later the ball was thrown again, and this time it hit the grandfather's portrait and made it rattle.

The boy stood in the middle of the floor in a defiant attitude, and the Bourland blood in his cheeks was as red as a pie cherry.

The father was about to let his irritation explode, but he so admired the boy's spirit that he throttled the passionate impulse.

"Come here, Little Chap," he said kindly, yet with the kindness of rebuke.

The spirit of defiance broke down. He ran into his father's outstretched arms.

"See your grandfather's eyes, boy. They are looking down at you."

Bourland could feel the child's limbs wince under the scrutiny.

"He's watching you. He sees everything you do. Remember, those eyes are always on you."

Deep in the child's life were branded forever those two searching eyes. They haunted him, years afterward, like an accusing conscience.

"You were naughty, just now. Don't you see how sad he seems?"

The thought of his grandfather, of death, of his watchful spirit, so awed the child that he sat subdued all evening until bedtime. Before he climbed into his bed, he kneeled before his aunt to say his prayers; first of all, the childish prayer which so often outlives our childish years; and then, after that, he prayed for father and mother and aunt, and Sam and Sarah and Trip; and when he had done with these he added, "Please, God, cheer up grandpa, and don't let him worry because I was bad. I won't be bad any more."

After the light was out, and the little penitent lay alone, he couldn't sleep. Two sad, immovable eyes were staring at him out of the darkness.

Eleanor went downstairs and told her brother laughingly of the boy's prayer.

"How proud Margaret would have been of him," he murmured, and flung his head back helplessly.

"I should think that the thought of him and his future would rouse you out of your selfish idleness," she replied with a trace of real rebuke.

Those were the first words of reproach she had spoken since his illness. They stung him with guilty virulence.

"What do you mean?" he questioned in self-defence.

"I mean that there are things for a man to do in these times, and you are not doing them." The words came unwontedly firm and incisive. "What have I been doing these last years? Not much, it is true, but some-

thing." A voice long stifled in her, it seemed, was finding utterance.

The brother regarded her with surprise, and then for the first time he read the record which those uncomplaining years had written on her face. She had been a strong, silent woman, and when he had lapsed into his futile life of revery, the burden of the cares had come to her, and she had taken up that burden, and borne it until now without a murmur.

There was the dry glaze of weariness in her eyes. She quivered visibly as she endeavored to quell a rising indignation.

"I don't mean to be cross, Henry; but oh, I am so tired," and with that, overcome by a most womanly attack of hysteria, she wept; she wept at last.

He took her in his arms and begged her forgiveness. He confessed that he had been criminally thoughtless and selfish.

"But what can I do?" he pleaded. "Our enemies are in power, and they are ruining us. There is no way to resist except by becoming a breaker of the law. I can't take to that."

"Use your brains," she cried out with fierce enthusiasm. "Oh, if I were only a man!"

She stood at full height, a Juno, divine in her wrath.

That phrase rang in his ears long afterward. The hall clock ticked it in the silence of night; when he awoke in the morning, it was the first thought that came to him. "Use your brains."

Two days later he was offered an opportunity to do so.

All through the South the outrages and peculations of the reconstruction governments had become so atrocious that there was a growing resolution on the part of the whites to put an end to them by some method, fair or foul.

One evening Bourland received a visit from a committee of three citizens. The chairman was a prominent character known as "Flue" Powell, who had seen much service in the House of Delegates before the war, and who had been baptized with his nickname for his fluency of

speech. He was accompanied by two Confederate soldiers named Jacobs and Wilson.

"We've come to have a talk with you, Colonel," said Powell. "The great day is a-ripening. We are going to reclaim the state at the next election."

"I'm glad the time has come," answered Bourland. "I have been waiting and hoping for it."

"There's a sympathetic movement, a rising of the temperature all through the Southern states, and it means the end of carpet-bagger, scalawag, and nigger rule. We've been living like cattle long enough. The South has become an Augean stable, so to speak, and we are going to clean it out."

"Well," said Bourland, "you know I tried some years back, and worked hard, but we were badly beaten. I got discouraged by the apathy, and quit."

"It has come to this, sir," spoke up Jacobs. "The white men have either got to rule the Southern states or get out of them."

"They ought to rule," answered Bourland.

"They will, they shall, by heaven, they shall!" broke out Powell, with more decorated emphasis. "White men can't stand what we have stood any longer. Do you know, sir, that there are one hundred and nineteen niggers on the benches of justice in Virginia who can't read or write?" The old man's lip vibrated with indignation like a telegraph ticker.

"I didn't know there were so many," replied Bourland.

"We're bad enough off in Virginia; but south of us it's far worse. Why, the robbers down there have fairly ripped their pockets trying to stuff in their stealings." Then with a vigor that increased as he went on, he began to fire off statistics with the rapidity of a Gatling gun: statistics of the tax rates, which were four to six times above the normal; statistics of the enormous increase in the state debts, for which, in the commonwealths, there was little or nothing to show. In South Carolina the state debt, during the carpet-bagger régime, was increased from five to eighteen millions of dollars; in Alabama, in three or four

years, from eight to twenty-five millions; in other states, the proportion was scarcely less. In North Carolina, the blackleg legislature issued twenty-five millions of bonds, and in Tennessee, six millions, for railroads, few miles of the tracks of which were ever laid; but the bonds were issued, sold off at a discount, and scored against the states.

"Who's going to pay these debts?" exclaimed Powell. "It will be our children, who will never get a dollar's worth of benefit for the money. Why, down in Georgia—"

"Stop! that's enough for me. What do you want me to do?" broke in Bourland. He was filled with remorse and shame when he realized that he, boasting of natural leadership, was so ignorant of political conditions, and that these men had to arouse him to action. "I'm ready for you now," he added, the spirit of fight awakening out of his inertia.

"That isn't the worst of it," persisted Powell. "That's only money matters. But things are getting so bad from the lawlessness of niggers that a farmer can't go into the fields any morning without the fear that he may be called back by the shrieks of his wife or daughter to protect them from assault. I tell you, hell's loose down here, and we've got to chain the devils or pack up and emigrate."

"Well, boys," said Bourland, who by this time was nervously walking up and down the room, "you can count on me. What is your plan? It won't need much talk to make me volunteer."

"We know you," said Jacobs, laughing. "We know the stuff that you are made of. You won't need any stirring up when you once get started. But to come to the point. We are a committee of the citizens. They know all about you, and your affairs with Parker. The stay-at-homes are getting over their sulks. We want you to be the leader of this district to beat Parker and haul down his black flag. We want to put a real Greek against the barbarian. You will be backed by every respectable man in the county."

Bourland felt his stature grow taller with pride; he felt his former self returning in full strength. This

recognition by the people, his people whom he had forgotten, this recognition of confidence, of worth, of his genius for leadership, — oh ! his heart beat like a school-boy's when he walks out to take his first prize.

“Do you really want me? Do you think I am the man?” he asked, stammering with joy.

“That's what we are here for. It is official,” said Wilson, who had spoken very little as yet. “You know at the next election we vote for governor and members of the legislature. We want you to go to Richmond as our man in the House of Delegates, and by the Lord, we are going to put you there, too.”

“Do you think you can, with this gang of Radicals in full control of the election machinery?”

“We are going to do it,” said Jacobs, with quiet assurance. “We are going to send the Bourbons back to their birthrights. That's simple, isn't it?”

“How?”

“Well, first of all, we shall use our brains.”

Bourland started. That same phrase had been echoing in his mind ever since Eleanor flung it at him.

“And then?”

There was a pause. It was the resolute Jacobs who replied: —

“Well, if worst comes to worst, we shall show a few shot-guns to the niggers; they'll scare fast enough. And perhaps we'll have to use the Klan.”

“Oh, not the Klan!” exclaimed Bourland.

“That will depend on the tactics of our enemies. We shall use it only in extremities.”

“I'm not used to that kind of politics, gentlemen.”

“You needn't soil your hands,” said Wilson, quickly. “There will be plenty of men ready to do the dirty work.”

“If I take the leadership,” responded Bourland, “I shall not shirk any of the responsibility. If I get into the boat, I shall be one of the boat's crew. Let me think a moment before I give a final decision.”

He paced the floor while they waited in silence. He wanted to be their leader again. But could he give his

full assent to the use of illegal methods? He realized that they were facing, not a theory, but a condition, now become so intolerable that it must have some solution, legal or illegal. His quick mind, as he meditated, framed his argument of justification. It was a logical sorites and followed a reasoning something like this :—

The white man must rule the inferior and incapable black. This is an axiom, and is not debatable.

He does not rule at present, and the result is an insufferable condition.

The law of self-preservation demands acts of self-defence. By reason, in a civilized community; by force, in a community which has lapsed into barbarism or semi-civilization.

The South, by reason of the unnatural and ill-timed enfranchisement of the negro, has lapsed into a condition of semi-civilization.

Force is therefore justifiable as a means of self-defence.

He thought it out clearly and came up to the men, holding out his hand.

“I’m with you, boys. I will accept your nomination with gratitude. I shall do my best to win. All I ask is that we shall be as clean-handed as possible.”

After they left his mind was not perfectly at ease. He had been bred in a tradition which respected the law; and now, even though he was sure the law was unjust, he was joining, even leading, a movement which would evade, nullify, yes, actually break the law. He went, years before, into the Bloody Angle for his people, with far less hesitation. But now—no matter, in this, too, he would be resolute for the sake of his people.

By chance his gaze crossed the eyes of his father in the portrait. There was, in truth, a sadness in the painted features. If the elder man were there now to speak and advise, what would he say? Would he approve of the son’s decision? or would he stand aloof and let the black plague continue to scourge the Southlands?

Bourland studied the riddle suggested by that sad countenance, and then, feeling himself alone with his problem, he murmured: “I have used my best judgment. We

must change this intolerable condition. Altered times necessitate an alteration of principles. We must regain control of the South; if not by one way, then by the other."

The next morning he awoke with the sensations of a man who had just entered into a band of confederates pledged to a desperate undertaking. But he was unflinchingly resolute.

CHAPTER XXXIII

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS

WITHIN the next ten days Bourland was made the formal nominee of the district for the House of Delegates, and political headquarters for the campaign were opened in Brayton.

The Radical candidate for governor was a man named Bollin, formerly a ward boss in New York. He had been speaker of the house in the last legislature, and though he stood high in the councils of his own party, he was known to the Conservatives as the Black Crook. The Conservatives selected an old soldier, Gilbert by name, to make the fight against him, and with his nomination began the battle of the Bourbons to drive "the Philistines and Ethiopians" out of office.

Truly, there were signs abroad that the day of resurrection was dawning upon Virginia. From the bounds of the tide-water lands to the slopes of the valley the native citizens of the commonwealth were awakening to a sense of their responsibility and duty.

The Radicals, intrenched in power and controlling the election machinery, at first jeered the hopes of the opposition. But in the face of the increasing evidences of vigor and determination they soon ceased their detraction and began to work.

The campaign soon developed indications of alarming defections from the Radical ranks. Among the emigrants from the North were many respectable men who came south with missionary zeal or with honest business intentions; and a large number of these, disgusted with carpet-bag rule, threatened to break away from their former political affiliations. Many negroes, too, had become disgruntled and restive; their political dreams had not been

realized; they had worked and voted and obeyed orders; but in some way the white leaders had taken the lion's share of the offices and "de swag." The unknown extent of these defections, therefore, gave inspiring doubt and executive energy to the contest.

In the South, even more than in the North, speech-making and eloquence were effective influences. And though Bourland was well qualified for such work, he soon realized that success would demand a mastery and manipulation of details. He was inexperienced in such things; but being inventive and full of theoretical suggestions, he became a valuable aid to his energetic lieutenants.

Ambition rose phoenix-like from the ashes of his inactivity. He desired to become a public figure in the state. His life was fired anew with an impulse to play a man's part in civic affairs. Many things pointed to his success: his family prestige, his war record, his persecution by Parker, his isolation in the retirement of the Hall—all of these made him a romantic figure which appealed to the emotions of his constituents, and commanded a certain chivalric devotion. Besides, he possessed a rare gift of eloquence.

He planned for himself the career of an orator. The long years of brooding had so intensified his personality that from the first speech he made a signal impression. So, while Jacobs and Wilson and the rest worked "inside the house," as they termed it, he and "Flue" Powell went about the county, talking from carriages, stumps, and platforms, in towns and at cross-roads. He soon was transformed into a happy man; his life now had an aim and an opportunity.

Parker became his opponent for the legislature. The carpet-bagger, snorting at Bourland's nomination, decided that he must be beaten, and no one, he knew, could beat him so well as himself.

"I'm getting rusty on the bench," he remarked to his friends. "I guess I'll get back to active service. Slate me for the legislature."

Parker had become a strong leader. He had tireless energy; he possessed a genius for making things cohere; he had a peculiar power over the negroes, who regarded him as a prophet. This man, in truth, had done much to ameliorate the condition of the freedmen; taught them to look after their own interests; settled them on patches of land where they could live in independence; helped this one by a timely loan; attached others by judicious gifts; and, more than these, he had given the blacks a reasonable share of the spoils of office. One old negro preacher called him, "De sickle ob de Rebelations," for, said he, "he hab cum to reap foh us de harves' ob de airth." When Parker heard the title, he chuckled. "They had better call me Michael," he muttered, "for I have come to slay the dragon and his kind." And with that he looked in the direction of the Hall.

Bourland labored with the ardor of a neophyte. During the campaign he saw but little of his home. Often he stayed in Brayton over night, and when he was not away on a round of rallies, he was usually found at headquarters.

"We've got a majority of fifteen hundred to overcome in this district," he said, looking over a census of all the qualified voters. "Our old friends will stand by us pretty well, and our problem is to get enough recruits to overcome that majority with a safe margin to spare. We must work over some of the immigrants and negroes, and bring out the Confederate sulkers. Of the last, we ought to get every man."

"We can't get them all," answered Jacobs, with a profane punctuation. "There are a lot of these malingerers, skulkers in war and peace, who haven't got the souls of cats."

"We must wake them up with brass bands and enthusiasm."

Wilson's report of his precinct was interesting. "During the last elections," said he, "there have been two votes, on the average, for every man. Parker has been putting the niggers on double time. They jump from one

house to another like fleas, and they have such common names that it is easy to stuff the registration lists."

"We must watch him and get an honest count," said Bourland.

"You'll never beat him by trying to play on the square," put in Jacobs, flatly. "I tell you we've got to come down to his school of politics."

"Oh, if we watch, we can stop his frauds," protested Bourland.

"No, you can't. He's too crafty and fearless. He knows he can control the courts if he is caught. It takes a thief to catch a thief."

"I want to try some of my moral suasion on the blacks."

"Well, Colonel, it won't do any harm. But then it won't do any good."

"They say," drawled out Wilson, "that there is to be a resurrection of the white people in this election. I reckon there is. For I know some dead men who are going to vote our ticket in my bailiwick."

"I think," said another man, "that it is easier to jingle a few coins in the ears of some of the board of registration. Those Cæsars will not refuse the crowns."

"Look here," called out a committee man, "suppose the Radical authorities decide that there shall not be any new registration. They say the old lists are good enough; that the sulkers who wouldn't register before don't deserve a chance now. It may cost us hundreds of votes."

"Let them dare refuse it," shouted Powell, with a thump of his fist.

"The Black Crook and his chorus of villagers will do anything."

Powell held up his hand for silence. One could hear the grit of his teeth. He spoke with a deliberate utterance.

"If the Radical state board refuses us a new registration, and cheats us by gagging our votes, you will hear of —" he paused.

"What?" cried several, with grins of knowledge.

"Some mysterious visitors," he added in a whisper.

Bourland shook his head deprecatingly.

"Even if they do, and then the case looks desperate or even dubious," continued Powell, "there is just one thing to be done. Gentlemen, we must win this election. The niggers have got to be kept away from the polls. We had better begin to discuss ways and means now. Colonel," said he, turning to Bourland, "you needn't stay. Go home and write up some more of your good speeches. You needn't mix up in this."

"No," replied Bourland; "I'll stick to the men who are sticking by me. I'm not going to hide in the woods while you fellows are on the firing line."

"Well, then, here goes! I've taken counsel with some of the stalwarts, but the details have not been published in the newspapers. If we find ourselves in a tight pass, we shall hire a few magicians who are going to conjure up some spirits, members of an ancient and honorable order — let me see — what is the name?"

He looked at them with a smile of amused banter.

"The Order of the White Camelias," suggested one.

"The Order of the Pallid Faces," offered a second.

"The Knights of the Invisible Empire," said a third.

All three spoke gravely, yet with mock gravity.

"No, that's not it," Powell went on. "The last one is most like it; there is a K in the name."

"The colonel is a good guesser. You can tell it in his face."

"I don't like it, boys," said Bourland, who had reddened visibly at the open secret.

"Some morning," declared Powell, solemnly, "there will be an article in the papers saying that the Ku Klux Klan has appeared in Lacamac County. That will be a preliminary, a curtain raiser, as they call it in the theatre. Then to prove the truth of the article, there will be that week a few nightly visitations, — no harm done, — just a good scare for those who can easily spread the news. If that doesn't make the teeth of some niggers chatter, and if that doesn't take away their desire to vote, then I don't know a nigger when I see one."

"I've got a much better substitute. It will be more effective and less harmful," said Bourland. "We don't want any of those infernal atrocities they've had in the other states." He unfolded a scheme of his own, which involved a travelling circus.

"It will cost too much, Colonel; still, we might use that too. Two shots are better than one."

"The farmers must be instructed to clean their guns right before their men on the day preceding the election, and they must talk a good deal about shooting and riots at the polls. That, I think, will scare some of the niggers and keep them away, or I'm much mistaken," said Wilson. "That influence can be used by the farmers better than by the men in towns."

"I think the colonel's suggestion about the circus is worth a trial," remarked Jacobs, reflectively. "I'm sorry we have to resort to such tricks. But it is the most harmless one I can think of."

Then Bourland explained his ruse in more detail. "If we must come down to these things, I suppose we must. Don't worry about me. I'm aboard the ship, and as I have said, I'll sail or hang with the crew. I won't flop overboard like a fool."

Nevertheless he had qualms of conscience. If he was aboard the ship, he felt like a landlubber in a storm. He was by no means at peace with his principles, and the proof was that he continually resorted to repetitions of that logical sorites for his own personal consolation. Even then he knew that he was a casuist.

"It is only for this one time," he pleaded in reply to the accusing monitor. "We are forced to it in self-defence."

As the campaign progressed, it developed a great deal of bitterness. The situation was very dubious, and the Conservatives saw that to win they must make use of every possible means.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A VISITATION OF THE KU KLUX

EVERY day Bourland received letters from Northern immigrants, declaring their disgust at the present administration and promising their support. But these acquisitions were probably offset by natives of the lowest class, who, lured by pledges of office, were turning scalawag. It became more and more manifest, as the situation developed, that the result hung upon the negro vote.

Bourland still clung to the hope that moral suasion could accomplish something among the freedmen. The others laughed at the idea.

"But go ahead, Colonel," said Jacobs. "It can't do any harm, and it may do good. It will give respectability to our campaign."

So, about two weeks before election day, Bourland announced a rally on the Court House green for the "Men of Color."

The Union League secretly gave orders to the negroes to stay away, but in spite of that, when the night came, there was a fair-sized audience of freedmen.

As Bourland arose to speak a burly negro shouted out, "Three cheers for Parker," and the first moments were marked by turbulence and endeavors on the part of a few to disorganize the meeting. And it was not long before it became evident that the Radicals had arranged to silence him. The big, black fellow, who was a deputy sheriff of Parker's appointment, continued to make irritating comments and ejaculations, and soon a brass band, trailing a motley crowd, came up the street and played "Marching through Georgia." The noise drowned the speaker's voice. Some one, afterward believed to be the deputy sheriff,

fired a pistol, and the negroes scattered like scared chickens.

Bourland came down from the stand as dejected as a schoolboy who had forgotten his piece.

"Well, Colonel," said Jacobs, with a laugh, "what are the results of moral suasion?"

"Failure," answered Bourland, sullenly.

"There are other ways open to us."

"Yes, I suppose now we shall have to try them."

"What's the name of that black buck who fired the pistol?" asked Wilson.

"That was Simpson. He's one of Parker's constables," replied one of the committee men. "He lives on a little place about a mile out of town."

"Simpson, eh? I reckon he'd better get a basket and hide himself among the bulrushes like Moses for a while."

Four days later the readers of Northern newspapers found, under varying headlines, the following special despatch:—

BRAYTON, VA. —

The elections in the South are bringing on the usual persecutions of the freedmen. The Ku Klux Klan has appeared in Virginia. On Wednesday night an inoffensive and industrious negro, named Jasper Simpson, was taken by a band of men in disguise, after they had battered down the door of his cabin, and was tied to a tree, after which he was beaten into insensibility with switches cut from briars. The savages drove his wife and children at the point of the gun, without clothes, into the woods. His cabin was then set fire to. The victim was left bound to a tree, one man, on riding off, firing his shot-gun at his lower extremities. Simpson was brought unconscious to Brayton next morning, and it is likely he will die. No arrests have been made. The suspected cause of this outrage was his political affiliation, he being an active supporter of the Radical party, and a leader among the men of color.

The North, naturally, formed its opinion of the affair from this statement, which was only half the truth.

The actual facts were these. On Wednesday night, Simpson's cabin was surrounded by a band of masked men. They knocked on his door and told him to come out; when he refused, they broke it open, dragged him out, and tied him to a tree. He was given thirty lashes on the back with switches cut from a willow, and he was told that if he didn't let politics alone he would fare far worse. He was then left in a subdued but not unconscious condition. No man fired a gun at him, his cabin was not burned, and his wife and children were not molested. Simpson was seen walking the next day, though somewhat stiffly, in the streets of Brayton.

Public opinion in Lacamac was biassed, or rather affected, by Simpson's known character and previous record. Though a public official, he had been the chief actor in half a dozen drunken rows; he was suspected of complicity in a barn burning, and he was known to have made the remark in a political speech that "matches only cost five cents a box." In addition he had been the prime mover in the breaking up of the Conservative rally.

Though the Northern papers published fuming editorials upon the incident, the Southerners of Lacamac regarded the matter with indifference. They were closer to the truth, and it affected them about as much as the casual sight of a shooting star. The managers of the Conservative campaign, indeed, endeavored to spread the report as widely as possible among the negroes, hoping it would inspire them with fear.

But the greatest terror spread among the blacks after the beginning of the pantomime visitations of the Ku Klux. These, though less harmful, were more effective. For the visits, to their superstitious minds, did not come from the living, but from the dead. All through the week preceding election, according to rumor, the country round about was infested at night time with wandering spirits, who brought direful warnings to the negroes.

One evening, on his way home, Bourland met a poor

darky in the road completely scared out of his wits. If he had not known the baselessness of the man's fear, the sight of his face, ghastly in the moonlight, would have horrified him. The man flung out two imploring arms.

"Save me, Massa Bourlan'," he cried. "Dey'se after me."

"Who?" asked Bourland, checking his horse.

"De Kluckers," he stammered, looking fearfully over his shoulders.

When Bourland had calmed him somewhat, he recognized him as a tinker who lived by himself about two miles away from the Hall. After some time the man was sufficiently composed to tell his story.

"I wuz a-settin' in my cabin," he began, "in de ole arm-chair wif de cushion wut Miss' Lanter gib me at de house cleanin'. I mus' a bin a-sleepin', kase de ole pipe wuz on de flo'ah, an' it nebba drops out wen I'se awaik, I kin tell you. I suttinly done a fit o' work ter-day, an' I wuz tuckered out. All at once comes a rap, rap, rap, free times on de doah. I heered it, but it jes' did'n waik me up, so I sot dar stun still. Den it cum louder'n quicker, jes' sof' en titterin' laik a woodpecker. Dat air done woke me up all de way. I rubs my eyes an' I see de taller dip a-sizzlin' low. 'I reckon hit's dat air Spot Clark agen,' sez I. 'But den,' thinks I insideaways, 'he wuddent rap; he'd jes' cum a-struttin' in ez ef de hull place wuz his'n.' So I goes an' opens de doah, an' oh, Gawd! Mass' Bourlan', right dar, befoh de las' day ob wrath an' kingdom cum, dar wuz a man, a-standin' befoh me, wif a white hat on laik a church steeple, an' a cloak aroun' him white ez a fiel' o' buckwheat. I wuz skeered, I tell you, an' my laigs went a-floppin' jes' laik ole mammy's bes' print gown in de win'. 'Get me a bucket o' watah,' he sez, jes' holler-like, ez if he wuz a dead mans. An' I goes an' I fatches it quick, suah, foh I seed a hoss a-stannin' by de gate. Wen I got de watah, I brings it respectful to de hoss. 'Bring it to me,' he sez; 'is you a blame fool?' I bringed it to him, an' foh Gawd, massa, may de Lawd burn me in de pit o' fire, ef he didn' drink down dat air



“ ‘Get me a bucket o’ watah,’ he says, jes holler like ez ef he wuz a dead mans.”

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bucket to de las' drop, drier'n ef a sponge hed sopped it. 'Bring me sum moah watah,' he sez, an' I fotched him anudder pailful, an' he dranked it all up again, jes' ez clean ez a hen. Den sez he, a-sighin' laik, 'Dat's de firs' watah I hab drunk sence de battle.' — 'Wuz you in de battles, massa?' sez I, a-stannin' back to get out ob his reach. 'Yes,' sez he. 'I wuz killed in de Wilderness, an' I wuz buried at de foot ob a big pin oak, an' I neber got a good drink kase de tree roots allus sucked away the watah fum me.' Den he looked all aroun' ez if he wuz tryin' to see whar he wuz, an' den he sez, 'You'se Pink Trotter, airn't you?' — 'Ya-as, sir,' sez I; 'an' I'se a berry good nigger, too.' — 'I know you is,' sez he; 'dat's why I kem all de way fum de Wilderness heah. Yoh mudder wuz my ole mammy, Pink. I used to lib aroun' heah. I cum to tell you to stay in yoh cabin all day nex' Tuesday, an' doan' you try to do no fool votin'. We dead mens in de groun', we hears all wut's goin' on in de world, an' I heerd a man say 'round here dat ef dat air Pink Trotter tries to bring any suffrage to de ballot box, he wuz a-gwine to shoot him befoh he got back to his cabin. Bless me, sez I, dat's my ole mammy's boy Pink wut he's a-talkin' about. I reckon I'll hab to go gib him a warnin'. Ef he's a respec'ful nigger he'll gib me all I wants to drink; ef he won' do dat, I'll let him go to hell an' get shot.' Den, Mass' Bourlan', he turns to de hoss an' pats him, an' sez, 'He's a dead hoss, too; I'll show you, Pink, whar he wuz hit wif a shell.' An' I puts my han' on de spot, all sore laik, an' crusty wif de dry blood. 'He cyarn't see none. He cyarn't see dat air moon no moah dan' a blin' bat,' he sez. 'Wen you pass yoh han' befoh his eyes he doan' blink none.' Den he look aroun' agin, an' axe me, 'Which way am de souf, Pink?' An' I pints out de hump o' chesnuts which is to de souf ob my cabin. 'I cyarn' see no souf, Pink,' sez he. 'Whar's de east?' An' I p'int out Mass' Trymier's barn, an' he say, 'I cyarn' see no east, nuther. I reckon I mus' be losin' my eyes a-layin' in de groun'.' Den he go on a-sighin' agin, an' say, 'Well, Pink, you min' whut a good frien' tells you. Doan' you

do no fool votin' unless you say yoh prayers an' meck yoh peace wif Gawd befoh han'. Now I mus' go. I mus' ride two hundred an' twenty-one mile befoh de mawnin'. Ef I doan' get back befoh de sun, I cyarn' cum out ob de grabe agin foh twenty-fibe yeahs. You rec'lect I cum all dis way to tell you yoh own good. You stay in yoh cabin all day nex' Tuesday, an' doan' you go down to Brayton. Ef you do, I'll hear ob it, an' I'll come back an' grab you, foh I ain't a-doin' dis yere kin' o' kindness foh ongrateful niggers. Will you stay to home, Pink?' — 'Ya-as, s'r,' sez I, 'I'll stay to home, massa. I won't get out'n o' my baid all de day, suah. Tank you, massa, kindly,' sez I, so skeered dat I could feel my own blood a-turnin' sour-laik. 'Den shake han's on dat promise,' sez he, an' I put my han' to his'n, an' his han' wuz all bones an' nothin' else. My hairt jumped laik a hop-toad out'n de grass wen I tech him, an' I close my eyes an' dassent open 'em till I heerd him ridin' away wif a shriek jes' laik a laughin' owl. 'I stay to home, mass' sojer,' I called aftah him, wif my eyes still shet. Den I went back inter de cabin, but I couldn' sleep none. I heerd a moanin' an' a groanin', till I couldn' stan' it no longah, den I scut an' run till I seed you."

"Come up and sleep in my barn," said Bourland. "There are no Kluckers around there."

He felt sorry for the poor trembling darky. He knew, too, that he was a party to this scheme of intimidation, and that with a few words of explanation he could allay the man's terror somewhat.

"It's pretty hard on the poor devils," he murmured; "and yet I don't see any help for it. Their so-called friends, with the gift of the ballot, have been their worst enemies."

Pink Trotter's experience was only one of many. In one week the mysterious Knights of the Invisible Empire had raised the superstitious apprehensions of the negroes beyond the reach of any reassuring argument. They could not work so well in the villages, but in the outlying districts, where the blacks lived in isolation, their

power was almost supreme. Parker and his agents tried to quiet their fears and ridicule with the truth the "warnings" and "messages." But reasoning is futile against superstition, and the dread of thirteen at a table is, in these enlightened days, a proof of it.

While all this was going on a circus, or rather a make-shift for such, appeared in Brayton. With a brass band, a few animals, some spurious bearded ladies, tattooed men, and some old paraphernalia, it gathered a crowd of negroes and decoy white men. The admission was half a dollar, and in default of that sum the management announced that it would accept the registration certificates of voters as pledges of future payment. The blacks vacillated between the circus and the vote, with the expected result. The show made a tour of the county, and after a week the manager turned several hundred certificates over to the Conservative committee at Brayton.

"It was a bright idea of yours, Colonel," said Powell, tearing up the papers. "But it has been expensive."

"We've got them now," remarked Wilson. "All we need to do is to watch the ballot boxes and get an honest count."

"How about your dead men?" asked Bourland.

"They are all registered and ready to rise," he said solemnly.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE POT AND THE KETTLE ARE BOTH BLACK

WHEN election day finally came the atmosphere seemed impregnated with an explosive fluid.

The preliminaries had developed a virulent tenseness of feeling. The county had been thoroughly canvassed, and word had been passed around among all the men of grit and backbone "to hang around the polls and bring their speakers." Both parties were determined to win; and it appeared unlikely, from the threats, that all of the electors would survive the day.

Parker made strenuous efforts to nullify the influence of the "Ku Klux." He prepared the constabulary for ready service, swore in extra deputies, and armed the town negroes, many of them under the pretence of enlisting militia. By this means he hoped to restore confidence in the timid and the intimidated. He relied greatly, however, on the secret manipulation of the ballot boxes, and a system of repeating.

The Conservative committee insisted that Bourland should remain indoors all day; and though he protested, he at last consented to stay at headquarters.

"It was your place to do the talking," they said, "and you've done it well." Indeed he had, so much so that he had received many invitations, some of which he accepted, to address rallies outside of his own county.

"There is going to be some rough work. You keep out of it. We'll do the watching," added Wilson, as the men prepared to leave headquarters. "See here, I've got something to show you. It may do something for us before the trick is discovered."

He unfolded a ballot of the Radical color with Lincoln's

head as the emblem, but beneath were printed the names of the Conservative ticket. "Parker's instructions to the niggers who can't read were to vote the pink ticket with Lincoln's head. I've got a good many of these around among them," he explained.

Wilson went to watch the polling booth near the Court House.

A gang of Union Leaguers, white and black, were crowding around it. Conspicuous among them was Simpson, the "inoffensive and industrious," of Northern notoriety.

A negro came up to vote. He was compelled to pass through a pair of parallel bars to the ballot box. Half-way there he was stopped by a Union Leaguer, and asked to show his ticket. The man hesitated, but finally let the inquisitor see it.

"Dis ticket ain't no good," the Leaguer said, tearing it up. "Heah's yoh ticket. You vote dat ticket. Dat's de right one," and he shoved a Radical ballot into his hand. "Come heah, boys," he called to the others, and they crowded around the voter.

"Do you want a Conservative ballot?" asked Wilson, pushing his way toward the man.

"No he doan'; he dassent," cried three or four Leaguers.

The negro didn't say anything; he looked around at the menacing faces of those who were his natural associates; then he wavered and broke. "I'll teck a Radical ticket," he said, and after he had put it in the box, the Leaguers gathered around him and slapped him approvingly. Wilson went up to the constable stationed at this booth. "I want those men kept away from the polls. They have no right there. It's against the law," he said with vigor.

"Keep away yourself," answered the constable, who was a scalawag. "I can't keep them away all alone," he added apologetically. "I'll have to wait until they send me some help."

But Parker, under the pretence of protecting property, had scattered the officials so that they were far apart, and, for the early hours of the day at least, the Leaguers

had an opportunity to do as they pleased with negro Conservatives.

"I'll help you drive them off," said Wilson to the officer.

"You haven't got any authority to do that," he replied.

"I'll soon get some authority," he answered hotly.

"Here, Jim," he called to one of his friends. "You go get half a dozen men, and bring them down here, and tell them to come loaded and ready for work."

In fifteen minutes they came. At sight of them the Leaguers moved away to a safe distance; but they continued their work by challenging every negro, and threatening him with vengeance if he did not vote the Radical ticket.

Some, however, they could not reach, for they were driven in by their white employers, and led to the ballot box, and supplied with Conservative votes.

Wilson had the right to challenge, and therefore he was entitled to be near the booth. While on duty he noticed one of the judges, as he put a ballot into the box, give a peculiar twist with his thumb which creased the paper. He watched more closely, and discovered a black substance under the man's thumb nail.

"See here, friend," he remarked dryly, "don't you think that dirty work is soiling your hands?"

The man started and thrust his hand into his pocket. He had been marking votes with a bit of graphite, and these, at the count, could be challenged and disqualified.

"Watch him, Frank," said Wilson to the Conservative judge in a loud whisper after some words with him. "If he does that again, have him arrested."

The Radical thought that a droll suggestion.

In the meantime some of Wilson's "dead men" were voting by proxy. The proxies were usually farm hands, who went around with their reputed employers, at different times, and voted under names that, by some means, had been put on the registration lists.

By two o'clock it was apparent that the negro vote was light, and the white vote unusually heavy. The Knights

of the Invisible Empire had done effective service for their cause. Scores of negroes, living on their small farms, never left their boundaries all day. They preferred not to vote rather than run any risks.

By three o'clock Bourland, from reports and indications, felt reasonably certain that he would be elected.

When Parker was told of the ruse of the Lincoln emblem on the Conservative tickets, and when he found how many of his supporters were remaining away from the polls, he realized that his chance was desperate. He became furious.

"They are cheating me out of my rights," he shouted, jumping up and shaking his fist. "Go get wagons, carts, anything, and drive around the country. Pile the niggers into them and bring them here. Take your whips, and lay it on to their backs. I'll keep the polls open two hours longer. Send that order off by telegraph all around the county. I'm judge here, and I'll make it go. Take word to Colonel Rippen to get out the militia to enforce it."

He sent half a dozen of his underlings, in different directions, with his dictatorial commands.

The streets of Brayton, by this time, were full of people. The saloons had been the centres of congestion as well as the polls, and some of the men were getting into ugly arguments. Several riots occurred, and there was some shooting, but with little damage. The Conservatives felt so assured that they committed few breaches of the peace, though they were prepared to do so, if necessary. In this electoral struggle they meant to take the offensive, yes, even to be revolutionary.

Toward evening some of Parker's vehicles came straggling into town, bringing a few conscript voters. The Conservatives, now feeling very confident, and seeing that the reënforcements would be very slight, made sport of Parker's method of getting out his full vote. They bantered the tardy negroes with comments like: "Lay for him when he goes back;" "Mark him for a dead one;" "Say good-by to yoh pappy, chile."

But when the order came to keep the polls open beyond the legal time, they began to collect in ominous force, and to look to their weapons. Quickly organizing, they went in detachments to the polls, and threatened to shoot any judge who should receive a ballot after the specified hour of closing. The militia, an ineffective organization in a real crisis, made a show of driving the citizens away. A few shots were exchanged, two men were wounded, but a battle was averted; for the courage of the soldiers faltered, and they broke, leaving the whites in possession of the ballot boxes. How many votes were stuffed into them during this commotion, no one, not even the stuffers themselves, could accurately report. But the election closed at the appointed time.

Several hours after nightfall the returns began to come in. By ten o'clock Bourland had received reports from nearly all the districts in his county; and he found that he had been elected by two thousand majority, at least. He wished that it had been less, for on the face of such a large majority in his favor the evidence of fraud was unmistakable.

"We've got a fat margin in our county to offset the scamps elsewhere, if the vote for governor should be close," remarked Powell, with great satisfaction.

"Now that the game is over, let us go wash up. I feel dirty," said Bourland, rubbing his hands with an air of meditative seriousness.

"I don't," responded Powell. "I just feel that I have knocked out my man with rules and regulations of his own making."

"Well, I think it is rather dirty business," said Wilson. "It's like pig-sticking, only in this case I really enjoy hearing the pig squeal."

Bourland thanked all the men who had worked for him so faithfully. In the depths of his feelings he was unspeakably grateful. But when the crowd began to pour into headquarters with congratulations, and the brass band, followed by a stream of shouters, came up the street, and the people below cried out for a speech; when the moment

of jubilation arrived, and that of doubt, with its stimulating excitement, had passed, he was possessed with a desire to slink home.

He went out on the balcony, nevertheless, and made a speech. It was not a particularly felicitous one, yet it called forth great enthusiasm. But that was, indeed, an occasion for enthusiasm in Virginia, for something more than mere hurrah. As the crowd in the street responded to his mention of the "end of carpet-bag rule," it was borne in upon him that the applause came with a certain glad seriousness, with the joy of a release from humiliation. His nature rang as with a lyric triumph of victory.

And as he stood there before them, two beings, a candidate-elect of suave speech and a secret self, he felt as proud as a knight of old, who, in the lists, amid the great ring of human faces, had won his lady's favor. Yes, while he spoke to the crowd, his secret self declared that once again he could call himself his father's son. He was an incapable no longer; he had regained his birthright. He was once more the leader of the people—his people.

But when, after midnight, the excitement was over, and he found himself riding homeward all alone, a reaction came. He was not joyous at all; he was depressed, even melancholy, and vexed with remorse. He had regained his prestige, the external lustre of it at any rate. Yet some inward pang plagued him with the sense that his character was no longer without blame. He had lost something. He had stepped down to a lower level of manhood. He had recovered the lost prestige by bribery, padded lists, false ballots; by the intimidation of helpless blacks through the fear of the shot-gun and supernatural visitations: in a word, by breaking the law.

"It's done now, Lance, old fellow," he murmured in the hearing of his horse. "I don't regret it, on the whole. I should do it again for the same cause. But it's mean business, and we'll keep clear of it in the future, won't we, Launcelot?" He patted the animal's neck affectionately. On many a ride, during the campaign, the creature had been the dumb, sympathetic auditor of his monologues.

Bourland saw the yellow glint of the lamplight through the dark trees, and when he approached the Hall he could distinguish the figure of Eleanor, standing by the white column under the wan light of the stars. She was waiting eagerly for the news.

"How is it, Henry?" she called out as he came through the gate.

"Well," he replied with light-heartedness, "Gilbert will be governor, I shall go to Richmond, and the cry now is, 'Turn the rascals out.'"

It was her victory as well as his. She had watched the campaign like the nurse of a fever patient.

"Perhaps there is a chance to save the old place yet," he whispered.

"Oh, if you only could!" she answered with quiet fervor. "You have a future now, and a work."

As they passed into the house, they heard a voice calling out, as a little white-robed youngster trotted downstairs in his bare feet:—

"Papa, papa, did you get 'lected? Did you lick that damn carpet-bagger?"

Even Little Chap hadn't been able to go to sleep. It was his victory, too.

BOOK VIII

THE OPENING OF A CAREER

CHAPTER XXXVI

ELSIE REAPPEARS

GILBERT, the new governor, went into office with a broom, and a homely commission from the people "to clean house."

On the evening of inauguration day he gave a reception to the members of the legislature. The gubernatorial residence, an unpretentious brick house, was built in an upper angle of the great Richmond square; it faced the Washington monument and the simple, massive Capitol, standing a few rods away, like an ancient temple in its grove of immemorial trees.

Bourland's breast was filled with an almost childish elation. He had come from the obscurity of the Hall to find that here, among the representative people of the state, he was a man of mark. Men approached him with an air of timidity and diffidence, as if they came uncertain of a welcome from a dignitary.

"Your speeches, Colonel," said one of them, "were an inspiration to us. I heard your address at Harvey, and went home with new resolution. I come from Rockbridge, sir, and I remember that General Lee, while he was president of the college, once said that you had the making of an orator in you. We shall look to you as one of our leaders this session."

Four men, standing by, were awaiting an opportunity to speak to him.

When Bourland met the governor, the latter took his hand and shook it gratefully.

"Lacamac is one of our banner counties," said he. "They tell me you were more interested in the election of the head of the ticket than in your own. I shall not forget you, Colonel."

"I'm not sure that you have the truth of it, Governor. The fight in Lacamac was a bitterly personal one. I had to do my best for my own skin."

"I've heard a good deal of that man Parker. He seems to have a great hold on the niggers, and he is full of resources. I intend to suppress him and his gang just as soon as possible. By the way, Colonel, my wife's niece tells me that you and she were old friends. She comes from down your way. Have you seen her?"

"Whom do you mean?"

"Vinton's daughter; I hate to call her by her husband's name. He's a pretty poor specimen—a scalawag, I understand. Poor girl, she made a great mistake when she was younger, and she has had a bitter experience. It's too bad, for she has grown to be as beautiful as a duchess. I expect her here to-night. She will be glad to see you, I know."

"Oh," said Bourland. "I did know her; quite well, I think, when we were young."

Elsie Vinton! She had disappeared long since from his life, almost from his recollection. He saw her in memory as one returning from the dead.

He would see her to-night! He felt absolutely indifferent about her coming, and the sound of her name did not even revive any of the old emotions. In fact, five minutes afterward the thought of her had slipped from his mind.

Half an hour later, glancing accidentally across the room, he saw her standing under a glare of light, the attracting centre of a circle of men. She was talking with great animation, and her eyes flung out lancets of exhilaration.

He sat down in a chair, observing her with cold curiosity. Was this the comrade of his youth? She was changed somewhat in appearance, but her manner was the manner of the Elsie of old. She stood there, in the full pride of social charms, distributing her smiles to the group of men as a Santa Claus doles out gifts to expectant children. A certain gracious superiority actually made them seem like children in her presence.

"Not much indication of tragedy there," thought Bourland, with an inward sneer.

He gathered up the stray bits of information that had come to him during the past years; it was mostly rumor and gossip, — the marriage with Clayton, her removal to Richmond, the separation from her husband, the life in the Confederate colony in London, the travels with an English family on the Continent, and last, that scandalous tale of her relations with an English noble. He didn't know when she returned to America. After that episode neither he nor Eleanor had mentioned her name.

His glance met hers. Bourland felt an impulse to shun the recognition. But she bowed and smiled with unmistakable cordiality, and in her face there was a gleam of joy, a gladness that suggested the freshness of girlhood. It struck home and awoke all those dormant impressions of his early romance.

The picture of the woman present in the body dissolved into the vision of youth. He saw the Elsie of other days: his playmate, tossing her impertinent head; the incarnation of witchery, the favorite of his father, the audacious rider of Scot. Poor Scot! the echoes of his last whinny had died away amid the clashing of battle at Fredericksburg.

Then came another memory, — the night of that last interview and the cause of their separation (he had almost forgotten it), the letter which she had stealthily read; the act which had broken irretrievably the enchantment of young lover's fairy land.

Shortly after their mutual recognition she left the circle of the charmed and passed slowly over to the conserva-

tory. Bourland divined her intention and her wish. He must follow her now, perforce, and he went, urged more by the gentleman's sense of obligation to the sex than by any real desire to revive the acquaintance.

She was standing alone amid the fragrance of the flowers, her back toward the entrance. At the sound of his step she turned and greeted him with low-uttered pleasure.

"I hoped you would come." It was an implied confession of her intention.

"Mrs. Clayton," struggled to his lips, but they refused to speak any name but the comrade's title of "Elsie."

Her face glowed with joy at the familiar address, while he regretted the indiscretion.

"I have been looking at you for half an hour, trying by thought to draw your attention," she went on. Her vivacity was gone now, displaced by the calmness of some secret satisfaction.

"I didn't see you," he stammered, and then betrayed himself with an after-thought. "I didn't want to come while all those men were around you."

"I didn't want you to come then."

There was an agitation in her voice. He felt that, in spite of himself, they had come back to the temper and tone of their former relations.

"You have changed very much," he said, ill at ease. Then, realizing that the remark was open to uncomplimentary interpretation, he added hastily, with chivalric courtesy, "You have grown more beautiful than ever."

The homage brought a trace of the wild fire of delight into her eyes. She unconsciously rose to the height of her stature under the stimulus of his gaze.

Indeed, she was more beautiful than when he saw her last; no longer with the beauty of fascinating girlhood, but with the developed power and fulness of woman; no longer a rose precious in the bud, but in the richness of the consummate flower.

She was taller by half a span, and the years, tormented by no wear and rack of maternity, had moulded her to a

sculptor's dream of health and maturity. There was no marring line in her face, no angle in her body, no deviation from the norm of symmetry. Her figure was an unbroken flow and bend and fall of sinuous curve that vibrated and quivered with the exuberance of vitality.

The modiste who fitted the gown she wore must have forgotten, for once, all thought of mercenary gain in the opportunity to display her art.

The impression that came over Bourland as he stood near her and caught the magnetic influence of her presence was an uncritical admiration for the robust splendor of her physical being. Whatever else she might be, she was to the seeing eye a magnificent animal, full-blooded, fiery, untamed, yet languishing from some inward distress.

A Buddhist lover with his belief in the transmigration of souls would have searched for her after death, among the royal mistresses of the jungle.

The impression grew upon him in strength.

"I can hardly believe you have come back to us," he said at last, somewhat bewildered.

"Perhaps you think I am somebody else, an impostor," she replied with half-subdued playfulness. "Do you want some passwords and signs? Scot, Uncle Aze, your father's habit of stirring his brandy with the middle finger." There was a wan pleasure in her face.

"Oh!" she added with an impulsive outbreak of feeling, "oh, if we could only blot out the consequences of our mistakes!"

There was in her voice the faint cry of some unquenchable agony. The prejudice which Bourland had maintained against her began to melt in the crucible of his sympathies. He wiped the moisture of agitation from his forehead.

"Let us go out upon the lawn. It is so hot here."

She flung a brilliant scarf of Roman silk over the bared whiteness of her shoulders, and then took his arm.

Arm linked in arm, the thought returned to him of the old comradeship. But he reflected that his hair was already touched with gray.

"I am so glad to find you changed, Henry. If you were as you used to be, you wouldn't have any sympathy for me. You are older now, but I like you much better for it."

She spoke as if they were companions in trouble and trial, and it brought him a certain consolation. He was ready to forgive and forget anything.

They passed under the arcade of trees in the adjoining square; lanterns, suspended from the branches, gleamed like magic fruit.

She dropped her fan. He stooped to pick it up. Her hand left its nest under his arm, and the nest became cool. He gave her the fan. She replaced her hand, and the nest became again deliciously warm.

"You have done such a lot of things since I saw you last," she said, going on to recount his deeds in war and peace, and showing that she had carefully followed his career.

"Tell me about yourself," he asked with gentle command.

"I would better leave my story untold," she replied with a sigh. But she opened her heart with a strange lack of reticence. "When I couldn't stand him any longer," she continued, after many exposures of her unhappy marriage, "I told him we should have to live apart. He was a perfect slave to me, and the more he did, the more I hated him. He gave me money and let me go abroad. I joined the American refugees in London, and travelled on the Continent. I grew tired of Europe. It is a wearisome place. I have come back to him." Then, after a pause, with all the pathos of helpless woe, she added, "Oh, I wish I were dead."

"Did you say you were living with your husband now?"

"We inhabit the same house," she answered. "It is shameful for me to say it, but it's a dog's life in a kennel. He has a certain brute kindness, and when I pat him on the back, he frisks and jumps with joy. If I helped him, I suppose he'd stand upon his two feet for me and be a man. But I won't. I hate him so."

Bourland could find no apt words. He remained thoughtful, attentive, embarrassed. "I wish he would abuse me. I wish he had spirit enough to do that," she cried; "I could respect him a little then." Her previous languor gave way to an impulse of passionate appeal. "I can't endure this much longer. Oh, Henry! You are the only one of my old friends left to me, the only one from the dear, old, better days." She stopped, and gave him a look, the meaning of which he only vaguely divined. "I'm like a ship at sea without a rudder."

"I'm glad we met to-night, Elsie. It is pleasant in these dark days to go back, even in thought, to the old times. Perhaps we can help each other." All vestiges of his resentment, of his indifference, had been obliterated by the vision of her bleeding heart. "You have scarcely begun to live your life yet."

"What have I to live for?" she demanded with petulant irritation.

"For the sake of the past," he answered, and he could see that the thought had touched the best that was in her. It put her to silence.

He began to tell her, on his part, of his own affairs, — the loss of the lands, and the prospect soon of losing the Hall home. "We shall be evicted, like Irish peasants," he declared sadly.

"Nonsense," she broke out. "Gather yourself together. You've got a great future before you. I've heard men say that you can be sent to Washington some day as senator if you fulfil your promise. Don't give up. Don't let the Hall go out of your hands. You know how your father loved it. Keep it—" she hesitated, "keep it—because—it stands for the best in the lives of more than one."

They had come to the foot of the Washington monument in the opposite angle of the square.

"How I should love to see the dear old place again," she said dreamily.

"You shall," he answered with decision.

"Perhaps Eleanor won't receive me now."

“She will.”

“What makes you think so?”

“Because I shall wish it; because she, too, has known what it is to suffer.”

Immediately he regretted his words. He had uttered them under the spell of his present mood—a mood of strong sentiment which, for the time, obscured everything else. It had been induced by sympathy for her utter loneliness and misery, and by an indefinable disturbance within himself. He experienced a stirring of the senses in her presence, an exhilaration when, in their motion side by side, this beautiful being, so alluring with radiant life, came nearer, and, at times, touched him. He was aware of the warmth of her nature, aware that it quickened in response to his own, aware that smouldering within her there was an unburned fire.

“Do you really want me to revisit the Hall?” she inquired.

A second thought had brought him caution.

“Yes,” he replied with slight hesitation.

“I am so glad,” she broke out joyously. “I was afraid that when we met you would find me dull, uninteresting; that you would say a few words, and then ignore me. You don’t know what a comfort it is to come back, after a long absence, and find one’s old friends still loyal and steadfast.”

Her hand gave a slight pressure on his arm, and almost immediately her mood changed. She became gay, joyous, and chattered like a brilliant *débutante*.

When she left that evening, as she entered her carriage, her hand, by tacit consent, lingered in his. He promised that he should come to see her.

When he went back to join a crowd of smokers whom the governor had requested to remain for a conference, it began to dawn upon him that he was in a very uncertain and indeterminate mental condition. His original intention had been to avoid Mrs. Clayton, or, at most, to be only formally polite. But some power, stronger than his intention or his will, had kept him a whole evening,

exchanging familiar confidences with the Elsie whom he had once almost loved.

"I'll have to keep clear of her in the future," he muttered. "I may run on a shoal. From now on my business must be exclusively with men."

In half an hour she was driven from his thoughts by the problems of politics.

CHAPTER XXXVII

AGRARIAN AND PROGRESSIONIST

WHEN a great cause fails, one on which men have ardently set their hopes, there usually comes unto the lives of the survivors a mood of morbid melancholy and Byronic despair. It grapples their hearts, their souls, their wills, and holds them chain-bound to their own sentimental misery. But if there be real men among them, this mood passes away, in time, and gives place to the unsubdued and unsubduable energy of some prophet like Carlyle with his gospel of work as a panacea for all earthly woes.

Bourland had played the rôle of Byronic incapability to the end; once again, and now with the reawakened genius of his people behind him, he was ready for the programme of action and achievement.

The cause of the Confederacy and states' rights was irretrievably lost. But Virginia, with much of her glorious heritage from the past, might yet be saved and restored to her proud position of eminence. "I have an opportunity to help save her," reflected Bourland. "That is my commission and nearest duty." And the love of the general doctrine of states' rights survived with him in a devotion to his own state in particular.

With this loyalty for the commonwealth there was mingled a due regard for his personal interests, so that he possessed double motives and incentives.

He was urged to take the office of speaker of the lower House of Delegates, but he definitively refused. "I haven't had the necessary experience," he said. "Let me serve on the floor until I get broken in." There was a self-regarding reason for his refusal. "If I should take it as a green-

horn," he thought, "I should surely make mistakes that might be fatal to my future. I can't run the risk." He had begun to look forward, and he saw hovering ahead of him a dream, a possible realization, a seat in the National Senate. Many men recently, perhaps they were merely politicians, had made significant allusions to such a career. "You ought to be an orator," General Lee had said at their last meeting. He had never forgotten those words. In the Senate! There was a chance to restore the prestige to his name.

The ideals of the planter still dominated in his political views and colored his policies. He had little sympathy for things beyond their range of influence. Before long he became distinguished as a leader of the agrarians.

The present legislature was composed of a Conservative majority with a considerable scattering of carpet-baggers, scalawags, and negroes. Among the Conservatives there was not a unanimity of opinion. A number of them, owning no land, were out-and-out commercialists, and they took up the hue and cry of "modern progress" and the development of mechanical industries.

The agrarians, on the other hand, were the representatives of the old conditions. They cherished the traditions of the planters, and desired to keep Virginia as in the past, an agricultural community. They looked askance at the encroachments of commercialism, and with heart and lip despised the Yankee spirit of bargain and trade. They felt a certain social superiority, like that assumed by the English landed gentry over the London shopkeeper.

In the South at that time the sympathy with the agrarian policy was very strong. During the carpet-bag régime the cry of "modern progress" had been used as the open sesame to the state treasuries, and more than forty thieves, under the pretence of building roads, public works, and of extending internal improvements, had bonded the states with debts, put the money in their capacious pockets, and had then sighed, like the Macedonian conqueror, for new worlds of spoliation.

The agrarians, therefore, with their policy of rigid econ-

omy, their distrust of modern innovations, their loyalty to the older ideals, represented the best Conservative sentiment.

There lay Bourland's opportunity for leadership.

But there was a man in the legislature destined to become a potent force in politics, and, possibly, a masterful opponent. His name was Barlowe,¹—a reticent man, one tardy in announcing his position, yet a person of tireless energy and inexhaustible resources. He came from an obscure family, but had fought his way from the ranks of the army into prominence. At Bull Run, he was a private; at Fredericksburg, a major; at Gettysburg, a colonel; at the battle of the Wilderness, the commander of a division. Everybody regarded him as a brave man, and a brave man he was. He had been several times wounded, and wounds were unassailable charters of esteem. After the war, amid the turmoil and chaos, he turned to politics, and he had never failed to carry his county.

Bourland was fifteen years his junior in age, and thirty in experience.

Barlowe had lost two fingers of his right hand, and, apparently somewhat sensitive at the disfigurement, he usually carried that hand in his pocket. He was an unhandsome personage, anyway, possessing none of those physical graces of presence and manner so helpful to a public character.

"It was those two fingers or my life," he remarked to Bourland one day. "This battered stump is a reminder of the circumstance. My other wounds—I've got seven—I can hide under my clothes; but this thing won't hide. I got it during the break-up at Appomattox, after the order to disband had been given. I was walking out at night on the edge of our lines, and a hungry-looking devil jumped out of some bushes, put a musket barrel in my face, and demanded my valuables. I pushed it away with my hand, but it went off and took those two fingers up to the moon."

¹ The public career of Barlowe may suggest to some a man once notorious in Virginia politics. There has been no intention here, however, of reproducing his private life and character.

"Was he a Yankee prowler?" asked Bourland.

"No; one of our fellows, a straggler turned bandit."

"What happened to him?"

"Oh, I stuck him with my sword through the guts. It was a pretty easy poke, too, for he was hollow from nothing to eat. That was a close shave for me, I can tell you. I felt very near God for an hour afterward."

He told it all with a cigar projecting from his rows of yellow teeth, and with his usual voice, a sonorous whine, which never passed beyond the range of the natural octave.

For the first time Bourland realized the utter heartlessness of the man. Barlowe had taken side with neither the agrarians nor the progressionists; he busied himself with the revision of the election laws, and in this work he showed himself an astute partisan. So partisan indeed were some of his proposals that several times he was jocularly criticised for them.

"Well," he drawled out, "when you are at war and you get a strong position, you fortify and intrench it, don't you, so's the enemy can't get in?"

On one occasion he invited Bourland to dine with him at Murphy's, and Bourland, although he never sought out Barlowe as a companion, accepted for political reasons.

"There's a fellow been talking at me for a long time, a promoter of some kind. I don't know about his scheme. I want him to have a shot at you," said Barlowe, as he gave the invitation.

He went, and the promoter, during the dinner, broached his idea—a plan to build a competing railroad into the West. Barlowe, apparently, was looking on it with favor.

"The Chesapeake and Ohio is bound to be a great success, Colonel," said Barlowe, sticking his napkin, which had fallen down, once more under his collar.

"Yes, it will do some good to the state, I suppose," answered Bourland; "but I take little stock in these bubble stories of boom towns and mushroom cities. Manchesters and Birminghams have been prophesied for us by the score. Indeed, in these tales, the future of New York itself is threatened with a superior rival."

"Well, now," replied Barlowe, "there's Norfolk. I haven't a doubt but what Norfolk in twenty years will be as big as Liverpool. Just look at this Chesapeake and Ohio, and see what it can do. See how it can beat out any other Eastern road in natural advantages for grain carrying. And look at that harbor; there isn't a finer harbor than Hampton Roads in all the world."

"Norfolk," cried out the promoter with zeal, "Norfolk is a natural gateway for the whole world. It is a gateway for the whole South. It is the key to our jewel chest, the entrance to a great treasure land, stored with our incomparable resources. I tell you, sir," he went on, "the future of Virginia is dependent upon the future of Norfolk. If we can boom her into an active, populous city, the golden age of our prosperity will return to us, the fields will blossom anew, the chimneys of factories will smoke to the clouds, the whistle and hum of machinery will make eternal music."

"By Jingo!" said Barlowe, jocularly, laying down the knife with which he had been eating, "you would persuade a heathen. That's what we want, — factories and eternal music. Then we could all start to sing."

The sarcasm did not dampen the ardor of the promoter. He continued to talk glowing pictures.

"I am far from sharing your enthusiasm," said Bourland.

"It is all true," he replied. "All we need is something like Northern push to make it true."

"We've had enough Northern push in the South these last few years," retorted Bourland. "Virginia is the garden spot of this country. She was ordained by God to be an agricultural commonwealth. It is wrenching her from her natural destiny to make anything else out of her."

"Oh, pshaw!" put in Barlowe, turning his banter on Bourland. "You aren't up to the times. You'd have us stand still. What this state needs is just what our friend says, though he takes many words to say it — another good railroad to compete with this Chesapeake and Ohio, which the fellows in Wall Street have got hold of for the

purpose of squeezing dividends out of us. What do they care about the state of Virginia? What we want is a strictly home enterprise, planned and developed and perfected all by our own people; something that will show the people of this country that Virginia is alive, awake, and up to date; something that will bring capital and labor over our borders. We want to give the country an object lesson, and this road, I think, will do it. It is proposed to run it along the river into the valley, and thus to open up a way that will drain the great states of the Southwest of their grain and produce. Virginia will become the port of entry and point of departure for half the continent. It means that Virginia, and not Georgia, will become the empire state of the South."

"But how are you going to drain the states in the rear when they haven't the roads to connect with ours?"

"Oh! they'll come in time," declared the promoter.

"Where are you going to get the money to do it? There aren't enough capitalists among our own people."

"We don't want it all to be private enterprise. Let the state do it with bonds."

"Haven't we had enough of that sort of business from the carpet-baggers?"

"But we should do it honestly," asserted Barlowe.

Bourland shook his head.

"You couldn't make the road pay. There isn't enough demand for such a thing. The state would have to pay the original cost, and then once involved, would have to grant annual subsidies to turn the wheels and keep the rolling stock in motion."

Barlowe had been studying Bourland's face carefully. "That's what makes me hesitate," he said. "That very point. Suppose we get in, there is no way of getting out. It's risky. I think our friend had better study up the details better before he takes the subject farther. We want more facts, friend, and less talk."

"Who are behind you?" asked Bourland, turning suddenly to the promoter.

"They don't want their names to be known yet."

“Well, I’m opposed to it tooth and nail,” he said decisively.

The promoter looked at Barlowe, but his face was impassive. He appeared to be meditating.

“Perhaps you’re right, Bourland,” he said at last. “You are on the safe side, anyway.”

Bourland left the table suspicious, and his suspicions induced him to do some very quiet work as a scout. He learned gradually, by stray facts and inferences, that a bill authorizing the railroad, and guaranteeing a large part of the cost by state bonds, was to be brought before the legislature; furthermore that Barlowe, after its passage, was to be the president of the corporation, at a salary of twenty thousand dollars a year.

“I see through your game now, General Barlowe,” muttered Bourland. “To make twenty thousand a year, for yourself, you will loot the state of several millions. It is too bad, too bad. We have just cleaned out the carpet-bagger pest, and now you come, out of our own ranks, to follow their example. Human nature is human nature, north or south. Well, here’s a chance to scotch a snake and kill him. And I’ll do it.”

He felt his fibres stiffen for the struggle.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

ANOTHER CHRISTMAS AT THE HALL

THE autumn passed, and the year drifted on toward Christmas.

"We can have a small, old-fashioned house party this year," wrote Bourland from Richmond to Eleanor. "I have sold that town lot for a snug sum, and we have enough to keep the wolf from the Hall door for a year or two, at least. . . . I want you to invite Elsie Vinton (I can't force my pen to add the other name); she will come with an aunt for the holidays. I feel very sorry for her; she is paying for the mistake of her youth with a long penance. My prejudices against her have all gone, for I think her trials have brought out the best that is in her. It would give her great pleasure to spend a few days with us. Write her, Eleanor, for the sake of old times. We ought to help each other as much as we can, in these days. . . . I am working up this railroad business, and I am going to defeat it, I believe. I purpose to throw a bomb among the conspirators when they least expect it. It is a gigantic scheme to make a few highwaymen rich at the expense of the state. If I can smash it, it is going to push me several miles on the road toward that which, at present, it is inadvisable to write down in black and white. But I hear the bees buzzing around my ears, and they are honey bees."

The house party was not even so large as originally planned. Anderson wrote that he would surely be there, "begrimed so like a darky with mine dust that he feared he would not be admitted to social equality." Elsie Vinton promised to come with her aunt. Bourland sent word that Major Talcott, an old army friend, a bachelor, would come with him. But the Hewitts, owing to the sudden illness of the youngest child, were compelled to decline the invitation.

"Send all the children who are not sick," said Bourland in a note to them, after his arrival. "We must have some

noise, and Randall can't make enough by himself." So the Hewitt children — Martia, Floss, and Little John, as he was called — were sent over with a box of gifts.

Anderson came last, laden like Santa Claus with a sack.

Christmas eve, that year, was truly merry. First came the children's hour, Major Talcott presiding with inimitable stories, and Bourland and Anderson assisting with some boisterous and altogether undignified play. But at nine o'clock the youngsters hung up their stockings and packed off to bed. The elders, after their departure, began to dress a tree cut from the woodland. Major Talcott was assiduously by Eleanor's side, much to Anderson's disgust; and when he persisted in his attentions, Anderson went off to a corner and sulked in a most gentlemanly silence. At half-past ten Randall and Little John were caught taking alternate peeps through the keyhole, and two timorous little seraphs (all four in nightgowns and bare feet) were discovered sitting, with feminine courage, on the top stair of the hallway. Amid their shrieks of delight (and the echoes rang through the old house like a pæan of redemption) Bourland drove them scampering back to bed, and punished each one with a kiss. Before midnight, the tree was dressed, the stockings were filled, the children's gifts were laid on the quarter sections of the square grand piano, and Elsie and Bourland, the major and the aunt, were deep in a game of whist, while Anderson, elate among mankind, was playing cribbage, in that sulky corner, with Eleanor.

Two hours later darkness reigned throughout the Hall, save when the flickerings from the fireplace momentarily illumined the watchful portraits in the silent parlor.

Early in the morning the children, mindful of the expulsion the night before, took full revenge. At six o'clock four angels from Gabriel's legion began to blow unheavenly horns, which, like the voice in Macbeth's hallucination, cried out "Sleep no more" to all the house.

During the forenoon the children were busy with their gifts. Anderson, who declared that camp life had made him an admirable purveyor of food stuffs, hung close to

the commissary department and Eleanor. Major Talcott, concealing disappointment with true chivalry, entertained the aunt, a garrulous maiden of forty-four, who still cherished hopes. Bourland and Elsie went for a morning ramble among the haunts of their lost comradeship.

The familiar objects, the landmarks, the reminiscent flavor of the very air, seemed to conjure back the elfin girl who once had raced the fields with unbound hair.

"I wonder if I could do it now?" she said, stopping under an apple tree and reaching up to the lower branches.

"Of course not," replied Henry, with a scorn that was an irresistible temptation to try.

She made the trial, raising herself with the ease of an athlete till her shoulders touched the bough. She swung there until she began to gasp, and then she dropped to the ground.

"It isn't worth climbing now. There are no apples there." The effort had wrought her superb bosom to a pulsating rise and fall; the crimson of the autumn fruit flushed her cheeks.

"No, there are no apples there now — only the memories of apples," he answered sadly.

"Oh, there is where the old haystacks used to be," she cried out, pointing toward the barn.

"Do you remember your leap from the window?" He asked the question carelessly, but some recollection deepened the crimson on her face.

The three children had been playing pioneers. The barn was the stockade, and having been besieged by Indians, they had taken refuge in the haymow. At last the time had come (time can pass at will in books and plays) when their water was gone, their food exhausted, and only four charges of powder remained. Capture, scalping, death at the stake, awaited them from the savages outside. It was the crisis for a manly deed. "I'll make a sortie, sister and little wife," he said. "If you see me get killed, take these knives (they were of laths torn from the chicken coop), and follow me to the happy hunting ground. Don't let them take you alive. Good-by."

He bent down to kiss her, a play kiss, such as he had often given before. But the caprice of the girl, or perhaps the growing revelation of the dignity of womanhood, put an unexpected limit to the privileges of play. She *wouldn't* be kissed. Her refusal aroused the thwarted tyrant, and he vowed that she should. Growing more determined as the pitch of his passion rose, she sought to escape. They scrambled over the hay, the one nimble, the other bent on his desire, until he had cornered her. Then, with an impulse of desperation, too proud to be conquered, by a sudden movement, she eluded him and, with a jump, flung herself out of the window on to the haystack near by. He stopped, dazed at her boldness, for it was a leap of dangerous breadth. But, plucking his courage, he followed her, and in the struggle he overpowered her rudely, brutally, and forced his lips upon her hot face, damp with the tears of intense physical strain.

The incident was a crisis in their lives. The limitations of play privileges were observed, and, thereafter, between the give and take of coquetry and raillery, there stood the silent barrier of mutual reticence.

And now, years after, man and woman grown, they ranged again over the vast plains on which they had hunted the buffalo; they walked along the willow bank from which they had fished for sunnies with pin hooks; they visited the Pocahontas stone in the copse of ash trees, where, more than once, John Smith had escaped the historic skull-crushing; and they discovered forgotten reminders of their wild games, sports from which the demure Eleanor often retired for the more domestic concerns of samplers and tatting.

As they came back to the Hall, she went across the lawn to a beech tree down by the spring house. He followed wonderingly.

"Oh, they are still there!" she exclaimed with an outburst of gladness.

"What?" he asked.

Her look was a reproach.

"Don't you remember?" She pointed to their initials,

black, yet still distinct, in the tough bark of the beech. "It was thirteen years ago last August," she added. "I read aloud from 'The Lamplighter' while you cut them. There was a great thunderstorm just before supper."

"They are archives of our youth, aren't they?"

"Oh, you had forgot all about them. They are rather the symbols of —"

She stopped.

"Of what?" he asked with tenderness.

"Of something that frequently happens in the world. Come, let us go in. I'm hungry as a bear. It has been a very happy morning for us, hasn't it?"

She turned and walked thoughtfully to the house.

Yes, it had been a happy morning, Bourland thought. He remembered the most delicious moment of it, when he had taken her in his arms, and lifted her up, so that she could peer into the window of the deserted mill.

Her mood had been something of a riddle; she had been shy, sad, and yet, withal, frankly joyous.

After dinner, Anderson and Eleanor went for a drive. Elsie and her aunt retired to their rooms, while Bourland and the major, after a smoke and siesta, rode out on horseback.

When Bourland returned, as he mounted the stairs, he heard a voice in the hallway above, which caused him to stop. It was Elsie, with the children around her, telling a story. He sat down on the steps, out of view, and listened to the narrative.

"So she gave the old woman her pitcher of water, asking her if she shouldn't run home to get her a cup. 'My dear,' said the old crone, after she had taken a long drink, 'you are not at all like your vain and wicked sister; you are a very kind-hearted girl, and I am going to reward you for your goodness to an ugly old woman like me,' and before the girl could say a word from wonder the ragged beggar was transformed into a beautiful woman dressed with silk and gold lace. Just think of that, Martia and Floss and John and Randall. Wouldn't you like to see her? Well, she came to the maid and said, 'Now this is your

reward; hereafter every time you speak, with each word there shall fall from your lips a diamond,' and as she said these words, she touched the girl's lips with her wand, which was a bar of pure gold set with pearls."

The children began to clap their hands with approval.

"I'd talk an awful lot if I was her," put in Little John.

"Crickety," said Randall, "if that other girl, the wicked one that dropped toads, lived in our house, she'd have to have a plaster put over her mouth."

"Isn't it almost time for the prince to come?" said Bourland, in a sepulchral voice, rising from his place of concealment.

There was a chorus of shrieks, the loudest of which came from Elsie herself.

It was an entrancing picture which he saw. Elsie, to please the children, had gone to the clothes-press and had decked herself in old grandmother garments. There she stood, for escape was cut off, arrayed in capacious hoops under a pink brocade gown, with diminutive waist, and bare arms and neck, half concealed under a bit of antique Mechlin. Her hair was powdered white, her face rouged, and on her cheeks were cross-patches of black court plaster—a figure of dainty quaintness such as one sees nowadays only in old pictures or on the stage.

"Go on with the story," said Henry. "Don't let me interrupt it."

"But I look like—like," her embarrassment could not find a likeness.

"Like something sweet and beautiful come out of the past," he exclaimed.

Her eyes dropped from his to the floor, and the rouge concealed the flush of her pleasure.

She tried to finish the story, telling how the fame of the diamond-dropping maiden spread abroad, and how the country's prince came and married her, but the charm of the juvenile style was broken by the presence of Bourland. She brought the narrative to an abrupt close, and then refusing four pleading requests for 'Just one more,' she made her escape.

She left Bourland in a thoughtful mood. He had come to realize that, in believing the gossip about her, he had done her great wrong. The affection of the children, whose natural likes and dislikes are so often a wiser judgment of character than the subtler analysis of older folk, had made him see her in the radiance of a new light. There was a tenderness about her now, such as comes into the lives of those who secretly desire, and yet are denied, the prizes of motherhood. No, she was certainly no longer the Elsie of old, the small-souled slave of vanity and self. The harsh tutelage of the years had brought her knowledge, and some beautiful regret, more sacred than her sorrows, had lifted her above the level of her folly.

And underneath all, deeply hidden in the depths of her nature, Bourland seemed to feel that there dwelt within her some splendid unburned passion, something awaiting a consuming, sacrificial fire—a possession of the hoarded, unclaimed riches of her womanhood.

And yet he could not exorcise altogether the influence of those rumors. They left upon his mind, in spite of his sympathies, a doubt, a distrust of her character.

About dusk he went out of doors in search of one of the servants. As he came back, he observed her walking toward the family cemetery. She was going, alone, to pay her deference to her godfather's grave.

"She must have a good, pure heart to do such a thing, of her own will," mused Bourland.

He watched her open the rusty gate; he saw her search among the tablets, bending down to read the inscriptions in the gloaming light. Pausing beside one, she bent her head in reverence, and at last put her hands to her face, as if to wipe tears from her eyes.

Bourland avoided her return. She passed through the gate again, returned to the Hall, and went immediately to her room.

CHAPTER XXXIX

A MAN-TRAP AND A MAN

GENERAL BARLOWE sat in his hotel apartment, awaiting visitors. He busied himself, meanwhile, with reading the draft of the bill for the projected railroad.

A rap sounded on the door, and, after a response, a man entered.

The general stared at the stranger without giving any sign of recognition.

"Parker," said the visitor. "William Parker."

"Oh, yes. Parker of Lacamac. I'm glad to see you. Sit down, Mr. Parker." He did not rise from his seat. "You'll excuse an old soldier for not getting up."

"So you are out of a job, eh?" queried Barlowe, after some casual remarks.

"My term of office has expired," replied Parker, with an attempt at dignity.

Barlowe remained silent some time, twirling his thumbs.

"Radical stock not very high in Lacamac, eh?"

"We were beaten by intimidation and fraud."

"The devil! You don't say so!" Barlowe appeared to enjoy a joke. "Bourland was too smart for you this time, I hear. He managed the circus, and you played the clown."

"Smart?" sneered Parker. "There is nothing smart about him. He's only the gas man."

"I wish I could tap his tank, and get some of the gas. He's going to do a taking turn on the stage before long, or I'm much mistaken. People around here say he's senatorial caliber. He may be the big Mogul of the state, and we'll all have to turn in and shout for him." Barlowe watched closely the effect of his words.

Parker winced and ground his teeth.

"I sent for you," continued Barlowe. "Do you want to get back into remunerative politics?"

"I'm not in need of money. But I hate to be idle."

"Your Radical party, it seems, has gone to smash. How would you like to join a new party?"

"Whose?"

"Mine," said Barlowe, bluntly; adding, "In three years I shall be the master of this state."

"Is Bourland to join you?"

"I don't know. I've got to draw him in or else —" he stopped and eyed his visitor — "or else tread on him like a cockroach."

Parker jumped up, flaming with scarlet zeal, and brought his fist down on the table.

"That's it!" he shouted. "Tread on him, or you can't have me. No, never! By God, I'm going to hound that damn snob until I see him in rags. I'm going to kick him out of house and home."

"Well," mused Barlowe, aloud, "I've got to get him in my power first. I need you to help me."

"I'll help, and be glad of the chance."

"You'd like to get hold of that mortgage on his house, wouldn't you?"

Parker answered with an eager affirmative.

"I know who has it, and I can get him to sell it to you. But to carry out my plan, I want you to let me hold the deeds of his land, your land, for a few weeks. I also want permission to sell."

Parker was reluctant to give them over until he knew more of the scheme.

"It's this way," explained Barlowe. "I want to hold out the mortgage on the house, and the possibility of his getting back his land, as a bait. If I can tempt him, he will come under my thumb, and he won't move afterward except as I bid him. There isn't any risk. The transfer need not be made until after I have him tied with my leading strings."

Parker still held off.

"The lands are no good to you without the Hall," argued Barlowe. "They are no better than other lands which you can now buy for half their cost."

"That's true enough," replied Parker. "But I want to be sure of what will happen. If it was certain that he would be ruined —"

"Well," broke in Barlowe, testily, "keep your deeds, then. I can work my scheme with the mortgage alone. I'll throw you overboard altogether, and I'll make a senator of Bourland as sure as the Day of Judgment. But I'll give you this chance. You help me, and I'll send you to Congress."

"Will you promise to smash him?"

"Yes, in time. I don't want to hurt him more than I have to, for he's a good fellow. But I'll promise you he'll never be senator."

"You are leading me blindly into an uncertain game."

"Of course. What do you expect in politics?"

Parker still swayed in indecision.

"I'll put you in a way of getting the mortgage on his house. That's a good argument. You must be sharp. But once get it, you can do what you please with it."

Parker, who desired nothing else so much, at last yielded, and promised the deeds.

"Now to the other business," proceeded Barlowe. "I can use you. They tell me you have great influence over the niggers. I want you to begin at once to disorganize what is left of the Radical party. Use your own methods. Keep up the bitterness against the aristocrats. I'll send you further instructions later. Remember now, the prize is a seat in Congress."

After some further conversation Parker took his leave.

"Well, this is a good beginning for the job," muttered Barlowe to himself. "But I want both of those men. Just think, a handsome, eloquent F. F. V. with an armorial crest, and a nigger medicine man — wouldn't they make a fine pair of stallions to draw my political barouche up the hill?"

An hour later Clayton entered the room.

He was a man of large bulk, with a rather genial countenance. In dress he was conspicuously untidy; there were wrinkles and spots in his clothes, while his linen was almost the color of unbleached muslin. He had not shaved for two or three days, and at the corners of his mouth were signs of tobacco.

"Hello, Clayton," said Barlowe, without stirring. "What is the latest quotation on delegates?"

"They are down fifty points. I gathered in five."

"Keep the change. You've earned it."

"We've got to have some of the agrarians, however, or the bill will never go through."

"Have you seen the colonel?"

"I had a talk with him, told him a rigmarole, — how I got hold of the mortgage on the Hall, — was pressed for money just now, — that Parker had been at me half a dozen times to buy, — that I wished to give him a chance to redeem it first, and then a lot of stuff about us Virginians and that Yankee scamp. I could see it took him."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said he couldn't do anything about it now; just at this time his funds were tied up. The beggar, he couldn't raise a thousand on his bond. Then he asked me to give him a year."

"What then?" asked Barlowe, with interest.

"I told him I'd give him a month. If he couldn't raise the money by that time, I'd sell to Parker."

"Good," said Barlowe. "I guess you've got him properly worked up for me to take the turn. Now let the devil enter, money in hand, and if he doesn't take it, he's — well, he's the fellow old Diogenes couldn't find with his candle. You can go now, I'm busy. Stop a minute, one question more. How's your wife?"

"Things are worse than ever. She's made a fool of me, and I'm a fool for letting her do it. That's my weakness, I suppose. But you don't know her, General."

"Can't you get a divorce?"

"It isn't so easy in Virginia. Besides, the witnesses needed are on the other side of the ocean. I won't do

that anyway. It is what she wants. She'd marry very soon if she could get free."

"Who?"

"Bourland." He uttered the name with a shamed face.

Barlowe gave a long whistle of surprise. "So that's why you want him downed, eh?" he said with a smile. "My plot thickens, as they say. If it wasn't real life, it might do for a novel."

During the next week the railroad bill was given a first reading in the legislature, and another emissary of Barlowe visited Bourland and offered to sell him the whole, or a part, of his lost lands.

Bourland shook his head sadly. "Come to me five, ten years from now, friend. Perhaps I can talk to you then."

"I'll hold them, anyway, for a while," said the man; adding incautiously, "A rich uncle may die and put you in funds." The proposal of Clayton, coupled with this, aroused his suspicion that something latent in his political fortunes was soon to develop.

The night before the day when the railroad bill was to come up for a vote, Bourland sat in his room making a last revision of his speech. He had worked in secret, and he proposed to blow up the whole conspiracy in one dramatic effort. He felt rather confident about the result, for he had mastered his facts, and he thought he should take its supporters by surprise, and drive many of them to cover.

He was dreaming ambitious dreams nowadays.

At ten o'clock Barlowe knocked at his door. "Hello, Bourland," he said, "what are you digging up at this hour of the night?" Their relations during the past months had been outwardly cordial, and Barlowe was quite unaware of Bourland's purpose; for the latter, seemingly busy with other things, had shown no unusual interest in the railroad project.

"I've been writing," he said, laying down his pen, and shoving the papers into a drawer.

"I'm glad to see a man work. You've got the brains

and the pluck to make a great future. If I were as young as you, I'd get up and hustle for just what you are hustling!" Barlowe smiled a fatherly admiration.

"What's that?" asked Bourland.

"Why, the Senate, of course. Everybody says you are on the way to it, if you are diplomatic, and don't make any political enemies. I've dropped in to-night to talk it over with you. I think you ought to begin to lay your plans. If I had your name and your gift of oratory, I'd make you sweat, myself; but I haven't. So I've thought it over, and decided to back you. You see," he put in with frankness and nonchalance, "I want to join the procession early. I see plainly how things are coming on." He spoke with no trace of insincerity.

"Well," said Bourland, with growing suspicion, "a man who wouldn't be a senator if he could, would hardly be a full-blooded native of Virginia. However, I'm pretty young yet to think about it."

"But not to get ready for it. I was talking to a rather long-headed fellow to-day. 'It's too bad that Bourland is in such bad shape financially,' said he. 'He can't make a show, and I tell you show goes a great way these days.' And he hit the nail exactly. If you could only get hold of some of your land again, and could open the Hall, and entertain your friends there, as your father did, you need only to pat some of these politicians on the back to make loyal liegemen out of them. To hobnob with you F. F. V.'s tickles men's vanity. You don't make use of your God-given capital. You let it lie fallow. You've got to do that sort of thing, if you want political power. Then there's that splendid war record of yours, — in Pickett's charge and on Lee's personal staff. They are things that will make votes."

"What you say is perfectly true, General. I've thought of it a hundred times. But I can't do it. I'm not able to do it." His suspicions now began to crystallize; he knew that he was about to face some strong temptation; that, ere the conversation was concluded, he would either fall from his standard of rectitude, or Barlowe would be

his bitter enemy. "I'll make him do the talking," he said to himself.

But Barlowe appeared to have said all he had to say. He lit a cigar, took a book from the table, and began to run through its pages. At last he put the book down.

"I've been trying," he said, "to recollect something a teacher wrote on the blackboard for a writing exercise one day when I was a ragamuffin at school. We had to copy it five times in our book. It was poetry, I think, though I've forgotten the jingle; something to this effect: 'There is a tide in the affairs of mankind which, if you launch on the flood, will lead you to a fortune. But if you let it pass, all life's voyage is stranded on the shoals of misery. On such a full sea are we now afloat. We must take the current when it comes, or lose our ventures.' It hits your case precisely, Bourland, and I'm in the same boat with you. Good hard money is what we need now, to float our ship to port."

"I don't know where to get it," said Bourland, aloud, while inwardly he thought, "Now, General, show up your hand."

"I know where to get it—for both of us," he blurted out after a pause. "These railroad people want us to come in with them, and give the weight of our names to the corporation. I think this bill is a good thing; honestly now, I do. They will make me president of the road, if I will take it, and you can get something else almost as good. The dummies who nominally have the places now will resign if we accept."

"But you know, General, that I said I was opposed to it long ago."

"Yes, but that was offhand; you hadn't examined into it then. I've looked into it since, and it's all right, I can assure you. They've done me the honor to offer me this position of president, and I am authorized to tender to you the position of first vice-president. The salary will be five thousand dollars a year, and, in addition, you will receive five hundred shares of preferred stock. You can

sell it, and with the money put yourself into shape, open the Hall, get back some of your lands, and it will be Senator Bourland in four years."

The vision of the possibility, breaking so suddenly, took away his judgment. He could save the Hall, and snap his fingers in Parker's face. Now that the temptation was fully before him, he realized, as he had never done before, the power of its attraction. It drew the hard steel of his resolution like a magnet. He was bewildered, like one in the play of an electric storm.

"You have never taken a public position against the bill, you know," said Barlowe, picking up the book again and carelessly turning its pages.

"But I have in my own conscience, General. I'm opposed to it. I don't believe in it." He began to walk up and down the room. A cold sweat oozed out on his forehead. It was true, an inner voice told him, he had never given public utterance to any opposition. He could say to the world that his judgment declared that the bill was for the best interests of the state. The question was certainly debatable and open to difference of opinion.

"If there were time, I could prove everything to your satisfaction. But it is too late; the bill goes through to-morrow."

"Why didn't you come to me before?" Bourland put the question sharply.

"I didn't have anything to say to you; no authority to make you an offer."

Ambition was appealing to Bourland with secret arguments. "Don't make any political enemies," it said. "If you do, say good-by to me. Just think, too, this is your last chance to save the Hall. If you don't use it now, Parker will drive you out, as he has sworn to do. The mortgage has only a short time to run."

Barlowe observed that he was making a strong impression. He began to press further. "I know how you feel, Colonel. You don't like to compromise even with yourself. But you've got to in politics. Hold your judgment in abeyance in order that great results may not be

thwarted. Think how, if you once got started, you could serve the state."

"Don't talk any more to me, General. I want to think. I realize the situation fully. It is simply a question of weakness or strength." He was sitting down in a chair, chill in every member of his body.

The temptation affected him like a stroke of paralysis; yet he could think, reason, see everything very clearly.

It was simply a question of honor, personal honor. He was facing that. His character was now enduring an ordeal that would test it, stamp it, brand it. This moment passed, and he would never again be the same man. He would be weaker, on the road to rise in the world's estimate, perhaps, but to degenerate, to rot in his own soul; or else he would be stronger, to go perhaps into obscurity, but to rise, elevated forever by an approving conscience, into the calm heights of self-respect.

With Barlowe against him, he might as well, indeed, fling all his hopes, his cherished dreams, with a millstone into the sea.

He came to his decision.

He walked over to his desk and took out some papers. "See here, General," he said, holding them up, "I don't know whether you are aware of it or not, but for months I've been working up the case against this bill, and I meant to kill the whole conspiracy; it is a conspiracy, you know that. I probably know as much about the details of it as you do. Here are statistics, opinions, estimates, testimonies of expert engineers; here are facts showing how it was conceived, plotted, and matured; here is something else, the most forcible argument of all, which I shall not now speak of. I intended to make a speech to-morrow using this material, and it would have defeated the bill, or I'm much mistaken. For I can prove irrefutably that the road must fail."

"That is all bosh," said Barlowe, who, though he felt like a man sandbagged in the dark, betrayed no outward signs of surprise. "Throw all those papers into the fire."

"No," answered Bourland, with slow, quiet determination, "I shall make that speech to-morrow."

"You make me laugh," broke out Barlowe, after a silence. "A man like you, with the reputation for fraud, intimidation, and ruffian politics, nigger hunting, jail breaking; a man with such a record behind him, to put himself upon a pedestal of honesty and conscience, why, what effect do you suppose your speech will make?" It was all said in perfect good nature. He showed no trace of anger or irritation.

"Come to-morrow and see," answered Bourland.

"I suppose you realize that if you make an enemy of me, you will never get far in this state?"

"The future will have to determine that."

"It is downright stupidity, Bourland. I wanted to help you along." Barlowe was vexed at the frustration of his benevolent purpose.

"Or was it to use me? Be frank, General."

"Both. Politicians aren't missionaries. They go in for themselves. You are in for yourself, aren't you?"

"Partly so."

"Is your decision final?" He got up to go.

"Yes; my mind is quite made up."

"You'll go it alone?"

"I will."

"You think you are a bigger man than I am, don't you?" Still there was no sign of ill temper.

"That question hasn't come to the test yet."

"Oh yes, it has. You are the bigger *man*, but I'm the bigger *politician*. Now, my Goliath, look out for your David, for he is going to hit you right between the eyes. Good night." He went away, smiling at his apt allusion.

After he had gone, five words rang in Bourland's sense of hearing. Fraud! intimidation! ruffian politics! nigger hunting! jail breaking! What vulnerable openings for an enemy! He could not confess; he could not deny the truth. He was caught, caught in the tangled ironies of Nemesis.

For hours he lay awake that night in the despair of his honesty.

CHAPTER XL

TWO CRISES IN ONE DAY

“STEADY, Henry Bourland, this is your chance !” he kept repeating to himself, as he walked over toward the Capitol the next morning. “This day will make you or break you.”

Only one experience in all his history had ever put his nerves to such an intense strain—the occasion when he walked ahead of his men across the valley of Gettysburg and approached slowly, slowly, slowly, the line of muskets that were waiting to blow him to his last judgment. That test, however, demanded only physical courage. To-day he was to fight, not with his sword, but with his brain.

And his intellect that morning was like an electric battery full charged ; a single touch, and it was ready to flash and discharge an irresistible, quickening current of thought and language. He was exhilarated ; he was conscious of an unwonted keenness of perception ; he realized for the first time in his life that he was possessed of real genius, and that beneath his intellect there was stored a reservoir of fierce indignation, the *sæva indignatio* of the deities. He felt himself to be an immeasurable, personal force.

When he got into the hall of delegates, he began to mistrust himself. Several of his carefully worded phrases and some of the strong points of his argument slipped out of his memory like absconding servants. He became a trifle nervous.

The routine of the day occupied some time, but the railroad bill finally came up for its last reading. Two or three supporters made rhetorical speeches in its defence ; two agrarians made speeches against it. After these men

Bourland arose, self-possessed, and he opened with an incisive utterance which awoke the attention of every man in the hall as suddenly as the blast of Gabriel's trumpet shall awaken the dead. They all turned toward him and bent forward.

"This bill," he declared, "under the pretext of progress, is a gigantic conspiracy to steal several millions from the treasury of the state."

He paused. The sweeping audacity of the statement dawned upon him in an appalling light. Here, in the public hall, the words rang very differently from the frequently repeated thought of his secret consciousness. He must prove the charge, or be irretrievably discredited.

Dozens of men around him had thought, had said in private conversation, the same thing; but none had the knowledge or the courage to assert their opinion in the open field. Bourland stood there as the challenging champion.

He proceeded to analyze the text of the bill, showing ambiguous phrases, craftily inserted, whereby the state might be forced into increased sponsorship for the undertaking.

Next he read letters from influential men, all over the state, protesting against its passage as an unwise, unnecessary project.

He detailed from memory statistics of the traffic and trade of the district through which the projected road was to pass, showing conclusively that the receipts could not reach half the amount of current expenses.

He brought forward the expert testimony of engineers, who declared that there were natural difficulties to be overcome, requiring tunnels, bridges, embankments, obstacles not provided for in the estimates, which would demand a far greater outlay of money than the proposals anticipated.

He introduced evidence proving that the promoters of the enterprise had bought up the land of the projected route, and held it only to sell again to the corporation.

He asserted that the road, to succeed, must be joined

with a cobweb of other roads on the flanks and the rear ; that these would probably not be built for a generation ; that failing of these, the present enterprise would have to be subsidized annually by the state, or else be forced into bankruptcy with a total loss of the original capital.

“But what do the chief conspirators care?” he asked, turning aside from statistics. “They can lose nothing, they are sure to win in either case. Suppose the road is wrecked ; they have sold their landholdings, sold the contracts, sold the stock, and some of them, in the meantime, have been receiving large salaries as officials. The state and the gullible public (and I understand this is to be a Virginian enterprise) will stand all the losses.”

He was perfectly at ease now, certain that already he had made a case, even though he could not defeat the bill. He was winning admiration ; he knew that. He was giving his fellow-legislators a signal instance of the power which a single man with brains, hard work, and an honest purpose can exercise even in the slough of despond of politics.

The meditations, the mental drill, the facts and phrases, all the resources of the months of preparation, were at his command now. In the excitement of the occasion unconsciously he slipped into an appeal to the feelings with a bit of that decorated oratory of which the old Southerners were such masters.

“Last autumn Hope came to us like the rose of a new dawn, when, after the dark days of storm and stress, after the years of humiliation, bitter as the waters of Marah, we awoke from our slumbers of apathy and came forth in our banded might to meet the glad morning ; when we came forth with renewed energy and consecrated devotion to set up once more the standard of our civic rights ; to cultivate with honest toil, to guard with honest purpose, this noble state — our widowed mother — left to us as the last dear memorial of our noble sires. We hoped that like them of old, we might return, as the children of Judah returned from their exile by the rivers of Babylon, to build anew the temple of our fathers and our fathers’

God. And God has given us back our heritage. To-day we sit in the seats of power and responsibility and trust, and our mother is calling upon us to proclaim ourselves her sons. And who is there among you so deaf that he cannot hear that call? Or so base, so loathsome, that he would betray that trust which our people of Virginia have reposed in him? To-day, my friends, as we face this attack of the insidious enemy in our midst, let us think of those who have sent us here to fight their battles and guard their rights, let us be mindful of Him who sits beyond the heavens, whose thunder is His clarion, and whose lightning is His sword. God watches! God condemns, and the voice of the people is the voice of God."

He made a pause; he was forced to do so, for the outburst of enthusiasm which followed would have drowned his words. There were a few impassive faces, some scornful, but he knew he had conquered. He stood erect, waiting for silence, in the proud consciousness of his imperial strength.

After the applause had subsided, he took up a bundle of papers and waved them in the air, saying at the same time, in a changed, business tone: "I have here some documents. They will prove in any court in Virginia that five men in this assembly have accepted bribes to vote for this bill. I may add that I was offered a bribe myself, a heavy one. If any of these five men votes for this measure, I guarantee his exposure and his conviction."

Individual consciences began to ask the question, "Is it I?"

Bourland sat down; a giddiness made the atmosphere visible with a confusion of currents.

A man sprang up, doubtless posted by Barlowe, and demanded, in the name of the house, a specification of the charges. Bourland refused to make it at that time. The man declared that he intended to support the bill because he thought it a good thing; he then proceeded, by reference to facts, local to Lacamac, to show the hypocrisy of this exponent of morality; but the majority of the members understood that situation, and they howled him down.

This action came as a great surprise to Bourland; it made him breathe freely, joyously. It added a grace note to the victory.

The bill came to a vote, and it was defeated by a small majority. Barlowe, when his name was called, gave an offhand vote in the negative. He had never been publicly identified with the bill, and by going on record against it, he thought to allay the effect of gossip in the future; for he had greater projects a-brewing.

When Bourland, at the close of the session, was the centre of a group, Barlowe came up to him and said before them all: "That was a fine speech, Colonel; the cleanest piece of demonstration I ever heard. It convinced me. I intended to vote the other way. You deserve great praise for your work."

Elsie had been one of the spectators in the visitors' gallery.

In the afternoon Bourland went for a long tramp over the country down toward Dutch Gap. A reaction after the strain of the morning had brought on a sudden relaxation and a headache. He desired strong physical exercise. Over the ridges, up and down, he rushed like one pursued. Before him stretched the wide reaches of undulating fields, rising from the James, which flowed down in the line of a tortuous suture and disappeared into the maw of the Gap.

He was on the heights. All the world, it seemed, lay at his feet. The ambitions of a boundless future kindled his brain; a procession of vivid images sped before his inward vision, pausing, flashing radiance into his imagination until they were obscured, dissolved by the press of more glowing pictures. An exultation that was almost a mental intoxication held him under a spell, the essence of which was a new emotion, a fierce lust for power.

The winds swept into his face, cooled the swift motion of his blood, and sent a delicious chill into the marrow. He was far more than a mere thinking intellect. He felt a wild, animal elation in the quickened consciousness of physical existence; an ecstasy so keen, so brutal, so ener-

vating, that it brought an irresistible craving for something to quench it.

He had promised to call upon Elsie in the evening. In the afternoon he made a resolution not to go near her. At nine o'clock he was standing in her presence.

She wore a close-fitting dress of dark blue silk under a network of black lace, but the gown was far less regal than the royalty of her figure.

"I was afraid you wouldn't come, that you had forgotten all about me in the midst of your triumph," she said, holding out her hand.

"I have seen your face a hundred times to-day," he blurted out in one breath. The touch of her hand burnt him all over; he drew his own away.

He sat down in a straight-backed chair; she sat opposite four feet distant under the glow of a lamp, the ruby glass of which turned the blue of her dress into a tinge of purple. He was breathing from agitation when he noticed that her eyes were inflamed by weeping.

His mood instantly changed. The thought of her tears instantly expelled the obsession of the savage instinct and subdued him into a serving cavalier.

"I was so proud of you to-day," she went on, striving to be light-hearted. "I heard a man say glorious things behind me. He said that speech would make you the most conspicuous man in Virginia, and that nothing could stop you now from getting anything you wanted."

"Never mind me," he answered very tenderly. "Tell me what has happened to you. I have a suspicion that it is something dreadful."

The allegro of her voice slipped down into the minor.

"Yes, something has happened." She stopped to gather strength and control for the recital. "The end has come to this terrible, unnatural life I have been leading. I sold myself years ago, Henry. Why? There were many reasons. I hate to recall them, except one, perhaps: the helplessness of my father. I have been a wife in name, nothing more. For years Mr. Clayton treated me kindly, generously, denying me nothing, hoping to get some return

of affection. But I loathed him after the first week of my bondage. I didn't do my duty. But don't blame me too much. Oh! I couldn't! I couldn't! I can't speak of some things. I endured him a long time. Then I went away. He let me go. I lived abroad. But I was all alone in the world, and I came back. He seemed glad to have me return. But he was changed; worse, far worse than ever. I couldn't be a wife to him, yet he insisted that I should stay in his house. At last his blind infatuation turned to bitterness and hatred. But he never struck me. I think that he is afraid of me, for I can easily master him. That is the strange thing about it. I'm sure if I had been the man I should have strangled such a wife as I have been to him. But I don't want to go into any more details. To-day he said something. I wish he had struck me instead. I must leave his house." She had begun to sob in the middle of the narrative.

"Why did you not leave at once?" asked Bourland.

"I told you I should be here to-night, and I wanted to see you to say good-by."

"'Good-by'? Where are you going?"

She cast down her eyes, and fingered the lace of her dress.

"My resolution will surprise you," she replied, not looking up. "I am going to enter a convent."

A cry of protest escaped him.

"Yes, for a time at least. I have been thinking of it for a long while; in fact, ever since I read the Memoirs of Saint Teresa. Her life was so intense and calm."

She explained how, amidst all the frivolity and selfishness of her existence, in her moments of reflection and desperation, her thoughts had been led toward the ideal of self-abnegation and isolation. "I have a sense of great guilt on my soul. I am not like commonplace women. I must lead some kind of life that is intense. One can do that as a nun; one can find intense joy in the utter crucifixion of self. I must do it. I'm afraid to be exposed to temptation." She raised her eyes and looked into his as she pronounced the last words, and her look drove from his mind a quixotic plan to offer her a home with Eleanor.

"I hate to have you sacrifice yourself that way," he said almost inaudibly. He had no longer any sympathy with monastic isolation in these days of the nineteenth century. Life meant work in the great world.

"I have quite made up my mind," she replied. "It is for the best."

Steps were heard outside, and the fumbling of a key at the door. She sprang up in alarm.

"Oh, go! go!" she cried. "I didn't think he would come back to-night. No, you can't go. It is too late."

"Do you think I'm afraid of him?" he asked scornfully.

"You don't know all," she stammered, shrinking with fear into a smaller body.

"Be calm," he said calmly. "Go sit down." She obeyed.

The front door was opened, and in a moment the form of Clayton appeared in the parlor doorway. His eyes were bloodshot; his body swayed unsteadily until he braced himself against the jamb for support.

"Well, blast my eyes," he muttered in a maudlin sing-song, "you ——, if you ain't at the game again."

"You cur!" exclaimed Bourland, springing up, a geyser of wrath. "How dare you apply such vile words to your wife?"

Clayton tried to speak, but he uttered only a drunken hiccough, which was followed by a silly grin. He tried again, and spoke two words, — the first with the accent of an incredulous question, and the second with a sneer of disgust.

"Wife? Hell!"

Bourland's hot-headed impulse had been to strike him, but such a dramatic dénouement was repugnant to a second glance at the situation.

To strike a drunken man, — in his own house, — for maligning a suspected wife. It contained the lurking essence of comedy.

"Have you been stealing some more papers and telling some more lies about bribery?" Clayton managed to utter with great difficulty to Elsie.

Bourland strode up to him, and pinned him by the throat against the wall.

"Don't hurt him," pleaded Elsie, laying a hand upon his arm.

"I won't, don't fear," he answered, still retaining his grip. Then he shook him, and glared into his cloudy eyes. "Wake up, you drunken fool, and hear what I say." He delivered the rest in fierce, single words. "She never told me a syllable, not a syllable. You told another man yourself when you were dead drunk."

"You tell that to the marines. Don't you say it to Barlowe. He'd believe you. Oh! that's all right—just as Barlowe said. You beat us square, you and the woman. *Cherchey la femme*: that means there's a woman in the case. It's French. I'm no fool. *Cherchey la femme*—that's what Barlowe said. But just you wait—you and the woman, damn her." He got the words brokenly past Bourland's grip on his throat. "Let me be. I want to go to bed. I know I'm drunk now."

"Let me take him," said Elsie. "I know how to manage him. I have done it many times before. Wait for me until I come down."

She went up to Clayton and took his face in her hands. "Jim," she cried sternly, "I want you to come with me. Don't make any fuss about it, for you are going."

She put her arm under his, and he meekly went with her upstairs.

In twenty minutes she reappeared, dressed for the street.

"Will you take me over to my aunt's on Grace Street?"

He put on his overcoat and took up his hat silently.

Before they left the room she took from her fingers three rings,—an emerald set with diamonds, a large brilliant, and a band of plain gold. She tossed them carelessly upon the mantelpiece, saying, "Mere baubles now, but I used to set my heart on such things."

They walked through the dark streets, each pondering a fateful problem, and when he said good night at her aunt's residence, her hands were as cold as frost.

BOOK IX

THE RISE OF THE READJUSTERS



CHAPTER XLI

SUGGESTIONS OF SEVERAL POSSIBILITIES

TIME has made a few strides, taking along the world of men and their changing fortunes. Little Chap is now big enough to saddle a horse; he can climb any tree in the orchard; he resents the diminutive part of his nickname, and to soothe his pride, the elders have dropped it.

His father takes him as a companion to all the political meetings and rallies, for Bourland intends that the boy shall follow a public career, and he introduces the youngster to everybody. "You must make all the friends you can, Chap," he says. "You can't begin too early. I wasted a great deal of time." To his acquaintances, by way of apology for the boy's presence, he declared: "I want him to take to his civic duties like mother's milk. Besides, he acts on me like a monitor, and keeps the old man steady."

Eleanor writes regularly and frequently to Anderson, and the Yankee, after repeated readings, puts the letters furtively away in a carefully hidden mahogany case. That same box contains three pressed roses, the rubrics of a romance, the chapters of which are found in the letters. One rose is white, another is yellow, a third is pink — all spoils gathered after visits to the Hall. It is tacitly understood between them that when he obtains the prize of a

crimson flower, the lady will name the happy and impatiently awaited day. On the last visit Anderson almost captured the red rose. "Wait until Henry goes to Washington," she pleaded, with assurance of its imminence. "I don't want to leave him alone until his life is filled with something else." The Northern lover good-naturedly grumbled and mumbled something about the "clan pride," but his arguments were insufficiently persuasive to conquer it.

During this meantime, Bourland had not been idle. Financially, it is true, he had made no progress, yet he had gained an honest, economical living. In good repute, however, he was a wealthy man. When he first went up to Richmond he was a local figure only; but after that dramatic annihilation of the railroad conspiracy, wherever he went he was a celebrity and an observed personage. The future, it seemed, was his with all he could make of it.

He missed no opportunity of appearing in public, and his clear, simple ideas, his impassioned language, coming from the depths of a nature that had bled and grown wise in the bleeding, and above all the fearlessness and the convincing power of his honest conscience — these gifts won for him the admiration and golden opinions of his fellow-men. He impressed them as one devoted to a high calling, and, judging from the signs, his coveted election was sure.

The pleasantest memory, perhaps, of these days was the occasion when he delivered the annual address before the literary society of Washington and Lee University. He chose as his subject "The Soldier and the Citizen," and he made a splendid eulogy and temperate comparison of the great American and the great Confederate, whose names gave title and honor to the college.

Some may even remember to-day the comment which the oration aroused in the Northern papers; particularly that of the irreconcilably partisan editor who declared the comparison was "a sacrilege," as if, forsooth, Virginia had no right to speak in commendation of her own children.

But while Bourland was exercising his wings for later flights to fame, he was almost blind to some of the things on this earth. He did not observe, at any rate he did not duly estimate, the importance of a movement which, though feeble at first, was brought to a menacing head by the subtle manœuvre of a far-seeing demagogue. The agitation is known in state history as the Rise of the Readjusters, and its satanic genius was Barlowe.

The full history of this movement is very complicated; but one will do no harmful violence to the facts with the simple statement that Readjustment was an endeavor to force the creditors of the state, those who held the state bonds, to accept a compromise wherein, by a reissue, the debt would be reduced and the rate of interest, both for unpaid arrears and future payments, would be materially decreased — in other words, it was a forcible scaling down of the state debt at the expense of the creditors and the state's honor.

At first the proposal had no political significance; but when some of the leading Bourbons set themselves against it, and when office-holders and school-teachers, forced to suffer a curtailment of income in order that the obligations might be met, advocated its adoption, then Barlowe saw his opportunity, and gathering in all the forces of dissent and discontent, he formed an organization, a new party, whose chief plank was forcible readjustment, and whose solitary dictator was himself.

This was the band of allies, white and black, carpet-bagger and scalawag, which the conservative Bourbons had now to face and fight. Its success was dependent upon two things: the ability of Barlowe to debauch the public conscience, and to control the negro vote.

In May of this year Bourland was back at the Hall. Major Talcott, now attached by friendship and interest to his political fortunes, was with him. Talcott, at first, had paid assiduous attention to Eleanor, but before long he saw that he was not the favored suitor. Vexed at the thought that in love as well as in war he had been outdone by a Yankee, nevertheless, with true Southern gen-

tility, he kept his vexation to himself, and continued his attentions with purely platonic devotion.

Like Bourland he turned his energies to the sterner attentions of politics.

"I'm not sure, Colonel," said the major one morning, as they sat beside their juleps on the veranda, while the dew exhaled a freshness into the blossom-scented air, "I'm not sure but that we've got to change our policy somewhat. There is a certain element among our constituents which is getting restless under our rigid conservatism. They say we are looking backward too much, and standing still."

"You can't run ahead until you get back your health and strength," replied Bourland. "We can't raise salaries and make internal improvements while we've got our debts to pay. We've got to retrench; we've got to wear cheap clothes, and live in the old, ramshackle houses until we pay up our arrearages."

"There is a shorter way to that, some think," commented Talcott, taking a sip of the odorous mint drink.

"Oh, yes! Cheat our creditors! break our word! repudiate!"

"They don't call it that; they call it readjustment."

"Bah," exclaimed Bourland. "A bond is a bond, and a dollar is a dollar."

"Yes, that's true enough; but readjustment is coming to be a political question, and it may swamp us. This nigger vote, in the hands of a bad man, may still be a menace to honest government. Besides, there is much muttering among the uneducated whites. 'A failure and a compromise is a recognized thing in the business relations of individuals,' they say. 'Why shouldn't it be legitimate for a state?'"

"I hope we shall never get into the sad plight of Mississippi in '43," Bourland said with earnestness. "She repudiated her bonds with far more excuse than we can have. But what was the result? Disgrace on the fair name of the state. Don't you remember that Senator Lamar refused a European commission because, he said, he came from a state that was branded by repudiation? I don't think Vir-

ginia will ever follow her example. It would almost destroy one of my dearest ambitions."

"We are in great danger of it. That man Barlowe is about some of the devil's business, and he's going to make a demonstration that will cause trouble."

"Oh! he's discredited among the best people."

"That all may be, Colonel," said Talcott, in his argument forgetting the unemptied glass. "But there is one thing you don't seem to realize; that is, that the *best people* haven't got the political influence they had before the war. The *best people* aren't going to run our politics much longer. The emigrants, who know not Joseph, the scalawags, the niggers, with their lax ideas of honor and honesty, are coming more and more into power. It will take only a crafty, conscienceless leader like Barlowe to unify them and make them formidable. It may jeopardize your future. You don't seem aware of the danger. You must be more modern. You must give up some of this stiff-backed reverence of the past and worship of traditions. You must accept the fact that Virginia's future prosperity is not altogether in agriculture."

"I am beginning to see that," replied Bourland, sadly. "And that thought has made me more eager to get into the Senate. That ambition has been my strongest incentive, my dream, day and night, during these last years. I have a *concern*, as the Quakers say. I want to get into a position whose dignity and prominence will command the attention of the whole country. Down here I am only a beaten rebel. I should like to tell the Yankees some day things which they don't know, or won't know, about the South. For until they listen to them, the wounds of the nation will never be healed. I understand a great deal about both sides of Mason and Dixon's line." His voice softened into the pathos of beautiful memories. "My dear, dead wife, who was a Yankee girl, if there ever was one, opened my eyes to many facts, and I learned from her because she was glad to learn from me. We differed, but we never had any ill feelings on that score. We understood each other."

Talcott was deeply impressed by the words of his friend. He had never before suspected the motives which this confession had revealed. He found nothing apt to say, and in his embarrassment he turned again to the glass and mint.

A small colored boy, astride of a lean horse, rode through the gate and delivered two letters.

"Bofe foh Mis' Eleanor," he said.

"You're getting along famously with your reading, Prim," said Talcott.

"Ya-as, s'r. I'se a-gwine to school to Mis' Burnby's nowadays," replied the lad.

Later, as they went in to dinner, Eleanor called her brother aside and said, "I've got a letter from Elsie."

"That's nothing strange. They come frequently."

"But the contents are. She says the time has come when she must decide whether or not she will take the last vows, and become a nun for life. She can't make up her mind. It would be best, she hints, if she could test herself by coming out into the world, 'getting one more breath of air,' as she puts it, and seeing if she could renounce the human race altogether. 'You folks in God's sunlight may be so wicked,' she writes, 'that I may be glad to get back to my cell.'"

"Which means," said Bourland, "that if you invite her to spend the summer here, she would accept the invitation."

"Yes, that's what I think. What do you say?"

"Tell her to come by all means. God knows this is probably the last summer we shall be here ourselves. Parker's got my mortgage at last, and when it falls due, I won't have the money, and we'll have to leave. Tell her to come if she wants to, and we'll try to make it pleasant for her."

Eleanor hesitated and considered for several days. "Why not?" she asked herself; "Henry is wedded to his political plans." So she wrote to Elsie, inviting her to spend the summer at the Hall.

CHAPTER XLII

A SCHOOL OF POLITICS AND ITS MASTER

ABOUT the middle of May Barlowe decided that the time was ripe for a demonstration, and he ordered his political underlings to meet him in conference at Lynchburg.

Just as Bourland had said, he had lost caste among the "best people" of the state. He determined upon revenge, and he found the means in the agitation about scaling down the debt. Secretly, cautiously, subtly he fomented discontent until it became formidable. During the last two years, with a Napoleonic reach and grasp of details Barlowe had drawn to his magnetic personality the leaders of the Radical party and many of the soreheads among the Conservatives. His hue and cry of disaffection and promise of relief had consolidated an incongruous lot of Mouldies, Shadows, Warts, Feebles, and Bulcalves into a political army: negroes with plastic opinions, illiterate whites whose feudal allegiance to the aristocrats was dissolving; disappointed politicians, who are but human, particularly when out of a job. In addition to these Barlowe had a personal following among some of the old soldiers, who worshipped him justly as a brave and distinguished leader, and among the public school-teachers whose salaries had been limited by the obligations of the debt paying. These latter classes gave tone and intelligence to the movement.

Clayton arrived in Lynchburg before the others. He had clung to Barlowe as a man overboard clings to a spar; and Barlowe, who had many kindly traits in his nature, had befriended him, and had utilized him as an agent in his secret service. Clayton was one of these kind-hearted irresolutes. He made friends easily, and he possessed

real ability, which unfortunately was becoming more and more impaired by drink.

"See here, Clayton," said Barlowe, after greeting him, "we've got great prospects ahead of us. Why don't you brace up? I'll see you get a good chance."

"You can't make a broken pot hold water," he replied dejectedly.

"It doesn't seem to have much trouble in holding whiskey," retorted the boss, pleased with his repartee. "What have you got to say to that?"

"Let's have a drink."

"No, sir! Not a drop. We've got business on hand, and we've got to have clear heads. Do you hear?"

"Have we got to sign the pledge?"

"That wouldn't do you any good. But I'll tell you what would. Get rid of that wife of yours; you can do it. She has deserted you. I believe she is the cause of all your trouble. You'd be better off, if she were out of your mind."

Clayton shook his head in the negative. "That would please her too much. Within a week after I got a divorce, if I could get one, which I doubt, she'd be out of that convent, and her name would soon be Mrs. Bourland. I know her, General. Why, she had the audacity, three weeks after I married her, to put that fellow's picture in her room. She has kissed it right before my eyes. I believe she used to say her prayers to it."

"He doesn't care for her. He's too busy with his own political affairs," said Barlowe. "He'd avoid any such scandal."

"He's only a man, don't mistake that, General; and my wife, damn her, is the trickiest and most beautiful woman in Virginia. In a convent! Bah! The devil knows why."

"Why don't you shoot her—or him—or yourself?" said Barlowe, jokingly.

"I have thought of it, often," he said gloomily. "If I blew out my own brains—that would please them better than a divorce. If I did the other, well, I haven't got any proof that they've done anything wrong, and I've

got a strong prejudice against a tight collar." Then he added, with a grim smile:—

“Where is your music, Sheriff Dunne?”

Said Willy at the Gate.

‘I often have danced upon the green,
With Molly, Meg, and Kate.’

‘I do not see them, Sheriff Dunne,’
Said Willy at the Stair.

‘Nay, nay, my boy, they have no lust
To dance upon the air!’”

In the afternoon, when the leaders assembled for the conference, Clayton came in so intoxicated that they had to lead him over to the lounge.

There were in all about fifteen men, including Parker, who, in that gathering, could pass for a man.

“I have called you together,” said Barlowe, “in order that we might have a chance to get acquainted with each other. We must have harmony from the start. Then, too, we must adopt a policy agreeable to all of us, and we must have concerted action. It is time for a big demonstration. I think Schumann Hall in Richmond would be the best place. After that we must begin a vigorous campaign. This fight is to be one of intelligence and education. But before I go on to speak further, I want to hear reports from you of the conditions in the various districts.”

He called upon each of them in turn, and he noted the details in his memorandum book. After they had all spoken, he said:—

“Some of you are more successful than others, according to my study of the figures, in getting good, safe majorities. You had better have some talks *in private* with each other, and exchange ideas. Mr. Skilton, you have had very remarkable results in your county. I wish you would explain, at your leisure, that invention of yours with the tissue ballots. I think I understand it pretty well, but I don’t want to steal your thunder. I don’t want to interfere with any of you; each man is to manage his own district.”

They indulged in some desultory discussion for an hour,

in which Barlowe made it a point to bring every man out into prominence for some merit. He assumed no dictatorial attitude, yet he was full master of the ring.

"I have given a great deal of attention to the study of this question," he said, resuming the position of school-master, "and I want to outline some of the arguments which we shall use in the campaign. In the first place, insist on the word 'readjustment,' and make it plain that 'repudiation' is simply a term of slander used by our enemies. Bring out the point that what we propose is a readjustment necessitated by the splitting of the state, in war times, into Virginia and West Virginia. Congress did that, and we are in no way responsible; we couldn't help ourselves."

"They can't refute that argument," put in one man.

"Not without more figuring than the average voter can do, anyway," replied the chairman. "Don't forget to emphasize that the public school-teachers are with us, and will vote solidly for our candidates."

He referred to some notes.

"Here is another very good point. Let me read it to you. The purchasing power of money has increased so that the state creditors are getting actually more than, at the time, the original contract contemplated. To scale down the debt and the rate of interest does not deprive them of material values. Refer to the case of Patrick Henry and the parsons, who got their salaries in tobacco. It's a splendid analogy."

"Has the purchasing power of money increased enough to square the difference?" asked another man.

"Of course it has, — in some things," answered Barlowe, testily. "What a question!"

"But we'll have to answer it," persisted the man.

"Well, then, get statistics. You can prove anything by statistics. Talk of wheat and corn to the farmers, talk bread and meat to the laborers, and keep quiet about the things that go against you.

"I shall have printed lists of delinquent taxpayers," he went on, "showing the utter poverty of the masses and

the inability to run things as the party in power has run them. It's like wringing blood out of a stone."

He asked the various men to send him, as soon as possible, the statistics of the county tax delinquencies, saying that he would appoint a committee to collate the results.

"There is another argument which will be effective to a good many,—the fact that our state bonds are held largely by Yankees and Europeans, who gamble in the stock markets on our poverty."

"What are we going to do about the niggers? They haven't got any property to speak of, and the tax collector doesn't squeeze them very hard," asked a man from a corner.

"I don't know so much about the niggers," exclaimed Barlowe, stretching backward in his chair. "We'll have to call on Parker. He is our specialist in that line. What do you say, Parker?"

"It isn't an easy problem," began Parker. "A good many niggers will want to vote under the name of their own party; others will join yours directly. You must give them a bait; it needn't be much. Advocate something they want—say the abolition of the poll tax and the discontinuance of the chain gang. A cheap method of attracting them would be to give their speakers as many opportunities as possible to talk on the same platform with white men. They like that sort of a thing next to a watermelon patch. Another way, and a very effective one, is to control the nigger preachers. Once get them on your side, and they will pull the congregations over. A little judicious liberality here will go a great ways. The Radical party may have to make a show of nominal existence. We shall have to work it so that our candidates can be ratified by them. It is necessary, therefore, for us to make our nominations early. We shall have to have some campaign funds for the nigger element."

"Yes, don't forget that," Barlowe brought out with emphasis. "Talking and argument go some of the ways, but we can't get along without money. We've got to

have an unusual amount of torchlight parades and shouting. I shall appoint a finance committee before you leave."

A recess was declared till the evening, and during the interim another committee drafted a formal platform, which was fully criticised and amended before the conference adjourned.

"This platform will be made public at the meeting in Schumann Hall," remarked Barlowe, after all the changes had been made. "We can't do anything more to-night. Go back to your districts and start the work."

Parker, before he went away, had a confidential talk with the leader.

"I'm going to be of a great deal of service to you," said he, "and I want you to keep your promises to me."

"You can be sure you shall get your share."

"I'm not after money, for I'm in good trim that way. But I want to go to Congress, and I want you to defeat the aspirations of that beggar down in Lacamac."

"What is the cause of your eternal grudge against that fellow? He seems to be a pretty decent sort of man, and just now his stock is running high. You must have some Indian blood in you. You never let up on him."

The veins in Parker's forehead swelled and darkened with the intensity of his hatred. He had brooded for years on his wrongs, as he conceived them, and the recollection of the old insult, and the consciousness that he had never got his full revenge, that Bourland had beaten him always, and was to-day one of the foremost men in the state, while he was still a "nigger man," politically and socially,—all these thoughts inspired him with a malevolence that was unappeasable. No vitriol, refined to chemical purity, ever possessed such a latent rancor for human flesh as this man's unsatisfied desire of vengeance.

"I went to see him once, General," confessed Parker. "You may as well know about it. I had done him several favors, and I wanted a small favor in return. But he put me out of his house, as if I were a lousy cur. I went—of course I went. It was his house. But may I burn in hell fire if I don't go back there some day, when it will

be all mine, and drive that infernal snob out with his own nigger whip."

"Oh, pshaw!" answered Barlowe, with a smile. "What is the use of making such a fuss about a little thing like that? He did me a much worse turn. He cost me twenty thousand a year, not to speak of other things. He gave me a clean punch in the belly that took all the wind out of me. Yet I didn't lose any sleep over it. I don't bear him such a great grudge either, for he did the thing like an artist. If he gets in my way now, though, I am going to knock him groggy. You go get first blood out of him in Lacamac. If he beats you there again, come down to Richmond, and I'll take a hand."

"You renew your promise, then, that he will never go to the Senate? That will make him the sickest, sourest, maddest man in these parts."

Barlowe smiled and chuckled, looking at Parker searchingly.

"I believe you can keep a secret," said he. "I believe I can trust you. The fact is, I'm going to the Senate myself. In fact, between you and me, that is why this Readjustment party is so necessary to the poor, poverty-stricken people of Virginia. Does that answer your question?"

Parker went away satisfied.

CHAPTER XLIII

IN THE CONFESSIONAL

OF all our American trees, one of the most imposing is the tulip. Tall, straight, sturdy, branching into a green density of foliage, these trees are most glorious when the van of summer comes from the tropics on its annual invasion. Then the tulip blossoms expand into innumerable golden cups, thrust out as if by many begging hands, to catch the bounty of the sunlight and the cooling showers.

It was just about this time — in the drowsy promise of summer — that Elsie came back to the Hall.

“I’ve brought a trunk with me,” she said gayly, as Henry and Eleanor greeted her at the station.

“Of course,” replied Bourland, and then he began to rally her about her truancy from the cloister.

She held up a pleading hand, and uttered a pleading “Don’t.”

The ride up to the Ledge made her eyes sparkle. She breathed heavily, as if reviving from a swoon. Exclamation after exclamation of delight broke from her lips at the sight of the familiar objects.

“What have you escaped from?” inquired Eleanor, — “the Black Hole of Calcutta?”

“It’s like coming back to life again,” she replied.

Arrived at the Hall, she desired to see everything at once. Little was changed, from the bronze crusader, whose tireless arm held the lamp on the centre table, to Sarah, puttering a little less energetically, perhaps, in the kitchen. Sarah she wanted to embrace.

“Hul up, Miss Elsie,” cried the old black cook, “doan’ yuh tech me. I’s e all greasy wif a-fryin’ ob dese yere fritters agains’ yuh comin’. I specks yuh done los’ yuh tas’e foh Sairy’s cawn slappahs.”

At the supper table she was brimming over with the old-time vivacity. Bourland watched her and became thoughtful.

When he saw her last she was serious, solemn, remorseful. Evidently this isolation in a religious atmosphere had forced a new issue in her spiritual development, and by some process of spiritual purging had set her free from the past. At any rate she was buoyant now.

There was some change in her outward appearance. Her face was not so full, and a delicate whiteness had invaded the former flush of her cheeks. There were shadows about her eyes and a subdued light, like that of a candle at noonday. As Bourland compared her now with his last memory, he felt that she had undergone some struggle, that the vigor of the senses had been subdued by the spirit into an inward serenity.

Yet she was none the less appealing to one's joy in the beautiful. There she sat, her loose sleeve revealing her blue-veined arm, daintily picking up red strawberries with her fingers and bearing them to the kiss of her enticing lips. There she was, carelessly jocose in the manner of the days of her girlhood, and the air that was wafted around her was bright with the freshness of surviving youth.

The brother and sister perplexed her with no questions. They let her enjoy herself, and for a week she idled and read and prattled at her delicious ease. The sunlight, the open air, some exercise out of doors, brought back the rose glow to her cheeks and restored to the full the manifest joy of living.

At last she voluntarily broke her reserve.

"I suppose you are wondering what I have been doing. You must have been surprised when I went off into a convent. It has made another woman of me; it gave me a new insight into life. But I think the best has already been done. It began to grate on me after a time. I woke up one day at the thought of staying there for life. It was like waking up in a coffin after being buried alive."

"I always think of such a life as beautiful and full of peace," said Eleanor.

"So it is to some natures. I was very happy at first, intensely happy; and you know I have to be intense to be satisfied. I became a real zealot, like Saint Teresa. I would read about the saints and martyrs, and I would kneel down on the stone floors and pray until I was too weak, sometimes, to get up. I used to fast until I got dizzy; sometimes, then, I saw visions and felt raptures. It was sublime. It made one so strong; but when they passed away, they left me with fearful headaches."

"That isn't the chief occupation of nuns nowadays, is it?" asked Bourland, sarcastically. There was too much of the cavalier and the epicure in him to relish any such spiritual intoxication.

"Oh! no, indeed. Most of them are busy with good works. I was only passing through the stage of the neophyte. It soon wore off, and then I couldn't get the ecstasies even when I wanted to. I soon had to settle down to routine and a matter-of-fact life. That was when I began to grow restive."

"I have often wondered how a lot of women get along when they are boxed up in one house. They are all angels, I suppose," remarked Bourland, still pursuing his vein of sarcasm.

"Well, I guess not," she answered with vigor. "They are women just the same. Their vows and the rules of the order hold them in check somewhat, but they are still women."

"When you see them on the street, with their black gowns and immaculate white hoods, they look angelic," said Eleanor.

"That is because they have, a good many of them, no striking personality. They are all whipped by rule and discipline into a type, and they lose themselves." Then Elsie's voice acquired her wonted strength as she continued, "Oh, it crazes me to think that some day I shall be hammered into a machine, a human machine of just so many motions and no more."

Shortly afterward she left them on the veranda and went into the parlor and played upon the piano some of the ephemeral songs and catches popular a decade before.

Half an hour later, when Bourland was sitting alone, plotting out some speeches, she came out again.

"Henry, come take me for a walk. I've got one of my fits on me to-night. I want company."

He led her, unthinkingly, across the lawn to the stone wall where they had parted several years ago.

The pale stars hung above, a vast stretch of them, meeting the gloom of the hills. The lights of Brayton twinkled in the valley, like the lamps of an illuminated garden. The air was full of the languor of night.

Her arms were propped upon the stone, and her chin rested in her hands. She looked like one alone on the infinite expanses of the sea. Her heart was audible.

At last she glanced up, smiling sorrowfully.

"You can't understand what a relief it is to have a confessor and to go to confession." She waited a few moments, then added reluctantly, "I have something on my mind to-night."

"Cannot I play father confessor?" he asked tenderly. "Tell me anything you wish. I shall hold it sacred."

"I wish you could know and believe without my telling you."

She hesitated in the silence of inward debate. At last she looked up again with searching, impressive glances.

"You have heard unpleasant things about me that came over the ocean, haven't you?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever believe them?"

He could not equivocate before the inquiry of those eager eyes. He hesitated, and the delay became an unspoken affirmative.

Her face paled; he could notice that even in the dim light of the stars. A mist of checked tears obscured the keenness of her glances.

"I don't blame you," she said.

He was about to say something, but she stopped him.

“Don’t speak. I want you to listen to me.” Her mind went searching for the apt words.

“You have been very kind, very helpful to me since our meeting after the long separation. A woman knows something by her intuition; she learns things that are behind words and deeds—the things people think they keep all to themselves. I know this, Henry; you pity me; yes, you even like to be with me; but you don’t fully respect me.”

She put her hand to his lips to check his polite denial, and she succeeded.

“I don’t find fault, Henry. It is only natural. I have done some foolish things. You believe them, perhaps, worse than they were. You find a certain pleasure in my company, I know; and yet, when we are near each other, I can feel you pushing me away—if not that, at least holding me off.”

“It is not true,” he cried out.

“Hush, it is true. I took the knowledge of that with me into the convent. It plagued me, maddened me, at times. I felt I must see you again, and win from you a different feeling. I couldn’t live happy, I couldn’t die happy, without it.” She stopped again, looking downward. “I’m a puzzle to you, am I not?”

He admitted that he did not understand her fully.

“I know. You are not sure whether, at heart, I am good or bad.”

“You are a hundred times better than I.”

“No, I haven’t your strength. You have got a strong hold on something, and you can stand firm. I have no anchor. I am controlled by the forces around me. I’m not bad; I’m only weak and without any aim. Now let me tell you something.”

“Tell me nothing,” he exclaimed with fierceness of emphasis. “I shall believe nothing they say against you.”

“You must listen. I can’t defend myself against all the charges. I don’t know what many of them are. But I want to take one, the worst I can think of, and I want

to tell it to you just as God saw it. You have heard about a scandal in Italy, haven't you?"

Yes, he had heard it. But it was very vague in his mind.

"You doubtless heard my name coupled with that of an Englishman, Lord Churton. He was the son of the Duchess of Carisbrooke, the lady with whom I travelled as companion. Lord Churton, who was but two years younger than I, paid me a great deal of attention. He took me places when I wanted to go, where I couldn't go without him, and places where I should not have gone. But I was reckless in those days, and he helped me to forget. The women in the party began to talk, but I paid no attention to them. I was having a glorious experience — distractions day and night. Finally Lord Churton became presumptuous, and not heeding my rebukes, he became bold. I was under great obligations to him, so I repressed him as gently as I could. But he was a small-souled creature, and when he persisted, and I had to speak plainly, he became furious, and said I had tricked him. Then I refused to have anything to do with him. That caused talk again, and, of course, made him ridiculous. I suppose I ought to have left at once. But I didn't. I was alone in a strange country. I didn't suspect his real meanness, and I thought the difficulty would soon smooth over. In fact, it did seem to. But all the time he was plotting to make me leave. He succeeded finally, and this is the truth about that scandal."

She paused, like a traveller, to gather strength for the rough strip of a journey.

"We were at Capri, staying on the island for two weeks. You know about the famous Blue Grotto there: how the cavern hangs like a huge, inverted bowl that just dips, and no more, below the surface of the water. The light comes in from beneath, and illumines the interior with the most beautiful tint of azure in the world. There is only one entrance, a small opening on the water side, and sometimes the men go up to it in a small boat, jump overboard, and swim in. It is like a sudden change from

a world of beautiful reality to a world of mystery and awe. Outside there is the shining, cloudless sky, the glorious sunlight of Italy, the sweep of the sea, on some days an unbroken plain of sapphire; and beyond, the panorama of the bay of Naples, Ischia, Sorrento, and the long, white line of the city, with smoking Vesuvius above it, yellow in the sun, like a mountain of solid gold. Then you plunge and enter, with a delicious chill, into the opening, swimming into the lonely heart of the cavern, a basin of liquid amethyst which, at the touch, splashes into foam, and every splash echoes with low, hollow music. It makes one think of

“The light that never was on sea or land,
The consecration and the poet’s dream.”

She stopped again, and Bourland took the moment to exclaim, “And so, like a fearless American girl, like the child of nature that you have always been, when somebody dared you, you swam in. It’s a little unusual, but I don’t see any chance for a scandal yet.”

“Wait,” she said. “Yes, when I heard the men talk about it, I was wild to do it myself. So one morning before daybreak, while the others slept, I got a boat and rowed to the grotto. Oh! I shall never forget that moment. It made me a pantheist; divinity seemed to lurk and brood everywhere. The white morning stars; the distant city asleep; one long, gray line watched by the red glow from the crater of Vesuvius; the flush of the coming dawn upon the smooth sea; and everywhere silence and awe and the sense of all the forces of nature at worship. It made me afraid. I wanted to turn back. But I didn’t. I jumped overboard and swam in.”

“You should have been born a mermaid,” he exclaimed. He saw her like the Venus Anadyomene in the ancient myth, rising above the water in the splendor of innocent voluptuousness.

She had related this latter part in a kind of ecstasy that thrilled him as nothing fully of this earth can thrill. He leaned against the wall and clutched tightly at the

stones. The sense of her beauty had never before come over him with such mastering attraction as now, under the spell of that picture. To relieve the tension, he repeated his remark, "You should have been born a mermaid."

"Oh! no, indeed," she replied. "I like to take hedges on horseback too much for that."

The picture of the Venus gave place to the Virginia girl in the saddle of a horse, and that brought him from the mythical romantic back to the real.

Her manner had changed, and her voice had something of dread in its tone. "Now comes the horrible part of it," she continued. "I went back to the hotel, and on the way I met Lord Churton, coming in from an early walk. We went in to breakfast together. The others of the party were already at the table. 'Have you been in bathing?' said Lady Carisbrooke as I sat down. 'Your hair is all wet.' I blushed and stammered out, somewhat proud of my feat, that I had swum into the Blue Grotto. 'Where have *you* been, Churton?' she asked, turning to her son. 'Your hair is wet also.' I looked at him. It was true. I began to blush again. 'You might infer,' he answered, 'that I was in swimming, too.' And with that he coolly turned to me and said, 'It was rather chilly this morning, wasn't it?' Behind his face I could see his sneering vengeance, saying tacitly, 'You will make a fool of me, will you? My turn has come now.' There was dead silence at the table. It was one of those situations where explanations are impossible. I lost my presence of mind, and rushed from the room. That, of course, was my conviction."

The rest of her story was broken by sobs and outbursts of fury as she revived the humiliating sequel.

"Lady Carisbrooke came to me after breakfast and said that the steamer would take me to Naples at noon, and that I had better get back to America before I corrupted her young son further. She would listen to nothing. When she gave me some bank notes, I tore them up and flung them in her face. Well, to bring the story to an end, I did come home, thinking that I might grow to

endure my husband; but oh, Henry! that was terrible. He had gone down to worse and worse. It was like coming to a pig in his pen."

The nervous strain, maintained through the narrative, relaxed at the close and she began to weep the tears of utter helplessness. A blast of human pity swept down upon Bourland's will and shattered it like the mast of a storm-beaten vessel. He took her in his arms and gave her the full tribute of human affection. She did not resist.

"Tell me," she asked, when she had regained her self-control, "do you believe I have told you the truth?"

"Yes," he answered quickly. "I believe you unreservedly."

"And with the knowledge of this one affair, are you willing to blot out all the others as untrue?"

He was the slave of the moment. He answered firmly, "Yes, everything."

"Have I won your full respect now?"

He assured her of that, and with greater emphasis as she repeated the question. Then with a sigh of relief, she said, "I can go back now with more courage to be buried alive." But not yet content with the fulness of her confession, she broke out again: "Oh, Henry! I want you to know it, — let the world say what it will, — if I've been sinful, my sins have been selfishness, vanity, pride, meanness, ingratitude, cruelty, but what they accuse me of — never."

He bent down and kissed the hand which she placed in his.

"I shall go back now and take the final vows. It is best for me — for us both."

"Why?" he asked.

"I'm afraid to trust myself in the world all alone. Besides, don't you see the other reason? Suppose you should be foolish, even more so than to-night, and I should be weaker, don't you see, Henry, that you might wreck your future and spoil your splendid career? You mustn't do that. You must go do great things, and I shall be

proud of your success. Just as much," she added tenderly, "as if I could share it."

There was a touch of voluntary martyrdom in her words. He became very thoughtful, and made no reply. If she was disappointed at his silence, she gave no sign.

When Bourland left her and began to think it all over alone, he had a mean opinion of himself. He had done her great injustice during the long separation. He had condemned her unheard. Now, under the spell of this evening, he saw her as something very noble, something exalted above himself. For, say what he might, the fact remained present to his consciousness, that all his feelings for her had been such as a man likes to secrete, especially from the knowledge of his better self. Her charms and attractions had not appealed to him in the language of spiritual aspiration. Indeed, they had only touched the surface of his life, and so long as his mind was bent upon his political advancement, they possessed little or no distracting power. But now, after this confession, he knew her to be, or to have become, a stronger woman — one capable of great restraint; one capable, perhaps, of a great sacrifice. She had entered into a higher caste of being.

CHAPTER XLIV

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF BABES

THE demonstration of the Readjusters in Schumann Hall had become a fact of local history.

At first the Conservatives did not take it seriously, but the show of influence and strength which succeeding events revealed, soon brought them to a sense of the menacing danger. Barlowe posed as a Conservative; for he did not think it judicious to break altogether with his own party; nevertheless he openly courted the help of all who desired to destroy "the Juggernaut which was crushing out the vitality of the people." His speakers proclaimed at courthouse and cross-road the specious arguments which the schoolmaster had taught them. They sought to obscure moral distinctions, and to appeal to the pocket; and, while they did so, they tried to hide the real purpose of the agitation under the profession of humanitarian motives.

The men of real character saw that their state was threatened with an indelible stigma. Here was a movement led by a native Virginian, a distinguished general, and supported by many of her citizens, proclaiming an intention which, if effected, would destroy the credit of the state, and bring upon her eternal shame. The Bourbons, naturally, were not blind to the crisis, and, to paraphrase the statement of the historian of the readjustment controversy, they put forth their most strenuous efforts. Men who had anything, gave to the cause with unstinted liberality. All men in touch with public affairs went upon platform and stump, and leading statesmen gave their time and energy to the cause, and left no region of the state in ignorance of the significance of the issue.

It was a campaign likely to arouse the passions; for it was a question of honor. As time passed, and the discussions became heated, charges and the recriminations came fast and furious. Arguments became personal, altercations were frequent, and in the heat of anger men quit talking and took to their weapons. Barlowe's faction, bent on victory at any price, began to assert that there was a plot to rob them of success by wholesale bribery and ballot stuffing; and the more audacious among them began to talk of Lynch Law for their opponents, advising that the polls be located near trees, and that plenty of stout cords should be at hand.

Bourland began the campaign with desperate vigor. He realized now that he had been paying too much devotion to the past, that he had pitched his speeches to a too exalted strain, and that in some quarters he had lost in influence. He had not kept in touch with changes of sentiment, nor had he developed with the new conditions.

He stood again for the legislature, and Parker, who was running for Congress, put up against him a man of considerable personal popularity. Bourland was not at all sure that he could win, certainly not without an energetic effort.

Three weeks after the campaign opened, he was down with a fever at the Hall. This sickness probably secured his election. It was reported that he was dangerously ill, and sympathy—a feeling to which Southerners are particularly susceptible—got him more votes than any ardent rhetoric could have done. “If he lives, we couldn't have a better man; and if he dies, don't let him die with the thought that we have deserted him. Remember he is one of Pickett's veterans.” Such was the plea of his friends, and Parker's man had no argument to nullify this appeal to the affections.

The elections came off after Bourland, who had been attended by Eleanor and Elsie too, was able to get about the house. He carried his district by a very small majority. But in the state at large the Readjuster ticket was successful far beyond expectation, and from the indications it was probable that Barlowe's party would control the legislature.

Bourland, weak in body, sick at heart, saw that the desire and ambition of his life would probably not be fulfilled; at best there was small chance of it now. Barlowe was in power; and Barlowe, doubtless, after what had taken place between them, would seize only too eagerly the opportunity to revenge himself on his enemy.

Letters came from prominent Bourbons, however, telling him not to give up the fight, and pledging their support.

When the legislature assembled, he went up to Richmond, taking Randall with him. Elsie remained with Eleanor at the Hall. She did not want "to go up for life," as she phrased it in an irreligious moment, until the senatorial election was over and she knew the fate of her friend.

It was Randall's first visit to Richmond, and during the first days, while the legislature was being organized, his father showed him the historic memorials of the city. To the boy, who from infancy had been eloquently taught by his aunt the rights and wrongs of the Confederacy until the narrative lay upon his mind as vivid as an actual experience, Richmond was like a city of ancient Greece to the first visit of a classical scholar.

But the deepest impression of all came not from the memorials of the war days, but from a visit to St. John's church, set on a high hill that overlooks the city and the valley of the James. Here, his father explained to him, in the early days when the English Parliament was humiliating the colonies with iniquitous laws, there rose a young man, who, fearless of the halter, loving independence, and preferring his manhood to his life, flung his single defiance into the face of the king and tyrannical power.

"Stand here, Chap, right by the door of this pew. That is where Patrick Henry stood when he spoke."

He made the boy take position on the spot, and repeat the words of that famous speech.

"Three millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and with such a country as we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us."

The little fellow, by his father's direction, raised the holy cause aloft with his right hand.

“Our chains are forged. Their clanking may be heard upon the plains of Boston,” repeated the child, imitating his father’s gesture toward the far north.

“Sir, I know not what course others may take, but as for me, give me liberty or give me death,” rang out the young orator.

“Thunder it out, Chap, as if you were all on fire. Bend over, like a slave, just as Henry did. Hold your hands this way, crossed, as if there were chains around them, and then when you come to ‘liberty,’ tear the chains away as if nothing in the universe could keep you from being free.”

He did it once, twice, to his father’s satisfaction, who afterward caught him in his arms, and with a voice almost broken by sobs, told him to take Patrick Henry as his model, and he would grow to be a strong man, of service to his people.

The senatorial election was the chief subject of talk among the delegates. Friends of Barlowe announced their intention of voting for him, but the leader of the Readjusters had not publicly sanctioned the use of his name. Bourland was the expected and inevitable choice of the Conservatives, yet a canvass soon demonstrated that if Barlowe entered as a contestant, they could not elect their man.

There were several reasons why Barlowe should not be senator, one of which was that he was not fit. Some of his advisers, it was rumored, urged him to strengthen his influence in the state by making a compromise with Bourland, agreeing to send him to the Senate if the Conservative leader later would support Barlowe for governor. Such an arrangement might be to the personal disadvantage of Barlowe, but it would aid and advance his professed cause. Bourland, it was argued, was now so near to the attainment of his well-known desire that he would prefer to make terms rather than lose the coveted position of honor.

But Bourland, after studying the situation, saw that he could not be elected without a capitulation of principle. Any such proposition he resolved to refuse. For he had

taken his stand before the people upon the platform of integrity and the commonweal, and he would not now retreat from principle and stultify his own character.

He had made up his mind to defeat, and though within he was dejected, yes, broken-hearted, yet in the presence of his political associates the natural dignity of his nature gave him an outward air of calm indifference, which, on the slightest provocation, bubbled into humor and persiflage. He meant to go down smiling, like a gentleman.

The night before the election, he was visited in his hotel by two men. They came, they said, to talk over the situation, and they suggested that Randall be sent from the room.

"Oh, let him stay," answered the father. "I can trust him. He knows as much about politics now as the average voter. He went early to school."

Although the boy embarrassed them, they could insist no further.

"I suppose you realize, Colonel, that you haven't got much of a show," said the spokesman.

"No, I suppose not, unless some of the delegates see a new light before morning," he responded with smiling countenance. The great ambition was dying in his breast; but there were no signs of the death throes.

"We come from Barlowe. He is willing to withdraw and support you," continued the spokesman.

"What do you think of that, Chap?" asked the father. "Here's a proposition from Barlowe. Two years ago I blocked one of his schemes, and now he can block one of mine. But he won't do it. He sends word that he will help me. What do you think of that, boy?" His face showed that his words bore a playful seriousness.

"I think he must be heaping coals of fire on your head, dad. He must be a good man."

The two visitors sat like schoolboys who had just failed in their lessons.

"Tell General Barlowe," said Bourland, turning abruptly toward the emissaries, "that I don't understand his kind offer, but that I should like the election to-morrow, and

that I accept his help. Tell him, too, that I thank him all the more, because I cannot repay him in any other way." He was intensely amused at this little farce; he was beyond the reach of temptation now.

The visitors, in turn, didn't seem to understand Bourland. Either he was a fool, or they were a pair of them.

"But, Colonel," ventured the second man.

"Oh! bother the 'buts,'" cried he, breaking the man off with well-feigned vexation. "There is always a 'but.' 'Buts' spoil everything. But for Waterloo, Napoleon would have died an emperor. But for a hundred miles of rock, a ship could sail from the Gulf of Mexico into the Pacific. But for a ladder, a man could climb to the moon."

"You don't suppose, Colonel," put in the first speaker.

He wouldn't let the man finish. He went on with a gleeful laugh: "No, gentlemen, I don't suppose anything. I just accept this offer of Barlowe's, which is exceptionally noble on the face of it. I don't suppose it to be anything else."

"We've got enough votes to control the senatorial election," said the first man, "but not enough to pass a readjustment act over the governor's veto. You know that."

"Of course I do."

"The governor hasn't declared himself against us, though we fear he may veto the measure. We want to bring some influence to bear on him. You have a great deal of power in his counsels." The sentences came piecemeal. "The case has changed, don't you see? This is a democracy. The voice of the people is sovereign. The majority of the people, at the last election, have declared for readjustment. Why should not you, a mere representative, obey the voice of the people, suppress your private views, and vote with us? There is a perfectly logical justification for a change in your attitude. It will make you senator."

Bourland was not smiling now. The tempter was near, but he had put him down two years before, and now he was far too strong for his enticements.

"You are trying to play the devil to me, gentlemen.

It's the old Faust story again. You will be my servants and get me what I want, but in exchange you ask for my soul. Isn't that about it?"

They had no ready words to answer. They mumbled something about a "fair exchange" and "political compromises."

The seriousness of Bourland's face melted into a benignant calmness.

"Chap," said he, "it is time for you to go to bed. Gentlemen, you won't mind if I break our conversation a moment to let him say his prayers? It is his regular custom. Come, Chap, don't be embarrassed. These gentlemen, no doubt, have boys of their own."

The child was naturally reluctant, and he obeyed only after the second command. He knelt down, nevertheless, by his father's knee and said the Lord's prayer, although it was hardly above a whisper. As he came to the words, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," Bourland looked up and saw before him two tense faces. The men sat there as if gorgonized, except for the strain of feeling in their countenances.

"Good night, Chap," said his father, as he kissed the boy when he arose. "Run along now. Say good night to the gentlemen."

He did so, and one of the men, who, though a politician, was also a father, bent down and kissed the little fellow's cheek.

After he was gone, Bourland turned again to his visitors, but they had no desire to renew the interrupted conversation.

"I guess I'll have to go under, friends," said Bourland, breaking the silence. "I'll have to give up my cherished ambition. Perhaps I've tried to reach higher than I could grasp. But there are honest little fellows in Virginia, growing up to do what we can't do ourselves, and we mustn't set them bad examples."

He stood up at his full height, and spoke with quiet cheerfulness.

They rose to go, and one of them, in leaving, turned

back, put out a strong, trembling hand, and said with an outburst of feeling that was both sacrilegious and divine:—

“By God, Colonel, if I wasn't pledged I'd vote for you myself.”

“I thank you for that, sir. You have my best wishes.”

He closed the door and went in to his little political bedfellow.

CHAPTER XLV

INTEGER VITÆ, SCELERISQUE PURUS

THE next day the two houses of the legislature convened in joint session for the election of senator.

The flames of passion, so fierce during the campaign, had greatly abated after the results were known. The stoical-tempered calmed themselves to the inevitable; the pessimists declared that the rule of the "best people" was over, and they sat down to nioan, while the victorious Readjusters prepared for a high carnival.

When, however, the candidacy of Barlowe was definitely announced, there was a revival of bitter feeling on the part of the Conservatives, due particularly to the fact that he was a deserter from their own party and, therefore, the object of that particular rancor which falls upon the renegade. The resentment of his supporters was aroused, in return, by a rumor that, if he did stand for the Senate, "he should go there with the blackest brandmark that truth could burn upon his forehead."

"Talk as little as possible," had been Barlowe's orders. "Wait until they attack me. Then, if they begin to sling mud, give 'em hell."

Bourland, although he had given up all hope, and although his friends urged him to withdraw in order to save his feelings, refused to retire in the midst of battle.

"I didn't run from the whole Yankee army at Gettysburg," he said with pardonable pride, "and I'm not going to run away from a mere pirate. Somebody has got to be a figurehead in order to show our voting strength. Why shouldn't I? I was ready to take the plum; now I'll take the medicine."

At the opening of the session, Parker sat a gleeful spectator in the gallery. He was going to Congress, and, from his safe point of observation, he could smell gunpowder among the legislators below. Besides, he had prepared a little bomb of his own, the fuse of which was timed to burn that very morning. He was impatient to see the effect.

Barlowe's name was placed in nomination by one of the officers on his staff during the war. This man dwelt principally upon the army record of his chief, recalling the fact that he rose to distinction from the rank of private. He spoke also of his kindness to officers and troops, and he paid many tributes to his character. He closed with a eulogy of the candidate as an energetic leader, a man of the people, careful of the rights of both races, and as a citizen in the front rank of modern politics.

There was great applause from the allied powers.

Major Talcott put Bourland in nomination with a speech wherein he spoke of him as the most distinguished man in Virginia, a soldier, a citizen, an orator, and a gentleman. He reviewed his record, his personal association with Lee, his dignified conservatism during the trials of reconstruction, his later services to the state, and his recent escape from death, which could not fail to suggest the thought that Providence had spared him for a purpose.

The nomination was seconded by the patriarch of the house, a man with an empty sleeve.

So far the proceedings had been calm and orderly; but there was bad blood, which had to be let sooner or later.

"I rise to ask," said a Conservative, opening the attack, "I rise to ask to what party this noble leader of the opposition belongs? I see certain members here who are evidently his friends and supporters. Does he belong to that dusky tribe? I see certain members who applaud this man of doughty deeds upon the field, men who make it their merit that they fought against our cause, if they ever fought at all. Does he represent those heroes? or will he go to the National Senate and proclaim to the country at

large that he represents a new party, the Repudiators, who have sent him up to Washington to show the world the latest way of paying honest debts? I ask to what party he belongs, Radical or Conservative, this man who seeks to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare? For, so far as I can see, he stands for no party, no principle, no people, nothing but Bill Barlowe."

A Radical sprang up to reply. Barlowe, he declared, represented an unbaptized party of the *people*, and after he had purged politics of dastardly slanderers and vindictive enemies, he would restore the Conservative party to all its pristine splendors.

This declaration was greeted with a mingling of jeers and applause.

The pitch of expectancy rose to the strain when a man named Shattuck took the floor; for he was known as a fire-eater with a bent for personalities and a gift for venomous epithet.

"I hope when this party comes to be baptized," he began, "it will be by immersion. From outward appearances it needs to be washed."

Laughter drowned out any other form of demonstration at this sally.

"But I pass from that," continued Shattuck, "to give voice to an indignation that cannot be repressed; to bewail the fact that this commonwealth, our mother of unsullied honor and noble dignity, is to be dragged from her proud place of precedence in the assembly of states, and is to be degraded to the infamy of a pariah. We are poor, yet even though we be poor, shall we sell our mother's honor for gold and deliver her over to those who stalk in the purlieus of darkness and inhabit the brothels and the stews?"

Several tried to interrupt him, but the chair evidently considered that the speaker had not transgressed the limits of parliamentary decorum.

"I would, sir, that I could close my eyes to the awful reality," cried Shattuck, looking toward the presiding officer. "I would I could believe that some barbarian,

some Attila with his horde of Huns, had arisen from his grave, and had overwhelmed us with a violence which could not stain our dignity or our good repute. But though Attila is dead, a worse than Attila is here. For he who debauches his neighbor's conscience with insidious sophistry, and he who, in the lust of power and the greed of gain, pawns the irredeemable integrity of the state that gave him birth, that nourished him, that elevated him from amongst her sons, he, I say, is more to be despised than any plundering barbarian of the darker ages."

Signs of commotion began to appear in several quarters, but at this juncture some quick-minded individual called out:—

"Let the mad bull roar. His horns are sawed off."

Many of the auditors, excited by the language, and curious to hear a climax, called out, "Let him go on! Let him talk!"

"I will add but one thing more," he said, as he began again with a rasp which showed that the wasp was about to sting. "In justice to us who are here in a minority, in justice to the future which will surely endeavor to obliterate the ignominy of the present, let this victorious brigand march up to the councils of the nation, trailing behind his motley band of Yahoos and his sable sons of Sahara, and let him march in fitting uniform—the uniform of the stripes."

Before he could sit down several Radicals made a rush at him, while the chairman vainly pounded his gavel. There was a confusion of shouts and indignant protests. A brawl was imminent, when a wag, with a bit of humor, saved the day and set everybody laughing. A man was seen to fumble in his back pocket, and two or three cooler men, thinking he was about to draw a weapon, tried to stop him.

"Let me alone," he cried out, with intentional distinctness. "I'm only hunting for my plug of tobacco. I want to present it to the honorable member. I think he deserves a chew after that speech."

The laughter which mollified the rising storm of passion

had not fully subsided, when a man, one of Barlowe's adherents, arose and demanded the floor.

Parker, with face tense with knowledge and expectancy, leaned forward from his seat in the gallery.

Bourland, as a member of the house, was attending the session; but during the preliminaries he had left his seat, and had gone off the main floor. He stood talking with some friends, and watching the discussion from time to time from behind the railing.

The next speaker began what promised to be a conciliatory speech. Enemies, he declared, might assail their leader with malicious spite, and in their impotent fancies they might dress him in any garb their envy might devise. But none of their insinuations could dim the lustre and the halo which his benevolence and good deeds had won for him in the eyes of the world.

Suddenly his manner changed, and he squared around to face his opponents.

"You talk of felon's stripes, you over there who prate and babble about honor and good names. But what manner of man have you put forward to represent you?"

Bourland, behind the railing, heard the question, and he came to a position where he could hear and see what followed. "It's going to be a rehash of Lacamac politics," he thought, caring very little what the man might say; for such charges had become cheap, rusty weapons of attack for anybody.

"You," he went on with rising scorn, "accusing and abusing us from your pedestals of high talk, you put forward, as your representative of honor and morality, a man who has broken the most sacred law of the decalogue; a man, who though he may love his neighbor, yet feels free to seduce his neighbor's wife."

Bourland felt as if some power had suddenly plunged him into a gurgle of dark waters. He lost his sense of location. He heard murmurs, then nothing but silence. A thought, a whole train of thoughts, dashed out from his memory, and he saw them in a light, a horrible, ghastly illumination, such as he had never seen before. He felt

his face burn, as if a myriad of curious eyes were blazing scornful queries at him.

In fact, the men in that house believed that the charge was true; at least those did who knew about his private life by rumor or observation.

This was the situation as they saw it. Clayton's wife was far above him socially. They had separated. She was beautiful, and not particularly conservative about conventions and appearances. She was an old flame of Bourland's, and was on terms of intimacy with him. Indeed, she was even then staying in his house. Besides, there were those ugly stories about her escapades abroad, and Bourland—well—he was a man. Of course! Men of the world thought little about the matter. Peccadilloes in private life were expected of political characters, and these did not detract from the faith in their integrity as public officials. Indeed, when the speaker dragged the private life of Bourland into the political dispute, many men cried out, "Shame!"

But the accusation had been made, and, though it was false, it was believed, even by his friends.

No better occasion could be imagined for a man to test the value and power of his own word, backed by his character.

Bourland stepped into the enclosure at the head of the accuser's aisle. He knew the truth, and a quick reminiscence gave him the weak points in his accuser's reputation. Fixing his eyes upon him, he stood rigid, absolutely rigid, ten, twenty, thirty seconds, in the attitude of dogmatic self-assertion.

The delegates, expectant, could hear the breathings of their own respiration, so profound was the silence.

"Members of this house," he said, prolonging each syllable, "the charge which this person has made is not true."

He raised his right arm, and with doubled fist shaking to the vibrations of his voice, he repeated the denial.

"I—say—that—it—is—not—true."

Every muscle, every nerve, every member of his body, was drained of energy to enforce the utterance.

He walked slowly down the aisle until he came face to face with his accuser. Shaking a contemptuous finger so close to him that the man involuntarily made motion to evade the touch, he hurled out with a ferocity of scorn: "Sir, when I shed my blood on the battle-field of Pennsylvania, where were you? Answer that question, and then repeat your foul slander."

The man blanched and averted his eyes. He didn't answer, for he knew, as did many another in that audience, that he had been conscripted into the army, had deserted, and had barely escaped from a court-martial with his life.

The incident for that day was closed. Some one called for the previous question.

The voting began. Bourland took little interest further in the proceedings. The verbal duel had left him weak, unstrung. When the announcement was made that Barlowe was elected, when cheering and loud applause followed it, and even when Barlowe himself was conducted into the room to make a speech, he was scarcely aware of what was taking place.

As he passed into the rotunda after the breaking up of the session, one of his friends, well intentioned no doubt, burst out into admiring raillery at his dramatic self-defence.

"It was sublime, Colonel. You ought to go on the stage. That was the prettiest bluff I ever saw in all my life."

The remark lacerated him like a scalping knife. His word, his character, even among his friends, had failed him at his need. Oh! what was the use of integrity in such a world?

He walked down the steps of the Capitol, oblivious of all sensations except that of a dull, nauseating emptiness of being.

BOOK X

THE PASSING OF THE CAVALIER

CHAPTER XLVI

FATHER AND SON

THERE come crises in the lives of the strongest when, after a period of honest, strenuous, persistent endeavor, all the powers of the world, of destiny, even of Providence, appear to be in league to break them down. Then the cherished ideals, however noble they may be, however tenaciously held, are on the verge of collapse. Then the lamp of faith burns low, sputters, and goes out, and in gloom the courage of the spirit grows fearful and oozes away; we can feel it ooze, like physical vigor from brain and muscle, blood and bone. Then the moral fibre, the cable which for so long has held the vessel of manhood secure at its mooring, strand by strand, begins to tear and part like some old rope.

In this crisis the tempter comes, as he came to the man of Uz, with jeering whisper in the moment of deepest dejection: "Dost thou still retain thine integrity? Curse God, and die."

A tempter, with some such words as these, accompanied Bourland home from Richmond. He was exhausted—utterly used up. He felt like some wrecked mariner, some lone swimmer, who has fought for life with a wrathful ocean, struggled until he could struggle no more, for

his strength was spent, and now he was about to sink, glad, indifferently glad, that the end had come at last.

In his own communings, Bourland offered no pharisaical claims of merit; he made no pleas of righteousness that deserved reward. He felt himself a sinner, just like other men; and when he prayed he beat his breast like the publican, and begged mercy for his sins. But he knew that he had tried, amid all his shortcomings and transgressions, to play the part of a man as he conceived the rôle of a man in the drama of life.

In his youth he had fought for the cause of self-government, a cause which, as he saw it in its provincial limitations, defended his home—that immemorial first love of man; and he had rejected, perforce, that encroaching idea of the indissoluble union of states, that idea of centralized nationality not then fully born. He had fought; he had been beaten. Then he had gone back to his home with the hope that he might save the wreckage and restore the prestige of his name and house upon the old foundations. But in that, too, he had failed. He tried, then, to be a servant of his people in civic life, standing by his standard of honor to his own worldly detriment, as a soldier stands by his colors. There, too, he had been beaten. The opposing forces in the world, whether for good or evil, had been too strong. The world had no place for him.

But the bitter, virulent thing, poisonous to faith, to ideals, to all that was heroic in his nature, was the fact that when he was accused in public by a malingerer; when, with his record on one side and his character on the other, he had denied that charge flatly, unreservedly, a friend had patted him on the shoulder and had called him a consummate actor.

He came home filled with the poison of misanthropy.

Elsie was still with Eleanor at the Hall. She had delayed her departure only too willingly at her friend's request. Before them, Bourland tried to appear careless, indifferent to his defeat; but the women discovered him, though they said little.

Three days after his return, a notification came from a

lawyer, saying that in two weeks the mortgage on Bourland Hall would fall due, and that if it could not be met, the house must be put up at public sale.

"It will have to go," he murmured ruefully. "I'm helpless now. The end has come."

"We have only two more weeks," he said to Eleanor, as he showed her the letter.

She bore it bravely, as a woman always bears such things. "We mustn't sit down with lamentations like Jeremiah," she said kindly, as she handed back the notification. "We have still got our health and hands."

"I suppose it must come to that—for me. But you are a lady. You must not forget that. I never shall, and no sister of mine shall ever—"

She began to blush violently.

"I have made some plans of my own," she broke in with a sweet, low agitation.

The blush put him at once on the trail of the plans.

"Which one is it?" he inquired. Of course he knew; those frequent letters had suggested the answer in advance. But the question was one of those deft compliments, so spontaneous in the South, which chivalry pays to feminine charms.

"Mr. Anderson," she said, dropping her eyes.

"Hmn!" replied Bourland, with a guardian's playful dubiousness of approval. "He's a Yankee. But I guess he'll do. The war's over. Why didn't you take Talcott?"

"Because Mr. Anderson is more like—like my idea of a man."

He took her in his arms, and gave her the kiss of love and of blessing. The face was not quite so beautiful as it had been; but the spirit behind it—that was a placid, pale-shining glory.

"What a sister you have been!" he exclaimed. "How can I give you away? Of course I shall," he added impetuously. "It would be selfish for me to want to keep you."

"I told him I would stay with you as long as we lived in the Hall," she answered. Then growing confidential, she continued: "It was very hard for me to promise him

anything. Because with all our losses and the emptiness of our lives, it is very hard for me to forget. I haven't forgotten. I shall never forget — what — he — says — he — will — try — to — replace. I fought it all out in my mind, — it took me a long time, — whether it was right to sit down all alone, and brood and weep, or whether it was better to lock it up, hide it away until God gives it back to us some day, and, in the meantime, to help a little, to love a little what is calling for love in the world."

She could hardly finish. She buried her face on her brother's breast, and clung to him, hushing her sobs in the concealment of his bosom.

Brave Heart! This Northern pen wavers as it writes your name. You are the real hero of this story. You, who sent your lover forth to fight, and watched at home, through dreary days and sleepless nights, for news of the battles; you, who, when all was lost, took up your cross and broken life without complaint, and bore them up the rugged steeps of Golgotha. Suppose, in moments of resentment, of human weakness, you took that little orphaned boy upon your knee, and taught him — to ease the anguish of your grief — the songs of the great secession, and told him bitter things about the nation's flag; suppose he learned from you to revere above all things the memories of that lost cause, and the men who fought for it honestly, and died for it nobly, are you less womanly, less worthy of our reverence? You only loved and wept for your own.

Go, heroic Lady of the old South, go now to your Northern lover, and let his brave heart and loving hand lead you unto the splendor and the human joy of the reconciliation. Go to him, with your sacred dead locked away in your bosom, and if he is half a man, he will revere you all the more because one loyal thought still clings to that mouldering memory upon some battle-field in Tennessee.

The prospect of a separation from Eleanor left her brother in the depression of utter loneliness. He walked out of the house, across the lawn, and into the next field. Chap was there, under a chestnut tree, searching for the nuts, as the last night's frost had opened the burrs.

"Come here, Chap," the father called.

The little fellow came, munching his last find.

"Come take a walk with me, son." The boy was his last comrade for the coming solitude.

"Crickety, Dad, look at them," he said, showing a pocketful of plump brown nuts.

The father's thoughts were fixed on other things.

"I've got bad news for you, Randall." He walked several paces. "We've got to give up the Hall."

"Where are we going to?" asked the boy, in surprise.

"I don't know yet; at least, I haven't made any definite arrangements."

"Can we take Spark and Starbright?" Spark was a collic, and Starbright was the carriage horse.

"We can take Spark, but not Starbright; we shall have to sell him."

The boy was very sober for an instant.

"What have we got to go for? Have we run to seed, Dad, as they said old Patchen's people did when they sold him out?"

The father started, stung by the phrase of the innocent child. "Run to seed" was applied usually to poor whites when the sheriff broke up their households for debts.

"Well, Chap, we have become poor," replied Bourland. "We used to be very rich, very rich; but the war ruined us."

He led the boy up to the summit of a hill that surveyed long ranges of the country, and he began to point out landmarks.

"Look over there, son. Do you see that field to the south where the corn is shocked at the foot of the big hill? Now run your eyes down along the stream on the far side of it, down past those poplars to the Lacamac, then up along the creek, two miles and a half, past the bridge to the mill; there it is, with the roof blown off. Now follow that edge of woods up along the slope, up the other side of Trymier's place, through that hollow — don't you remember where we go for huckleberries? — then up to the top of this hill behind the Hall. It's a nice piece of land, isn't it?"

"I should say so."

"Well, boy, all that land once belonged to my father, and to me. It would have been all yours, if it hadn't been for the war."

"Jiminy Jinks!" said the boy, lacking fit expression for wonder at the thought of that immense proprietorship. "How much of it have we got now?"

"Not an acre, my son."

It was gone, all gone; as irrevocable as the lost Atlantis sunk in the depths of the sea.

"When I was your age," the father continued, "those shanties and cabins which you see all over the estate, they weren't built. They are small farms now and nigger patches. In those days there weren't so many fences; you could gallop a horse anywhere you wanted to, and start up foxes in lots of places. We had about two hundred slaves then, and over that, perhaps."

"Where are they all gone to?" asked the boy.

"God knows, Chap. They got their freedom when the Yankees came, and off they went, all but a few."

The picture of the old days revived in his memory like a palimpsest, and the fields were re peopled with the old faces and swarthy forms. The squads of negroes, sweating in the sun; the shouts of reaper and binder; the pitching and the laying of sheaves; the slow motion of the carts; the overseer in the shade of the tree; and all the livelong day, in field, about cabin, around the Hall, the swarm and scamper and play of the kinky-headed pickaninnies; and at night the horn calling the workers to supper, to the long twilight frolic, the music, and the dance.

"For I'll take my ole banjo,
An' I'll sing a lit'l song,
Way down in my ole cabin home."

Where are they now? Ask the question again, Little Chap! They are scattered over the earth; gone forth like the sons of Ishmael; gone forth to freedom, to greater independence, to greater opportunities for selfhood; gone forth into a greater world of sin and temptation; but in

the going they left something behind — the discipline of industry; and, more than that, the graces of sentiment and gentility which it will take their children centuries to regain.

Yes, they had gone; and all that was left to tell the history of the lost civilization was that old weather-beaten Hall, standing upon its ledge of rock, and, looking mournfully down upon it, the landless master, about to say farewell.

“You came too late, boy, for those good old days,” continued the father, his attention fixed more upon the things within the mind than upon those without. “We were an agricultural people, and Virginia was one blooming garden. I suppose we shall have to take to trade now, like the Yankees, or dig up the minerals out of the bowels of the earth. I couldn’t do that. I wasn’t fitted for it. I wanted to follow the honorable profession of my father. But the days of the planter are gone, and the old South has gone with them. You will grow up, my boy, with the new era; there are signs of its coming. And you’ll have to make your own way; I haven’t anything to leave you. But you won’t reproach your old dad, will you?”

His tone was pleading, as if he feared the boy’s condemnation; as if he thought he had done something shameful, like robbing a child of his birthright.

Chap appeared somewhat bewildered by his father’s mood. He knew not what to say, but under the impulse of filial instinct, knowing that his father was in pain, he took hold of his hand and kissed it.

Another mood came over the dejected man.

“One thing more, son. Remember this morning as long as you live. Look down there at the dear old home, and when you think of it as a man, don’t forget that your father fought and offered his life for it, and for the ideas which built it. The Yankees called us rebels and traitors for doing so.”

He paused, and broke out a moment later with an unusual fierceness. “Don’t let any man ever call your father a traitor! Drive the lie back into his throat, son!” It was

a passing fury, induced by the recollection of the bitter, humiliating days of the reconstruction — the last cry of an impotent lion given to his cub.

“Perhaps,” he went on in gentler voice, “by the time you are a man, they will stop all that. Perhaps the Yankees may see that we weren’t traitors after all — only men fighting for a principle that was our heritage. When a Yankee meets you on that ground, take his hand, Chap; and if the time comes, help him defend the flag, for I suppose it must be our flag now. It was your mother’s flag, anyway.”

For some inexplicable reason, Chap began to cry. Perhaps the unusual passion of his father was too incomprehensible, too fierce, for the tender nature of the child. He began to cry so bitterly that his tears almost became contagious; for Bourland was ready to weep like a Homeric hero.

He picked the child up and pacified him, and, seating him upon his shoulder, he walked down the hill.

It is a galling thing, when one has been born to wealth and privilege, to find oneself, at forty, without place in the world, without aim, with nothing but the things a beggar can call his own.

CHAPTER XLVII

THE LAW OF GRAVITY

It was a bracing October afternoon. The autumn haze filtered slowly through the atmosphere; the breezes brought the crisp aroma of spices; in dazzling brilliance, a mantle of many colors lay spread over field and hill.

Bourland and Elsie had started to climb Bald Pate, a neighboring mountain which dominated several counties. As it was some miles distant, they galloped on horseback over to its base, then left the horses at a farm-house, and began the ascent on foot.

Eleanor had remained at home. "She had some mending to do," she said, which meant that a modest trousseau was in preparation.

The change of light and temperature, as the mountain climbers passed out of the open into the wooded slope, gave to Bourland an impression, vaguely defined, that they were crossing a boundary, that they were leaving the world of civilization behind them, and were venturing into some primeval lair.

At first they broke the peace of that solitude with their talk, but when the path began to wind upward with steeper pitch, they grew more thoughtful, and came under the spell of the ancient silence which intensifies the solemnity and mystery of a forest.

Halting, Elsie plucked a cluster of scarlet ash berries, and put it in his buttonhole.

"A sprig of rowan is a charm against evil spirits," she remarked, adding, while he stopped to take the decoration, "when I get into the deep woods I always feel things prowling around."

The air had the tang of loam and moss and decaying bark, and it etched its way into his lungs with acrid bitings. He was exhilarated by the play of his physical forces, the swifter, warmer coursing of the blood, the alternate change from strain to relaxation, as they climbed the pitches and paused to take rest. The use of his muscles gave him the full sense of animal strength and the relief of expended energy. He was a happy animal. He wanted to run, jump, leap, for the mere delight of exertion.

They passed a pool; a desire came to him to plunge into its chill waters. A squirrel looked down from a tree bough; he wanted to climb and chase it. A footbridge led the path over a brook; he jumped over the gulley of its bed. A boulder rested upon the edge of a rock; he pushed it over, and as it ripped its way madly down the mountain side, he was seized with a wild desire to rush after it, overtake it, and stop its motion.

Temporarily he had retrograded into the condition of primitive man. The aboriginal instincts, checked, suppressed, by the discipline and decorum of civilization, awoke again and broke loose into the lawless passions of the woodlanders, those progenitors of the race, wild and free in their ancient, limitless expanses of forest and plain.

His imagination became inflamed. He pictured himself, escaped from convention, society, the restraints of law; he saw himself a savage, in the zest of the chase by day, bounding over rock and field, and at night returning, under the mysterious evening star, in the fearful twilight, to the bright yellow warmth of his hut; he felt the brawny embrace of his mate; and afterward the dull weariness, and the deep, dead slumber.

This delirium was all a mere matter of brain-sick psychology; actually, while it was going on, he was tramping up the slope of a mountain beside a lady, helping her deferentially over the rough places, and prattling of a hundred trifles.

Elsie, after the summer spent in the open air, had regained that fulness, that exuberance of being which she had lost in the close atmosphere of her cloister. To-day

she tripped along the level stretches like a schoolgirl. Several times she ran ahead of him, and waited, all aglow, for him to overtake her. Once they raced.

"You seem very different this afternoon," she remarked, as they stopped to recover breath. "Of late you have been to me like a man in armor; a real man inside, but an iron shell all about you."

"I feel young again," he said, breathing heavily. "If I had an axe here, I'd like to cut down some of these trees."

"I don't want to be young again," she said dreamily. "I wish I were old, wrinkled, white-haired."

"Why so?"

"Why?" she answered, turning her face, "why, when you are old, you are no longer plagued with vain desires. It's all over then. You've got everything behind you, and nothing to expect."

She had indeed left her girlhood behind; at least she had lost those frail, fragile charms which fire a young man with romantic ardor. But yet something about her, something unfed, something unfulfilled, something suggesting a survival of youth, kept her still youthful. It was a tempered pathos which gave her an appealing beauty of her own, possible only after the flight and discipline of disappointing years.

"Do you want to grow old, really?" He stood close, facing her. "I have never put you and age together in my thoughts."

Her look was brightened with glad satisfaction.

He reached out both hands, brushed back the stray hairs from her forehead, and looked into the wistful eyes. Did his guess, he wondered, enable him to penetrate into the secret treasury of her unuttered meditations? He saw, at any rate, either in his own thought or in hers, a solitary chapel, dim with the suffusion of light through richly stained windows; a form bent apparently in prayer, with face pale, dry, withered; thin lips, which, while the inattentive mind prayed, murmured reproachfully, "He might have given me life."

She did not evade the touch of his hands upon her fore-

head; she stood, impassive, with her own hands clasped behind her, as he looked into her face.

“A book of verses underneath the bough,
A jug of wine, a loaf of bread, and Thou
Beside me, singing in the wilderness, —
Oh! wilderness were paradise enow.”

No one had spoken; but which of them had harbored the thought, or both?

Within himself the soul of the primitive man stirred again, became restive, clamorous. “Take her, take her, and carry her off, as we did in the heroic days, when men desired and *dared*.”

He felt the impulse, strong, almost irresistible, to seize her, and weld her forever into his own being. But the hesitation which comes to a man as he reflects before he plunges into moral darkness, before he stifles the voice of conscience, before he flees from friends and overleaps the barrier which civilization has built about itself like a protecting wall, this hesitation — is it cowardice or courage — held him irresolute.

“Come,” he said at last, “we haven’t reached the top yet. We must go on.”

He took her hand and drew her arm under his own. In the closeness and the pressure he could feel her heart beating violently (the last climb had been a severe one); but she did not withdraw her hand from his until they had gone at least a hundred paces.

They reached the top at last, an open space of flat rock, and beheld the treasuries of autumn color, spread out at their feet in the world below. Gold, gold, gold, an ocean’s bed of it, as far as eye could reach, except where patches and streaks on the hillsides were stained to crimson or retained their evergreen. To the east, there was a steady decline into a plain that crept at last under the half circle of haze as under a curtain; to the west, a sheer cliff dropped into the valley below; beyond, undulations fell and rose and climbed upon the broken backs of the foot-hills that were shut in and watched by the Blue Ridge, shimmering

now in the distance like a Miltonic wall of brass; overhead, an inverted sea of sapphire, unplumbed by the eye, the glass, the thought of man, the infinite reach and depth of ether through which swam the procession of invisible worlds like a drifting of motes.

Both stood searching the landscape, as mariners scan the sea for a sail.

"There it is," said Elsie, pointing downward.

A mere speck, almost hidden by trees; something diminutive, something in miniature; a child's toy house, it seemed, from that height; yet something for which a man had offered his life; the symbol of a civilization whose funeral rites had demanded a million lives.

"It looks very small from here, doesn't it?" said Bourland, as if from this exalted point of view it were, after all, an insignificant thing, a doll's house, not worth fighting for. There were a hundred others scattered around it, and to the eye, from this altitude, it could hardly be distinguished for size or excellence from the rest.

He stood there, gazing questioningly over the cliff at the Hall below. All his former life seemed shrunken to the measure of that insignificant object—a mere molehill in the landscape. The voices of his remote ancestors, those prehistoric ancestors of the lawless woods, were crying to him in a strangely modern tongue: "Ah! love is at your side. Take love. The rest is vanity."

And she, gazing out toward those western mountains, into the shining splendor of the sun above them, out into the El Dorado of unburned passion beyond them, was sitting upon a melancholy stone.

Soon afterward they began the descent, realizing that their last day of joy together was drawing to a close. They had breathed the odor of the blown rose of life, but had not plucked the flower. The hands of their gentility were not sufficiently rough and callous to tear it, so full of thorns from the stem.

Down they ran, down, down the paths; thoughtlessly, merrily, recklessly, with wild dash and trip and go, like sprites amid Nature's solitude and soul-stirring silences.

At one point, halfway down, a rock jutted into the path, and a steep, slippery face led to the bottom. He went ahead and waited below, while she, timid, began the descent cautiously. Suddenly her foot slipped; she lost control of her motion. Downward she came, faster and faster, her only safety in forward movement; down, down she came, with danger at the end, in a helpless endeavor to stop and stand erect.

“Catch me, Henry!” she cried in fright.

Nature’s blind law of gravity flung her into his arms. He caught her, saved her, held her fast.

Run, Paris! Run! Destiny has cast your Helen into your desiring embrace. Think not now to tarry and consider the why, the wherefore, or the consequence. The prize is yours by right of possession. Take her and run, though Troy town should burn and fall in retribution.

It was Nature’s voice amid the free play of her forces.

He had picked her up easily, and, seized by a sudden impulse that came over him like a flood and mastered his motion, he ran down the sloping path. He strained her to him with the ravenous greed of a cannibal; and she, in her fright, had flung her arms about him, and now, in a tense circle, they were riveted around his neck. He felt the delicious graze of her lips against his forehead; her warm breath breathing a terrified surrender into his eyes. He was energized into a Titan; the access of emotion gave him the strength of ten. He ran on, bearing her without fatigue.

The sweep of the flood, before it let them escape from its resistless impetus, bore them to the foot of a rock covered with moss.

“Where are we now?” she cried, once more becoming aware that there was a world outside of themselves. “Where are we?” She spoke as one lost in the darkness, with no sense of direction.

“You are safe,” he replied. He had not yet released his hold of her.

“I was falling, and you saved me. Oh! how strong and good you are, dearest.” She was still under the stress

of the emotion. In her gratitude, surrender, love, whatever it was, she threw her arms about his neck, drew him down, kissed him on the lips, the cheeks, the eyes, the lips again until he was blinded, and his flesh burned with many flames. He gathered her in closer to himself.

At length the joy became too great for her. She began to sob, and when he opened his eyes and looked into her face, it was an irresistible vision. Her love, long-tortured and denied, was now clinging tenaciously to its object.

"Oh! it was worth the long waiting for," she murmured, unwilling to escape from the bondage of his arms.

Her hair had become loosened. He gathered its long strands, and drew them across her face, as if he would veil those eyes, those lips, those cheeks, and he kissed them, in turn and again, through the delicate mesh.

She took the touches with absolute resignation, quivering under the ecstasy of each kiss.

"What a glorious revelation it has been! It was something greater than ourselves," he whispered.

"I am all yours now. Every portion of my being," she answered. "I wish I had been better in the past so that I might be more worthy. Punish me, Henry; make me do any penance; but love me, only love me. Your love makes me feel complete at last." Again she put her hands behind her in sign of full surrender.

Her love! What a strange passion it had been! Often, through the lapses of time, she had forgotten him; yet it returned again and again, with the strength and cry of a deathless need. During the long absence it had burned, at times, as hate, yet none the less passionate love. And when, after the separation, it came again into his presence and companionship, it became calmer, timid, mute. And now, now that its object was won, however late the winning, it had become refined, tempered with feminine resignation and sweetness. It meant so much to her that, womanlike, she forgot all other claims in the joy of its possession.

His love! Had he ever really, truly loved her during these last years? If so, it was as a creature low in the

scale of lovers; a creature with an earthly need, giving it a place among other demands; inferior in attraction to other allurements in a man's career. But now, now that the career was closed, now that he was left, single-handed, without aim,—now that her own love was giving an exaltation to his own!—could he now bow down before the shrine of the supersensuous deity of love?

The twilight was coming down, for they had delayed long. They made motion to resume the return home. She began to twist her hair to put it again in coil, but he stopped her.

“Let it hang free till we get to the farm-house; it makes you look so much like a young girl I used to know, Elsie Vinton.”

She obeyed without protest.

But the name, her maiden name, jarred on the thoughts of both; for it reminded them with bitter truthfulness that it was no longer her name, and that she no longer possessed the maiden's freedom and privilege.

They reached the farm-house, mounted their horses, and rode homeward.

But it was a grewsome ride. Each was left alone to commune with self,—to see the incidents of the afternoon under the grim scrutiny of reflection, and in the drenched intoxication of a horrible awakening. Each began to realize what must be faced, dared, broken, if they were to follow the reckless leading of that passion. All the afternoon everything had been tinged, distorted, intensified, by the glamour of their own emotions. The jolting gallop, as they rode apart from each other's touch and thrill, dispelled that glamour, quenched the light, and brought them back into colorless, disenchanting reality.

“Think everything over, dearest, and decide what we shall do. I will obey your will,” she whispered, after they had dismounted at the Hall. She kissed him again in the darkness, and then both passed out of the world of love's incantation into the house.

CHAPTER XLVIII

THE VIGIL OF THE CAVALIER

FOR the first time in his life Bourland experienced a reluctance, a chill fear, to enter his own home. It seemed like a strange house to him.

He had some of the sensations of a sneak thief. He was carrying into it something which would infect the atmosphere, alienate the sister, poison the innocence of the child, and exorcise, with diabolic power, the spirit which had dwelt in that place and had made it a temple of domestic purity.

Hide it, master of the Hall! Hide it from the sister, from the little boy who knows not yet its meaning! Hide it from the stern-faced portraits on the wall! Hide it, if you can, from the all-seeing, invisible Eye!

And yet his physical being, all tingling as with electric charges, was an incarnate ecstasy.

Supper was waiting. He was voraciously hungry, and he sat down to the table with a lionlike desire to tear flesh. He wanted no dainties that night.

"You must have had a hard tramp," said Eleanor, pouring out the coffee. "You look all flushed, Elsie."

"Oh, that comes from the way we raced down," she replied with languid ease. "We stayed so long on top that when we came back, we rushed down like rolling stones. We didn't stop once, did we, Henry?"

She looked toward him with unconcern to confirm the half truth.

He was not schooled in deception. He took refuge in a reservation.

"We did make pretty quick time; faster than when we went up, by a good deal." He attempted to smile.

"Oh, give me some more of those preserved plums,"

cried Elsie. "The thought of them will make my mouth water when I get back to fast days. Can't you let me smuggle a few cups of them into my trunk, when I go back to the convent?"

"Are you still resolved to go back and take the vows?"

"Yes," she answered, without the slightest hesitation or change of color.

The ease of her acting amazed Bourland, who sat engrossed, but only apparently, with his food. He admired her nonchalance, and her self-possession. To himself he seemed as tremulous as quicksilver. But this ease of her acting brought back that old distrust of her character. She was playing a part beautifully, but what of the woman behind the rôle?

"Oh! the moon has come up!" called Elsie, after supper, from the front door. "Come here, Henry."

"Come, let us take a little walk," she begged. "It is hot here in the house."

He followed her down the steps into the partial obscurity and umbrage of the lawn.

She wanted to make an apology.

"It wasn't quite right, Henry, I know, to say those things. It seemed like cowardice and disloyalty to you." Her hand caught his. "But we mustn't let Eleanor suspect anything, at least, not until after her marriage. We don't want to spoil her pleasure. So we must keep our secret all to ourselves for a while. It will be hard for me to do it. I am so happy, so very happy, dearest." She nestled closer to him, content in the security of his protection, and he, still under the spell of the afternoon, drew her and held her in the tension of his embrace.

"Do you recollect this spot?" she asked.

Yes, he recognized the place; here, years before, they had separated in anger. Then it was May; she was a young girl, and he an officer in a gray uniform. Now it was autumn — the autumn of the year and of their lives, and the winter was close at hand.

"O that it were possible, after long grief and pain,
To find the arms of my true love around me once again."

she murmured. "I have uttered those lines so often, Henry, and now they have come true. Tell me, dearest, why did you cast me off that night? I thought you really cared for me in those days."

He remembered the reason distinctly. The romance of his nature had been aroused by the stimulus of her charm and companionableness; his vanity had been flattered by her resignation to his imperious wishes. He had thought of love, of asking her to be his wife. But there had been that suspicion, that old distrust of her personal honor, so forcefully confirmed when he found her furtively reading one of his letters.

"It seems like a slight thing now. Don't let us speak of it."

"No," she answered, "I have done many wicked things, but I want to face my sins. You'll forgive me, won't you?"

He really desired to clear it from his mind, for it had been recalled that very evening by her equivocation at the table.

"Do you remember a letter of mine, which you picked up one day when you thought I was not around?"

"Oh," she cried out, "was it that?"

"Yes," he answered. "It was that more than anything else. It dropped like gall into a sweet cup."

The moon was glaring down upon her face, lighting it like a dark lantern. He looked at her fixedly. Her features were drawn tense with pain. He observed that she was startled, but immediately she recovered her composure.

"I didn't read it," she cried fiercely, looking him squarely in the eyes.

"I only saw it in your hands."

"I know you did. I picked it up. I was jealous of that girl. I knew she cared for you. When I visited her once I saw that she kept your letters all in a box by themselves. I wanted to find out how it was between you, and I was tempted to look. I took the letter out of the envelope, but then it came over me what a mean

thing I was doing. I knew that you would despise me for it, so I thrust it back into the envelope, and just then you came and caught me. But that was after I had made the decision in my own mind. Indeed, it was. Don't you believe me, Henry?"

Who could refuse to believe those pleading, persuasive eyes, so tearful under the glare of the pale light?

He said that he did believe, and he did, at that moment.

"It was mean and base for me to be tempted even," she added in deep humility. "I deserve to be punished. But, oh! don't you think the punishment was too great, too cruel? It has kept us apart for years."

Her words brought him a disturbing thought. Did he regret the mistake? Would he exchange what the past had held for any greater measure of this present? His countenance took on a strange expression, and she observed it.

"Kiss me and forgive me," she pleaded.

He did so, and came again under the Circean enchantment.

"Now kiss me again; kiss me until you have blotted it out of your mind altogether — the very last vestige of it." Her manner was playfully enticing as she lifted her face upward for the fulfilment.

The warm lips were an irresistible magnet.

Soon after they went into the house. Before they parted, he, now all enervated, still under the glow of the afternoon's emotions, and intoxicated by her persuasive tenderness, reached downward for a good-night pledge and token; but before he could put his lips to the sweet chalice, he heard the step of Eleanor on the stairs. They slunk away like culprits foiled in some meditated felony.

Bearing a tumult of riotous emotions in his breast, he passed upstairs into his room. It was dark, and the darkness was so peopled with spectral shapes that he made a light for companionship. The illumination only increased his torment. For it revealed, in its undisturbed sanctity, the room of his dead wife, the consecrated shrine of love, its holiest of holies. There were the untouched memorials

of her presence, the chiffonier with her dressing-case, her jewel box, her half-emptied bottles of fragrant extract; the side-table on which lay her Bible, a volume of Tennyson, a copy of "Kathrina"; he could see, in his mind's eyes, the marked pages, the very words of the passages. And there was the bed on which she had closed regretfully upon this world her love-longing eyes forever.

He became conscious that the room was chilly, and that his forehead was damp with sweat.

He sat down in a chair; it was her chair. He looked at the opposite wall and saw the Madonna by Murillo; it was her picture, brought from the home of her maidenhood. He picked up the Bible and frantically opened it, hoping to find at random a passage with providential aid. Ugh! he closed it with a snap. It was the genealogy of Obed-Edom in the Chronicles.

He began to undress hastily. He put out the light.

He was very tired; he stretched his limbs in the delicious comfort of weariness upon the soft bed of rest. But his heart burned like a white-hot coal. He turned over, tried to drive out all thoughts from his brain. He tried to sleep. He rolled and tossed and writhed, as on a bed of thorns, finding nowhere ease. He tried to endure his pangs like Prometheus chained to the icy rocks of Caucasus. He lay there panting, with closed eyes that saw — everything.

He would have made an interesting subject for the student of psychology or the painter of spiritual agony. Let them use a glass of high power, such as a biologist takes for a microscopic examination of the living tissue. Let them watch the muscles strain, the fibres twist and writhe, the nerve stuff quiver, the particles of blood go slipping with terrified speed through the veins. Let them watch the breaking up of the organism, the disintegration of the vital cells, the escape and loss of energy. It is all a preliminary riot and struggle in the collapse of character.

And yet there was another power that ruled the riot with tyrannical strength; a power that heeded no admonition, no restraint of the will, no law but that of its own self-assertion; a power that often lies dormant, but when

awake sweeps aside judgment and will with uncontrollable fury—the blind, fierce animal impulse of unregenerate man.

Oh! the wild joy of that unforgettable moment, when Destiny flung her down the steep into his strong arms! Oh! the relief to fling aside all qualms, all restraint; to recede into the thoughtless, heedless, primitive savage of mere sensations. Oh! the exquisite rapture of forgetting past, present, future, disappointment, anguish, duty, honor, shame, responsibility, home, friends, self, forgetting everything,—to be the slave of passion, exhaustless passion, while Mother Nature amid that solitude of rocks and trees dropped her autumn silence and her twilight around them like a concealing cloak.

Suddenly, ringing like a hammer that descends to beat flat the iron upon the anvil, something resounded in the darkness. It seemed to roar from the remoteness of space and time.

“Thou shalt not!”

Bourland could see vividly that stern, indignant revivalist in the camp meeting which he had once attended when a boy. He could hear him blazing out the wrath of divine justice upon the sin and the sinner. The incident had slipped out of the past into his consciousness with such unexpectedness that he was suddenly awed. He lay upon the bed still, rigid.

The hall clock struck one.

The tempter came to reason away the superstitions of childhood, to put the matter on a rational basis, to show why, in order to add to the sum of human happiness, a man might love and possess another man's wife.

“Consider it with reason and common sense. The husband and wife now mean nothing to each other. There is no possibility of a reconciliation. Your love will fill up and complete her life. Why should she be made to suffer for her marriage? It was a step taken in the moment of despair. She has already endured enough agony. She has done full penance. Why shouldn't you help each other to happiness? Why should you immo-

late yourselves? There is the burden of the proof. Divine retribution? Divine fiddlesticks! Follow the philosopher who was wiser than you. Take the cash and let the credit go. Don't fear the rumble of a distant drum."

"Thou shalt not! Thou shalt not!"

The words of that old fanatic, the revivalist, had not fallen everywhere on stony ground. Years had passed since Bourland heard them as a boy, and here they came again into the maturity of his manhood. He crouched under them. He cringed under them. He was cowed by them.

"You aren't a man," the tempter began again. "You haven't any courage. She has it all. She does not hesitate and consider. She simply puts her hands in yours and says, 'Take me anywhere.' She will follow you regardless of everything, will risk any consequences, even hell fire. She is only a woman, too. You a man? Bah! you're a coward."

The satanic scorn stung him into the mood of daring and defiance. Yes, he would be no less courageous than she. He would take her out into the West, the unknown West, and begin life again, as his ancestors did when they first came to Virginia.

The hall clock struck two.

He lay for a long time fixed on this decision. But later some queries arose which shook his resolution by breaking the disenchantment as it had been broken years before. Had Elsie told him the truth about that letter? He could not feel certain. Then came a startling question, infamously unjust, if untrue. Did Destiny fling her down that steep, or did she throw herself? He was ashamed to harbor the thought.

But, said a small voice within, she uttered two deliberate falsehoods at the table.

He was too chivalrous, however, to accuse and condemn any woman on such suspicion. He reverted to his former resolution. Besides, the tempter sneered, you are a fine one to be judge of her honor. Can you cast a stone?

He made no plea of defence, and by his own acquiescence it was clearly revealed to him that there had begun some process of disintegration in his character.

The clock struck three.

His brain, by this time, was utterly fatigued and incapable of further thinking. From sheer exhaustion he fell into a drowse.

The hidden cherishings of meditation, long stored away in memory, now rearranged by the obscure processes of slumber into a dream, came forth with the distinctness of the lost words of a palimpsest.

Across his closed lids there drifted a procession of swarming stars that swept out of the void and into the void again. A faint flush, and then the growing light of an illumination, which shone and parted like a curtain, revealing a celestial vision. Up from the midst of a boundless plain there rose a shining mountain whose slopes were mantled with trees, bearing golden fruit, up to the pointed summit. Above it hovered the Shekinah, the visible symbol of the Presence, a canopy of light which shed a radiance upon the infinitude of the crowd surging around the base.

The faces of the people were lifted up to catch the golden rain of the radiance, and as it descended and fell upon them, they burst in the hallelujahs of a choric song, while their eyes glowed with the joy of the everlasting Life.

From all directions, stretching to the rim of the horizon, came streams of those recently delivered from the bonds of earth and death. They ran at full speed to join the multitude and to share the ineffable bliss which came in palpitating showers from the Shekinah above.

But there was one who lingered and waited outside of the throng and the press. She was clad in stainless white, and over her robe the loose hair hung and fell, veiling her like a bride. Her eyes were warm with beseeching tenderness; her face luminous with a love that was more than love, and human with a sorrow that was more than tears. She made no motion to press inward, but remained

always on the edge of the crowd, watching. And often, turning her eyes from that source of supreme rapture above, she scanned the arrivals, and failing to see the object of her beloved search, she inquired of the stranger if he brought her any news from the world. At last came one who spoke sadly something in the hushed secrecy of a whisper; and when she heard it, the light fell from her countenance like a veil. She dropped upon the shining sand, and hid her face and wept, while the glad tumult of hosannas left her solitary with her solitary grief.

Bourland awoke from the vision and the dream to find the sunlight glinting through the frosted window panes. With the first clear thought his mental tortures returned. Once more began the battle of indecision. Finally, in the hope that activity of some kind would relieve him, he got up, dressed himself, and went downstairs. The house was still. No one else was awake. He went out of doors into the cool air of the autumn morning. He wandered about aimlessly for a while, until, led by a prompting, he found himself beside the low wall which guarded his dead in their irrevocable slumber.

He pushed his way past the rusty gate. From a distance the letters on the slabs were no longer legible. Rain and weather were eating away the last vestiges of the inscriptions, and soon even this last bed of death would pass into a stranger's hands, and nothing would be left to tell the tale of John Bourland and his line.

The son paused beside the slabs that bore his father's and his mother's name; he thought of the stainless purity of their wedded lives, of his own present shame. Then he turned to another slab just beyond, beneath which lay the body of his wife. Was that the last of her? that day when they lowered her from his sight; that day when, with eyes that were blinded by despair, he could only hear the thud and sprinkle of the gravel stones upon the lid of the resounding coffin; that day when for him the world returned to the black void whence it came. Was that all?

He did not think so at that time. Ah, no! there was something more than that. There was that pledge which,

in the agony of his grief and in the devotion of his love, he had graven upon the marble. The moss had crept into the grooves of the letters, but it was still legible. These faced him, the last, best words of that sacred love:—

MARGARET RANDALL BOURLAND

WIFE OF

HENRY BOURLAND.

DIED 1867

AGED 27 YEARS.

IN LIFE, IN DEATH

AND

IN LIFE FOREVERMORE

Bring instruments of iron, O recreant lover! sledges and bars, and break that slab into fragments. Raze out that pledge to the dead, lest in the great day, when all men are called to their last reckoning, this stone be brought before the stern Judge and condemn thee.

He got down on his knees and put his lips against the cold marble. He kissed the letters reverently. He murmured his wife's name. He began to pray, silently at first, but in the end sobs forced his thought into audible words.

“My wife, forgive me! Pray God to forgive me. O God! have mercy!”

He remained on his knees for a long time, but when he arose and went back to the house, his face was shining with unutterable peace.

CHAPTER XLIX

ABOUT STARS AND METEORS

"It's rather yellow with age," said Elsie, surveying a white satin gown which Eleanor had just brought from the clothes-press—the costume which her mother had worn to the bridal altar.

"It will suit my complexion all the better," responded Eleanor. "I think it will do very well."

Her hands were very busy in those days, and her thoughts were closely linked to the work of her hands. The trousseau, to be sure, was not extensive, but a thousand and one trifles claim attention before a wedding.

The ceremony was to be read in the parlor, and then the engineer and his bride, after a wedding breakfast with a few friends, were to say farewell to the Hall, and depart for a tour into the West.

Henry came into the room where the two women were sewing.

"Go away," called out Eleanor; "we've no time for you. You'll only be in the way."

Elsie gave him a look which revoked the dismissal—a glance which, indeed, was a mute plea for him to stay. But he went off without heeding it.

He really desired to get away from her. For he could not come within the radius of her influence without some wavering of his last resolution. He knew it would require all his strength, and especially all his tact, to sever the threads which fate had already woven about them. He felt a certain duty, a certain obligation, toward her; for by his own act he had begun an alliance which left him somewhat entangled, somewhat bound.

Two hours later, while he was sitting in the library reading, he heard some one moving down the hallway, humming with great solemnity that never wearisome wedding march by Mendelssohn. In a minute Elsie appeared in the doorway, and paused on the threshold. She had arrayed herself in the bridal dress, and there she stood, her face hid beneath the white veil.

"To have and to hold, in sickness or in health," she uttered without a tremor, putting forth her hand.

Perhaps she expected him to rise and play out the mock ceremony, or to come and lift the veil.

But he did not stir from his seat.

For a moment she stood rigid; then, casting aside the gauze that concealed the play of the features, she came two steps into the room, made a low courtesy as to an audience, and then assuming the tragic attitude of Cleopatra in the great scene of the play, she began to read the lines, like an empress. Before she had uttered the first half-dozen sentences, Bourland felt the fascination of the Egyptian queen and the power of the woman before him.

"Give me my robe, put on my crown; I have
Immortal longings in me. Now no more
The juice of Egypt's grape shall moist this lip.
Yare, yare, good Iras; quick! Methinks I hear
Antony call; I see him rouse himself
To praise my noble act; I hear him mock
The luck of Cæsar, which the gods give men
To excuse their after-wrath. Husband, I come.
Now to that name my courage prove my title!
I am fire, air; my other elements
I give to baser life. So, have you done?
Come, then, and take the last warmth of my lips.
Farewell, kind Charmian; Iras, long farewell."

In the next lines the thought of a possible suggestion of his dead wife made her pause with indecision. But after an instant of hesitation she dared.

"This proves me base:
If she first meet the curled Antony,
He'll make demand of her, and spend that kiss,
Which is my heaven to have."



“Through the doorway he saw Parker, his hat on his head, his hands in his pockets, looking at the family portraits.”

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She scanned Bourland closely; his lips were tightened, but he gave no sign. She made the motion of applying the asp to her breast, and spoke with a voice that was unsteady with the inexpressible pathos:—

“Peace, peace!

Dost thou not see my baby at my breast,
That sucks the nurse asleep?”

Bourland made utterances of admiration. Then, as if she heard the applause of an audience, she began again to courtesy, and to cast professional kisses, to right and left, after the manner of a stage favorite.

“You ought to be an actress,” said Bourland, too deeply impressed with her power, and too vexed with her flippancy, to be demonstrative.

“That’s what I’ve often been told. I played Cleopatra once in private theatricals in London. Lord Churton offered to put me on the stage.”

He shuddered at that thought. “I’m glad you didn’t go.”

“I almost made up my mind to try it.”

He gave her a horrified rebuke.

“You great big goose,” she cried, with a grimace, and, turning, ran upstairs.

In the afternoon he rode down to Brayton to make inquiries about the coming public sale of the Hall. No men had as yet signified their intention of bidding for it, and it was commonly supposed that Parker would buy it, to protect his mortgage, if for no other reason.

So then at last Parker had got him where he could enjoy the vindictive pleasure of evicting his rival from his home. The mere idea of the vengeance gave Bourland no pang; he felt little virulence against Parker personally, because he had always regarded him as a person of an inferior order of being. The real pangs came from the loss of the Hall itself, and the humiliation and the sense of incapability.

Late in the afternoon, when he returned, the atmosphere, deep in the west, was lucid amber. As he went up the steps, he caught the sound of Elsie’s voice, singing at the

piano. It was a song of intense possibilities, and Bourland, as he listened, felt his own passion stir again within, as if about to conquer him once more. The song was that famous love lyric by Ben Jonson, the one which everybody knows, but which few can sing with more than a tithe of its latent fervor. It might have been a fitting swan song for Shakespeare's passionate Egyptian.

"Drink to me only with thine eyes,
And I will pledge with mine.
Or leave a kiss but in the cup,
And I'll not look for wine.
The thirst that from the soul doth rise,
Doth ask a drink divine;
But could I of Jove's nectar sup,
I would not change for thine."

Her voice made the very strings of the instrument ring an echo to delirious emotion.

Ah! that cup! She was holding it out for him to drink. He could catch the fumes, rising with fragrance, bewildering the brain like a narcotic. He stood on the veranda, leaning against one of the massive columns for support.

She ended the lyric with a thump upon the keys, and before the last notes had died away she ran her fingers deftly up and down the chromatic scale, rippling helter-skelter, and then she dashed suddenly into a flippant Italian arietta. Bourland had heard her sing it before; it was one of those popular catches which a short-skirted soubrette sings on the vaudeville stage.

*"Corta lingua nelle donne
Impossibile di trovar."*

She supposed herself all alone. He, outside, awoke from the intoxication of the narcotic with the shock of a cold plunge.

"You are an enigma to me," he muttered. "I cannot, I cannot fathom your character." When he went into the house, he avoided the room in which she was playing.

He saw her next when she came into the supper room.

She entered, humming a negro melody, and sat down, after making a grand *salaam*.

"Well, runaway, you have come back to us, have you?"

He was in a sober state of mind.

"I haven't been far away. The business was not at all joyous."

There was no one else in the room. She arose, came toward him, and bent her face down near to his. "You will share it with me? Perhaps I can help."

"It is past help now," he replied with sad decision.

Remorse was pictured on her countenance. "Forgive my levity, Henry. Please don't judge me by the surface. I ought to have known that these are dark days for you. It is very selfish of me, but I've been in a thousand humors to-day, trying to chase things out of my mind."

Her eyes were mute ambassadors of a thought in exile. Out of her hair a perfume fell into his face, tempting it upward. Just then the approaching steps of Chap drove her away like a scared, affectionate pet animal.

Later in the evening, Bourland, wishing to end the uncertainty of their future, for so long as it hung in suspense he felt the force of temptation, gathered his reluctant courage, and asked her to accompany him. She flung a cloak over her shoulders and followed him into the night.

The air, though the mists had settled in the valley, was singularly clear in the upper regions, and the stars shone with unwonted splendor. The Great Bear hung low; Orion was moving up over the summit of Bald Pate; the Pleiades were glimmering faintly in their huddled group, and Saturn burned brilliantly beside a lone minor star.

They passed down to a little wooden bridge beneath which a brook prattled in a language all its own. There they stopped, and leaned over the railing, watching the dash and gurgle of the water among the rubble stones. He knew not how to begin. He feared lest he might wound her feelings. He knew that after the past few days, he was himself not entirely free. Several times he was on the point of speaking, but his courage oozed away, his resolution took flight, the apt words refused to come.

The crucial moment was delayed by her inquiry about the afternoon. He told her of his efforts to maintain the estate, of his failure, of the end which was now imminent. She spoke words of real consolation, and he felt that his sorrow was also sincerely hers.

"There are some harsh things in this world which must be borne," he said with bitterness.

"I know that only too well," she replied.

"We seem to be free," he continued, disregarding her remark. "We deceive ourselves. We are bound by laws."

She made no answer. Her intuition told her that the iridescent bubble of their joy was about to be shattered.

"Do you see those stars so high above us, Elsie? There is not one but must keep in its course, and move according to the unchangeable law of its motion; each one has a destiny of its own, each one a path in its solitary orbit. Do you catch my meaning? Human beings are like stars in some ways. They must obey the laws of their natures, or break with themselves, with their appointed purposes in the world, with the power that upholds them."

She trembled slightly in her answer. "It may be so. It may be so for men with great ambitions, great aims. But it does not fit my case, I confess, though perhaps with shame. There are other things besides stars up there—things of very little account in the great plan. There are wandering bodies, aimless meteors, and when they feel the attraction of something stronger than the laws of their own motion, they rush out of their courses." She spoke the next words with sadness. "I think I am like one of those meteors, one of those homeless wanderers."

"And what happens to them?" he asked.

"Oh, they whirl about just like the rest, until they feel a great throb; until they feel the presence of a superior power drawing them away. They fall sometimes with a rush and a flash, and are burned up." Her whole nature began to kindle as she proceeded. "You are a man. You don't rightly understand a woman like me. You don't conceive the glory, only a woman can, of being

burned, absorbed, destroyed if need be, by something more sublime than oneself."

He stood amazed, awed, as those must have done who viewed from afar the horrible grandeur of burning Rome. Yes, he was a man; he did not understand that kind of woman.

"Why do you shudder?" she inquired calmly. "It doesn't take much courage. Men have been burned for their religion; and women for religion and love. No, I see more clearly you have not understood me. People think me selfish; perhaps it is true. They think I love idleness and pleasure; so I do. But the greatest pleasure I can conceive is utter effacement, utter annihilation of self — by you. All these other things, these fripperies and vanities, I cared for them only as distractions, to fill up the time when you were not near me. Ah, my dear love, I have known times when I felt you cared for me but as a plaything; and even in those moments I have wished you to turn upon me, to beat me, to bruise me, and if I had afterward possessed the strength, I should have crept to your feet, and caught your cruel hands and kissed them. Don't you perceive that I really have something of a devotee in my nature?"

"And why all this for me? I do not comprehend it." He was well-nigh speechless before this revelation of devotion.

"Because," she replied quickly, "other men are but weak fools. I can make them jump for me, like jacks upon a stick. But you, you are the conqueror and the master. I feel that when you look and speak."

He shook his head.

"Oh, yes, you are. I know it; my confession is proof of it. There is another reason for your power, and there lies the tragedy of our lives."

He waited for her to speak again. She looked him piteously in the eyes and said with a voice broken with anguish, "Because you never really loved me."

He protested that he did, more than anything else in the world.

That, indeed, gave her a measure of joy and increased her hunger; so much so, that in her eagerness she put a fatal question.

"Do you care as much as — for — anything — in — heaven — too?"

"No," he answered very quietly, "it is she who stands between us now."

She grasped the wooden railing for support. Underneath the water trickled over the stones, but above its incessant noise he could catch the spasms of contending emotions. The rage of jealousy was at death's grip with a woman's passionate love. The struggle became too fierce, her nerves gave way under the strain, and she broke forth in a hysteria of laughter and sobs.

"It's all right, Henry, dear, I'm a big, big baby. I don't understand myself. Oh! what mad things I have done in my life, and I've led men on wild courses just for the excitement. I needed some one to rule me, to tell me what to do. I'm like a boy's top, I have to be whipped to stand up straight. Sometimes I go all to pieces, just like this. But you bring me back to myself, bring out all the good in me, make me tender and womanly. You broke my heart years ago, but still I kept thinking the day would come, but it never will, will it, dearest?" At the last question, like a drowning man seizing another in the frenzied struggle for life, she threw her arms about his neck and clung to him in the madness of despair. He held her in his strong arms until she grew more calm, and when she recovered, she was much ashamed.

"Can you forgive me for what I have done, Elsie? It is all my fault. I feel like a skulker," he cried out in self-accusation.

"No, Henry, don't blame yourself. The fault was all mine. I knew what I was doing. I did it with my eyes open. I knew it was wrong. I tried to make you love me. I played for you against my own soul. This is only justice to-night."

He told her his thoughts of the past months. She told him hers. He showed her how bitter, how difficult, had been his last decision.

“You are right,” she replied to a repetition of his demand for pardon. “Your decision was right. You are wiser than I. I have been thinking, too, these last days. I saw how it would all end. Suppose we had gone away, fled from the law into some obscure place in the West, we could not have fled from our past lives or from ourselves. They would have goaded us, turned our joy to gall. You might have cared for me at first, and I should have loved you always; but in the end you would have despised me, turned on me, and cast me out. I saw how it would be. But oh, I couldn’t, couldn’t give you up! I couldn’t give you up. I see it all now. We are not free. We must obey the laws, not only man’s law, but the law within ourselves. We cannot escape their after vengeance.”

They returned, after a time, into the house: he, in humble, unheroic mood; and she, bravely sorrowful.

At the foot of the stairs, as she was about to leave him, she put forth her hands and drew his lips to hers.

“Once more — for the last time,” she whispered. Their lips met in a last token of their parted lives, and during the sadness of that farewell the Recording Angel of the sins of men and of women averted his eyes.

A look came upon her face like that the old masters used to paint upon the countenance of the penitential Mary.

“Good night, dearest.”

“Good night, Elsie.”

The last he saw of her that night was her hand, lingering upon the curve of the balustrade, as she passed the turn of the stairs.

A lamp was burning in the parlor, and Bourland went in to put it out. As he stepped over the threshold of the door he became aware that he was again in the presence and the company of his own. There they hung still, the portraits of those stately men; the Knight of the Golden Horse Shoe; the friend of Washington; the soldier who fell at the battle of Camden; the statesman who guided Virginia through the stormy days of Nullification; the uncle whose body lay wrapped in the flag under the walls of

Chapultepec ; and then, over the mantel, the sad face of John Bourland, his father.

And there, too, in the midst of them, was the living master of the Hall, soon to pass out of its possession, and to take with him all that was left of the glory of the house.

Humbly he stretched out his hands before those mute witnesses ; humbly he gazed into the eyes of his father's face ; humbly he murmured in his despair : —

“ Father ! I have done what I could, but I have failed.”

He was not conscious of it, so great was his anguish, but he stood there erect — erect as a bar of iron.

CHAPTER L

FAREWELL TO BOURLAND HALL

It was a marriage without church bells or commotion. A score of friends gathered in the parlor; a wedding march was played upon the well-worn piano; the bride entered leaning upon her brother's arm. The ceremony was simple and homely, with low, scarcely audible responses from the lady, and firm, manly accents from the groom. It was not a romantic affair, but there was something about it that was beautifully and soothingly human, particularly the damp lashes of Eleanor, the frank satisfaction of the middle-aged lover, and the sad secrets of those who stood by and watched.

The ceremony was performed at eleven o'clock, and the wedding breakfast followed immediately. Bourland sat at the head of the table, the bride and groom at his right and left hands. The banquet was served in the style of old Virginia—a profusion of everything enticing, spiced with an abundance of the beverages that cheer, although they may sometimes inebriate. Indeed, it was remarked afterward that Major Talcott, who was present, acted rather thoughtlessly. But, poor fellow, he wasn't very happy on that occasion, and all he did was to deaden his sensibilities a trifle. At any rate, he never forgot his manners, for he remained a true Southern gentleman to the end. And this may be said, too, in spite of the fact that Mr. Hewitt heard him say under his breath, when, at the conclusion of the ceremony the new-made husband gathered in his armful of treasure, "Damn the Yankees; they've got everything!"

At two o'clock the carriage drove up to the front door to take the bride and groom down to the Brayton station.

They were off for a long tour into far-away California and the Yellowstone. Eleanor shuddered at the prospect; except for her school days in Baltimore, she had never been beyond the borders of the state.

The company came out on the veranda to see them start, and as Sam whipped up the horses, it began to rain rice and old shoes. Some mischievous person had tied a tin pail to the rear of the carriage, and when it began to rattle and drag on the gravel, Sam had to stop, get down with his rheumatism and cut the string, while the crowd jeered hilariously.

Eleanor thrust her head out of the carriage when they started again, and in their last view of her, her eyes were lingering upon the dear old home, and her hand was waving farewell with a handkerchief not altogether dry.

Later the time came for Elsie's departure. Bourland drove her down to the railroad station to take the Richmond train. She went away bravely, telling her friend with deep sincerity that she should always think of him with joy. He pressed her hands firmly, but at the end could find voice only to say "Good-by."

He returned to the Hall. The company had broken up and had gone their several ways. Only himself and Chap and two or three negroes were left.

He felt indescribably lonely. His emotions can be appreciated best, perhaps, by some weather-beaten sea captain about to desert his sinking ship,—a stout, trim craft, the chief among all his joys, which he had commanded and sailed for decades, but which was now doomed to destruction, and left no hope except escape with his life. The boats have put off, the crew are safe, and he and his little mate are lingering to take the last leave.

Chap, who hitherto had slept in an adjoining room, crept that night into his father's bed. It was Bourland who got the greater consolation from the companionship, and he talked for comfort's sake, and would not let the boy go to sleep until he became drowsy himself.

The next morning Bourland began to pack some of the movables, which he intended to send down to Brayton for

storage until he could arrange for their permanent destination. Most of them in time would find a place in Eleanor's new home. Chap helped, or tried to do so, although he was frequently in the way. But Bourland wanted the child near him. He was hard at work, in his shirt sleeves, when three loud raps resounded on the front door.

He stopped, surprised. "Run down, Chap, and see who it is," he said.

Randall came up in a moment.

"It's a man and a woman. He said he came to look over the house."

"What's his name?"

"He said no name was necessary. I asked them to go into the parlor."

A dryness came into Bourland's throat. He knew who it was. Parker had come, before he left the Hall, to fulfil his promise. But Bourland had no fear of his taunts; he was above the reach of their sting.

He washed his hands, put on clean linen, brushed his hair, arranged his cravat neatly, drew on his best coat, a long frock of black broadcloth, and went downstairs.

Through the doorway he saw Parker, his hat on his head, his hands in his pockets, looking at the family portraits. His wife was seated in the far corner of the room, in the most uncomfortable of the chairs.

"Good morning," said Bourland, bowing politely, first to the lady, then to the man.

There they stood face to face, representatives of the best of the South, the worst of the North.

"Morning," said Parker, without withdrawing his hands. "I came up to have a look at the place. I bought it in, as you probably know, and I want to see if it's a very bad bargain. It's been some time since I was here, and then, you recollect, I didn't stay long enough to take notes." There was a sour curve in his mouth. "I've brought my wife along," he added, without looking at her.

"I hope we don't disturb you," the lady began timidly.

"Not at all, madam, I assure you," replied Bourland, turning his attention to her.

"I wanted to wait awhile," she continued, with a fearfulness of tone, "but William was bent on coming now. He wants to take some measurements, and order some things."

"Yes," said Parker, dryly. "I want some new things sent down from New York. I guess you'll gather up this truck pretty clean."

"I beg your pardon," put in Bourland, quickly, ignoring his boorishness. "Won't you have a seat? Excuse me for not asking you to sit down before."

"I suppose I might as well, seeing the house is mine," returned Parker, taking a chair and putting his hat on the floor beside it.

Bourland turned again to the lady. "You must be cold after the ride. It is quite chilly this morning."

She was a decent body, with thin face and peaked nose, dressed in dark stuff that was old but clean. Her deportment showed that she had long been drilled into subjection and resignation, yet that she had not lost her respectability. In fact, in her way, she was refined.

"Can I not offer you some refreshment?" he asked, addressing both this time. "Madam, will you not have a glass of wine to take off the chill of the ride?" He rose and made a deferential bend. "Here, Chap," he called at the door; "go get some wine and glasses."

"None for me," said Parker, brusquely. "I never drink. I'm a teetotaler."

"Perhaps your wife may be prevailed upon to take a little."

When Chap came, bringing the tray, she demurred at first. She really didn't drink wine, though the doctor had advised her to take it for her health. The golden liquid tempted her, however, and she was finally induced to accept. He offered her the glass as he would have done it to the greatest lady in the land, and as he raised his own, he bowed again and said, "Permit me to drink to the new mistress of the Hall."

He was passing, yes, he was passing to make way for others; but he was going with the dignity and the stateliness of one long used to royal purple.

"William," said his wife, after a pause, "you might speak of — what — we talked about coming up."

"Well, yes, I suppose I might," he drawled. "I suppose you are short of cash, Bourland, and a snug sum would come in handy to you just now. You don't want to cart away all this stuff in the house. Suppose you put a price on it. Set your own figures. I won't bargain hard with a man who is down on his luck." Parker evidently meant to do so, but he could not altogether suppress a man-in-the-moon's grin of triumph.

His wife saw how deeply the insult had struck home, and she hastened to repair the injury.

"We could take some of your things, sir. Indeed, we should feel honored to have them."

But Parker had stung him too virulently, and scorn struggled with his impassive courtesy, as he faced the man.

"That was very thoughtful of you, Mr. Parker," he replied, still retaining his suavity amid the scorn. "Most of the articles I shall send to my sister. The rest I purpose to give to the negroes. What *they* do not want, you are welcome to, *for nothing*."

Parker snarled an angry reply in which he used the word "beggar," but Bourland paid no attention to his words. He rose again and looked at the wife.

"Pardon me, madam. I believe you wanted to see the house. Permit me to conduct you over it. It is a historic old place, and I may be able to tell you some things that will interest you. We can leave Mr. Parker down here to make his measurements."

Parker, who had come with a purpose and a plan, was not able to control the situation at all. The moon-faced grin gave place to a scowl, as Bourland motioned for the lady to pass out the door, and led the way upstairs.

He took her, one by one, through the hallways and rooms, pointing out the advantages of each. One room had the splendid view; this got the morning, another the afternoon

sun; the south rooms were warm in winter, and the opposite ones were invariably cool even in August, owing to the fact that they were always in shadow. He showed her what a woman regards as the greatest merit of a house, the capacious closets, and the large cedar chests, entertaining her, in the meantime, with those pleasantries of comment and reminiscence which only the natural-born conversationalist can command.

When they came downstairs again, Parker was outside, seated in his carriage, fretting and fuming at his wife's delay.

"What were you fussing up there so long for?" he asked testily. "You were long enough to see a dozen houses. Come, get in here. Jenny wants her oats."

He made no motion to help her in, but Bourland assisted her to the seat. She was very much confused, ashamed.

"Thank you very much for your kindness, sir," she said with real gratitude. "When we get set to rights, I wish you would come see us sometime."

"Thank you, madam. It would be a great pleasure, I assure you. I bid you good day." He bowed pleasantly.

"Get up, Jenny," said Parker to his horse, and he slashed her viciously with the whip and drove off.

For the next three days Bourland was busy sending furniture and boxes down to Brayton to await there his sister's orders. Anderson's iron projects had come to realization, and he planned to make his home at Buena Vista, in the southwestern part of the state. This was a great source of satisfaction to Eleanor, who did not desire to go north among strangers.

By evening on the third day the Hall was almost empty. And when, late at night, Bourland took the lamp in one hand, and Chap by the other, and went upstairs to the bed that was left for their last night's rest, the sound of his steps on the bare floors made echoes that rang back from all the dismantled rooms, echoes that lingered long in his own empty heart.

He awoke several times during the night, and then fell into deep slumber. When his eyes opened again, it was well into the morning.

Shortly after noon everything was ready for the departure. Black Sam and his wife were to leave the house and go live in a cabin on a little patch by the edge of the sloping woodland. This land, though practically valueless, Bourland still held, and he gave it rent free only too gladly to the last loyal black.

"Watch over the Hall, Sam," said Bourland, thrusting the key in the front-door lock. "Don't forget that it was once ours."

"Ya-as, marster, I'll do dat. I'll watch it. 'Twaz our'n onct, wuzzent it? Dar's no denyin' ob dat."

Bourland turned the key, and the lock clicked into its mortise.

There was a brazen knocker on the door, a lion's head, holding a ring in its jaws. Randall reached up and gave one last rap. They could hear the sound echo and fill the empty house.

"Hush, Chap," said his father. "Let them sleep."

He made a sad pilgrimage to the sacred corner where only the slabs remained as a memorial of the family. The mist came into his eyes as he stood by the graves of his father, his mother, his wife, and took a last farewell, a mist that almost gathered into rain.

He went back to where the carriage was waiting, and while Chap began to throw gravel stones at an old tree stump, Bourland took one final, lingering look at the home of his boyhood, the home of his life. He was reluctant to turn away and let the sight of the dear old place pass away from before his eyes.

Randall stopped throwing stones and came up beside his father.

"We are coming back again, some day, aren't we, Dad?"

He got no answer for a full minute. Bourland's spirit had slipped back into the past.

"What's that, Chap? Did you say something?" said his father, coming back into present time.

"I asked if we shouldn't be here again some day? Won't we?"

“Perhaps so, boy. We may come back to take a look at it. But it won’t be the same to us.”

They climbed into the carriage. It was no longer theirs. Together with the horses, it had been sold, and was to be delivered to the new owner that afternoon.

Black Sam took out his whip, but only a single word was needed to put the horses in motion. They saw Sarah, Sam’s wife, standing on the porch waving her red bandanna, the sign of her servitude. Then the horses trotted through the stone gateway, dashed into the hushed peace of the long arcade, and bore the master down the valley.

And this was the passing of the cavalier.

EPILOGUE

TWENTY years later, one autumn afternoon, an elderly man, leading a little boy by the hand, might have been seen walking along one of the streets of Lexington. His hair is silken white, his tall figure slightly bent, but a serenity upon his face suggests a life closing in the beauty of tempered sunshine.

They enter the campus of the University, taking the path toward the chapel, just as a college student comes in the opposite direction.

"Good afternoon, professor," says the student, stopping and removing his hat; and then, stooping down to the child, he adds, "This, I presume, is your son's boy?"

"Yes, sir! and he's his grandfather's boy, too," answers the elder, with the fond pride of a grandparent. "Give the gentleman your hand, Harry. Have you forgotten your manners, sir?" He administers an affectionate rebuke on the youngster's shoulder with the tip of his cane. "I'm taking him up to the mausoleum," he continues to the other. "It is such a beautiful thing for a man to have among the earliest memories of his childhood."

They pass on and a moment later enter the chapel. It is deserted at that hour, and their steps unconsciously soften as they break upon the stillness of the interior. They go up the main aisle to the chancel, ascend the steps of the pulpit, and find, facing them, an arched opening in the wall barred by an iron grating.

Within, dimly illumined by a shaft of pale light, is a plain, massive sarcophagus. Dressed in his heavy army coat, his sword close to his side, the carven figure of a soldier reposes upon the cold immobility of the marble. The face is placid beyond the reach of any earthly disquietude; he lies there in state upon a monument of worldly honor and eternal peace.

The man stands in reverent attitude as before a shrine, while the boy, innocently restive and curious, climbs up on the iron grating.

"Get down, Harry," says the elder, in a subdued voice.

"Who is it, grandpa?" The child's treble ranges through the empty air, and breaks into the resonance of many echoes.

"It is the tomb of General Lee, my boy." The old man stoops and raises him up so that he may look down upon the graven features, adding softly, "He was one of God's gentlemen."

Then the living veteran tells him how the dead general was once the inspiring commander of devoted armies in a long and bitter war; how his men laid down their lives for their homes and their fathers' principles; and how, after the war was over, he retired quietly to civic life and became the president of that college, where the child's grandfather had been a teacher for so many years, and where his father had gone to school. "He was a noble man, Harry," he says in closing, "because he forgot himself and fought for his people. He was one of our greatest Americans."

For some time they stand, regarding this tribute of love and reverence to him whose body lies beneath, but whose pure soul has long since gone fearlessly to the judgment of the Maker.

They turn to leave and pass down the aisle, the patter of the little fellow's short steps keeping ill time with the stride of the man. They close the door, and the echoes die away in the hush of the imperishable silence.

Halfway home the child begins to lag, and finally stops.

"I'm so tired, grandpa."

The man takes him in his arms and carries him, talking cheerily. But before he reaches the house he is noticeably wearied by the weight of the burden.

At last he reaches the gate. The door of the house opens, a young woman comes out, and rushes down the steps.

"You ought not to carry that big boy, father," she protests.

"The exercise will do me good, Mary," he answers, speaking with an affection as tender as if she were the daughter of his own blood.

It has now grown into the dusk. There is an orange radiance in the west, and the day shimmers as it dies.

She takes them both by the hand, and leads them into the house. She pushes a great easy-chair before the crackling fire, for the season, at evening, has become chilly. She brings his roomy house coat and his slippers; she kneels and helps him off with his stiff, tired boots; and when she has arranged the

cushions and ministered in every way to his comfort, she bends over and kisses his forehead.

"Come with me, Harry," she says; "let grandpa take a little nap."

"Don't take him away. Let him stay here," the man pleads, as if for a comrade.

So she leaves them alone.

The youngster climbs up on his grandfather's knee, and shakes his curls over his coat sleeve; he nestles close, putting his hand into the vest pocket, in search of the customary tidbit of mint, while the elder regrets that the supply is exhausted and, to soothe the disappointment, begins to sing some old-fashioned juvenile rhymes; and later, following his own mood, he slips into a low melody of the church, into the music of that solemn hymn which is sung during the recessional: —

"Now the day is over,
Night is drawing nigh;
Shadows of the evening
Steal across the sky."

The child falls asleep, the old man hugging him close as a miser his bag of gold. His own voice grows fainter as the fire induces a languor; his head begins to droop and drowse. He, too, is asleep.

Outside there is the noise of an opening door, the boisterous voice of a man, and a wife's greeting.

The fire continues to cast its warmth and glow into the room, illumining the chubby cheeks of the boy and the paler countenance of the aged man. They slumber on, secure in that home of family affection and guardian love, the smile of pleasant thoughts upon their faces. Perchance they are dreaming.

Dream on, old soldier of the lost cause. We would keep you with us as long as we may. But the hour of your going, despite our loving solicitude, will soon be at hand. Dream on, venerable cavalier, and if dreams will brighten the last of your heroic days, let them gloat fondly over the years that have been. Dream on, dear child of innocence, you who came too late for the struggle and the full sorrow; you, with the great promise of the century before you, and the sincere devotion of your sires behind you; dream on, sweet child, of the years to be.

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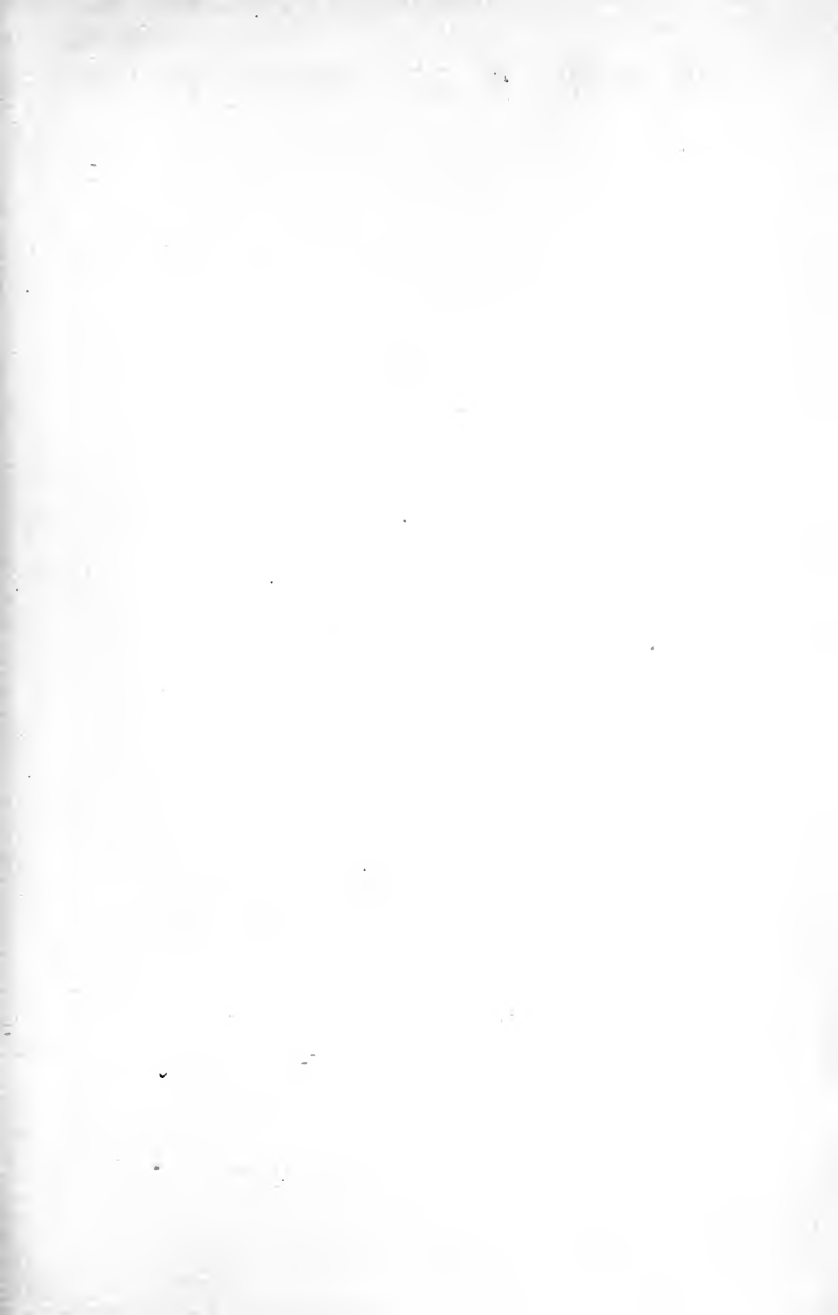
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